

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

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

1. Ensure CU leaders in your church are coming to Forum

The Uncover Mark Gospels will be launched on Wednesday 29 August 2018 at Forum. Graham Daniels [from Christians in Sport] will unpack the theological underpinnings upon which the venture rests, and the evening will be full of stories about how the Uncover Luke and John seeker studies have been used around the world. Attendance at Forum often makes the difference, humanly speaking, as to whether an individual or a whole CU gets behind Uncover. Encourage CU leaders from your church to attend (and consider joining us for the Extended Student Worker Forum then you can be around for the Uncover Mark launch too. More information about this at www.uccf.org.uk/events/student-worker-forum).

2. Get clear on the vision

You'll be better able to support your students if you understand the vision for seeker Bible studies yourself – that, in relationship and not assuming faith, Christian students introduce and intrigue their friends with the person of Jesus. Becky Pippert outlines more of the vision for seeker studies at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl87Y52WbEg. UCCF will be encouraging students to pray for three friends, and to give each of them a copy of Uncover Mark, with an invitation to do the seeker studies at the back of the Gospel. Our hope is that 50,000 copies of Mark's Gospel will find their way into the hands of students, each time accompanied with an invitation to explore it through the studies.

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

Here are the eight passages used in the seeker studies integral to Uncover Mark:

Study A: **Mark 1:14-45** – The world we all want is nearly here!

Study B: **Mark 2:1-22, 3:1-6** – Bursting bubbles

Study C: **Mark 5:21-43** – No one's beyond hope

Study D: **Mark 8:27-33, 9:30-37** – Partially sighted

Study E: **Mark 10:32-52** – Glory and power

Study F: **Mark 14:27-72** – Only human after all

Study G: **Mark 15:16-41** – God forsaken

Study H: **Mark 15:42-16:8** – The opening

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

History tells us that students 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 about how the studies are being used in CUs. If they're being used, for example, by first-year CU hall groups, you might find a way of encouraging second and third-year students in your church to use the studies in groups.

5. Speak into your students' fears

Here are seven reassurances that we've found set students' 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 is able to 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 students 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.

6. 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!)

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

Here are some ideas through which your own student 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 (see above).

- 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.
- 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 starts a seeker study early on? 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 church members (and perhaps 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.

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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