



# MARK

## HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

### GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 2



### CONVERSATION STARTER

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If you could have a lifetime supply of any one snack or treat, what would you choose?

### JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

*Mark 6:30-44*

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Mark is not kind in his depiction of King Herod, who spends his time lounging in his palace, surrounded by sycophants and parties, lashing out at his political opponents. *Is this the kind of king you want?* Mark whispers to us.

Meanwhile, a crowd sits along the Sea of Galilee like “sheep without a shepherd.” This phrase is common in the Hebrew Bible when referring to those with no true leader. Yet, in Ezekiel 34, God promises a future king is coming in the form of a shepherd from the line of David.

*“I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them.”*

–Ezekiel 34:23-24.

It’s like Mark is saying, *Get ready! You’re about to see the true king at work!*

The crowd grows hungry as Jesus sits among them with his disciples. The disciples beg Jesus to send them away so they can find food. But Jesus doesn’t want them to find nourishment elsewhere. He knows they’re with the one who can give them bread that truly *satisfies*. Jesus tells the disciples to give the people something to eat. I wonder if there’s a twinkle in his eyes as he says this. Jesus is reminding the disciples that, one day, they will be the ones who feed the hungry in Jesus’ name when he’s no longer with them physically. *Why not start now?* The disciples don’t get this hint. Instead, they ask, “Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” Two hundred denarii is the equivalent of eight months wages for a single man. It’s an astronomical sum. This is not a serious question, it’s soaked in snark.

Jesus responds by asking what they *do* have. The disciples come up with five loaves and two fish. Jesus then arranges the crowd into groups by “100s and by 50s.” This same language is [used throughout the Old Testament](#) to describe armies being readied for war. Jesus is depicted as one preparing for battle, only the way he fights will not be through violent revolution.

How does Jesus fight? He takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples to pass out among the crowd. Later, Mark will use this same language to describe [a meal Jesus shares with his disciples](#). Today, we call this sacramental meal Communion. As we receive the bread, we’re reminded of Jesus’ broken body, given for us.

How does Jesus fight? What kind of king is he? Jesus is the king who laid down his own life out of love for his people. His kingship is self-sacrificial, not self-seeking. His leadership is compassionate, not oppressive. Jesus is the Great Shepherd, the only king worthy of the title, the only king worth following, and the only one capable of satisfying our deepest hungers.

## 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 differences do you see between the leadership of Herod and the leadership of Jesus?
3. What characteristics do we tend to value in our leaders today? How do these compare to the example Jesus sets for us?
4. Read Mark 6:45-47 together as a group. In this passage, we find Jesus once again retreating alone to pray, as was his habit. How has prayer influenced your walk with God up to this point? How might God be inspiring you to make prayer a more regular part of your rhythm and routine?

## 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!**

This week, we encourage you to **get creative with random acts of kindness**. This could be anything from paying for someone’s coffee to buying a stranger’s meal at a restaurant, volunteering with your favorite non-profit, to leaving a server the biggest tip you can afford.