

Ten ideas for church student workers to help students make the most of Uncover Mark

Are you keen to make the most of Uncover Mark with students in your church? Here are ten ideas that you might use to encourage the use of Uncover Mark in your context.

1. Get clear on the vision

You'll be better able to support your students if you understand the vision for seeker Bible studies yourself. Seeker studies do not assume faith on the part of the inquirer and build upon pre-existing relationships, allowing Christian students to introduce and intrigue their friends with the person of Jesus. Becky Pippert outlines more of the vision for seeker studies at www.uccf.at/Becky-Pippert. Our vision is that copies of Mark's Gospel will find their way into the hands of friends, each time accompanied with an invitation to explore it through the integrated studies.

2. Chat with your local UCCF CU Staff Worker about the local CU strategy

History tells us that Christians are much more likely to offer to do a seeker study with their friends if they've worked through the studies in a group of Christians first. Talk with your local Staff Worker and students about how the studies have been used in CUs, plus any plans for the future. If the studies are being used by students in your church, then their stories and enthusiasm might feed your plans as a church family.

3. Familiarise yourself with the passages used in the seeker studies

Here are the eight passages and themes that the seeker studies integral to Uncover Mark explore:

Study A	Mark 1:14-45	Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God is followed by an outbreak of healings – signs of a damaged world being restored; foretastes of how things will be when God is king.
Study B	Mark 2:1-22, 3:1-6	Jesus explodes the categories and expectations of his day. By forgiving sins and welcoming sinners, Jesus does what only God has the right to do. Jesus refocuses humanity's hopes for a better world upon himself.
Study C	Mark 5:21-43	Jesus alone is the one who can meet our deepest needs. The response Jesus calls for is faith – giving up confidence in ourselves and our own resources, placing confidence instead in him.
Study D	Mark 8:27-33, 9:30-37	Sometimes our false priorities can prevent us from seeing things clearly. To see Jesus rightly, we must lay aside our preconceptions about ourselves and the kind of help we need.
Study E	Mark 10:32-52	People with power and influence tend to use it to get their own way. Jesus has immense power – yet comes to serve us through giving his life, freeing us from our sin and self-centredness.
Study F	Mark 14:27-72	Stood before the Sanhedrin, on the face of it, Jesus is on trial. But according to Jesus, everyone else is on trial – and we see our common human arrogance and moral weakness.
Study G	Mark 15:16-41	On the cross, Jesus not only identifies with in experiences of pain and loneliness, he is substituting himself for us. Jesus was forsaken by his Father so that we would never have to be.
Study H	Mark 15:42- 16:8	The empty tomb changes everything. If Jesus is risen from the dead, then what he claimed is true: his death was not a meaningless tragedy but the price he willingly paid to set us free and heal his broken world.

4. Speak into your students' fears

Here are seven reassurances that we've found set Christians' hearts at rest and grow their faith in what God can do:

- **Mark is on your side.** Mark wrote his Gospel with the express purpose of letting the world know the good news about Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God (Mark 1:1-2).
- **God speaks through His Word.** As we sow the seed of this gospel word, Jesus encourages us to trust that some will receive it and enter the kingdom (Mark 4:20).
- **Mark's Gospel is a great read!** Though the shortest Gospel, Mark's account is action-packed. He tells his story simply but with great emotional power, drawing us in to engage with Jesus.
- **Mark's Gospel is all about Jesus.** So often we want to talk about Jesus but the conversation stalls on another issue. But by studying Mark together, Jesus takes centre stage. Friends start to see what the eyewitnesses saw: what an amazing person He really is.
- **God uses ordinary people.** The Bible was written by normal people for normal people. It doesn't matter who you are. Each of us can draw alongside friends and, through Mark, help them see what you've seen of Jesus.
- **Friends matter.** God touches the lives of strangers – but most seekers come to know Jesus because they see how much he means to a friend. Close friends know you're not perfect, but they see how much you value Jesus. Uncover is relational – and can be studied over pizza, coffee or a pint. You can share your life as you share the gospel.
- **Uncover is simple.** Studying Mark's Gospel with a friend is easier than you think. The eight studies do the work for you. They have been written imaginatively to help you uncover Jesus together. It's not a one-way monologue – you can both see for yourselves.

5. Offer practical training

One of the strengths of seeker studies is that a person doesn't need much practical training to have a go. But we have found that students do value practical help in a couple of areas – inviting their friends to do a seeker study and working out what to do once they've finished the studies. Could you include a slot where you ask more seasoned students to tell their stories and share their wisdom, especially in these areas? (And, of course, any training on relational evangelism rarely goes amiss!)

6. Familiarise yourself with the wider Uncover resources

There's a wealth of Uncover resources available online to help you share Jesus using Uncover. Uncover.org.uk has lots to share with your seeking friends - there are videos to watch to engage and provoke conversations, articles to share and read around apologetic issues that may arise, as well as the studies so you can still read, listen to and discuss the text even if you left your Gospel at home! Go to uccf.org.uk/uncover for resources to help Christians who want to do Uncover with their friends, including leaders notes, stories and information on Mark's Gospel.

7. Help your students get deeper into Mark's Gospel

Here are some ideas through which your own church ministry can support the use of Uncover Mark – week-to-week, in one-off sessions or on a weekend away:

- Arrange a sermon series in Mark that supports the passages used in the seeker studies.
- Organise a short talk or Bible study series unpacking some of the key Old Testament texts to which Mark alludes (such as Psalm 110, Isaiah 53 and Daniel 7).
- Do a character study of Peter in Mark's Gospel. Tradition says that Mark relied upon his eyewitness account. Peter's confession, his later denial of Jesus and the forgiveness Jesus extends Peter can give us great encouragement – especially when we feel guilty, or full of fear and weakness.

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- Put on an overview session of Mark's Gospel in a single session.
- Run a slot on the historical reliability of Mark's Gospel – there's good material for starters at www.bethinking.org/mark-reliability, which can be supplemented by Craig Blomberg's *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, Mark Roberts' *Can We Trust the Gospels?* or Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*.
- Subsidise a book of the term, such as Tim Keller's *Jesus the King* (previously called *King's Cross*).

8. Encourage 'early adopters' to share their stories

It's often through seeing peers take a step of faith that the broader Christian community can be encouraged to do the same. Why not interview and pray for a student who's already been doing Uncover studies with friends? Hearing their experience in a student gathering or church prayer meeting might prove a wonderful encouragement.

9. Tie in your church's social media channels with the 'documentary' theme

The design of Uncover Mark features Mark as a 'documentary photographer', carefully recording various characters' encounters with the person of Jesus. Could you feature stories of students - and seekers - who have encountered Jesus and not been left the same? As well as offering an invitation to read Mark's Gospel, a good social media campaign could perhaps build up to a church evangelistic event using Mark's Gospel, perhaps at Easter time. Follow Uncover social media channels (@UncoverJesus on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) for ideas and stories of lives changed by the Gospel. And note how the language is inclusive, avoiding Christian lingo that might push away seekers from engagement.

10. Lead by example

If you're hoping that students in your church will take a step of faith and invite their friends to do the Uncover Mark seeker studies, you'll be able to encourage them more authentically and minister more effectively to their joys and sorrows if you've made the same offer to friends of yours.

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