

# #InstagramJesus

## Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill  
chapelhillpc.org

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### **Megan Hackman**

Associate Pastor at Chapel Hill. Student of God's Word with colored pencils in one hand, ready to take notes and understand, and a cell phone in the other, ready for it to make a difference in the next appointment I have. Local waterfront, coffee, and running route connoisseur.

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## *Saturday through Friday January 5–January 11*

### **LifeGroup Guide**

- **Review**

*How has Jesus been challenging you this week? Where have you experienced transformation?*

- **Story**

*Mark 1:1-8*

- **Head**

*Open up a study Bible to the introductory notes on Mark's gospel, and consider what you already know about this gospel in comparison with the other gospels. Think about the way the writer, Mark, recorded the ministry of Jesus. What was Mark's literary style and what are the main themes found in the book of Mark? How might this have led the sermon planning team to the title #InstagramJesus?*

*How about the opening few verses of Mark help you to see Mark as a gospel of action?*

*Use the footnotes in your Bible to find the original context of the Old Testament verses quoted in today's passage. What is the significance of John the Baptist's role when understood through this lens?*

- **Heart**

*This is a story of new beginnings. What new beginnings is God working in your life, or the life of those around you, at this time?*

*John's role was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. He did this through calling people to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Who is God calling you to support in their journey towards relationship with Jesus?*

*John's attitude towards Jesus and his own sense of self-importance is reflected in his statement "After me comes he who is mightier than I..." Who do you look to as a model of this type of humility? What inspires you about that person?*

- **Hands**

*John's call to repentance and his posture towards Jesus reflect deep humility and a desire to point others to Jesus. Which one of these two areas will you take time to reflect more deeply on this week? Commit to listening more attentively to the Spirit this week to where he is asking you to take the humble place, or to who he might want you to point to Jesus.*

*John's outward appearance was a little wild, but very intentional. Study up this week on the significance of his clothing, and consider how God might be asking you to pay attention to the details in your life and how they point to Christ. How do the everyday, mundane details of your clothing purchases, daily routines and habits point to Christ?*

- **Pray**

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## DAY 1 – Monday

### Daily devotional

- **Read**

*Mark 1:1-8*

- **Ask**

*Open up a study Bible to the introductory notes on Mark's gospel, and consider what you already know about this gospel in comparison with the other gospels. Think about the way the writer, Mark, recorded the ministry of Jesus. What was Mark's literary style and what are the main themes found in the book of Mark? How might this have led the sermon planning team to the title #InstagramJesus?*

- **Reflect**

Welcome to the book of Mark! This first head question is such an important first step when you open up a book of the Bible. You don't pick up a book without reading the jacket cover, finding out something about where the author's coming from, and at least glancing through the introduction to see why it was written. This is great for the Bible, too. It's nearly a 2,000-year-old story, yet it's been translated into English and passed down faithfully through the generations so that you might see Jesus for yourself, as he really was when God came to earth.

Isn't that amazing?!—first, that God came to earth at all to be with us; second, that we can read the eyewitness testimony of what God looks like.

So take the time to learn a bit about John Mark and his source, Peter. You can read through the book of Mark in less than an hour, it's only 16 chapters. See how much he loves the word, "immediately." Note how quickly he jumps from one story to the next. See what extra details you get about Peter. Jot down what you're excited to read more about.

My little Bible has a short summary of Mark to get you started, "The Gospel of Mark emphasizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God, healed the sick, and died as a ransom for sinners. In addition to Jesus, Mark features three main groups of people: the disciples, the crowds, and the religious leaders, none of whom understood Jesus. When the time came for Jesus to go to the cross, the religious leaders arrested him, the disciples abandoned him, and the crowds jeered him. Only when he died alone on the cross did a Roman centurion recognize that he was the Son of God. Though the book is anonymous, tradition identifies John Mark (Acts 12:12) as the author. He may have based his Gospel on Peter's preaching, writing sometime in the 50s or 60s A.D." (The Holy Bible English Standard Version: Journaling Bible, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001.)

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## DAY 2 – Tuesday

### Daily devotional

- **Read**

*Mark 1:1-8*

- **Ask**

*How about the opening few verses of Mark help you to see Mark as a gospel of action?*

- **Reflect**

Let's do a little comparison exercise here. Look at the opening verses of the other three Gospels, Matthew, Luke and John. How is Mark different?

You'll see that Mark gives you three verses to let you know that he is continuing the story of Jesus from the Old Testament. (We'll talk about those tomorrow.) Then he goes straight into action with Mark 1:4, "John appeared, baptizing... and proclaiming..."

Imagine verses 1:4-8 as the opening scene of a movie. Who is playing John? For some reason, I picture a scrawny Tom Hanks at the end of *Castaway*. He's in a river. His camel's hair tunic is wet from the waist down. His beard is sticky from honey. Yet he's magnetic, people are drawn to him. You can't tear your eyes away.

When you meet as a LifeGroup, ask for casting ideas for John the Baptist and Jesus. Ask if anyone can paint a picture with words of what these verses looked like. If you've been to the Jordan River, bring pictures so your group can see this.

What is standing out to you? If these were the only eight verses you had of who Jesus is, what would you be intrigued by? Would you want to stick around for more?

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## DAY 3 – Wednesday

### Daily devotional

- **Read**

*Mark 1:1-3*

- **Ask**

*Use the footnotes in your Bible to find the original context of the Old Testament verses quoted in today's passage. What is the significance of John the Baptist's role when understood through this lens?*

- **Reflect**

There are three passages in the Old Testament I want you to look at. Let's look at the first occurrence of the word "gospel" or "good news" in the Bible. It's in Isaiah 52:7. Read Isaiah 52:1-10. What is the good news? What will be the result of that good news?

My [Advent devotional](#) helped me understand the Greek word for "good news" better. This is what Dr. Mateus de Campos said:

"In the first century, people didn't have the Internet, and news traveled at a slower pace... The most important at the time was the emperor's news. News of his accomplishments and victories was celebrated as *euangelion*— "good news" for the world."

This shifts how I read the opening verses of Mark. Mark says, "This is the beginning" of the good news message *finally* arriving that God is victorious! He has won the battle! And the results that we can expect from God now asserting his victory is what we see in Isaiah 52: no more enemies (verse 1); you're free of everything that's holding you captive (verse 2); you've been bought back out of slavery (verse 3); you now know the name of God! And he's speaking to you! And he's here! (verse 6). And so on...

That's Isaiah 52. Now head back to Mark 1 and reread the prophecies that a messenger would be coming with this good news. Mark 1:2 is the prophecy from Malachi 3:1. Malachi's the last book before Matthew, the last word about how God is going to return. What's the significance of John the Baptist's role when you read Malachi? It's that the Lord is really going to come!

Mark 1:3 is from Isaiah 40:3. Read Isaiah 40:1-5. What is the significance of John the Baptist's role when you read those verses? Comfort and the end of warfare are coming! "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed," and everyone's going to see God all at once! (Isaiah 40:5).

Now that you know the back story, go back to Mark 1 and reread Mark 1:1-8. Here—listen up!—is the beginning of the message of victory about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He's here! Come on down to the Jordan. The messenger is here, baptizing, and preparing for God's victory lap.

## DAY 4 – Thursday

### Daily devotional

- **Read**

*Mark 1:4-8*

- **Ask**

*This is a story of new beginnings. What new beginnings is God working in your life, or the life of those around you, at this time?*

- **Reflect**

Mark 1:1 started by saying, “this is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The message of God’s victory brought about many new beginnings. John the Baptist invites everyone to be a part of the cosmic new beginnings by starting their own new life with God by repenting—turning and going in the completely opposite direction—and being baptized, letting God cleanse you and claim you.

What new beginning is God working in your life?

Yesterday I was processing many changes coming in my life with a coach. He told me, “you need a discipline of slowing.” He knows I’m a woman of action; it doesn’t take me long to make a decision and go with it. So he encouraged me to fast—to not eat a few meals and instead, allow that time to carve out time for me to listen to God.

I’ll share more about some of those new beginnings on January 19-20. But the new beginnings and the need to slow are about more than what I do Monday to Sunday. I’m in a season of beginning to let God be the starting point of each conversation. I’m beginning to find silence welcoming—just the 5 minutes in the car that I don’t turn on the radio or make a call. It feels like the start of a new way of relating with God. (Get your own coaching on silence from Emily P. Freeman, [here](#).)

As a LifeGroup leader, you may want to press in a bit when you get to this question. Don’t let them “get away with” talking about just a new routine or a new habit. Dig deeper to what feels new in who they are and how they relate to God as a result of that change. That took a bit more thought for me, and I suspect it will now for you, too. But it’s that deeper, heart-level conversation where Jesus really does the work of transformation. Let me encourage you not to settle!

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**DAY 5 – Friday**  
**Daily devotional**

- **Read**

*Mark 1:4-8*

- **Ask**

*John's role was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. He did this through calling people to a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Who is God calling you to support in their journey towards relationship with Jesus?*

*John's attitude towards Jesus and his own sense of self-importance is reflected in his statement "After me comes he who is mightier than I..." Who do you look to as a model of this type of humility? What inspires you about that person?*

- **Reflect**

This first question can be an intimidating one. We've asked you to reflect on a passage about repentance and sin and then immediately asked you who *you* are supporting in their relationship with Jesus. I get it. Sin, repentance, and friendship are not a typical combo in our world. It's like religion and politics, avoided conversations.

And yet – we are all called to make disciples of Jesus. You don't have to be perfect in order to call others to follow Jesus! Think about it—if you're going to start training for a half marathon, you don't want to run with a 6-minute-mile marathoner. You'd rather start with someone who's just started running in the last couple months and still is running closer to 10-to-12-minute miles so you can keep up while feeling like you're with someone who kind of knows what they're doing.

Apply that principle to discipleship and you'll realize, if you have even started talking to Jesus, you're further along than the millions of people in the world who don't even know Jesus exists. So who is God calling you to support in their relationship with Jesus?

I love that the question of who you're walking with goes hand-in-hand with the observation of John's humility. He was baptizing others, and he recognized that Jesus would come after him. He knew he wasn't the big deal; Jesus is.

So even as you think about who you're helping walk with Jesus, who models humility for you? I have a friend who models that humility for me. She's been leading and discipling behind-the-scenes for years. Much of what you've done as LifeGroups is a result of her writing. She's been experimenting with multiplying LifeGroups and coaching others in a way that has been so informative of what we do. But you aren't likely aware of that because she doesn't step into the spotlight. She's humbly leading, volunteering, being faithful to use the gifts God has given her. Who models Jesus-first humility to you?

**DAY 6 – Saturday**  
**Daily devotional**

- **Read**

*Mark 1:4-8*

- **Ask**

*John’s call to repentance and his posture towards Jesus reflect deep humility and a desire to point others to Jesus. Which one of these two areas will you take time to reflect more deeply on this week? Commit to listening more attentively to the Spirit this week to where he is asking you to take the humble place, or to who he might want you to point to Jesus.*

- **Reflect**

If you’re anything like me, you read this question, and you think—that’s a good question. I’ll think about it later. But you forget to come back to it. So instead, think about this now. Which of these phrases stands out to you more right now? John calls people to repent, and points people to Jesus. That reflects...

1. **deep humility**
2. **desire to point others to Jesus**

Why do you think that particular phrase is jumping out to you? Do you struggle with it? Love the idea of it? Don’t understand it?

I’m in Port Orchard, a place I believe God is calling me to make his name known. So I am drawn to the “desire to point others to Jesus.” I was nearly in tears just now when I overheard this conversation:

**Regular:** *You guys gonna be open on Christmas?*

**Bartender:** *No! We’re not going to be open Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.*

**Regular:** *What? Why not?*

**Bartender:** *I guess our boss wanted us to have some time with our family which I, for one, appreciate.*

**Regular:** *But we are your family. What am I going to do?*

Honestly, the regular sounded so sad and so desperate, that even though I was across the room, I felt compelled to go over and tell him, “God wants you in his family! Come to church Christmas Eve!”

I didn’t, though. And now that I’ve come to this question, I sense in my own heart that sadness and that desire to point others to Jesus.

How can you take seriously the second part of today’s question, “Commit to listening more attentively to the Spirit this week to where he is asking you to take the humble place, or to who he might want you to point to Jesus.” Can you right “humble” or “Jesus” on your hand to remember? Another way is to commit to really asking this question in your LifeGroup! Accountability is a beautiful thing.



## DAY 7 – Sunday

### Daily devotional

- **Read**

*Mark 1:6-7*

- **Ask**

*John's outward appearance was a little wild, but very intentional. Study up this week on the significance of his clothing, and consider how God might be asking you to pay attention to the details in your life and how they point to Christ. How do the everyday, mundane details of your clothing purchases, daily routines and habits point to Christ?*

- **Reflect**

Let's talk about John's clothes first. This seems so random, I know. Read these passages and note how John's "uniform" pegged him as a preacher who had a direct message from God: 1 Kings 17:1-7; 2 Kings 1:6-8. The ESV Study Bible includes a note about locusts on Matthew 3:4:

"John's garments were common to nomadic desert dwellers and thus were associated with poorer people. Locusts and wild honey were not an unusual source of food for people living in the desert... The desert locust is a large grasshopper, still eaten today by poorer people in the Middle East and Africa."

Now, let's talk about how intentional (or not) we are with the mundane details of our lives. Think about this now in several areas so that you're well thought-through when you get together as a group.

- What does your uniform, your clothes, "peg" you as?
- Are there ways in which your home points to Christ?
- How does how you interact with your neighbors point to Christ?
- The coffee you do (or don't) drink?
- Anything in your pre-lunch routine?
- Who you eat lunch with? What you eat? Where?
- How you handle the afternoon slump?
- Your dinner routine?
- What you watch after 8pm?
- Your social media posts?

I had a friend ask me recently if I felt like I was living a life that was "imitatable." She has slowed her life down significantly as a pastor the last two years because she realized that when people were looking for what it looked like to follow Jesus, she didn't want anyone's life as harried and non-neighborly as hers was.

If someone was to describe you in the way that Mark describes John the Baptist in verse 6, would they know you were a follower of Jesus?