



We are in week two of a series called “Misunderstood: Jesus According to Mark.” This series is an opportunity for us to prepare our hearts and lives for Easter as we study the book of Mark together. This discussion guide is designed to help your small group or class dive deeper into what is being taught each weekend, and to be intentional about applying it to your life as you prepare to celebrate Easter. If you weren’t able to hear the sermon this weekend, please check it out at:

<http://www.firstdecatour.org/sermons/>

## WEEK 2: FOLLOWER VS. FAN

Last week Pastor Brian helped us put on some new lenses for our study of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Mark. As we learned, Jesus came both **proclaiming** the Gospel (the Good News) and **declaring** that he, himself, **IS** the Good News. We also were challenged to use some new perspectives and look for what Mark has to say about Jesus **bringing** the Kingdom of Heaven to earth and **being** the King. Finally we looked at how Jesus is fully God and fully man; both completely divine and completely human, and it is this miraculous truth that helps us understand how he is both our Savior and our Lord.



### START

In his sermon, Pastor Brian talked about a few of the different ‘versions’ of Jesus that people might use to describe Him. ***Fire Extinguisher Jesus; Genie Jesus; Jesus the Judge, Jury and Executioner and Hippy and Happy Jesus.*** While it really doesn’t matter what we think or wish he is like, we do face misconceptions both inside and outside of the church and even within our own personal faith journey about who Jesus is. As we study Mark’s Gospel, it is helpful to remember that human nature has changed little and we can certainly identify with the people who encountered Jesus as “fully man,” and tried to reconcile his behavior with their expectations of how the Messiah should act and interact with people. Working through these, and holding our ideas up to the truth about Jesus that we learn in the Bible, is an important step in the process of spiritual growth and maturity.

- Whether you grew up in the culture of the church, or you are new to Christianity, what impressions did you have of Jesus early in your faith journey? As you listened to the descriptions Pastor Brian shared, are there any you have assigned to Jesus in the past? What have you, or others you know, mistakenly thought Jesus should do or be?
- In his sermon, Pastor Brian mentioned “the opposition,” or those who outrightly opposed Jesus because he did things differently than the established faith traditions they held to so tightly. Even today, it is difficult to embrace change in our churches. If you’ve been attending church for a while, you’ve probably heard a mature Christian discuss how they didn’t always love the “new,” but loved the next generation so much they were willing to be uncomfortable so that young people could be

reached. As you think about your youth, do you remember adults who flexed to your preferences so that they could disciple you in the faith? How did their influence impact what you know about Jesus today? What are some of the “old ways” you miss and “new ways” you embrace? If you are a younger person, how could this idea impact the way you approach church as you age? What does it mean to say, “While the message never changes, the methods do?”

## VIDEO

Take a minute to watch “Week 2: Misunderstood: Jesus According to Mark” and think about the ways different groups of people responded to Jesus. You can stream or download the video at: <https://vimeo.com/album/4987313/video/256670595> or on the Grow Together Blog at: <https://fccgrowtogether.org>

## READ MARK 2:13

Pastor Brian talked about the difference between being a “fan” and a “follower”. While Jesus drew many crowds wherever he went, many were only seeking what he could do for them or they were caught up in the novelty of his miracles and the public attention he drew. Living in the age of social media and “going viral,” we certainly can understand how people tend to get excited and interested over the current trending topics. While “following” is a term that has become common place in our culture, we don’t want to confuse what it means to follow Jesus with our modern day understanding of keeping up on the posts, comments, or the wide range of local and international celebrities that fill our news feeds.

- How is “following” Jesus different from following your favorite blogger, decorator, stylist or athlete? Are there ways it is similar?
- What do you think of Kyle Idleman’s quote in his book **Not a Fan**: *“My concern is that many of the churches in America have gone from being sanctuaries to becoming stadiums. And every week all the fans come to the stadium where they cheer for Jesus but have no interest in truly following him. The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren’t actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them.”*
- Assign people in your group to read the following passages: Matthew 4:18-20; Matthew 8:18-22; Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 18:23-29; AND John 12:25-26. What did the invitation to follow Jesus cost each of these? What have you given up to follow Jesus? Levi left everything to follow Jesus. Known to us as the disciple Matthew, and most likely author of the Gospel with his name, what can you say Levi gained in exchange for all he gave up?

## READ MARK 3:20-21,31-35 and 6:1-6

As Pastor Brian pointed out in the video, Jesus encountered a lack of faith from those who knew him best. Quoting Urban T. Holmes about spiritual apathy and a condition called *acedia*, Pastor Brian pointed out that while we, as Christians, tend to focus on the more sensational sins; the danger of losing our heart for Jesus tends to happen when we allow familiarity and comfort to prevent us from fulfilling the whole-hearted devotion of a true Follower of Jesus Christ. Our mission call is side-lined because we lose the passion for the Passion.

- Knowing that Jesus never sinned, what point do you think he was trying to make to the crowd about family and the cost of following Him? What do you think he meant by “whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and mother”? How have you experienced the struggle of slipping into Spiritual Boredom in your journey? In what way can you, as a group, encourage one another to avoid the inevitable pitfalls of dry seasons that come in your spiritual life?
- The Greek expression in verse 21 indicates that it was Jesus’ immediate family who planned to get him away from the public, because they thought he had lost his mind. Jesus’ response, in front of his “fans,” was a bit shocking and unexpected. We know that Jesus’ brother James did come to believe and became a powerful voice in the early church. We also know that Mary, his mother, attended his crucifixion and he spoke provision over her (John 19:26). Perhaps following Jesus has cost you by creating division, or just an uncomfortable distance, in some of your closest relationships. If you are comfortable sharing with your group, ask for prayer for healing of those relationships even as you continue to grow in your relationship with Jesus. How does it help you and give you comfort to know that he experienced this same kind of rejection while he lived on earth?



## READ MARK 2:15-16

The word “sinner” in Greek is *hamartólos* - an archer’s term for missing the mark or used to describe a traveler leaving a familiar road and taking twisted paths that cause him/her to lose the way. It indicates someone who is devoted to sin by choice so that they rebel against God in thought, word or deed. To be a “disciple” (*mathétés*) means “to learn”; with implications that this pursuit of knowledge requires effort put forth; to follow both the **teaching** and the **teacher**.

- Have members in your group read Romans 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 5:21. Put on the lens of Jesus being fully God and fully man and look closely at what these Scripture passages would mean to the “sinner” and the “disciple”. What do they mean to you? Many people are quick to point out that we all fall short, but how is that different from intentionally living in a way that is contrary to God’s Word?
- As a follower of Jesus, how can we invite those who are outside to come into our lives so that we can share Jesus with them? What are the risks and obstacles we face in doing this? What are some of the practical struggles we face as we choose to leave worldly pursuits and yet minister to those who are embracing the things from which we have separated ourselves?



## BRING IT HOME

Finish your time together by reading Hebrews 1: 1-4. Thank God for sending His Son Jesus Christ to forgive us, and teach us, and lead us. Pray for members who are currently experiencing the pain of rejection as a cost of following Jesus. Pray for God to guide each of you to “sinners” who need to know the mercy and grace and forgiveness found only in knowing and following Jesus Christ. Pray for one another to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when you are tempted to make Jesus fit your image of Him. Encourage one another to use the new “glasses” we are using during Lent to really see people they encounter every day and pray for ways to connect with them through fellowship and genuine care for them.

On your own this week, take time to reflect on what God is revealing to you through the book of Mark. Please also take time this week to listen to the audio devotional and prepare for next weekend.