

Beforehand:

Arrange: 1. time and place,
2. NIV Bibles (or printout),
3. Pray for the people you are going to be talking too.

1. What are we doing?

- A simple intro to what Christianity is all about.
- 4 weeks
(explain that I am following notes – in order to be clear and succinct)
- Allows us each to survey the info – then make our own decision
- Not asked to read or pray aloud. No questions asked – but questions welcome.
- Make the most of the opportunity – it is a safe environment.

2. Introduce self.

My story.

3. Christianity in a Nutshell

- It is not complicated
- God has revealed himself (in the Bible)
- He has sent his Son – his appointed King of his Kingdom.
- We all stand before His appointed King
- He has promised to receive us then as we receive him now.

- So, Christianity is about the relationship we can have with the God of all Creation through his Son Jesus.
- Our choice – to know and respond to Jesus.

4. Introduce the Bible.

- We find out about Jesus in the Bible
- The Bible tells us about God – more specifically, what God has done for his world.
- The Bible is God's rescue plan for us – and he rescues his world by sending his Son.

5. Introduce the Gospels.

At the beginning of the New Testament there are 4 eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus. Each gospel has a different emphasis and is written from a different angle. (Use Titanic illustration)

- Matt – written by the disciple Matthew (Levi), tax collector - a long and complete historical record from Jesus' birth to his death and resurrection.
- Mark – written by John Mark, a companion of the Apostle Peter - a short, concise account of the last 3 years of Jesus life – this is the gospel we will look at.
- Luke – written by Luke, a companion of the Apostle Paul, a Doctor (Col 4:14) so he speaks a lot about the miracles

and other miraculous things that Jesus did.

- John – written by the disciple John, son of Zebedee (Mk 3:17), Jesus inner circle with Peter and James (Mk 5:37) - an account that looks back at Jesus' life and gives a reasoned argument for who Jesus is.

It is important that these are *eyewitness* or *witness* accounts – it gives them credibility.

- Did you know the Bible is the historically the most reliable ancient document in history – Christian or non-Christian?
- Compare Homer (Iliad – 643 copies – with a 1000 year btw original and copy)/ Caesar (Caesar's War – 10 copies) / Plato (Republic - 7 copies) c.f. w. NT which has 5664 manuscript copies – the earliest gospel script dated 92 years after the actual events.

The Bible is not a brainwashing activity. It is important that you test it.

Jesus is the central character of the Bible – so as you read, ask yourself: 'Who is Jesus?' He is either a:

LIAR – Deceiving
Lunatic – Deluded
Or Lord – He is who He says He is.

So, let's look at what Mark tells us about Jesus.

- thought to be the Apostle Peter's account of Jesus life (written down by John Mark).
- thought to be earliest recorded account (60's) – and so about 30 years after Jesus died and rose.
- the shortest.

6. Jesus the King

(May be helpful to explain Chapter (large) and Verse (small) numbers)

1:1 (pg:) – Up front we know what Mark's purpose is – it is the 'gospel about Jesus Christ' (another way of saying the 'good news' about Jesus.)

1:14-15 (pg:) Kingdom is near.

What does it mean 'near'?

- = coming soon?
- = beside you/within reach?
- Both!

Having announced the Kingdom, Jesus goes on to act as the King. To show the authority of the King.

- Let me show you six descriptions of his authority.

1:21-26 (pg:) Authority as teacher and over evil Spirits. LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

2:1-12 (pg:) Authority over sickness & sin.

- Who has authority to forgive offence? The one offended.
- Who has authority to forgive sin against God?
- Here Jesus is making bold claims.

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

4:35 – 41 (pg:) Authority over nature.

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

5:35-43 (pg:) Authority over death.

- There are 3 different accounts of Jesus raising someone from the dead in the Gospels.
 - Jairus' Daughter (c.f. Mk 5:35-43; Mt 9:18-26; Lk 8:40-56)
 - Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44)
 - The Widow's Son (Lk 7:11-17)

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

It might be possible at an individual level to dismiss each of these accounts of Jesus as either just a big fib, or as a lunatics story – but put all together, it seems we have a picture of several things that only someone who really was LORD could do?

- In the last Australian census (2011) – 63% of Australians indicated that they believed in God (or a higher power) – does this mean that 63% of people believe that God or a higher power could do things in this world that humans could not?
- Jesus seems to show that he can do things that we can not.

7. The Key Question:

Who is this man?

8:27 – 30 (pg:)

- Jesus asked his disciples
- Peter answers – 'You are the Christ.' (OT: Messiah)

Best human answers – he is only a 'wise teacher' or 'moral man' or 'unfortunate

martyr' – seem inadequate. His teachings are egocentric and he claims to be the only way people can be reconciled to God in this life and forever.

But if 'Messiah' is correct – then he would have to come and done only what God could do!

There is one more authority we see!

1:16-20 (pg:).

- At this point, Jesus had done nothing public to show what he could do but he starts his public ministry by *calling* people.
- Jesus shows he has authority over people as he calls Simon, Andrew, James and John.
- They show us how to respond to his authority as King – it is to Turn, Trust and Follow.

8. What is Christianity?...

Christianity is a Relationship – not a set of rules and regulations.

- Christians live the relationship.
- It is a relationship between the King and you.
- To live in the Kingdom of God we must come to the King.

9. Questions...

Ask anything to clarify where I might be unclear.

Before next time:

- Have a read of Mark 1-5
- Ask yourself – who is this Jesus?
- Be Critical – but open-minded.