

LIFE GROUP

Participant Guide

Go Love!

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



NAME _____

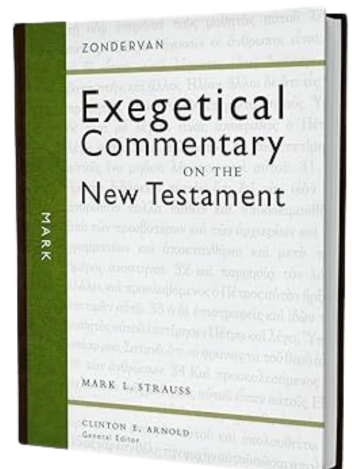


wentzville
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 WHEN LOVE COMES TO TOWN | JAN 5 | WEEK 1
- 6 LOVE BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS | JAN 12 | WEEK 2
- 8 LOVE EXPANDS OUR FAMILY | JAN 19 | WEEK 3
- 10 LOVE PROPELS US DEEPER | JAN 26 | WEEK 4
- 12 LOVE HAS THE POWER TO TRANSFORM | FEB 2 | WEEK 5

COMMENTARY FOR THIS MARK STUDY



LETTER FROM ALEX

Whenever people think of January, their minds often go to resolutions. Some people make a goal of cutting calories, reading more, or spending less time on their phone. I love the New Year season because I love to set and pursue goals. Having a clear objective and a strategy to accomplish it makes me excited!

It's for that reason that I love the story of Mark 12. A teacher of the law approaches Jesus and asks Him what the most important commandment is. Essentially, this religious leader is asking, "What needs to be my primary goal?" And Christ answers masterfully. Mark 12:30-31, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

The goal is love! Love God; love others. That's the most important commandment. Everything in Scripture hangs on one of those two instructions. WCC's theme for 2025 is Go Love! All year, our services and teaching will flow out of this theme. How can we love God and love others? There's no better place to start than a series following the perfect example of love, Jesus. As we launch into 2025, we begin a series through the Gospel of Mark that will take us to Easter. I can not wait to see how our study of Jesus grows us in love.

There's one big change that separates this life group series compared to anything we have ever done. Every week, your group will conclude with a Go Love exercise. Every session will wrap up with a hypothetical that presents an opportunity to love. We want your groups to talk it out and brainstorm how you can go and love in the situations presented to you. The reason for these hypotheticals is that they are based on actual questions and experiences we have heard as pastoral staff. We want you to apply what you learn to the real relationships God has placed around you.

Go! Love! And enjoy this series through Mark.

Alex Goff
Discipleship Minister

CONNECT QUESTIONS

1. What was one highlight from the holidays for you?
2. As we begin this series in the book of Mark, what would you love to see happen in your faith journey? How is your head, heart, and hands impacted by this book?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Read Mark 1:1. What core words are found in this verse and what do these words teach you about Jesus and the book of Mark?
2. In verse 1, you might see the word Christ or Messiah, depending on your translation. Messiah comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach* and means “anointed one” or “chosen one.” The Greek equivalent is the word *Christos* or, in English, Christ. The name “Jesus Christ” is the same as “Jesus the Messiah.” Have the group turn to Isaiah 35 and pick someone to read verses 4-10. In these seven verses, what do we learn about this Chosen One and how does He fit with the theme “Go Love?”
3. Isaiah 35:4 (NIV) says, “He will come to save you.” The Bible teaches that because of our sin and disobedience toward God, we are separated from God and rejected from His Kingdom. We require saving! Flip back to Mark 1 and read verses fourteen and fifteen. How does Jesus’s proclamation fit with the promise of Isaiah 35:4?
 - a. Commentary from Commentaries: “A right relationship with God is now available through God’s agent of redemption. Jesus’ message is an invitation to repent and believe in the kingdom, to submit to God’s authority, and so to “enter” the kingdom. It is an invitation to reorient a life focused on self to a life focused on God.”
4. What did the moment of repentance and belief in Jesus look like in your story? What does eternal salvation mean to you?

5. **Jesus wasn't just concerned about future eternal saving. When talking about the Kingdom in verse fifteen, the verb translated "is close at hand" could mean "has arrived," "has drawn near," or "is near." Christ came to change people's present just as much as He came to change their future. Read Mark 1:29-34. How do we see Jesus changing people's present circumstances?**

6. **Read Mark 1:16-20. In these five verses, we see Jesus encouraging four fishermen to follow Him. It was a call to discipleship, a relationship of learning from a master teacher and then modeling that same lifestyle. Today, we are encouraged by Christ to enter into that same discipleship relationship. What role do disciples play in the announcement of this loving Messiah and His Kingdom?**

7. **WCC's theme this year is called, "Go love!" To grow in this area, we want to conclude every life group session in Mark with a Go Love Exercise. I'll read out a problem and then we as a group will talk out a loving response and solution.**
 - a. **You have a friend who comes to you and says, "Hey! You read the Bible. Who was Jesus? Was he like a teacher or a prophet? Why was He such a big deal?" Utilizing Mark 1, what would a loving response sound like?**

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER & THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

MISSION OF THE WEEK: High Hill Christian Camp

High Hill Christian Camp's goal is to offer a fun, Christian atmosphere in a modern camp setting surrounded by God's wilderness — all designed so attendees will leave with a closer relationship with Jesus. On February 7-8, WCC will host a women's weekend designed to help you sit in the presence of Jesus, which you can register for on our website. Summer Camp Registration open January 6 and some of the weeks fill up very fast. Make sure to register at highhillcamp.org.

CONNECT QUESTION

1. **If you could have dinner with anyone alive or dead (other than Jesus), who would you pick and why?**

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. **Today, we will look at a moment of Jesus sharing a meal with someone unexpected. Have one person read Mark 2:13-16 and encourage everyone in the group to read along in their own copy of the Scriptures. Who are the different parties represented in this story and what are their attitudes toward one another?**
 - a. Commentary from Commentaries: “The word “Pharisee” is most likely derived from a Hebrew term meaning “separatists,” which was applied to this group because of their obsession with holiness and the resultant separation from anything that would cause spiritual defilement. The most distinctive characteristic of the Pharisees was their strict adherence to the law (Torah)—not only to the written law of the OT, but also the “oral law,” a body of tradition that expanded and elaborated on the OT law. The goal of these traditions was to “build a fence” around the Torah so as to guard against any possible infringement that could cause defilement.”
2. **Read Mark 2:18 and Mark 2:23-24. How do you see the Pharisees in these two moments modeling the quote mentioned above?**
 - a. In all three stories that we’ve read about the Pharisees, they are missing the greater point. On top of the 613 commands in the Old Testament law, they added hundreds of traditions and regulations and then elevated these new laws to the same authority as Scripture. In the name of strict adherence, they were forgetting the two most important commands: loving God and loving others. The Pharisees were so focused on doctrinal purity that they were missing out on the people right in front of them that God was calling them to love. And they were so focused on their traditions that they missed God in flesh standing right before them!
3. **Looking at the sub point listed above, what would it look like for a church today to slide into Pharisical behavior?**

4. **Read Mark 2:17. What do we learn about Jesus, His heart, and His mission?**
5. **Jesus says in John 13:34 (NIV), “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” He expands on this command in Matthew 5:44. Jesus says, “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Unlike the Pharisees, these verses teach us that we are called to love everyone. We are called to eat with anyone and everyone that God puts before us. Listed below are different sets of people groups. Circle three groups you would have the hardest time eating with.**
- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Someone Who Is Financially Deprived | i. An Alcoholic |
| b. Someone from an Immigrant Community | j. A Prostitute |
| c. Someone from an Ethnic Minority | k. A Prisoner or Someone on Parole |
| d. A Documented or Undocumented Alien | l. Someone from the LGBTQIA+ Community |
| e. A Homeless Person | m. Someone from a Different Religion
(Muslims, Hindus, Jews, etc.) |
| f. Someone Who Is Mentally Ill | n. Someone from a Different Political Party |
| g. Someone Who Is Elderly | o. _____ (Your Own Answer) |
| h. Someone in a Gang | |
6. **Our job is to love the people God puts before us and point them to Jesus. As a group, read Mark 2:1-12. How do you see this principle of loving and pointing on display?**
- a. How cool are these friends and the faith they demonstrate? They were willing to demolish a roof and risk the consequences of the homeowner to point someone toward Jesus. Radical faith believes God can do anything and is willing to take risks to see it happen.
7. **Go Love Exercise: Keith Comp (WCC’s Senior Minister) preaches a sermon about loving the people God puts before us. After the sermon, you ask God to show you someone that you can love. The next day, there’s a moving truck in your neighbor’s driveway and the For Sale sign is taken down. You walk out to greet your new neighbors and discover that it’s someone in a group that you circled above. Without sacrificing biblical truth, what are some ways you can go and love this couple?**

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER & THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

MISSION OF THE WEEK: Outreach International - Josh & Susan Sanchez

This mission, called Me & My House Ministries, is a church plant in Colima City, Mexico. Their goal is to begin a church-planting movement within the region. Please be praying for the Sanchez family.

CONNECT QUESTION

1. Describe your family in three words. What words would you use and why?
2. When talking about your immediate and extended family, on a scale of 1 to 10, rank yourself in closeness, with one being completely distant and ten being incredibly close?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Today, we are going to read about a new spiritual family that Jesus came to create. These new relationships are available to all of us today. Let's start by defining what this new family is. Could someone read Mark 3:7-8? In these verses, the crowd is coming from Judea and Idumea, which is south of Galilee, regions across the Jordan that would have been east of Galilee, and two Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon, which would have been north of Galilee. What does this crowd, gathered from all over, teach us about the nature of this new family Jesus is creating?
2. Read Mark 3:7-12 and encourage everyone in the group to read along in their own copy of the Scriptures. In these verses, we get even more information about this new spiritual family Christ is putting together. Other Gospels tell us that this group consisted of fishermen, a lower-income position, and a tax collector, which was a wealthier profession. Knowing the variety in financial status, what do these twelve teach us about the nature of this new family Jesus is trying to create?
3. This newly created family was unified amid its variety. Mark 3:14 teaches us that they were all called to be with Jesus and then model His lifestyle. How has the church come together through its variety? How have you seen unity trump differences in the local and global Church?
4. This new spiritual family was defined by the unified goal of following Jesus. We talked about what this new family is; let's now talk about what it is not. Have someone in the group read Mark 3:20-22. Who rejects this idea of a new family and why is their rejection surprising?
 - a. The two groups rejecting Him are the Jewish religious leaders and Jesus' own family. With Jesus being a Jew and a teacher, it is surprising to see the teacher's rejection. It's also surprising to see Jesus' own family claiming his insanity!

b. Commentary from Commentaries: “The family is presumably in Nazareth when they receive reports that the intensity of Jesus’ ministry is taking its toll, so they set out toward Capernaum to “take charge” (κρατέω) of him. The verb often means to “arrest, seize, take possession of,” indicating an attempt to forcibly remove him for his own good. They assume that he must be “out of his mind” (ἐξίστημι) from stress and overwork. In a Middle Eastern culture where honor and shame were among the highest of values, their purpose would also be to remove Jesus from a situation that could reflect badly on the family.”

5. **Read Mark 3:31-35. New Testament scholar Mark Strauss comments on this moment:** “Jesus’ words about his family would be shocking in the group-oriented culture of the Middle East, where loyalty to one’s own family, clan, and nation was among the highest of cultural values. Jesus is not rejecting his own family. He is establishing a new society in which family is defined not by ethnic or national identity but by common allegiance to the kingdom of God and his purpose in the world. Jesus’ words here would have great significance for the church of Mark’s day, where allegiance to Jesus Christ often resulted in rejection by one’s own family. Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah were often disowned and treated as apostate; Gentile converts were viewed as abandoning the gods of their ancestors. Both suffered social and cultural ostracism.” **In the early church, following Jesus could get you socially and culturally ostracized. How can that happen in our culture today and how can this idea of a new family be a comfort?**
6. **How can WCC cultivate an environment for meeting emotional, physical, and spiritual needs?**
7. **Go Love Exercise: Listed below are a variety of situations. How does your reading of Mark 3 influence how you interact with these topics?**
- a. A single parent comes into church looking for community. (A Possible Answer: Because they are a brother and sister in Christ, I’m going to treat them like family.)
 - b. Two life group members find out they voted for a different candidate.
 - c. The widows and widowers within our congregation.
 - d. A spouse who is afraid to go all in with Jesus because their partner is an unbeliever.

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER & THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

MISSION OF THE WEEK: Righteous Rides

Righteous Rides’ Vision is that every international missionary has access to affordable, stress-free stateside transportation. Their Mission is to provide care and cars to missionaries on home assignments in a manner worthy of God. Find out more at righteousrides.org.

CONNECT QUESTION

1. What’s the most impressive thing you’ve grown in a garden? If you haven’t grown anything and you had to start, what would you attempt to grow?
2. What steps did you take (or would you need to take) to bring forth growth? What problems did you (or would you) have to overcome?

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

1. Our theme this year is Go Love and today we are going to look at what it looks like to truly love Christ and enter into His Kingdom. In Mark 4, Jesus uses a parable about seeds and soil to illustrate four different responses to Christ and His Kingdom. Have two people read Mark 4:3-8 and Mark 4:14-20 and encourage everyone in the group to read along in their own copy of the Scriptures. Once they finish reading, have them write in their books or on a piece of paper what the defining characteristics were of each soil. Once everyone has finished, share as a group what was written down.

Soil One:

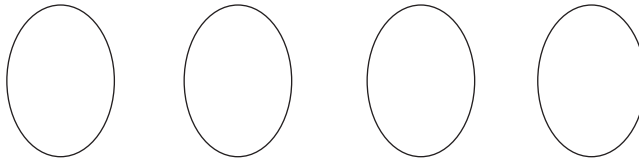
Soil Two:

Soil Three:

Soil Four:

2. Read Matthew 12:22-28. How does this interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees illustrate this first soil?
 - a. The first seed does not grow because of the hard-packed soil of the path, representing those who are unresponsive to the message. In these six verses, we have Pharisees who were hostile to Jesus’ kingdom while denying the power by which Jesus was able to heal.
3. Read John 6:53-66. How does this interaction between Jesus and the crowds illustrate this second soil?
 - a. The crowds desert Jesus because His teaching is too difficult, revealing the shallow nature of their faith. Throughout the Gospels, we see crowds coming to Jesus for miracles, healing, and provision, but when the call gets too challenging, many choose to walk away.
4. Read. Matthew 19:16-22. How is the rich young ruler at risk of becoming the third seed?
 - a. The third seed has initial success, but then is choked out. It falls victim to the distractions of the world. The young man desires eternal life but cannot bring himself to leave his riches and follow Jesus.

5. **Read Luke 5:1-11. Think about this story and what you know about Peter’s faith journey. How does he represent the fourth soil?**
- a. It’s important to note that Peter had seasons where his faith resembled different soils. On the fishing boat, he rejects the wealth that could be gained from the catch, forgoes everything, and follows Jesus. Before the cross, we see Peter return to his roots of fear as he abandons Christ in His final moments. After the resurrection, Peter transforms into a man ready to boldly lead the church, endure persecution, and bear fruit for the kingdom.
6. **Below are four ovals. On your own, create four characters that represent the four different soils. The ovals are there so you can draw their faces. The three following questions are there to describe where they are in their faith journey. Once everyone has created their four characters, share what you’ve created with the group.**



What is your person’s name, age, and background? Where are they in their faith journey and how did they get there? What has to change for this person to move to soil four?

7. **What can you start, stop, and continue to better cultivate a soil four type of life?**
8. **Go Love Exercise: You grab coffee with a Christian friend to check in and see how they are doing. They break down because of a failed faith-sharing conversation with a family member. Your friend blames themselves for where the conversation went and is also wrestling with God not ‘doing enough’ in that moment. What can you lovingly say to your friend, per the truths found in Mark?**

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER & THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

MISSION OF THE WEEK: Jireh India Missions

This ministry in India provides homes and education for orphans at House of Peace, teach widows to sew so they can provide for their children, provide bread for much of their community through Five Loaves Bakery, and work with a leper colony. They strive to fulfill Psalm 82:3 — Defend the poor and orphans; do justice to the afflicted and needy.

CONNECT QUESTION

- 1. What are some silly things that you're afraid of?**
For Example: Alex Goff, our Discipleship Minister, is scared of fish.
- 2. What are some of your serious fears?**

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

- 1. Today, we will look at four stories of fear in Mark 4 and 5. All four moments present a similar takeaway. Faith has the opportunity to override our fears because God can get us through anything! Have your group turn to Mark 4 and read verses 35-41. What caused fear for the disciples in this story, and what does this story teach us about faith?**
- 2. Our next story in Mark 5 details Jesus's encounter with a demon-possessed man and the town around him. The Gospels don't shy away from the topic of the demonic, clearly teaching that there is the presence of spiritual evil in the world. Faith has the opportunity to override our fears because God can get us through anything. How does this main point inform a Christian's posture toward spiritual evil and the demonic?**
- 3. Read Mark 5:1-20. After the demon-possessed man is healed, the townspeople find themselves afraid. In Mark 4:41, the disciple's fear drew them closer to Jesus. In Mark 5:17, the fearful townspeople begged Jesus to leave. Why do you think the crowd responded in such a different way compared to the disciples? What does this teach us about fear?**
- 4. Our last two stories deal with the theme of sickness and death. Have someone read Mark 5:21-26 to the group. Imagine you are Jairus or the woman with the bleeding condition. What fears do you imagine they wrestled with?**

- 5. The good news is that even in the face of sickness and death, faith has the opportunity to override those fears because God can get us through them. Have your group read through Mark 5:27-43 on their own. What details stick out to you from this text? How do you see the element of faith come into play within these two stories?**
- a. Commentary from Commentaries: “Jesus turns away from Jairus, a religious male of high social status, to meet the needs of a woman whose gender and illness render her of little value by society’s standards. As both a female and a child, Jairus’s daughter would also be low on the social pecking order. Through Jesus’ willingness to touch and heal these two women, he challenges both social norms and purity laws and demonstrates the restorative power and inclusivity of the kingdom of God. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to treat all people, whatever their position or status, with respect and compassion and break down barriers that divide and alienate.”
- 6. Thinking about the fears you shared earlier and the lessons you learned from these stories, what do you think God is trying to teach you about your fears?**
- 7. Go Love Exercise: Listed below are a series of fears someone might struggle with. Imagine you have friends struggling with these items. How can faith provide hope in these fears?**
- a. Loss of a Family Member
 - b. Struggles With Mental Health
 - c. Losing A Job
 - d. Rejection From The People Around You
 - e. Terminal Diagnosis

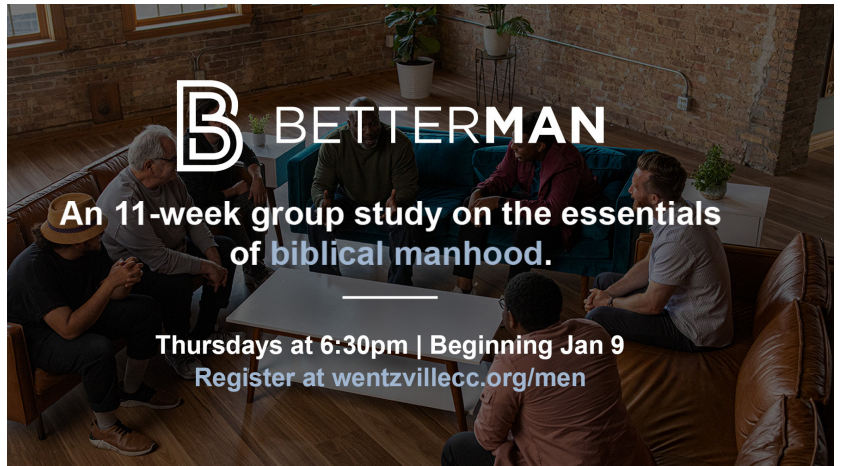
PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER & THE MISSION OF THE WEEK

MISSION OF THE WEEK: Show Me Christian Youth Home

Children living at Show-Me Christian Youth Home receive therapeutic benefits from specialized programs in a Christ-centered, family environment. Working together, they help each child—physically, academically, emotionally, and spiritually—overcome the struggles of their past and prepare for a successful future. You can find out more at showmehelpingkids.com.

BetterMan

Live teaching, mentoring, and group discussions provide a clear definition of biblical masculinity and practical ways to make your marriage, parenting, work-life, relationship with God... everything ... *better*. You can get more info and register online at wentzvillecc.org/men.

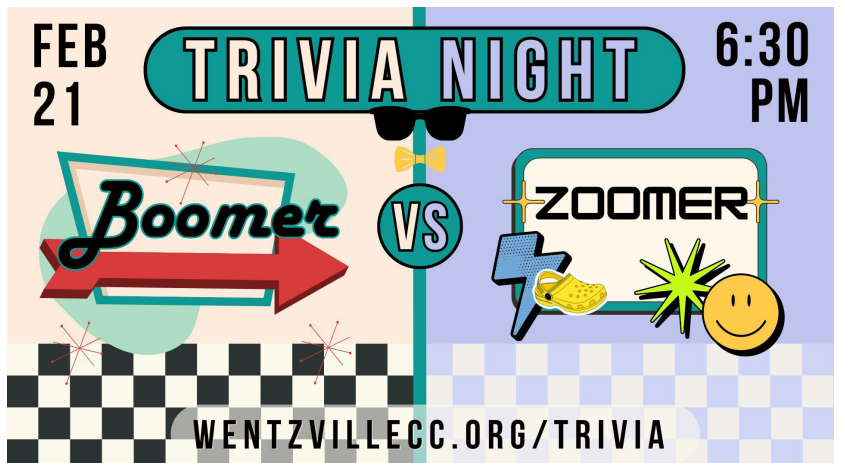


WSM NITE

Middle and high school students, enjoy a meal, lesson, and small group discussion time with other students. We're expecting this year to be the biggest and best year yet. If you choose to eat with us at 6:30, please bring \$5 and follow us on Instagram to stay updated on what each week's meal will be.

Trivia Night

Come support our High School students attending a mission trip to Blue Ridge Mountains, NC. This event is always a favorite and fills up quickly. Reserve your table today and start planning for our Boomer vs Zoomer themed evening. Childcare is available when reserving ahead of time. Register today.





Women's Bible Study

Sundays @ 9:45am or Mondays @ 6:30pm

wentzvillecc.org/women

Women's Bible Study

We have groups on Sunday mornings and Monday evenings begin January 5 & 13. The Sunday group is using Bible Recap to read the entire Bible in a year. The Monday group is doing a study called Discerning The Voice of God by Priscilla Shirer. Get more info and sign up at wentzvillecc.org/women.

Women's Retreat

Be guided into a transforming connection with Jesus through immersive spiritual practices, Biblical teachings, and engaging worship. We will explore Biblical habits to quiet your heart and mind as you truly rest in God's presence, experiencing His peace and love in tangible ways. Come away renewed as you Encounter God's Transforming Presence. Register today at wentzvillecc.org.



ENCOUNTER

God's Transforming Presence

February 7-8 / High Hill Christian Camp

wentzvillecc.org/women

Ladies GAME NIGHT

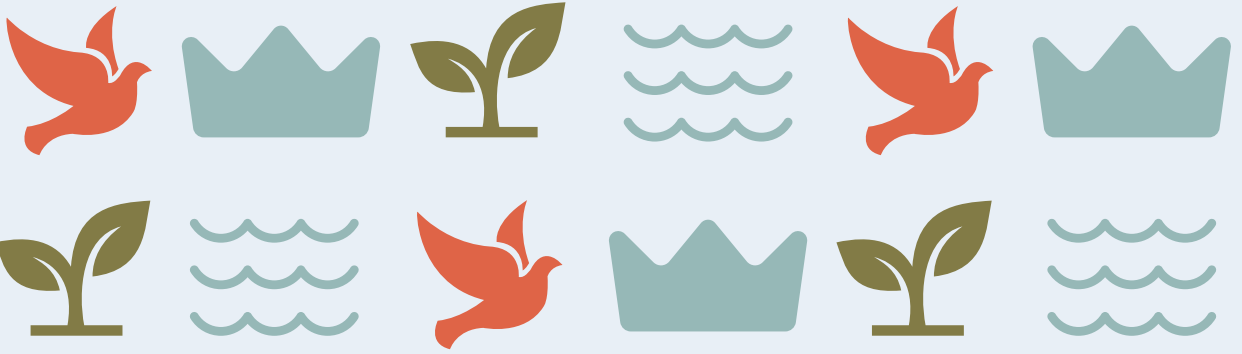


January 17
6:30-8:30PM

wentzvillecc.org/women

Ladies Game Night

Enjoy time together with other ladies as we play games, eat, and make amazing hot chocolate. Please sign up at wentzvillecc.org/women so we can plan ahead and bring your favorite appetizer or snack to share. Bring a friend and let's kick off the new year with fellowship and friendly competition!



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

