



# MARK

## HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

### GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 1



### CONVERSATION STARTER

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If you could become like any one person, living or no longer living, who would you want to be like and why?

### FOLLOWING JESUS

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One day early in his ministry, Jesus meets a handful of fishermen while walking along the Sea of Galilee. He calls out to them saying, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

Far from simply being a clever metaphor, this phrase was a well-known Jewish idiom about discipleship. Becoming a “Fisher of Men” was a way of referring to a rabbi, or a teacher. In Jesus’ day, becoming a rabbi was a very intensive and selective process. Long before you could become a rabbi yourself, you had to become a disciple of a rabbi.

This was no easy feat! Only the best of the best were even allowed to try out for one of the coveted spots. Think of them as the Rhodes scholars of their day, the top students at Harvard or Yale. Except, in Jesus’ day, they were only men between the ages of 12-15. If you wanted to be a disciple you were interviewed extensively, and if you were selected, you agreed to leave behind everything you knew and follow your new teacher around 24/7. A famous Jewish blessing says, “May you be coated in the dust of your rabbi.” In other words, the hope is that you follow your rabbi so closely that you are coated in the dust kicked up by their sandals as they walked. As a disciple, your only

goal was to learn what your rabbi knew and do what your rabbi did, all so you could become like your rabbi. Your hope was to be indistinguishable from them.

Jesus extends this same opportunity to lowly fishermen. Jesus doesn't target the best of the best—the smartest, the most accomplished, those with connections, or the wealthy. Jesus invites anyone and everyone to become his disciples. In the Gospels, we see him extend that invitation to men and women, young and old, the forgotten, ignored, oppressed, downtrodden, and lonely. Jesus invites them all to follow him, to become the kind of people who know what he knows and do the kinds of things he does, all so they can become just like him.

Imagine Jesus was standing before you, hand outstretched, inviting *you* to become his disciple. What would you say? Would you be willing to leave it all behind, to turn around and orient your life in a completely different direction? What *wouldn't* you be willing to leave behind to follow Jesus? What *wouldn't* you let go of? Your way of doing things? Your job? Your dreams for the future? Your bad habits? Your entertainment choices? A relationship? This question acts like a pulse check on our heart, revealing what we are holding onto too tightly, or putting our hope in apart from Jesus. It's one thing to say we want to follow Jesus, it's a whole other thing to commit to rearranging our whole way of life around the Kingdom of God.

Are you willing to become Jesus' disciple? To do so means accepting the mission of learning what he knows and doing what he does, so you can become like him! Discipleship is a lifelong journey, but it's the very thing we were created for.

Spend a few moments discussing this idea with your group. What does discipleship mean to you? What's one step you can take this week toward orienting your life around Jesus?

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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1. Who has shaped you most as an individual? How have they helped you to become the person you are today?
2. What do you think makes Jesus someone worth following? Is there anything that makes you nervous or hesitant to follow Jesus?
3. The "big question" in the first eight chapters of Mark's Gospel is *who is Jesus?* Mark will portray Jesus as a great teacher, healer, the Messiah, King, and much

more. His goal is to challenge you to wrestle with Jesus' identity and what it means for you. Spend a few moments with your groups sharing how you would answer that question, *who is Jesus to you?*

4. Jesus draws close to the outcasts, the sinners, and the messy people around him. Do you ever feel like you need to "clean up your mess" before coming to God? How does Jesus challenge that perspective?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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This January, we're seeking to be people who are cultivating the fruit of kindness in our lives in partnership with the Spirit. What's the best way to build our kindness muscle?

**The practice of radical generosity!** As followers of Jesus, we believe that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving of our time, resources, and talents not only helps us tap into the joy that comes through blessing others, it also breaks the gravitational pull our 'stuff' has on us. As we practice generosity, we actually rewire our hearts to be more loving, caring, and *kind* toward those around us.

This week, practice generosity by **doing something kind for someone who is struggling**. Think of someone you know who is going through a difficult season. Consider bringing them a meal, writing an encouraging note, offering to pray in person with them, or anything else you think might bless them where they are.