



JesusWORKS

A short course about Jesus

THE COURSE

Ken D Noakes

JesusWORKS was developed by Ken D Noakes in partnership with many who have sought to explain the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Little of this material is original! It is written into this form with no intention to claim authorship, ownership or credit and relies on the kingdom-minded goodwill of those who are the originators of the ideas and concepts that this course and book draw upon (and who are cited on the 'Acknowledgements' page!).

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*In memory of Stephanie Ruth
such beautiful feet*

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Introduction

I came to Christ kicking and screaming! Well, I like to say that I put up a fight.

By the time I was 20, I had been told what “sin” was numerous times, but I hadn’t yet realised I was guilty of it!

“Sin”, my mate said, “is when you think you are better than God.”

“I don’t think that”, I quickly replied, to which my wise friend said, “What evidence in your life shows that you think God is better than you? You seem to live first for yourself, then for the world, and I struggle to see which part of your life puts God first!”

How rude! How true.

I became a Christian because a very patient friend was bold enough to tell me about Jesus and explain to me that Jesus did for me what I could never do for myself—make me right with God.

He took me to 1 Peter 3:18 (in fact, I am sure he took many of his friends to this verse) and showed me that “*Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*”

Four things struck me (at least retrospectively, they stand out to me now!):

- Jesus was willing to do for me what I was not willing to do for him.
- He did it once and that was sufficient for all.
- He was right before God (that is, righteous) - a claim that I knew I honestly could not say about myself.
- And that, for some reason, he did it so that I could go with him before God.

So I asked, “What do I do?”

My mate said, “You’ve done enough, how about you let Jesus do the rest!”—and with that he asked me to pray with him. I can’t remember exactly how it went, but it was something like this: “Father, Ken has stuffed up, but you already know that. He now knows that, and he is really sorry. Please take him back by the blood of Jesus and help him from now on to live for you rather than himself. Amen.”

I have often reflected on how good God is – to put this friend (and others) in front of me, who were *willing and able* to talk to me about Jesus. And I have often lamented at how few Christians are also willing and able to talk about Jesus like this friend did for me!

JesusWORKS is an attempt to offer (under God) an easy, understandable and structured way to introduce a person to Jesus. It has come together over the years quite simply as a way to help me and then others present the good news about Jesus.

I hope, that you are reading this *JesusWORKS* book because you are *willing* to talk to others about Jesus. And I hope in working through this *JesusWORKS* book, it may help equip you to be *able* to share the good news you have in Jesus.

Acknowledgements

I am so grateful for the many people who have talked to me about Jesus, whose ideas or comments I have adopted (often unconsciously), and which may now appear in this *JesusWORKS* presentation.

I am also thankful for those scholars who have written formal evangelism courses or books which have shaped my understanding and method when it comes to speaking about the gospel of Jesus. Michael Bennett, Rick Smith, John Chapman, Sam Chan, John Dickson, Stephen Abbott, Phillip Jensen – your ideas may be represented in what follows. In no way do I wish to claim your ideas as my own.

And I want to acknowledge those who have been trained to lead *JesusWORKS* and whose comments have further developed this course into what is presented before you here. In no particular order: Anna Stoyanoff, Ben Hunter, Miriam Broadhurst, Oliver Tweeddale, Cameron Phillips, Gavin Wicks, Katy Annis, Shane Ellery, Caleb Pullman, Paul Jansen, Amy Seymour-Walsh, Duncan Ward, Roger Yerramsetti, Peter Evans, Georgie Parsons, Arthur Ang, Darren Russ, Jack Weeks, Esther Weeks, Paul Merenda, Caroline Litchfield, Trace Akankunda, Maren Phillips, RJ Lim, Trevor Hall, Ming Tan and Stephanie Ruth among others. I thank God for the way you have each used your evangelistic gifts to reach others for Christ.

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Lynette Evans, Rachel Norman, Sarah Li and Roger Yerramsetti in proof-reading this manuscript you have picked up so many of the errors that I would otherwise have been blind to – and saved many from getting frustrated by my poor use of punctuation! I am very thankful.

Ian Dunn, Judy Langshaw, Sandra Downes, David Morgan, Malcolm and Sheila Wilson, Robyn Sweatman, Jill Phillips, Michelle Schultz, Emily FitzSimons, Ian and Mack Lockwood, Ruth Chapman, Brian and Helen Gitsham, David and Marilyn Jolly, Helen Caterer and Naomi Noakes your encouragement and prayers have helped push me to turn this material into a format that could be distributed more widely.

Peter Evans, your friendship and willingness to edit this work so that it could be used to help folk explain the gospel is a key reason why we find this course in book form. I thank God for you.

Largely due the support and outreach efforts of the staff and members of Trinity Church Adelaide, this course has been run numerous times, in various locations and formats, catering to a wide range of people. To God be the glory.

May this book be a resource that helps many to confess “Jesus is Lord” and believe that God raised him from the dead, so that all might trust in him and be saved.

Enjoy presenting Jesus to those who do this course. Rest in the work that the Spirit of God will do to place Jesus in the hearts and minds of people.



What is *JesusWORKS*?

JesusWORKS is simply a short course about Jesus.

It aims to introduce a person to the Jesus of the Bible – his teaching, his work, and his ministry.

The prayer is that anyone doing this course will freely be able to consider what has been said *by* Jesus and *about* Jesus, so that they can examine him for themselves and make their own decision about whether he is a person worth following.

Jesus calls people to himself, yet he gives everyone the opportunity to examine him and his message before making that decision.

- *JesusWORKS* can be arranged at a time to suit the person.
- *JesusWORKS* can be done in a small group or one-to-one with someone.
- *JesusWORKS* can be done in a private setting (e.g. a church room) or in a public setting (e.g. a quiet café).
- *JesusWORKS* can be accompanied by a meal or just a coffee.
- *JesusWORKS* takes 1.5 hours each sitting for 4 sessions (ideally once a week).
- *JesusWORKS* is free and all materials are provided.

There are no prerequisites and no prior knowledge required to do *JesusWORKS*.

The person/s doing *JesusWORKS* should not be asked to read or pray aloud or answer questions – yet questions are welcomed. More on this below.

By the end of the course, the person will have been instructed to read (on their own) the whole of the gospel of Mark.

To whom is *JesusWORKS* written?

Primarily, this course is for the person who wants to check out the claims *of* Jesus or the claims *about* Jesus – so that they can make up their own minds about him.

Secondly, this course is for any Christian who wants to be prepared to give a reasoned answer for the hope that they have in the gospel of Jesus (1 Pet 3:15).

Additionally, this course can be used quite easily as part of Baptism or Wedding preparation.

Development of *JesusWORKS*

There are several key resources that have been used in the development of this *JesusWORKS* course. They include:

- Dickson, J., *Simply Christianity*
- Bennett, M., *Christianity Explained*
- Abbott, S., *Everyday Evangelism*
- Chapman, J., *What is a Christian?*
- Matthias Media, *Two Ways to Live*
- Chan, S., *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*
- Noakes, K.D., *The Essential Christian*

The Structure of *JesusWORKS*

JesusWORKS usually takes four sittings to complete. Each sitting aims to answer two questions (which perhaps, may be questions the participant could be asking).

Following each sitting, the participant is given something to read and a further question to consider on their own.

Sitting 1	Sitting 2	Sitting 3	Sitting 4
Question 1			
What is the Bible?	What is Sin?	What is the Resurrection?	What is a Christian?
Secular Misunderstanding 1			
The Bible is an old irrelevant book.	People are basically good, and the problem is out there.	When people die, that is the end.	I could never be good enough to be Christian!
Aim 1			
To establish the reliability of the Bible as a key source in understanding Jesus.	To describe the strange idea of sin and why it is such a bad thing for everyone.	To explain why the resurrection is fundamentally important to the Christian faith.	To describe how a person can respond rightly to what Jesus has done to save.
Question 2			
Who is Jesus?	Why the Cross?	How does the resurrection relate to Life?	Do you want to become a Christian?
Secular Misunderstanding 2			
Jesus was a moral man, wise teacher, unfortunate martyr.	If I am 'good enough' then all things will be fine.	Christianity is all about keeping rules and commandments?	I am not the kind of person who has faith.
Aim 2			
To introduce Jesus as the one who has authority – over all things and is in fact LORD.	To show what Jesus had to do so that we could be forgiven before God.	To show that Christianity is all about a relationship with God made possible through Jesus' death and resurrection.	To explain what it means to trust in Jesus and show the person how to start a relationship with Jesus.
Follow-up Reading			
Mark 1-5	Mark 6-10	Mark 11-16	The Case for Christ (Book or DVD)
Follow-up Question			
Who is this Jesus?	What is Jesus trying to achieve?	Does Jesus achieve what he says he will?	Who is Jesus to you?

Note: Each of these 'sittings' usually takes around 1.5 hours. If that is not possible, then each sitting can be split into two (effectively making this an eight-sitting course).

No Questions asked!

JesusWORKS is set up to be as helpful as possible for the participant/s of the course. As such, one of the concessions offered upfront is that no questions will be asked of the participant, although their questions are welcome. It is also promised that the participant will not be asked to read or pray out loud.

The aim is to relieve any anxiety by ensuring that the participant/s do not find themselves put on the spot. This is especially helpful for those who have an Eastern background and may be additionally reluctant to speak up out of a desire to keep face before the person in the role of ‘teacher’.

This has two immediate implications.

First, it means that the Course Leader does a lot of talking.

JesusWORKS in that sense becomes more of a presentation. The Course Leader needs to work hard to watch the body language of the participants and then work out ways to break, pause and reshape what they are saying to encourage the participants to stay with them.

If leading with someone else, then breaking the material into sections and taking turns may help. Alternatively, having one leader present the material and the other read the Bible Passages as they arise may also be helpful.

Second, often the participant in fact does have questions!

The Course Leader needs to incorporate time and space to address questions as they arise.

One way to keep the promise of not asking questions, yet still give space for questions, is to stop at several points during the presentation and ask *‘Is there anything you would like me to clarify or repeat?’* Technically it is a question, yet it is a question that allows the participants to quickly answer ‘no’. That said, it opens the door for them to ask any question that they may have.

Suggestions on how to approach answering questions are covered later in *Answering Questions* (on page 39).

The Course content with Leader’s Notes for the four sessions (Sessions 1, 2, 3 and 4) start on page 13.

Within these Notes *italics* indicate information and guidance for the Course Leader. The spacing of the Notes provide opportunities to ask *‘Is there anything you would like me to clarify or repeat?’*.

Resources

All the (updated) leader’s notes can be found at **Church Central**:

<https://churchcentralonline.com/who-is-jesus/>.

At any point you can download the material and you are ready to go.

This *JesusWORKS* book is accompanied by a second booklet, *“JesusWORKS – the Bible Passages”* which contains extracts from the Bible (NIV 2011) and a glossary of terms for those who may need some assistance with Christian terminology. This booklet (also found on Church Central) can be printed and given to participants.

Additionally, leaders of *JesusWORKS* will benefit from reading some books that attempt to do what this course is doing. Such as:

- Lee Strobel – *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, 2016 (Rpt)).
- John Dickson – *A Spectator’s Guide to Jesus: an introduction to the man from Nazareth* (South Sydney: Blue Bottle Books, 2005)

Session 1

‘Jesus – Liar, Lunatic or Lord?’

Session 1: 'Jesus – Liar, Lunatic or Lord?'

Beforehand you should:

- *Arrange the time and place.*
- *Arrange to have NIV Bibles (or Bible Passage Booklet).*
- *Pray for the people you are going to be talking to.*

What are we doing?

- A simple introduction to what Christianity is all about.
- 4 sessions (*explain that you are following notes – in order to be clear and succinct*).
- Surveying the information so that we can then make our own decision.
- Not asking you to read or pray aloud. Not asking questions – but questions are welcome.
- Making the most of the opportunity – it is a safe environment.

Introduce yourself.

My story.

See 'How to Write Your Testimony' (page 40) for suggestions.

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.

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.

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 from a different angle.

Illustration: The Titanic sank on the 15th April 1912. More than 1500 people died. There were only 705 survivors. The wreck was lost at sea for 73 years until discovery in 1985. Much has been written about the Titanic – by a variety of sources: those who built the ship, those who saw it set out on its maiden voyage, those who survived, those who helped with the rescue, those who knew people who perished etc. Of all the documents, there is discrepancy! For example: different details are given by those who were at the stern of the ship when it sank, compared to those who were watching from the lifeboats, compared to those who were surviving crew members! Each have a different perspective. Yet, none waver on the key details: the ship existed, it set sail, it hit an iceberg, it sank, many died and some survived. Despite the fact that the ship was lost at sea, and therefore could not be seen by the human eye, the facts about this vessel were attested.

The same principle applies when examining the different New Testament accounts concerning the life of Jesus.

- Matthew – written by the disciple Matthew (Levi), who was a tax collector. It is a long and complete historical record from Jesus' birth to his death and resurrection.
- Mark – written by John Mark, who was a companion of the Apostle Peter. It is 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. He was 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), in Jesus' inner circle with Peter and James (Mk 5:37). It is an account that looks back at Jesus' life and gives a reasoned argument for who Jesus is.

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

- Did you know the Bible is historically the most reliable ancient document in history – Christian or non-Christian?
- Compare the following widely recognised historic documents:
Homer (*Iliad* – 643 copies – with 1000 years between the original and copy)
Caesar (*Gallic Wars* – 10 copies)
Plato (*The Republic* - 7 copies)
New Testament which has 5664 manuscript copies – the earliest gospel script is dated only 92 years after the actual events.

For more information about the credibility of the Bible see 'Is the Bible Reliable?' (page 41).

The Bible is not about brainwashing. 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.

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

Jesus the King

(Give out the Bible Passage Booklet (or a Bible). It may be helpful to explain Bible referencing - Chapter (large) and Verse (small) numbers)

Mark 1:1 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)* – 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 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)* – The Kingdom is near. What does it is 'near' mean?

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

Having announced the Kingdom, Jesus goes on to act as the King and shows the authority of the King.

Let me show you six descriptions of his authority.

Jesus' Authority

1:21-26 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)* - Authority as teacher and over evil Spirits.

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

2:1-12 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)* - Authority over sickness & sin.

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

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

4:35 – 41 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)* - Authority over nature.

LIAR? LUNATIC? LORD?

5:35-43 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) - 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 a big fib, or a lunatic's 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 2011 Australian census – 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 cannot.

The Key Question:

Who is this man?

8:27 – 30 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

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

The best human answers: he is a 'wise teacher' a 'moral man' or an '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 do only what God could do!

There is one more authority we see!

1:16-20 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

- 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.

What is Christianity?...

Christianity is a Relationship (*with Jesus*) – 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.

Questions...

Ask anything to clarify where I might be unclear.

Before next time:

- Read through Mark 1-5 and as you do ...
 - Ask yourself – ‘who is this Jesus?’
 - Be Critical – yet open-minded.

Session 2

‘Jesus and the Cross’

Session 2: 'Jesus and the Cross'

Beforehand you should:

- *Bring NIV Bibles (or Bible Passage Booklet),*
- *Bring a book (not the Bible) for the 'Book Illustration',*
- *Pray for the people you are going to be talking to.*

This session – in a nutshell

Why the Cross is so important in Christianity.

- Why do Christians have such a fascination with a man dying on a cross?
- Misunderstand the Cross and you'll misunderstand Christianity. Understand the cross and you'll understand the very essence of Christianity.

Last Session

(As with last session, explain that I am following notes – in order to be clear and succinct)

Jesus claimed and acted with God's authority – by doing things that only God could do.

- Jesus displayed his authorityas a teacher – over Evil Spirits, Sin, Sickness, Nature, Death and over People.
- For us, we can decide if Jesus was a – Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.
- Whatever we decide, we should see Jesus as someone more than simply a 'good teacher', a 'moral man' or an 'unfortunate martyr'.
- The Bible presents Jesus as King of God's kingdom who calls people to Turn, Trust and Follow him.

(NB: - you asked the person to read Mark 1-5 last session and write down any questions. This may be a good time to check if they have any questions – and answer them)

So why did Jesus come?

Jesus came to do far more than simply **announce** the Kingdom of God, and far more than simply **heal** people from sickness – he came to **accomplish** something for us.

- Three times in Mark, Jesus tells us what would happen to him.
 - Mark 8:31 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)*
 - Mark 9:31 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)*
 - Mark 10:32b-34 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)*
- Jesus came knowing that he was heading toward death on a cross.
- An amazing feature of those predictions were the very specific and particular details that Jesus said would have to occur – there is no generalisation (so very different to a horoscope!).

- What is to celebrate about accomplishing death?
- To understand the Cross, you need to understand 'Sin'.

What is Sin?

- Humanity's anthem. 'It's my life and I'll do what I like'. (*Popular funeral song: 'I did it my way' by Frank Sinatra!*)
- 'Sin' is not a particularly well understood idea now days. Certainly, a hard concept to talk about.
- Sin is where you put your needs and wants before God and before others.
- It is when you do what you want to do, yet that goes against what God wants you to do.
- It is ungodliness, lawlessness.
- It offends God and it separates us from God (and others).

It is quite possible for a person to be nice, sincere, good, yet deeply sinful.

- 'But surely sin is not that serious!' – Wrong! - The reason why Christians often talk about sin, is because sin is the reason why all things in this world are not great (e.g. disaster, pain, suffering, mourning, death – all features of a broken world)
- But more, sin has real consequences:
 - It means a person is broken and has dishonoured God and this **shame** means they have lost face before him and **need to be restored** (*Eastern worldview*).
 - It means a person has fallen short of God's expectations and are defiled/unclean before God. As such they have reason to **fear** him unless they are **cleansed** (*Middle Eastern/Americas worldview*).
 - It means a person is **guilty** before God and **in need of forgiveness** (*Western worldview*).

Note: 'Sin' is first described in the Bible in Genesis 3:1-13 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) when Adam and Eve sinned against God – the result: a. they were naked and covered themselves to hide their **shame** (*Eastern*), b. they hid from God out of **fear** (*Middle Eastern/Americas*), and c. they blamed each other to shift the **guilt** away from themselves (*Western*).

Illustration: Like a flower broken from its stem, it may look pretty for a while, soon it will wither and die. ...so, a person separated from God fades and dies.

The promise of the Bible is that sin will be dealt with – it says 'the wages of sin is death' (*Rom 6:23 – in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

- And so, we have a dilemma: A person imperfect, stained by sin, cannot approach God (who is perfect and sees all). So, God either has to *compromise* or he has to *have nothing to do* with sinners.

- Sin has to be dealt with in order to restore the relationship between You/Me and God.
- And sin has to be addressed in order to remove a person's shame, free a person from fearing God, and assure a person of forgiveness.

Sin is dealt with at the Cross

- Sin is dealt with at the Cross

Read Mark 15:33-39 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) – this is Jesus on the Cross.

- Some things to notice:

15:33 - 'Darkness came over the whole land' reveals a supernatural event.

- the sixth hour to ninth hour – means the middle of the day. Time was measured according to daylight hours - from the sixth hour after sunrise, to the ninth hour after sunrise.
- This is not an eclipse¹. The Passover (c.f. Mk 14:12-15 – the day before) was celebrated at the time of the *full moon* (14th day of the seventh month). A solar eclipse (which would make the earth dark) can only happen following a *new moon*. And further, an eclipse can take a maximum of 7 mins 31 secs (not 3 hours).
- It is as if God turns his face away.

15:34-37 - The Cry. Here Jesus experiences all the consequences of humanity's sin and death – God forsaking him.

Illustration: the 'Book illustration'.

Before sin came into the picture, people were close to God (hands flat together).

But sin causes a barrier (left hand, pick up book – not the Bible).

Imagine this book contains everything I've done that is wrong and shameful, and every time my heart has turned away from God – it is effectively a record of all my guilt. It would be a much bigger book than this one!

The consequence/penalty for sin is death. It is what is recorded in this book that prevents me from approaching God. It is my sin that has become the barrier that prevents me enjoying a relationship with God (hands together, holding book).

(Put the book down – show an empty left hand). Jesus has no sin. When God looks at Jesus, there is no barrier that prevents their relationship. In fact, he's so united with God that they are one (link fingers).

On the cross, it is as if Jesus takes not just my book, but everyone's – every person, for all of history – and carries it willingly (put the book on the empty left hand). And he experienced all the consequences/penalties for sin (hands with book between) – and he died in my place. He took my sin. And so, when God looks at me, there is no longer a barrier that prevents me being close to him (drop the book, bring hands flat together, and then link fingers).

¹ An *Eclipse* is an astronomical event that occurs when one celestial object moves into the shadow of another. A '*solar eclipse*' is when the Moon's shadow crosses Earth's surface (making the earth dark), or a '*lunar eclipse*', when the Moon moves into the shadow of Earth (making the moon dark). The solar eclipse can only occur after a new moon (the first visible half-moon).

At the cross, Jesus – the perfect man - becomes the greatest sinner. All of my/your guilt, shame, bitterness, jealousy, selfishness, greed, rejection of God became his. All my/your punishment was put on him.

- Christ carried our sins in His body on the cross.

15:38-39 – The ‘curtain of the temple’. The temple was the place where the people met with God. That all changed with Jesus’ death.

The temple had two rooms separated by a curtain. A large room, where all people could meet. A small room (the ‘Holy of Holies’) symbolised God’s perfect presence. No one could enter without dying (because they were shamed, unclean and guilty of sin).

Once a year (on the Day of Atonement – which happened at the time of Passover c.f. 14:16) the High Priest would enter to make the sacrifice of Atonement (on behalf of the people). In other words – all were excluded from God’s presence because of sin.

The curtain tears showing that the perfect sacrifice has been made by the perfect High Priest and that access was now open for the people to come into the perfect presence of God – there is now no divide.

- Curtain tearing top to bottom? - a small detail but maybe teaching us that it is God’s work not ours. Restoration is not according to what we can do but what God has done for us in Christ.

Why Jesus died on a Cross.

Illustration: Parent says to a sick child: “I’m sorry you have to go through all this. If I could go through this for you I would. If I could take your pain from you, I would.”

- That is love.
- That love is what is perfectly expressed at the cross.
- As a parent desires to take away a child’s pain, so Jesus comes to take away the consequences of our sin (eternal death) and in doing so restores our relationship with God.
- Jesus pays what he didn’t owe, for what we owe and couldn’t pay - for our sin/rebellion against God.

Conclusion

Today there are two types of sinners in this world:

- Not big and little.
- Not polite and twisted.
- Not beautiful and ugly.
- Just forgiven and unforgiven.

(Might want to point out that God sees through fakes.)

- It is the restored, cleansed, forgiven person who has seen their need.
- They have seen what God has done for them in Jesus.
- And they accept and trust in Jesus.

So...

A – Admit our need – we have a problem – sin.

B – Believe in Jesus – recognise God’s solution.

C – Consider - accept Jesus as your King.

Questions...

Ask anything to clarify where I might be unclear.

Before next time:

- Read Mark 6-10 and as you do ...
 - Ask yourself – ‘what is this Jesus trying to achieve?’
 - Be Critical – yet open-minded.

Session 3

‘Jesus and his Resurrection’

Session 3: 'Jesus and his Resurrection'

Beforehand you should:

- Bring NIV Bibles (or the Bible Passage Booklet).
- Bring copies of an evangelism tract (e.g. 'What is a Christian?', 'Two Ways to Live').
- Pray for the people you are going to be talking to.

This session – in a nutshell

Why the resurrection is so important in Christianity.

- The 'resurrection' is the term used for when Jesus rose back from being dead to being alive again.
- The Bible says that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then preaching/teaching about Jesus is useless, a Christian's faith in Jesus is futile, and there is no forgiveness of sins (1 Cor 15:14, 17).
- The Bible has a lot to say about the importance of the resurrection – and so we will look at quite a lot of passages today. (*Refer to the Bible Readings Booklet*)

What we've looked at so far?

(As with each session, explain that you are following notes – in order to be clear and succinct)

First Session – Introduced the Bible, introduced the Gospels, then introduced Jesus.

- We saw Jesus announce 'the kingdom of God is near'.
- We saw that Jesus **taught with authority** but also had **authority over**:
 - Spirits – he rebuked them.
 - Sickness – he healed.
 - Sin – he pronounced forgiveness.
 - Nature – he controlled (the storm).
 - Death – he raised people back to life.
 - People – he called them to follow.
- Whatever we think of Jesus – it is too simplistic to consider him just a 'good teacher', a 'moral man' or an 'unfortunate martyr'.

Last session – We looked at why the Cross was so important in Christianity.

- It deals with Sin – that which separates people from God.
- We considered the nature of sin:
 - that all people (incl. Christians) are sinners.
 - there are visible consequences – our fallen world.
 - there is a real price – death.
- An imperfect person, stained by sin – cannot approach our perfect God.
- So, God did something about it – he gave his perfect son Jesus – who paid the price of sin – he died.

The cross is so important in Christianity because *it was at the cross that Jesus paid what he did not owe, for what we owe, but cannot pay.*

- So, there are two types of sinners – those forgiven and unforgiven.
- Those who are forgiven are those who:
 - A** – Admit their need – we have a problem – sin.
 - B** - Believe in Jesus – recognise God’s solution.
 - C** – Consider - accept Jesus as King.
- Those who are restored, cleansed and forgiven are not sinless.
- Yet, those who are forgiven are not shamed, they have no reason to fear, and they are no longer guilty for the consequence of their sin.

(NB: - you asked the person to read Mark 6-10 last session and write down any questions. This may be a good time to check if they have any questions – and answer them)

Is the Resurrection Important?

And so, this session we look at what happened after Jesus died on the cross – his resurrection.

- There is a lot of fuss made over the resurrection – and with good reason.
- It is not every day that someone who is absolutely confirmed dead and buried, then comes back to life again.
- Why is it that Christians defend an event that just seems so unbelievable? Would it really matter if Christians just dropped the idea?
- The answer is that it absolutely matters and the Bible tells us why...

1 Cor 15:1-19 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet – the **bold** sections*)

- Here the Apostle Paul (who writes) recognises that the resurrection matters.
- He says that if Jesus didn’t rise, then Christians are still in their sins and are to be pitied more than anyone.
- Paul (and the other apostles for that matter) realised that if Christianity was fabricated then it was pretty silly.

The Resurrection

The resurrection was an event that was foretold – remember this passage from last session...

Mark 10:32b-34 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

- This prediction is either - true or terrible, weird or wonderful – and if it then happened, it would be at the least, unsettling.
- Evidence for the Resurrection is in all 4 gospels (c.f. Mt 28:1-15; Lk 24:1-49; Jn 20:1-29).
- For example: Mark 16:1-8 (in the Bible Passage Booklet)
- (Note that 16:9-20 are not reliably attested – usually comes up next session in questions.)
- As you read the Bible accounts it mentions numerous people who saw the resurrected Jesus, numerous times, in the forty days before his ascension:

We have already looked at 1 Corinthians 15 (in the Bible Passage Booklet) and it lists – Peter and then the twelve disciples (1+11) + more than five hundred brothers/followers (500) + James (1) + all the apostles (already mentioned) + Paul (1) = 514 not including women.

In Mark 16 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) we have Mary and Mary Salome.

- In John's gospel there are several accounts including: John 20:24-31 (in the Bible Passage Booklet) where we meet Thomas - the sceptic.
- Thomas' reactions are totally realistic – people don't come back from the dead – so "show me". But once he sees – he proclaims, "My Lord and My God" (the first place in the New Testament where Jesus is called both 'Lord' and 'God'. (Note: JW#1 looks at Jesus as 'Lord' & JW#2 looks at Jesus as 'God' – Thomas sees both)
- It is because of seeing the resurrected Jesus that Thomas is moved from disbelief to belief.

(It may be helpful to draw out the distinction between 'doubt' and 'unbelief'...

Illustration: Doubt can be good!

When I set out to purchase something significant (e.g. computer, car etc.) there are many choices. I have doubts about which would be the best for me. So, the natural thing to do is to explore and examine the options, check out the specifications, consider the product history, listen to the reviews and more. In the process, I become more certain about the item and eventually I get to the point where I am convinced enough – so I buy in.

This is good doubt! There may be uncertainty, but steps can be taken to address that uncertainty. Good doubt calls me to act so that I can move to the point where I either reject or accept something and have the reasons to qualify my decision.

Bad doubt (perhaps unbelief) exists when there is uncertainty, yet the person does little or nothing to address that uncertainty. Even though there may be steps that could be taken to explore the doubts, no effort is given. They reject regardless.

When it comes to doubts about Jesus, a good thing to do is to explore and examine the options (doing JesusWORKS is a way to do that!). Check out the eyewitness and witness accounts, consider the authenticity of the historical data (be they from Christian sources or not), listen to what Jesus said, look at what he did. And in the process, you should be able to either reject or accept him and have the reasons to qualify your decision.

- And as Jesus points out – Thomas believes because he sees, how much more will those who have not seen, yet believe, be blessed.

Three Resurrection Outcomes

The resurrection:

a. Vindicates Christ's Word.

- Jesus is given the stamp of God's approval – it declared Jesus to be the Son of God – Romans 1:4 (in the Bible Passage Booklet)
- It confirms that Jesus was who he said he was.
 - Remember when we looked at Jesus healing the crippled man (Mk 2:1-12 – back in Session 1). Jesus said he could forgive sins, and to show it he healed the man – the miracle shows Jesus' authority to forgive.

- In John 11:11b-27, 38-44 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) we meet Lazarus who has been dead for four days and Jesus' declares himself to be 'the resurrection and the life' (11:25). To confirm that Jesus was who he said he was – he raised Lazarus from the dead.
- Jesus says that just 'as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life' (Jn 5:21). Only one who has conquered death is in a position to grant life over death.
- The resurrection shows that what Jesus claimed of himself was true.

b. Deals finally with Sin.

- The resurrection shows that humanity's enduring problem (death) has a solution.
- What the world offers stops when we die – and in the end are proved empty (or at best temporary) (Humanism – people have the answer; Individualism – I want to determine what is best; Materialism – What I can earn or own will be all I need)
- Yet, in the resurrection God points us to his enduring solution.
 - 1 Peter 1:3-4 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) – A living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 1 Peter 3:18 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) - The guilt and punishment that my sin deserves and God demands, Jesus takes, and pays for it on the cross - and it is the resurrection that declares it PAID IN FULL.

Illustration. Gift Voucher – bought by someone (at their cost), given to me (freely), redeemed at store (so I don't pay), walk away with the item (paid in full) = Jesus went to the cross (paid the price), to set me free of sin (freely), died (so I could be redeemed from sin), rose to give me life eternal (paid in full).

c. Declares Jesus Judge

- The resurrection declares Jesus to be the now living Judge of both the living and the dead.
 - Acts 17:30-31 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) – God raised Jesus from the dead to be the judge of the world (see also Acts 10:39-42).
 - Hebrews 9:27 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*) says that people will die and after that comes judgement – this is all people, believer and unbeliever alike. We will all stand before God's judgement seat.

(It may be helpful to draw out that 'judgement' is needed if we want justice – because it declares that which is right to be right and that which is wrong to be wrong)

- The one who will judge is Jesus – and he judges without fault, bringing true justice.

Illustration. The Courtroom, with Jesus as Judge and each person as the plaintiff – found guilty, condemned, sentenced, and then substituted – all by Jesus!

How will we stand?

"How we will stand on that judgement day?"

- Will we stand before Jesus either:
 - As his friend – with our sin paid for, such that we are restored, cleansed and forgiven?
 - Or, as a stranger – alone and called upon to defend ourselves?

- Many people think they are good enough – they are a good person, they have been nice, they deserve to be saved.
- But the Bible says: ‘Good people’ are never good enough. God’s standards are perfect. Are you?
- In their own minds, ‘Good people’ are often too good. The problem is out there (with others or in the world) and the solution is found in themselves.
- But the Bible says the opposite: the problem is in yourself and the solution is out there – in fact it is in Jesus.
- God calls on all people to repent and trust in Jesus.

What is Christianity?

- Christianity takes its name from Christ – without Christ there is no Christianity.
- Christianity is not about trusting ME, or YOU, or CHURCH, or some GURU, or some religious EXPERIENCE, or understanding some INTELLECTUAL PROOFS.
- Christianity is not dependent on a beautiful building, or the keeping of laws and commandments, or the battling over different philosophical ideas.
- Christianity is about trusting JESUS.
 - it is all about recognising a relationship with Jesus Christ and having life in his name.
- Jesus’ death paid and cancelled our debt of sin – making it possible for us to be back in a relationship with God.
- Jesus’ resurrection from the dead shows us life after death – and an ongoing relationship with God.

What next?

- Over these last three sessions of JesusWORKS we have looked at ‘What is Christianity?’ Next time, we are going to look at ‘What is a Christian?’ – in other words, what it means to recognise Jesus as Lord of your life.
- And if you are willing, I will show you how to start that relationship.

(You may want to give out the Evangelism tract here. It will mean that the person can read a second gospel explanation before the next session, hopefully reinforcing what you have said. It will also mean they have the Prayer that you will be asking them to pray next time)

Questions...

Ask to see if anything needs clarification.

Before next time:

- Read Mark 11-16 and as you do...
 - Ask yourself – ‘does this Jesus achieve what he says he will?’
 - As in previous sessions, be Critical – yet open-minded.

Session 4

‘Jesus and his Call’

Session 4: 'Jesus and his Call'

Beforehand you should:

- Bring NIV Bibles (or the Bible Passage Booklet).
- Ensure you have your wallet, mobile/keys and sunglasses (for Illustration).
- Ensure you have copies of an evangelism tract (e.g. 'Two Ways to Live') and a Gospel giveaway (Matthew, Luke or John).
- Bring invites to 'The Essential Christian' Course (or equivalent follow-up course) and/or a Small Group.
- Have gift/s – e.g. 'The Case for Christ' (Strobel) – Book/DVD
- Pray for the people you are going to be talking to.

Introduction

For the last three session, we have looked at *JesusWORKS* – to consider 'What is Christianity?'

This session I want to turn our attention to how someone could respond to the message of Christianity – in other words 'What is a Christian?'

Let me begin by saying how I'll end... I am going to ask you to make a choice and pray a prayer.

- I want you to know up front where I am going so that you can make your own choice when we get there.

What we've looked at so far?

- Session 1: God's King = Jesus – Authority - calls on us to respond.
- Session 2: What happens to the King = Cross – because of Sin - access to God.
- Session 3: What this King Accomplishes = Resurrection - Jesus Vindicated - Sin dealt with – Debt Paid - Jesus Declared as Judge.

(NB: - you asked the person to read Mark 11-16 last session and write down any questions. This may be a good time to check if they have any questions – and answer them.)

Responding Rightly

(Refer to the Bible Passage Booklet)

So how should someone respond to the message of Christianity? Let me suggest three things to think about:

a. To respond - recognise there is a need.

Luke 18:9-14 *(in the Bible Passage Booklet)*

- Notice that Jesus is speaking to people who were self-confident – and so he tells a story about two men and two different responses:

The tragedy of the *Pharisee* in this story is that he didn't see his desperate need – he thought himself so righteous or good that he had no need for saving – this is Pride (the result: humbled).

On the other hand – *the Tax Collector*. He saw that he had a need, he was humbly aware that he was a sinner (the result: exalted).

- The point: Before God we must see and know our need.
- You will not recognise what has been done to save you, unless you understand that you need to be saved from something.
- Our sin creates a problem – we have a deep, eternal and personal need.
- To respond to God, we should come to God stripped of our facades, cynicism and say: “restore me, cleanse me, forgive me of my sin”.

b. To respond - respond to Jesus

Mark 8:34-38 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

- Jesus teaches a crowd and his disciples what it means to follow him.

Notice that he addresses our need to be saved:

- In 8:35 – to ‘save’ our life (that is to keep it in our own control) means we will lose it. To ‘lose’ it (because giving it to Him may seem a loss) means we will save it. Jesus turns things around.
- In 8:36 – ‘soul’ is another way of talking about a person’s ‘life’.
- This is saying that the ‘soul’ is more important than ‘the whole world’.
- To Jesus, our ‘soul’ is valuable – it holds value beyond this world.
- It would be unwise to give everything for this world if it meant that you would forfeit your life (soul).
- A life lost cannot be regained.
- The key to life here is not found in ourselves (v37 ‘what can a man give for his soul?’) – the key to life is in the one who can give life – Jesus.
- Our ‘life’ is only safe in Jesus’ care and control.

What does Jesus say we *must* do? (all from verse 34):

- i) deny self (8:34). This means the ‘self’ that disagrees with God.
- ii) take up his cross (8:34). This means paying the price of walking according to his way.
- iii) follow Jesus (8:34). This means going where he says and not going where he forbids.
- To respond badly – would be to be ashamed of Jesus in this generation (world) – and he will be ashamed of you (c.f. 8:38).
- To respond rightly, would be to respond to Jesus.

c. To respond – we must trust

Ephesians 2:4-9 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*)

- To have ‘Faith’ is to trust.
- Why trust?
- Notice that in this passage it shows that all people come to God ‘dead in transgressions’ (v5).
- The promise in this passage is that God has mercifully saved people from death and given life – in fact life eternal.

- It is by grace (his free gift), that he has saved – but at every point that salvation has involved Jesus (note the repeated ‘with Christ’/in Christ’ references).
- That free gift of salvation is accepted through faith (v8).
- And so – as we respond to Jesus, he will accept us in faith, take us, and bring us home to life – eternal life,
- To have ‘Faith’ is to trust.

To trust means...

- How do I trust Jesus?

Trust is not an emotion. Trust is an action.

Illustration: Chair (standing)

- To prove I trust a chair, I sit on it. I entrust my weight to the chair.
- If I did not think the chair was trustworthy, I would not sit on it.
- What is important about trust is the object of your trust.
- That is the same for Jesus – to trust Jesus is to entrust your life to him.
- If you thought Jesus was worth trusting – then you wouldn’t turn your back on him.
- But here is the thing – everyone trusts.

Illustration: We go to the shops trusting that they will have what we want (or else we wouldn’t go)! We get rolled into an operating room trusting that the surgeon knows what he/she is doing (or else we wouldn’t get on the bed)! We get into a car, or onto a bus, or into a plane trusting that the driver/pilot has the skill to carry us safely to where we want to go (or we would never travel)!

- And everyone entrusts themselves to something (often many different things).

Illustration: In the world we live often it is money (place wallet on chair), or possessions (places mobile/keys on chair), or our health (place glasses on chair).

- But God wants people to trust him with their lives (sit on the chair). You are more valuable than the things of this world.
- I can have a little bit of trust or a lot of trust. The amount of trust that I have won’t alter the facts about whether the chair will hold me.
- Trustworthiness determined by the **object** – the chair.
- And so, trusting is like a child crossing the road with you. A child takes your hand and crosses a busy road with you, because he/she trusts you. You are not going to let them go.
- It is the same with Jesus.
- You can look at Jesus, you can find out all about him, you can check out all the evidences – but to trust means sitting in his chair. To trust in Jesus means entrusting yourself to him.

Give out the Evangelism Tract (e.g. 'Two Ways to Live')

This is a short explanation describing what a Christian is – it is more detailed than what I have been going through with you – but the basic message is the same.

- A Christian is someone who recognises they have a need (they cannot save themselves from sin), they respond to Jesus, and they respond by trusting him to be Lord of their life.

Do you want me to clarify anything?

Actually Responding

So that brings us to actually responding.

- How do I respond?
- At this point there is choice – either to reject (ignore, defer, continually review) or accept.

Let's read one last passage in the Bible – Mark 4:1-9 (*in the Bible Passage Booklet*).

(Note – Jesus' explanation of the parable (vv. 10-20) is printed in the Bible Passage Booklet).

- Described here - there is one Sower, one seed and four different types of soil.
- The **Sower** is Jesus.
- Jesus plants the **Seed** – his Message.
- The **Soils** describe how different people respond to the message.
 - Path: message has no impact
 - Rocky Places: message accepted, but lost
 - Thorns: message accepted, but crowded out
 - Good soil: accepted and acted upon.
- There is only one soil that bears fruit.
- Friends – the choice I want to ask you to make is whether you would like to accept the message of Jesus. I want to ask you to become a Christian.

How do you become a Christian?

- You call upon God. Speak to him. Pray.

I'll show you how in a moment.

What will happen? - God promises to restore you, cleanse you, forgive you.

A fresh start with a different centre.

What will change? - Your heart.

Look to Jesus. Listen to God's direction as he details in his Word the Bible. Follow his lead.

Will it be easy? – Not always.

At times it will feel costly because you won't be living for this world any longer, but for God.

Am I good enough? - When will you be?

Do I know enough? - When will you?

- There are all sorts of things that may make us want to stop us accepting Jesus – our pride, family, background, self-sufficiency, profession, fear – and the list could go on. But is there anything on that list that promises the free gift of eternal life?

Do you want me to clarify anything?

Becoming a Christian

Let me show you how to become a Christian.

- Becoming a Christian starts like any other restored relationship – you talk, say sorry, and ask to be friends again. We talk to God by praying to him.
 - At the end of the booklet I gave you, there is a prayer (*Note: in the 2W2L Tract it is under the title 'Talk to God'*)
 - You might notice this prayer does what I have suggested when responding – recognises a need, responds to Jesus, places trust in him.
 - Let me read it (so you know what you will be praying) and then, if you want to become a Christian today, then I'll get you to pray it with me. (I'll pray aloud, you can pray quietly in your own mind – because God will hear what you pray)

Okay?

(Read it, Wait, then Pray it, then give pause before moving on)

What next?

- If you just prayed that prayer – then Congratulations! There is a party happening in heaven for you right now!!
 - Don't be concerned that there has not been a flashing of light, angels breaking into song, or that you may feel no different - that is not surprising. Let me assure however you that your status in eternity now looks very different.
 - Let me quickly address the question of: "What next?"
 - What does a Christian do?
- i) **Read the Bible** – you will get to know God better by reading his Word: the Bible – start with a gospel.
- You have read through Mark during this course, so you might want to have a read of Matthew, Luke or John (give out a copy of a gospel booklet). Then move on to a book called Acts.
 - A suggestion would be to read something from the Bible (maybe up to a chapter) each day.

ii) **Pray** – speak to God and ask him to help you know him better.

- God speaks to us in his Word. We speak to him in prayer.

iii) **Fellowship** – it is essential for Christians to have fellowship with other Christians so that you can grow together to be like your Lord.

- Church is a good place to get this fellowship – a place where people who trust in Jesus gather and hear his word spoken (it is not necessarily a building or a location).

Illustration: A burning coal burns longest when with many other burning coals – remove it and it fades out quickly.

You can ensure fellowship by:

- Joining a church that teaches the Bible well and prays to God regularly.
- Joining a ‘The Essential Christian’ Course (or a similar follow-up course) or a Small (Bible Study) Group (give out an invite).

iv) Finally – **live with a changed attitude** towards God, Sin and the World.

- Live in such a way that pleases God (as the Bible says) and shows others that you live for him - not for yourself or the world.
- Becoming a Christian doesn’t change your personality – but it does change you as a person

Illustration:

Think of your new life like a garden that needs some work!

The important thing is that your garden is now an accepted part of God’s kingdom, but there may be some things (perhaps lots of things that need to be worked on – i.e. different sins).

As you grow in your relationship with Jesus, you will change things about the way you live (like pulling up some weeds) and hopefully over time you might have a garden that looks more like the garden of a King!

Now, of course, if you didn’t pray that prayer – then you still can.

When you are ready, you can pray. God is not going anywhere!

- But please let me encourage you to make your decision – sooner rather than later.
- You might want to read through the Booklet I gave you and then decide.
- And of course, feel free to ask me anything you want, whenever.

Conclude

That, my friends, is the end of *JesusWORKS*.

- At the start of this course, the aim was to give you the information you needed to make your own decision about starting a relationship with Jesus.
- My prayer is that you have been helped to know who Jesus is and what he has done for you.

Follow-up

Follow-up is important.

- a. Give the person a gift – ‘Case for Christ’ (Strobel) – Book/DVD.*
- b. Ask the person to fill out a ‘JesusWORKS Feedback Form’ (see ‘JesusWORKS Feedback Form’ on page 47).*
- c. Invite the person to church – connect them to others.*

For the New Believer.

Ensure you:

- d. Talk to the person about getting baptised (c.f. Acts 2:38-41; 8:12, 35-38; 16:13-15, 31-34; 18:8).*
- e. Invite the person to do ‘The Essential Christian’ Course – if with you, ask others to meet with you.*
- f. Invite the person to join a Small Group once they have started or finished ‘The Essential Christian’ Course (or a similar follow-up course).*
- g. After a few weeks, ask the person if they would be willing to be filmed talking about the value of JesusWORKS (see ‘JesusWORKS Video Questions’ on page 50).*

For the Person needing more time.

There are a few follow-up options for you:

- d. Invite the person to continue to meet and read a gospel with you (Matthew, Luke ‘The Essential Jesus’ or John).*
- e. Invite the person to do ‘The Essential Christian’ Course (more suitable for the person who is close to deciding to become a Christian)*

Resources

and

Feedback Forms

How to Write Your Testimony

In *JesusWORKS* session 1, there is a part where you give your *Christian* testimony. What follows is how you might prepare your testimony.

Your 'testimony' is the testimony of Christ and what he has done in your life.

As such, for your *Christian* testimony to be helpful, it should be a testimony to Jesus using you as the example!

The Apostle Peter helpfully challenges Christians to be ready to speak about Jesus when he says:

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (1 Peter 3:15)

So, some brief tips for writing your testimony. It is helpful to:

- remember that the outcome is more important than the process.
- be personal, not 'preachy'.
- keep it short (if written, not more than 500 words).
- use the Word of God (a verse that means something important to you).
- be honest.
- have a good opening sentence.
- have a challenge (e.g. tell others).

Above all...be Christ-centred. Make sure you speak about Jesus!

Here are some suggestions about how to structure your testimony², in either of two 'models':

'Before and After' Model

Before:

How:

After:

Challenge:

'Always Believed' Model

The Present:

The Past:

The Gospel Facts:

Challenge:

Here is a three-part challenge:

1. Take a few moments with a Christian friend to write down your testimony.
2. Give it to one another. Help sharpen the way that you talk about the hope you have in Jesus.
3. Then tell someone who doesn't know Jesus.

² These structures are thanks to Stephen Abbott, *Guidelines for sharing YOUR story!* 1995.

Is the Bible Reliable?

How can I trust that what was written down in the Bible is reliable?

If you could not be present, what factors would you find helpful to establish the truth of an event today?

Eyewitness and Witness Records

It would help if someone who was there wrote down a recollection of the event – of what they saw and heard. In fact, it would be even more helpful if several people wrote down a recollection of that event.

At a simple level, that is what we have with the Gospels – the eyewitness accounts about Jesus at the beginning of the New Testament. Some who were there wrote down what they saw and heard - like Matthew (who wrote the gospel of Matthew), and John (who wrote the gospel of John). On top of those, we also have others who got to write down what they heard from those who were there – like Mark (who wrote the gospel of Mark and who was the likely scribe for Peter who was there), and Luke (who wrote the gospel of Luke after interviewing many who saw and heard Jesus). With the Gospels, we have the eyewitness and attested witness accounts of Jesus.

Copies of Eyewitness and Witness Records

What else would help? Further to those written eyewitness records, it would help if those accounts were carefully copied, many times. The fact that many people take those important written recollections and copy them multiple times adds to the historical reliability of the original event. The presence of *many* copies tells you something of the importance of the original event. And the presence of copies *in different languages* tells you something of the significance and influence of the original event.

When you have many copies you also have the ability to check for error in transmission. Whenever something is copied, errors could be made, but with many copies, you can compare them and see clearly whether errors have been introduced or not (i.e. if four copies say one thing and a fifth contains a difference, it is likely that the fifth is in error).

When it comes to scripture, be it the Old or New Testaments, there are multiple copies of the original documents to compare. Speaking just of the New Testament accounts, literary scholar Bruce Metzger, said this in an interview with investigative journalist Lee Strobel:

‘We have what are called uncial manuscripts, which are written in all-capital Greek letters. Today we have 306 of these, several dating back as early as the third century. A new style of writing, more cursive in nature, emerged in roughly A.D. 800. It is called a minuscule and we have 2,856 of these manuscripts. Then there are also lectionaries, which contain New Testament Scripture in the sequence it was to be read in the early churches at appropriate times during the year. A total of 2,403 of these have been catalogued. That puts the grand total of Greek Manuscripts at 5,664.’³

³ Strobel, L., *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 81.

Strobel then recounts an additional piece of information that Metzger offered:

‘In addition to the Greek documents, he said, there are thousands of other ancient New Testament manuscripts in other languages. There are 8,000 to 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, plus a total of 8,000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian. In all, there are about 24,000 manuscripts in existence’⁴

In the Introduction of the *Greek New Testament* it helpfully provides the total list of manuscripts, with what they record of the New Testament (be it a Gospel, Acts, General Epistle, Pauline Epistle or Revelation), their storage location in the world, and their attested date. The Papyrus, Uncials, Minuscules, Lectionaries and Language versions are all listed.⁵

Testing the Eyewitness and Witness Records

What other factors would help you establish the truth of an event? It would help if the written accounts could be tested.

The passage of time should not make the witnessed recollection of an event any less reliable although it is not uncommon for someone to assert that because something is old it becomes superseded (my grandmother would have a problem with that!).

On the contrary, the passage of time can often help ‘sure up’ the reliability of those written down witness recollections. We live in an age when we can reliably examine and carbon date the copies which we have. For example, we can look at each manuscript and compare the hand writing consistencies, the quality of the ink used, the age of the paper or scroll – and if they match up they should all point to the same time period - which in turn shows the document to be authentic (or not).

With the attested date of the manuscript, it is then possible to consider the time gaps between the original event or document and the copy that survives. Testing the documents is helpful.

The earliest Gospel Manuscript in existence is dated around A.D. 125 which means this copy is only 92 years after the original event (taking the date of Jesus’ death in A.D. 33). There are other Papyri which are dated around A.D. 200 (4 manuscripts), in the second century (1 manuscript), in the third century (30 manuscripts), in the fourth century (22 manuscripts), in the fifth century (8 manuscripts), in the sixth century (14 manuscripts), in the seventh century (13 manuscripts) and in the eighth century (2 manuscripts). That means that there are 95 New Testament manuscripts dated less than 800 years after the actual events.

Compare that to the next most reliable ancient document in history - Homer’s *Iliad* composed about B.C. 800 of which there are only 643 copies. The oldest surviving fragments of the *Iliad* are dated in the second and third centuries (approximately) – a gap of 900 to 1000 years.

⁴ Ibid, 81.

⁵ Aland, B., Aland K., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C.M., Metzger, B.M. (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (4th Ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1998), 1-29.

External Sources

Are there any other factors that may help establish the truth of an event? Yes! How about other sources (friendly or not) which could attest to the truth of the original event? This could be other articles that make mention, or material evidence, or circumstantial connections that help establish date or personnel involved.

For example, looking at coins, artworks, architecture, histories, novels, newspaper clippings, court reports and the like can often testify to people or concerns of an early time even if the topic of those items might be something or someone else.

In the case of the New Testament there is a wealth of helpful external source material – no novels or newspaper clippings - but plenty of surviving material from the time prior, during and following the life of Jesus. It is helpful that there is much evidence mentioning people or events present around the time of Jesus. For example, coins bearing the face of Caesar Augustus (called Octavian) who was in power at the time of Jesus' birth (c.f. Luke 2:1) and Caesar Tiberius who lived at the time of Jesus' death (c.f. Luke 3:1). There are historical writings such as those from Josephus (a Jewish historian) who wrote much about the people, issues, politics and geography of the time of Jesus.

It is even more helpful that there are external sources who mention Jesus himself – not because they believed or followed him, but because he was a historical figure of the time that they wrote about. Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* names Jesus, mentions that his brother was James, that he was called Christ, that he was wise and virtuous, that he had disciples, that he was condemned to death by crucifixion at the hands of Pilate, and that he appeared to have risen three days later.⁶

And there are also references which attest to the effect that Jesus had on people of the time. For example, Pliny the Younger (a lawyer and Roman governor of Bithynia) in his *Letters* wrote about how, under the threat of death, he cross-examined the disciples of Jesus and whether they thought Jesus was indeed 'a god'. Their affirmation would lead to their execution!⁷

Suetonius (a Roman historian) wrote the histories of twelve successive Roman rulers and when writing about Emperor Claudius mentioned that Jewish Christians in Rome caused disturbances at the instigation of 'Chrestus'.⁸

Tacitus (a senator under Emperor Vespasian and governor of Asia) wrote about the fire that destroyed Rome in A.D. 64 and how the then Emperor Nero had blamed it on the Christians – those who followed 'Christus' - a man who had been put to death during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate.⁹

These external sources all help to attest to the reliability of the New Testament accounts about Jesus, his life, ministry and impact.

Those factors that would be helpful in establishing the truth of an event today, are all factors we can look to when trying to establish the truth of the Bible records.

We are on firm historical ground when we pay attention to the Bible.

This extract 'Is the Bible Reliable?' is reproduced from *The Essential Christian*, Chapter 2: Excursus by Ken D Noakes.

⁶ Flavius Josephus, the so-called *Testimonium Flavinium* - two passages: *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.3.3 and 20. 9. 1 – dated A.D. 93.

⁷ Plinius Secundus, *Epistulae* X.96 – dated around A.D. 112.

⁸ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, *The Twelve Caesars (De Vita Caesarum): Life of Claudius* – dated around A.D. 120.

⁹ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annals* - dated around A.D. 116.

Answering Questions

JesusWORKS is set-up to be as helpful as possible for the participants of the course. As such no questions should be asked although questions should always be welcomed.

Experience shows that questions are often asked, and more frequently as the course progresses.

So, what do you do when a question is asked?

These three steps may help:

Step 1 – Restate the Question.

- To love and help the person asking the question, it is important you understand what they are asking. An easy way to do that is to simply restate the question in your own words e.g. “*So you are asking*” or “*Let me restate your question to make sure I understand...*”
- Doing this, gives you time to think about how you might approach an answer and it also checks that you are correctly hearing what is being asked.

Step 2 - Seek to understand what is driving the question.

- Most questions will be motivated by one of three reasons:

a. A Personal dilemma

- That is, something that the person has *experienced or feels* – a ‘heart’ dilemma.
- Aristotle called this *Pathos* (Greek for ‘suffering’ or ‘experience’).
- Answering these kinds of questions involves caring for the person *emotionally*.
- The answer they need to hear should be pastorally sensitive, gracious and gentle.

b. A Theological dilemma

- That is, something that the person wants to know or understand – a ‘head’ dilemma.
- Aristotle called this *Logos* (Greek for ‘word’).
- Answering these kinds of questions involves helping the person *intellectually*.
- The answer they want to hear could quite easily be a right/wrong answer or could help to clarify something that has been said that does not seem to make reasonable sense.

c. An Ethical dilemma

- That is, something that the person may need to change or adjust about the way *they behave* – a ‘hand’ dilemma (that is, a doing/action).
- Aristotle called this *Ethos* (Greek for ‘character’).
- Answering these kinds of questions involves helping the person *apologetically*.
- The answer they may or may not want to hear could challenge a particular behaviour or lifestyle choice. Answering these questions requires you to be credible, unbiased and clear even if not agreeable.

- Now here is the trick. Sometimes the question asked does not clearly indicate what is driving it. So, if you have not understood what is driving the question you will answer the question in a way that may not be as helpful.
- For example, a person could ask: “*Is God always loving?*”. To answer most helpfully it would be good to know what is driving the question.
 - It could be that the person has experienced something that makes them question whether God is loving (personal – pathos - heart).
 - It could be that the person is seeking to understand what the Bible says about love (theological – logos - head).
 - It could be that the person is fearful that God will not accept them because of some behaviour or sin that they are engaged in (ethics – ethos - hand).
- Handle this best, by asking a follow-up question if needed. For example: “*Tell me why you ask that question?*” or “*Do you ask that because ...?*”
- Make sure you understand what is driving the question – heart, head or hand. You are then in a good place to answer it most helpfully.

Step 3 – Answer the Question

- Your job now is to attempt to answer the question by getting the person to the Bible.
- Your starting point in answering should aim to address what is driving the question – the heart, head or hand dilemma.
- Here you are on familiar territory! You have a heart, head and hand, and you are a person who has been shaped by the gospel. So, aim to answer the question in a way that you would find most helpful.
- The key, however, is that your answer moves the person to the Bible.
 - If the question is driven by a *personal* dilemma – then it would be helpful to hear how the Bible addresses your experience.
 - If the question is driven by a *theological* dilemma – then it would be helpful to look at the Bible to clarify or offer the answer. Usually the answer will be helped by the context of the passage – so read before and after and see if the answer becomes more obvious with the wider view.
 - If the question is driven by an *ethical* dilemma – then it would be helpful to see in the Bible how it addresses particular behaviours. Often the New Testament Epistles (letters) will address the way a Christian should live – the ‘how’ in the later chapters follows the ‘why’ of the earlier chapters.
- With any question, you want to allow the gospel to shape your answer. For it is the gospel which addresses us *personally*, it is the gospel which transforms our *thinking*, and it is the gospel which called us to change our *behaviour*.

Final Encouragements

- Remember that God is sovereign, Jesus is Lord, and the Spirit is there to intercede (Rom 8:26). Be confident that you are well supported in your efforts to offer the reasons for what you believe and know.
- Recognise that when a question is asked which seems challenging, your role is to be a witness to that which you know to be true and correct. If you don't feel you have the knowledge to answer truthfully or correctly, then don't answer. Instead say something like: *'Good question, I am not sure that I can helpfully answer that question right now, but I am happy to look at that and come back to you next time'*. You then have the time before you next meet to work it out.
- One of the great things about getting 'difficult' questions, is that you will be sharpened as much as the person asking the question will be helped. And over time, you will find that you will get better and more knowledgeable in the way you answer the question/s.
- At times, the questions asked may be totally off topic. In your wisdom as a Leader, you will need to decide if it is helpful to answer the question at that time or to defer the question to be addressed later. This is especially important if you are leading a group or if the question being asked is inappropriately personal.
- Finally, don't win the argument yet lose the person. Your manner in answering questions is always more important than the answers that you offer. Not all answers will be agreeable to the questioner. It is okay if the person takes issue with *what* you say (content); it is preferable that they don't take issue with *how* you say it (manner).

Have fun. Work hard. Be faithful. Pray lots.

JesusWORKS Feedback Form

Thank you for participating in *JesusWORKS*.

Our hope is that this course will have helped you consider what has been said *by* Jesus and *about* Jesus so that you are in a better position to make your own decision about whether he is a person worth following.

Now that you have completed the course, you may have feedback you would be willing to share with us. There may also be ways that you would like us to help you going forward.

Below are some questions – please answer as many as you can/wish.

1. Before you began *JesusWORKS* would you have described yourself as (*tick one*):

- ☐ someone who didn't believe in God.
- ☐ someone who didn't know if there was a God or not.
- ☐ someone who believed in God but not in Jesus Christ.
- ☐ someone who thought they were Christian but wasn't.
- ☐ a Christian (with personal commitment to Jesus Christ).
- ☐ something else..._____

2. Before you began *JesusWORKS* how would you have described your attitude to Christianity? I was... (*tick – one or more*)

- ☐ Hostile ("It's a waste of time")
- ☐ Disinterested ("I'm here because someone else wants me to be")
- ☐ Open ("There might be something to it")
- ☐ Considering ("Maybe Christianity is okay - we'll see")
- ☐ Trying it out ("I'm willing to give this a go")
- ☐ Accepting ("It's okay, but I have reservations")
- ☐ A committed Christian ("I openly called myself a believer")
- ☐ Loyal ("I am willing to tell others about Jesus")
- ☐ Other..._____

3. What is your attitude toward Jesus now? (*tick one*)

- ☐ I have come to see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died in my place and I have put my life into His hands.
- ☐ I prayed the prayer at the end of the course.
- ☐ I am interested to learn more but as yet uncommitted.
- ☐ I am unsure.
- ☐ No change from before.
- ☐ Other..._____

4. Throughout *JesusWORKS* we talked about some Biblical concepts. What one-phrase reflection would you offer in response...

a. The BIBLE is..._____

b. JESUS is..._____

c. SIN is ..._____

d. The CROSS is important because..._____

e. The RESURRECTION means..._____

f. CHRISTIANITY is most concerned about..._____

g. To REPENT means to..._____

h. TRUST/FAITH is ..._____

5. If you have become a Christian in this course, an appropriate next step is to get baptised. Would you like to get baptised? (*tick*)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Talk to me - I need more information.

6. Would you be interested in continuing on by joining a Small (Bible Study) Group? (*tick*)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Talk to me - I need more information.

7. Are there other questions for which you would like to get answers?

8. Any other comments which you would like to make?

Thank you for doing *JesusWORKS*.

Our prayer is that we might have served and cared for you well.

This form will remain confidential. Only the Ministry Team will view it. No details will be given out.

Name: _____

If you would like further information or for us to make contact with you, please provide your preferred contact details.

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please post or hand in to:

JesusWORKS (follow-up) Video Questions

Thanks for agreeing to be videoed about *JesusWORKS*.

The footage will be used in different formats to help promote the *JesusWORKS* course.

Below are the questions you will be asked, but please don't be freaked out. They are offered because it is helpful to come to filming having reflected on the course in specific areas. For some of these questions, you may have nothing to say, which is fine. For other questions, they might want to draw out something that you found very helpful in the course – that is the kind of footage we are after.

The format is like an interview - with you being the only person on camera, talking to the interviewer who is off camera. That means you don't have to stare into a camera and the whole exercise should be more relational. There will be no opportunity to read out any written answers, so don't burden yourself by crafting your answers to the following questions. A suggestion (if you are worried about how you express your answers) is to bullet point your reflections for the questions below so you can refer to them on the day of filming. Please don't stress about this exercise.

The footage will then be edited and you will be shown a copy to approve before the footage is used publicly.

We hope that is helpful. Thanks again for doing this.

QUESTIONS

You

1. Tell me your Name
2. If working – what do you do? If studying or studied – what do/did you study?

JesusWORKS

3. Overall, what would you say is the value of *JesusWORKS*?
4. Can you describe the format of the *JesusWORKS* course that you did (i.e. small group/1-2-1, at church/café etc.)
 - 4a. If in a Café, what was it like doing *JesusWORKS* in a public place? (i.e. we use a print out of the gospel of Mark or the Bible passages)
5. What is the structure of *JesusWORKS* (i.e. number of sessions, time, frequency etc.)?
6. What is covered in *JesusWORKS* (generally)?

JesusWORKS – Session by Session.

(If helpful at this point, review the course content on pages 13 to 38 of this booklet or look up <https://churchcentralonline.com/who-is-jesus/> which also includes the course content.)

7a. Session 1 – looks at how we know if the Bible is reliable. What was most helpful for you?

7b. Session 1 – introduces Jesus and looks at the authority he has as a teacher - over evil spirits, over sickness and sin, over nature, over death and finally over people. How was this helpful in understanding Jesus better?

8a. Session 2 – looks at the unpopular topic of sin. Did you find this session offensive?

8b. Session 2 – looks at how and why Jesus died on the cross. Did you learn anything helpful here?

9a. Session 3 – spends time looking the resurrection of Jesus. How did this help you in faith?

9b. Session 3 – considers the implications of Jesus being resurrected – he is vindicated, sin is dealt with finally, and Jesus is declared as judge. What was most helpful about this session?

10a. Session 4 – is crunch time, having spent three sessions looking at what Christianity claims. In this session we look at what it means to be a Christian.

Did you pray a prayer of commitment? Were you respected in the way you responded?

10b. Session 4 – if you accepted Jesus during *JesusWorks*, were you give direction on what to do next?

Testimony

11. If you could say anything to a person considering doing *JesusWORKS*, what would you tell them?

12. Remembering back to before you did the *JesusWORKS* course, what were your expectations or fears? Having done the course, were those expectations met or those fears realised?

13. Please look into the camera and invite people to *JesusWORKS* (and if you can do that in a language other than English, please do).

Thank you so much for taking the time to pre-think about these questions.

JesusWORKS Leader's Training Feedback Form

Name (Optional): _____

Date: _____

Trainer: _____

How would you rate the following (on a scale of 1-4) with 1 being the lowest & 4 being the highest rating?

Course Structure	1	2	3	4
Course Content	1	2	3	4
Training Environment	1	2	3	4
Training Co-ordination & organisation	1	2	3	4
Training Methodology	1	2	3	4

Any comments you have to further qualify your ratings above?

What did you like best about the course / content?

What could we have done better?

Area(s) of evangelism you might like to be involved? *(tick as many as are appropriate)*

- ☐ Run a *JesusWORKS* course when needed.
- ☐ Be an assistant leader at a *JesusWORKS* course.
- ☐ 1 to 1 with a non-Christian friend.
- ☐ Small Group or church gathering outreach.
- ☐ Other _____

Thank you for giving us your thoughts.