

# Leader's Guide



**christianity  
explained.**

**Discovering the Christian  
message through Mark's gospel**

**LEADER'S GUIDE**



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**Discovering the Christian  
message through Mark's gospel**



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Christianity Explained Ministry

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# Why should I lead **Christianity Explained?**

# What is Christianity Explained?

Christianity Explained is a six-session evangelistic course designed especially for people with little or no knowledge about Jesus and the Bible. The course aims to teach the fundamentals of the Christian faith using the gospel of Mark, which is chosen for its simplicity.

It's an evangelistic course that seeks to lead the person to genuine faith and repentance by the end of the six sessions. The course takes a low-key approach in that there is no attempt to pressure or manipulate people into a commitment, though the need for a genuine faith-response is clearly and regularly presented.

Christianity Explained teaches only one key point per session, building on what was learnt in the previous session. This allows participants to gradually build their knowledge of Jesus without becoming overwhelmed with too much information upfront.

In the first three studies, the course builds into the participant's mind some basic knowledge about Jesus Christ and his finished work – that he is the Son of God, that he died for our sins, and that he was physically resurrected. During the first three studies, participants are encouraged to read progressively through the gospel of Mark at home to further their learning.

In the remaining three studies we address the question: *How does the finished work of Jesus apply to me now?* We cover some of the key concepts of Christianity: faith versus works, repentance and believing.

This Guide contains helpful tips for running Christianity Explained, and the Christianity Explained website provides additional resources and tools to help in a variety of ways to share the Gospel. Additional resources include the Christianity Explained Session Videos, Christianity Explained (Kids Edition) and Christianity Explained (Youth Edition).

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## Why share the Gospel?

There is no greater thrill in the Christian life than seeing a person come out of eternal darkness into the light of Christ's Kingdom. So why is it that so many Christians are reluctant to share the Gospel? You would think that knowing the Good News of Jesus and the saving grace that is offered, all Christians would be excited and enthusiastic about sharing their faith. You would think that we would want all people to be saved.

### Who's job is it to share the Gospel?

Some Christians believe that evangelism is not their responsibility, that it rests on the shoulders of trained pastors or ministers, or perhaps those who have the gift of evangelism. While it is true that not every Christian has the gift of evangelism, the Bible calls us to share our faith and be prepared to give an account for what we believe:

*“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

### Matthew 28:18-20

*“Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.”*

### 1 Peter 3:15-16a

Clearly, we are all called to be witnesses and are instructed to be both prepared to give an answer for what we believe, and to actually seek opportunities to do so (“go and make disciples of all the nations”). Yet despite this, many do not share their faith. Why is this?

# Fears in presenting the Gospel

**Below is a list of fears or concerns that some Christians have in presenting or sharing the Gospel.**

## **What if I cannot answer a question?**

Many Christians feel that if they are not theologians they are not equipped to explain the Gospel and fear that they may need to debate with sceptics. Another fear is that they feel that they do not know enough and may be made to look foolish. However, the reality is that you do not need to be a theologian to share what you believe. Often people who ask you to explain what you believe may, in fact, have a genuine interest and desire to understand.

Most of the questions people ask about Christianity are very similar and/or based on the same themes. At the end of this guide there is a section that covers frequently asked questions that will help equip you to respond to those questions.

One of the methods that we use in Christianity Explained which is outlined later in this guide, is to not make up answers to questions, but to admit you do not know the answer, and then seek an opportunity to research and find out the answer later.

Some questions that people ask may also be a smokescreen, where the person is not really interested in the answer but is just trying to discount Christianity. If this happens, it is relatively easy to respectfully say that the question, while interesting, is not the core issue. The core issue is who Jesus is and how through faith in what he has done on the cross, *we can be forgiven and become accepted by God.*

## **What if people reject me?**

The fear of rejection is one that many Christians struggle with. In fact, it may be the main obstacle for many in sharing their faith. In some countries and cultures, declaring yourself to be a Christian can have dramatic consequences ranging from being ostracised from your family, persecution, jail and even death. But for many Christians, this is not the case. It is important to realise that only Jesus can save people and that as Christians, we are to model his love to the world. This requires us to put Jesus first and be willing, if necessary, to sacrifice our popularity in order to share the Good News. Often the fear of being rejected is unfounded, and if you are prepared to give a gracious answer or witness for what you believe, people will mostly respond positively to you. However, if you are a Christian, it is helpful to remember that our Lord and Saviour was rejected.

One of the advantages of running a course like Christianity Explained is that those who sign up to do the course are already interested in the Christian message and have committed to come to six sessions to hear about Christianity.

## **What if I get it wrong?**

The fear of getting it wrong can be a legitimate fear. Sometimes this fear is that by getting it wrong we might turn someone away from God rather than help them to come to know Jesus. Christianity Explained is a very helpful tool to guide you, and the participant, through a structured, logical and clear explanation of the Gospel. By using this simple yet profound outline of the Christian faith, you can have confidence that the course is Biblically based, and that each of the sessions is built on the truth of God's Word.

## **But my life is my witness!**

Some Christians have formed the view that their "life is their witness", and as such their responsibility to share the Gospel message is fulfilled. While it is true that we need to live a life that is attractive and God-honouring, and that the example we set is important, simply living a Christian based life does not in itself explain to non-believers the reason for the hope we have. We are all called to be witnesses, this is not meant to be a passive thing, but for us to seek opportunities to introduce people to the Gospel.

## **I am too busy**

Life can be busy and full of challenges. Many of us are, let's face it, too busy. However often the busyness is of our own making. Sometimes it is about setting priorities. If something is important to you, you will find the time to do it. What can be more important than sharing the love of Jesus with someone?

From a practical viewpoint, looking at your diary and setting aside a designated time for running Christianity Explained provides a commitment to prioritise a time for sharing your faith. While there are many other methods and possible opportunities to share the Gospel, in this introduction we are focussing on the Christianity Explained course. If you are too busy, look at your diary in a month or two and you will most likely see very little scheduled. In that case, planning ahead will give you the time that you perhaps didn't think was available to you.

# Fears in seeking the Gospel

What are the main obstacles people perceive about attending a Christian course?

**There are three common fears or anxieties that many people have when being asked to attend a Christian course or event. Christianity Explained has been designed with those fears in mind. One of the important things to emphasise in any promotion for the course is that Christianity Explained is a safe environment to hear about the Christian faith, where participants can ask questions and will not be made to feel uncomfortable.**

Imagine that you are not a Christian and a friend asks you to attend a Christianity Explained course, or to join a Bible Study group. What fears do you think you may feel about participating in such a group? There are at least three which we need to consider.

## **Fear of answering questions**

The greatest of all fears is being made to appear foolish in front of the rest of the group. People fear that they will be asked questions about the Bible or the Christian faith, and their ignorance will be exposed to ridicule. When they are being invited, they need to be assured that this will not happen.

## **Fear of praying aloud**

People are very apprehensive that the group leader will say to them, "Will you open the session with a prayer?". Again, when inviting people to attend, tell them also, that they will not be asked to pray aloud.

In fact, it is strongly recommended that, when you are conducting the Christianity Explained sessions, you do not either open or close with prayers. The classes are a fact-finding exercise for non-Christians, and as such, public prayer is inappropriate. You, of course, should pray for the group members at home, and encourage other Christians to support you in prayer.

## **Fear of reading aloud**

Many people cannot, or do not wish to, read aloud. Assure the person being invited that they will not be asked to do so.

## **THE INVITATION**

When you are inviting a person to do the Christianity Explained course with you, assure him or her like this:

*You will not be asked to pray, answer questions from the Bible, or to read aloud. There will, however, be ample opportunity for you to ask questions for discussion.*

It is important this point is made with the invitation, not later on.

## **THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE HUNGRY TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS**

While many non-believers have fears about going to Church, or attending a course like Christianity Explained, that does not mean they are totally against anything to do with Christianity. Their fears are often a result of not wanting to stand out, or be different, or made somehow to feel inadequate. It can take some courage for some people to go to Church for the first time, or to commit to doing Christianity Explained.

Many seekers have the view that they will be made to feel not good enough. Ironically, of course, we know that none of us are "good enough" and that is why Jesus endured the cross to pay for our sins. Here is where it is important to understand their anxiety and to ensure that when running the course, we are welcoming and friendly and encourage their attendance and questions.

One of the misconceptions that many Christians have been led to believe is that people are not interested in hearing about Jesus. While it is true that some are not interested, God has placed eternity in the human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and many hunger for a relationship with the Creator. Christianity Explained is a proven approach that provides a safe environment for the seeker to hear about Jesus in a clear way, while addressing the three common fears that many have.



# Running Christianity Explained

# Spiritual Disciplines

## YOUR OWN FAITH JOURNEY

If you are to lead a Christianity Explained course it is critical that you yourself have a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. We encourage you to continue in your own faith journey, to remain faithful and to seek to honour and glorify God in your life, and to be obedient in seeking to share your love for Jesus with others.

## PRAYER AND PRAYER SUPPORT

Prior to, and throughout each Christianity Explained course, it is important to pray for God's protection and guidance, as well as praying for each of the individuals participating in the course. Pray that the Holy Spirit would open the hearts and

minds of each of your participants.

It is also suggested that you ask others to join you in praying for the course. Ask them also to pray that the hearts and minds of your participants would be opened, but also ask that they pray for you as a leader. Ask that they pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you and give you the right words to lead people to Jesus.

In your Church, we suggest that you provide the names of any participants to the Bible study groups, or to a dedicated prayer team, and ask them to pray for each of them (you can provide just first names to maintain confidentiality). Similarly, you may have some faithful Christians that you know who would be willing to support you in prayer.

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## Practical tips

### Practical tips for running a Christianity Explained course.

#### Be prepared

If you are hosting a Christianity Explained course, it is important to be prepared. We have discussed the importance of you yourself having a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ and praying for the course. It is also very important that you know the course well and have practiced the illustrations (such as the Book Illustration and so on).

#### Use the same Bible translation

Wherever possible have the participants use the same Bible translation. The course materials use the New Living Translation (NLT), and this is the translation that we recommend. It has proven useful to provide each participant with the same copy of the New Testament if possible. That way, when reading passages of the Bible, not only can you ask them to turn to the chapter and verse, but you can also tell them the page number that the passage can be found on.

This is very helpful for those unaccustomed to reading the Bible and takes away any potential embarrassment that they may feel about being unfamiliar with looking up each of the readings.

In addition, using different translations may be confusing for some people. It is simpler for everyone to be reading the same words.

#### Where to run the course

For small to medium size groups (up to twelve participants), we suggest that you run the course in your own home. Many non-Christians will find going to a Church to be threatening, whereas going to someone's house is a little less "religious". Also, when it is held in your own home, you may find it easier to show hospitality and make the participants feel comfortable and assured.

#### Duration of each session

Typically, each session lasts for an hour to an hour and a half depending on questions, discussion and so on. Each study on its own should take about 30 minutes.

#### Hospitality

It is important to make the participants in the course welcome. Over the six sessions (usually held once a week) you will have the opportunity to get to know people and often develop friendships. Be friendly and welcoming. If you are hosting the course at your home, often it is helpful to have tea and coffee available and to start the course with conversations that will help you to get to know them, and them to get to know and trust you.

Non-Christians can often have a view that Christians are very different to them and maybe even a little strange. While it is true that Christians hold different beliefs than non-Christians, we are just people who have a hope, a purpose and a future in Jesus. Being friendly and genuinely interested in them can break down barriers and help them to feel confident that they will not be judged (which is a common fear when people come to a Christian course or Church).

### **Limit distractions**

Wherever you are conducting the course, ensure that you have comfortable chairs for participants, and if it is a group, that the chairs are arranged in a way that everyone can see the presentation. Try and limit any distractions, in making sure that all media is turned off, pets are put somewhere else, and the environment is uncluttered.

### **Do not have the Leader's Guide open**

When you are taking a group through Christianity Explained do not have this Leader's Guide open in front of you. Rather, summarise each study on small sheets of paper with the key points, Bible readings and so on.

Do not try to hide these notes. You are not expected to memorise the course! You are strongly urged, however, to practice each study beforehand.

### **Do not start or end the course with prayer**

Remember it is critical to make people feel comfortable and safe in the course. Earlier in this Guide the main fears that people have were outlined. One of them is that people can be very apprehensive about being asked to pray aloud, or even, for some, hearing others pray as it is very foreign to them.

Of course, it is very important that the leader prays for the course and for each of the participants, but that should be done before and after they leave.

It may be appropriate at the completion of the six sessions to ask if you can pray for them, and if they give permission you may do so. Very few refuse at this point as by then they may have learned to trust you, and they may have asked Jesus into their heart.

### **Reminder**

Each week, earlier in the day or the day before, it is suggested to send a reminder to each of the

participants telling them that you are looking forward to seeing them for Christianity Explained, reminding them of the day and time and asking them to let you know if they cannot make it.

### **Balance teaching and discussion**

We are trying to impart knowledge about the Christian faith, so this is more a teaching session than a dialogue meeting. However all groups function better, and people stay more alert and awake, if there is a healthy interplay of questions and discussion. The leader should promote this, but at the same time be aware that there is certain content to get across. Remember, you only have six sessions!

In addition, as the leader, you are presenting the truth of the Gospel as explained in the Bible. It is not a case of different people's opinions or wishes. The Gospel is clear, and your role, in a faithful, engaging and clear way is to help people to understand, and hopefully come into a place where they put their faith in Jesus.

### **Assume nothing**

Emphasise at the beginning of the course that Christianity Explained is designed to "assume nothing", meaning that no assumptions are made about participants prior knowledge of Jesus Christ or Christianity.

It is important to understand that a wide variety of people with different backgrounds and knowledge may participate in a Christianity Explained course. This spectrum ranges from people from other countries that have never even heard anything about God, to experienced pastors seeking to further understand how to present the Gospel in a clear and compelling way. Because of this, explaining that we assume nothing means that taking the time to demonstrate tasks, such as how to look up a Bible verse, will not be seen as patronising and displays respect for anyone who is not familiar with the Bible.

You may find that there are people who do the course who have a "Christian background". That is, they have attended Church for many years, know the Bible well, maybe serve in a ministry area or two. Do not assume that they are saved. One common outcome of the course is that many have believed themselves to be Christian, but through the course have realised that they have placed their faith in their good works, rather than in Grace.

Unfortunately this Biblical ignorance is extremely common, both inside and outside the Church,

with many believing that “a Christian is a person who tries to live a good life according to the Ten Commandments”, or some associated answer. This is why a course like Christianity Explained can be so helpful in that it points to the Gospel and clearly explains the truth of “salvation by grace alone” and “justification by faith”.

*“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”*

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

### **Reassure people that there are no dumb questions**

One of the big fears that many people have is to be made to look and feel foolish. At the beginning of the course make sure to encourage people to ask questions and to reassure them that there is no such thing as a dumb question - all questions are valid and welcome.

One of the great advantages of Christianity Explained is that it gives people an opportunity, in a safe environment, to ask as many questions as they like. Let’s face it, you cannot stop the preacher in the middle of a sermon and ask “what did you mean by that?”, or “I have always wondered about ...”.

### **When to use session handouts**

There are handouts for the participants which summarise the key points of the lesson. Have them printed and ready before the session. A helpful approach is to make sure you give them out after the lesson and not before or during, otherwise people are likely to read the summary and be distracted during the presentation. Also, a summary at the end of each session reinforces the key points of the session as the last thing they hear.

### **At home reading**

At the end of each session, participants are asked to read a section of the book of Mark at home (detailed in the session handouts). Encourage them to write down any questions they have or things they do not understand in the reading before the next session. Explain that most likely, if they do not write the questions down, they will probably forget them. It can be helpful to explain that while the Bible is a Holy Book, it is the words that are holy, and it is quite okay to underline words or passages and write questions or comments in the Bible.

At the beginning of each session, provide a question time so that people can ask their

questions. Often when someone asks a question, others in the group (if it is a group course) comment that they too have always wanted to know the answer to that.

### **Do not guess or make up answers**

You may be asked questions that you are unsure how to answer. Do not guess or make up an answer, and do not dismiss the question.

One approach which is very helpful is to have a notebook for questions. At the beginning of the course explain that it is possible that someone might ask a question that is going to be covered in detail in a later session. If so, write the question in the notebook and explain that at the end of the course you will go through the notebook to make sure that all of those questions have been answered.

In addition, if you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, admit that you do not know, but write it in the notebook and let them know that you will do some research and have an answer for them the following week or by the end of the course.

This approach has some advantages. Firstly, it shows the participants that you take their questions seriously. Secondly it takes the pressure off you, as it gives you time to go and research or seek advice.

Also, at the end of this guide is “The 20 most asked questions” as a resource for you. These cover the typical questions that people ask throughout the course and give answers that you can use.

### **Catch-up sessions**

The six sessions of Christianity Explained build on each other and have been written to clearly unfold the Good News of Jesus. Because it is a six-session course, usually held over six weeks, it is likely that some will miss a session because of illness, work commitments or for some other reason.

At the beginning of the course, it is helpful to explain how important it is to come to each session but recognise that something might happen which causes them to miss a week. If this is the case arrange a catch-up session with them prior to the next session (so that they still do each session in order). You might ask them to come a half an hour or so earlier the next week, or catch up with them on another day, or if you just can’t catch them in person, another option would be to send them a link to the session video on our YouTube.

## The Assessment Sheet

We have outlined that it is important to assume nothing, and this often becomes very evident at the end of the course when participants are asked to complete the Assessment Sheet.

There have been many occasions where we have been surprised to see how people respond to the questions. Many times, we have believed that someone was already a Christian only to discover in their Assessment Sheet that they were not. Other times someone who appeared disinterested in the course came to give their lives in a powerful way to Jesus in the end.

The Assessment Sheet is a valuable and useful tool, to see where people are at in terms of their spiritual journey after completing the course. It is also useful to see if they would like to attend a follow-up course and/or be introduced to a Church.

Make sure that you ask the participants to

complete the Assessment Sheet at the end of the course and collect it then. If you give the sheet to them and they take it away, there is little chance that you will get it back.

## Other Christians in the group

You may have other Christians join the group, either because they want to learn how to present the course, out of general interest, or because they are supporting a friend. Some well-meaning Christians cannot help answering questions or asking deep theological questions that are off topic. This can be extremely unhelpful and may mean that visitors retreat into their shells or become so confused that the key messages of the Gospel are missed.

It is suggested that you speak with the other Christians prior to the course and ask that they be conscious of the other participants, and remain in the background, allowing you to lead the course and answer any questions that are asked.

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## Your role as a leader

One challenge that you may face as a leader of Christianity Explained is disappointment when people who have completed a course do not make a commitment to Jesus. It is sometimes very difficult after spending six sessions with people, hearing their stories, investing time in them, sharing the life changing truth of the Gospel with them, to see them not take that step.

At these times it is easy to be discouraged and disappointed, and also to think that somehow you have let them, and God, down.

Remember that your role is to present the Gospel faithfully and truthfully. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict people. While our role is to be prepared and do the best job we can, ultimately, we cannot convince people into faith. We cannot, by the strength of our own words, open their hearts to Jesus. It is helpful to remind yourself that there were many in Jesus' time who met with him, saw his miracles and heard his teaching, and yet still rejected Him.

In addition, sometimes you and Christianity Explained might only be one part of the person's journey.

It may be that there are others who will come into that person's life who will lead them to Jesus.

We should not be surprised when some reject the Gospel, or accept it and fall away. In these instances remind yourself of the parable of the farmer scattering seed:

*"The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"*

**Matthew 13:19-23**

# Prayer of Commitment

**Do not be shy about the Prayer of Commitment. Yet also do not believe that the prayer is a magic formula.**

The Gospel has the power to change lives, eternal destiny and to change people. In the last two sessions of Christianity Explained, a “Prayer of Commitment” or “Sinner’s Prayer” is discussed and in the last session, people are invited, if they are at that point, to say a prayer of commitment similar to the following:

*“Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. I am sorry for going my own way. Please forgive me for all of my sin. Thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sin. I agree to turn from my old ways and follow you as my Saviour and Lord. Please come and take first place in my life. Amen”*

They can say this prayer silently in their own heart, or aloud if they wish. Make it very clear that this is a decision that only they can make, and if they have not reached this point in their journey, that is totally fine.

Some leaders balk at this point and feel too uncertain or shy to offer the Prayer of Commitment. Do not be reluctant, it may well be that the person is ready to take a step and simply needs you to guide them. Equally though, do not try to convince anyone to say a prayer that they are not genuine about.

As a disclaimer, there has been a view held by some in Christian circles, that saying the Prayer of Commitment is all that is required, that it is like a magic formula and once spoken that person is saved regardless of whether they have repented, or regardless of how they live. This is not supported Biblically. The Prayer of Commitment can be an indication that someone has opened their heart to Jesus and has started their salvation from that point. However, the parable of the

farmer scattering seed on the previous page shows that many fall away after a short time and saying a prayer at one point in your life is not all that is required. In the book of Matthew, Jesus gives us a warning to emphasise that a relationship with him is the critical thing, not just saying one prayer at one point in time.

*“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.”*

**Matthew 7:21-23**

We find that the use of a mini-booklet (often called a tract) that summarises key the Christian beliefs is a useful addition to give to participants in the later sessions, and these often have an example Prayer of Commitment as well. We use and recommend the ‘Knowing God Personally’ booklet produced by ‘Power to Change’. You can purchase these on their website at [www.powertochange.org.au](http://www.powertochange.org.au). They may offer discounts when ordering larger quantities, so we recommend contacting them. If you encounter any issues sourcing an appropriate booklet please get in contact with us and we can provide recommendations.

If you choose not to use a mini booklet, we have included an example Prayer of Commitment on the back of the weekly handouts for sessions 4-6.

# How to get better at sharing the Gospel

The simple way to get better at anything is to practice. Like any part of life, the more you do something, particularly if you have prepared, the better you will get and the more comfortable you will be doing it.

This is also true of presenting the Christianity Explained course. Running the course multiple times means that you become more familiar with the material, you become better at presenting the illustrations used throughout the course, and you become more confident answering questions. The key point though is to start!

This guide has been written to assist you in running the course. Also, the Christianity Explained Session Videos are an example that you can use that will demonstrate how to present the course. The main difference between the video presentation and an in-person presentation is that participants can ask questions during the in-person presentation, and that over six sessions you can build relationships and trust, whereas a video is impersonal in that way.

*If you want your work to bear fruit, to see results, present Christianity Explained regularly and consistently.*

Another advantage of presenting Christianity Explained on a regular basis besides becoming more comfortable with presenting the course, is that over time, you may be blessed by seeing more people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. You may see individuals, couples, families and even communities change as they open their hearts to Jesus and begin their Christian journey. It will also change your heart and keep you grounded in the core fundamentals of the Christian faith.

HumeRidge Church of Christ, based in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia (which is the hub for Christianity Explained) offers Christianity Explained every term (four times a year). This consistent approach to evangelism has been an important focus for the Church and has resulted in many people hearing the Good News over the years. This intentional commitment to evangelism has been a wonderful blessing to all of those involved. If you are part of a Church that wishes to offer Christianity Explained, it can prove to be very effective to offer the course on a consistent and regular basis rather than as a one-off event.

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## Who might be interested?

**The short answer to the question of who might be interested in doing Christianity Explained is: anyone!**

One of the interesting things about the Christianity Explained course is that people with all sorts of backgrounds and interests may wish to attend. Possibly the most common type of person is someone who either knows they are not a Christian but is searching, or those who think they

are a Christian but believe that doing the course may be helpful for them.

However, it is important to not assume anything!

If you run Christianity Explained regularly you may find that sometimes one person does the course and then encourages their wife or husband to do the next one (and sometimes comes along with them).

# Ways to present Christianity Explained

**There are multiple ways to effectively use Christianity Explained and we have provided resources to facilitate a variety of methodologies. The main and most common approach is to use the six sessions, typically one a week, to take the participants through the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.**

*Below are some ways to use Christianity Explained:*

## 1. Small Groups

A small group can be defined as somewhere between two and twelve people (plus the presenter/s). This approach works very well, and there are advantages to this style. Firstly, in a group setting, a person may not feel as self-conscious or intimidated because there are others in the group. Also, often in a group setting people ask questions that others are interested in but may not have asked, and helpful conversations and relationships can form over the duration of the course.

In addition, if you as presenter are running Christianity Explained courses on a regular basis, having groups of people means that you can share the Good News of the Gospel to many more than if you only focussed on one person at a time.

## 2. Couple to Couple

Learning to present Christianity Explained as a couple and having a shared ministry that seeks to reach the lost is a wonderful ministry that you can do together. As a couple, presenting the course together can utilise the strengths and different skills that you possess and doing ministry together can be an amazing blessing. Another benefit is that often one may have a real strength in Church history, or in hospitality, while the other's strength may be in apologetics or answering difficult questions in a clear and helpful way. It also has the advantage that if one person is unwell or unable to make that session for whatever reason, the other can continue in their absence.

If you are a couple that is able to present Christianity Explained together, presenting the course to other couples can work very effectively.

## 3. One-to-One or One-to-a-Couple

There are times where a one-to-one approach is appropriate. This can be where someone has approached you or the Church and it is felt that they may respond better to a personalised

approach. Or it could be that only one person has signed up for the course. Christianity Explained is a tool that works well regardless of the size of the audience and over time we have found that on those occasions where only one person has indicated an interest in the next course, that there is a reason for that, and that God has set up that situation for reasons that become clearer during the running of the course.

A word of caution here, if the course is one-to-one, it is strongly suggested to ensure that, if possible, a male presenter conduct the course with a male participant and a female presenter with a female participant.

## 4. Large Groups/Events

While Christianity Explained initially has been designed as a six-session course, there are other applications that have also proven to be an effective way of sharing the Gospel. One such method is to run the course not over six sessions, but to use a modified two-part presentation. In this method the first part comprises sessions 1-3 of the original Christianity Explained course, and the second part covers sessions 4-6.

This approach has been designed to accommodate either a single event comprising two 90-minute sessions with a break in between, or alternatively, it can be delivered as a presentation split across two separate days. These two options are detailed below, with specific resources available on the Christianity Explained website.

### OPTION ONE: Single Event Presentation

This approach has been used in Church organised events both in Australia and overseas. The structure entails presenting part one, followed by a break for lunch or a meal, and then proceeding with part two.

This approach is beneficial as it does not require a six-week commitment from those wanting to hear about the Christian faith. Additionally, it can function as an evangelistic event, either wrapping up a Church series on sharing one's faith or initiating such a series.

Another advantage of this style is that Churches can publicise that there will be a Christianity Explained event and encourage everyone in the Church to attend and invite friends and

neighbours. The Christianity Explained event can then be presented by someone familiar with the course (and others can observe how the course is structured for them too to learn how to present).

The Single Event Presentation style has been used with groups ranging from 15 people in a small Church to over 380 people.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it is a lot for people to absorb and even with a break between, three hours of presentations can be difficult for some to maintain interest and concentration.

### **OPTION TWO: Two Session Event Presentation**

A variation of the Single Event Presentation method is to run the program over two sessions (most likely a week apart). Churches, or other groups can use this approach as a special event. For example, one Church ran an event over two Tuesday evenings, and advertised it through the Church and social media.

One method that has proved effective is that in addition to inviting anyone who is interested (whether they go to Church or respond to the advertising), is to invite each of the Bible Study groups within the Church to come to the presentations and use it as a base for their study that term.

While this may sound a little like “preaching to the choir” the advantage is that some in the Bible Study groups will have the foundations of the Christian faith reinforced to both help in their own journey and give them an approach to explain the Gospel to seekers. It is also important, as we have discussed earlier in this guide, to not assume that simply because someone goes to Church, or belongs to a Bible study group, that they are saved.

## **CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED SESSION VIDEOS**

A resource that is available for free download on the Christianity Explained website or YouTube ([www.youtube.com/@Christianity\\_Explained](https://www.youtube.com/@Christianity_Explained)) is the *Christianity Explained Session Videos*. The videos are also available on a USB or DVD for the cost of supply and postage (for international support or orders please contact us). The video series covers each of the six sessions and can be used in a variety of ways.

### **1. As a Training Resource**

One method to learn how to present Christianity Explained, which could be of great assistance to

you, is to use a combination of this guide and the videos. The videos provides a visual example of each of the sessions, and demonstrates each of the illustrations, explanations and Bible readings.

Prior to running a course, the presenter could use the video to familiarise themselves with the content and how the session is constructed.

### **2. As a virtual Christianity Explained Course**

While Christianity Explained was not originally designed to be run as a video course, in the case where there is no leader to run the course, or where the presenter is lacking in confidence, the video can be used as the main presentation for each of the sessions. The course could be run in a similar manner as if the leader was presenting, with the video being paused at any point if the participants wish to ask questions or have more information about a particular point that was made in the video.

If the video is used as the virtual presenter, all the other responsibilities of a leader will remain. For example, showing hospitality, providing handouts, answering questions and so on.

### **3. As a Bible Study or Small Group Study**

Using the Christianity Explained video as a study series in your Church’s Bible Study groups can be an effective method to study the Gospel and to reinforce the basis for your salvation. In addition, many Christians struggle with how to explain and defend the reasons for their faith. Using the video to spend time in the Bible, primarily the gospel of Mark, can be a beneficial and powerful study.

Each week the video could be watched, with questions prepared by the leader to look at a deeper understanding of the key message of each session. For example, session one covers “Jesus, the Son of God”. The Bible study leader may choose to, in addition to the set study, look at other passages from the Bible that explore who Jesus is, and provide questions for discussion for the group.

### **4. For Individuals**

It is possible for a variety of reasons that individuals are unable, or unwilling, to join a Christianity Explained course. In those circumstances, the Christianity Explained Session Videos provide a clear and Biblically based explanation of the Christian Faith. The videos can stand alone in this sense in that anyone can watch them and have a clear explanation of what Christians believe, why they believe and what to do to put your trust and faith in Jesus.

## Follow up

Remember to have participants fill in the Course Assessment Sheet at the end of your final session. This can be found at the back of this Leader's Guide.

This is important as it will help you to gauge if the participants have come to genuine faith in Christ. If so, it is important that they are supported and encouraged to join a Church (if they do not already belong to a Church) and that they be encouraged to do the follow-up course and/or join a small group (Bible Study group).



**Jesus (son of God)**

**This is God's world, and we have seen that Jesus comes into the world with all the authority of God himself.**

In this study, we have seen:

- 1 Jesus' authority as a teacher  
**MARK 2:13**
- 2 Jesus' authority over evil spirits  
**MARK 2:22**
- 3 Jesus' authority to forgive sins  
(Who alone can do this - Jesus with God)  
**MARK 2:10**
- 4 Jesus' authority over nature  
**MARK 4:35-41**
- 5 Jesus' authority over life and death  
But most importantly, as far as we are concerned today:  
6 Jesus' authority over people  
**MARK 16:7**

**SON OF GOD**

**15**

**Read Mark chapters 1-3**

What are the main themes of the first three chapters of the Gospel of Mark? How do you think the author of the Gospel of Mark would describe the authority of Jesus?

**Summary**

- Jesus has great authority as the Son of God.
- Jesus claims to be divine, that is, God.
- Jesus calls for us to follow him.

**What does it mean to come in a servant about Jesus - is He a Son of Man or the Lord?**

There are three basic concepts which you must believe to be a Christian. We have seen the first of these.



# The six sessions

# Introduction to the six sessions

## STUDY ORGANISATION

The course is split into six studies. The first three focus on the life, teachings and claims of Jesus, and are based on the gospel of Mark. The final three studies focus on how this applies to us and utilises several other books of the Bible.

### SESSIONS INCLUDE



**Jesus** [Son of God]



**Jesus** [His death on a cross]



**Jesus** [His resurrection]



**God's Gift** [Not our works]



**What is a Christian?** [Repenting]



**What is a Christian?** [Believing]

The gospel of Mark is used because:

- It is the shortest
- its vocabulary is the simplest
- the opening chapters lack the genealogy of Matthew chapter 1, Luke chapters 1-3, and the difficult language used in John chapter 1.

## COPYING MASTERS

All six sessions require the use of printed materials. A booklet of Copying Masters should be accompanied by this guide. Alternatively you can download a free digital version of this Leader's Guide (which includes the Copying Masters booklet) from our website for easy printing.

### Variations to this course

This Guide and the session plan outlines are designed to help you present to individuals or groups who are interested in learning what Christians believe in a way that is clear and allows people to have their questions answered in a safe environment.

The most effective way to present the course is in person with sessions led by a facilitator. The earlier section on 'Ways to present Christianity Explained' details the various delivery model options, and also highlights the Christianity Explained Session Videos, which can be used for a variety of purposes, including as a demonstration to new leaders of how to present the course. You can find these on our website or on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/@Christianity\\_Explained](http://www.youtube.com/@Christianity_Explained)).

No Christian has a perfect understanding of God's word, and no Gospel presentation will be totally acceptable to every person who uses it.

If you sense a weakness in any part of this presentation, you are free to vary the wording to suit your particular context, provided that such alteration does not seriously change the overall structure and purpose of the course.

- Minor variations are allowable.
- Major structural and content alterations are not.

In any case, use the course as written the first time through – you may find that your 'objections' on a first reading are overcome by how it works out in practice! This course has been extensively used and revised, taking into account a lot of experience. Even though, at first sight, you may not see the logic in the way we suggest you do things, try it first rather than adapting it straight away.

### Use of this Guide

Remember - do not have this guide open in front of you when leading the sessions, but create your own summaries of each study. We recommend using small sheets of paper that can fit inside your Bible. However don't feel the need to hide these notes, you are not expected to memorise the course in its entirety.

You are strongly urged, however, to practice each study beforehand.



## SESSION 1.

# Jesus [Son of God]

## SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session introduces people to Jesus, especially his early ministry. We look at his authority and miracles, and show that they point to his status as the divine Son of God.

### Session 1 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- Jesus' Authority Flash Cards
- Three-legged stool visual aid and concept 1 – Son of God
- Session 1 handout

## AT THE BEGINNING

- You will need New Testament Bibles to hand out to participants. It is important that they are the same version so you can direct participants to page numbers while they are learning how to find verses. We recommend using the NLT translation as this correlates to our printable resources. If possible, ensure that participants are able to keep their Bibles. Explain that throughout this course they are welcome to highlight/underline passages within their Bible.
- Explain that although the course is being organised by 'Church X', you will not push any particular denominational positions. Rather, you will be looking at the facts on which there is general agreement among mainstream Churches.
- Assure them that they won't be asked to pray, read the Bible aloud or asked to answer questions – there will, however, be ample opportunity for discussion.
- Encourage them to commit to all six sessions as each study leads on to the next.
- Ask if there are any questions about how the group is to operate.

## THE FIRST STUDY

### Opening Statements

1. The title of this course is Christianity Explained.
2. Christianity, as the name implies, is all about Jesus Christ.
3. The Bible includes four 'biographies' of Jesus, often referred to the Gospels (Gospel is Greek for 'Good News'). These books are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
4. This course will look at one of these - the gospel of Mark.

### Jesus' Authority

Do not give participants the session handout until the end of the session. Begin the study by giving out New Testament Bibles and explaining how to find different books, chapters and verses within the Bible. Don't forget that some participants may have never picked up a Bible before, so this will be new to them. Assist them in finding the book of Mark. Remember that sometimes using page numbers to begin with may be the easiest way for new participants.

#### Read Mark 1:1: "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God".

*What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Son of God? We will see today that it means that Jesus is a person with authority - all the authority of God his Father.*

Look up the following passages in order. Make brief comments on each and place the flash card down, one at a time in the following way, before moving onto the next. You will notice that some of the readings overlap. In this case read through it once, and then discuss both takeaways at the end.

#### Jesus' authority

...as a teacher

...over evil spirits

...over sickness

...to forgive sins

...over nature

...over life and death

...over people (you and me)

### 1. Jesus' authority as a teacher (Mark 1:21-22)

*The people were surprised that Jesus' teaching was so different to other teachers of religious law. He did not quote the thoughts of other Rabbis or religious leaders. His characteristic way of teaching was, "I say to you...", showing that he had greater authority than all other religious leaders.*

*Even today, people are amazed at his teaching. He taught in a way that was full of compassion and contrary to traditionally held views. He said amazing things such as "love your enemies".*

(place the first two flash cards down)

#### Jesus' authority

...as a teacher

### 2. Jesus' authority over evil spirits (Mark 1:23-28)

*Jesus has authority over the spirit realm. The evil spirits recognised him ("I know who you are - the Holy One of God") and they had to obey Him. Jesus helped many demon-possessed people with just a word.*

(Add this flash card)

...over evil spirits

### 3. Jesus' authority over sickness (Mark 2:1-12)

*At just a word from Jesus, this man was instantly healed. Not only was his body healed, but his muscles were restored to full strength so that he could walk away. The Bible contains over 30 such incidents - the sick, blind, lame and those with leprosy were healed by Jesus.*

(Add this flash card)

...over sickness

### 4. Jesus' authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12)

*Jesus said to the man, "My child, your sins are forgiven". The religious leaders rightly saw this as a claim to be equal with God, as only God can forgive sins. The rest of the New Testament tells us that Jesus is indeed equal with God as God's Son. More than that, he is both God and man in the one person. (Emphasise this point)*

(Add this flash card)

...to forgive sins

## 5. Jesus' authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41)

*In a violent storm, where the disciples were terrified, (many of whom were fishermen, and so were used to being on rough waters), Jesus commanded the wind and the waves to be still, and they obeyed.*

(Add this flash card)

...over nature

## 6. Jesus' authority over life and death (Mark 5:21-24; 5:35-42)

*On three recorded occasions Jesus raised people from death. In this story in Mark's gospel, he raised Jairus' daughter. He also raised a widow's son (Luke 7:11-17) and even his friend Lazarus who had been dead for four days (John 11:1-44).*

(Add this flash card)

...over life and death

*So this is the picture we are building up. Jesus has come into God's creation, God's world, with the full authority of God. There is no part of the creation - animate, inanimate, human or spiritual - over which Jesus does not rule. As God in human form, he also forgives sins. However, there is one more area of Jesus' authority we need to consider.*

## 7. Jesus' authority over people (Mark 1:16-20)

*Jesus went to almost complete strangers and commanded them to leave their jobs and families and to follow him.*

*As the Son of God, Jesus makes the same claim over your life and mine. He calls ordinary people like us to follow him. These four men did. Some whom Jesus called, later refused to follow him.*

*In the whole of creation Jesus' authority is never resisted, except by the wills of human beings! God, however, commands us to submit to the authority of his Son.*

*We have been given free will. That is God did not create us as robots. Real love requires a choice. God loves us and wants us to love and obey Him. But we have the ability to choose whether we do so or not.*

Emphasise that we are not advocating that they should leave their family or spouse.

(Add this flash card)

...over people (you and me)

## CONCLUSION

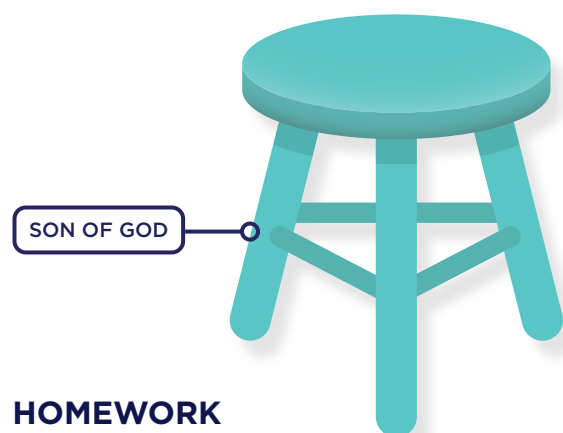
We have seen in this study:

- Jesus has great authority as God's Son. He is the supreme Master in God's world.
- Jesus himself claims to be divine, that is, God.
- Jesus calls for us to follow him, and we each need to come to a decision about him. We cannot accept Jesus as only a great moral teacher, but not God. He hasn't left this option open to us. He would either be a liar, which would mean that he isn't a great moral teacher. Or he would be a lunatic for believing himself to be God. If we choose to believe in Jesus, our only option is to believe the entirety of what he says - that he is the Lord (C.S. Lewis).

## The Three-Legged Stool

Introduce the illustration of the three-legged stool and place the visual aid down in front of participants.

There are three fundamental concepts that Christians believe, and they are represented by this three-legged stool. If one of the legs are missing, the stool would fall over. Each of the three concepts are just as important as the others when it comes to the Christian message. As we continue through this course we will learn about each one. Today we have discovered the first concept - Jesus is the Son of God.



## HOMEWORK

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the 'At Home' section asking them to read Mark chapters 1-5. Ask them to note any passages which they do not understand or which they would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these questions at the beginning of the next session.



## SESSION 2.

# Jesus [His death on a cross]

### SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session expands on the previous session's learning to illustrate that Jesus did not come only as the greatest healer and teacher. We look at Jesus' death on the Cross and subsequent resurrection, which are crucial to an understanding of the Christian faith.

#### Session 2 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)
- Large thick book for The Book Illustration (not a Bible) (provided by facilitator)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- Temple layout visual aid
- Three-legged stool visual aid, concept 1  
– Son of God, and concept 2 – The Cross
- Session 2 handout

### REVIEW

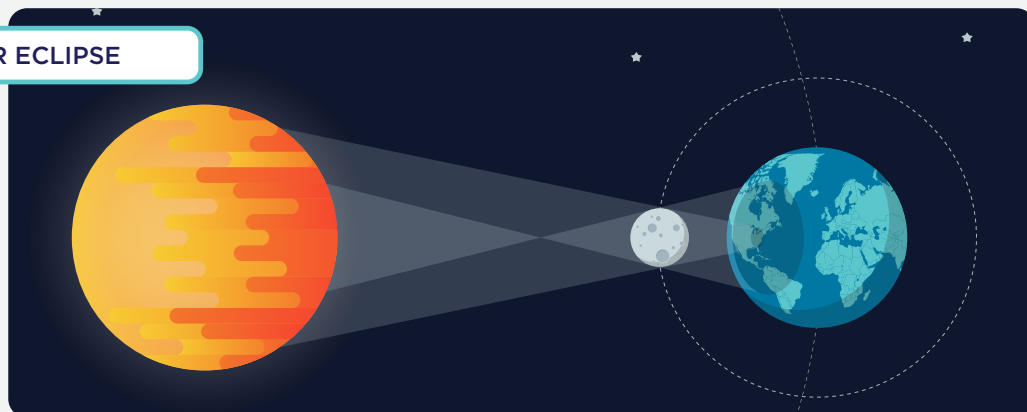
#### Homework Review

The participants were asked to read Mark chapters 1-5 at home. Ask if they have any questions that arose out of this, or any other questions about some aspect of the Christian faith that the passage raises. Allow some time for the discussion on the passages of Mark. If lots of other questions are raised, write them down, and deal with them one by one. Don't be afraid to put some questions off if they relate to the topics of future course material - let participants know that their questions will be answered in the upcoming sessions.

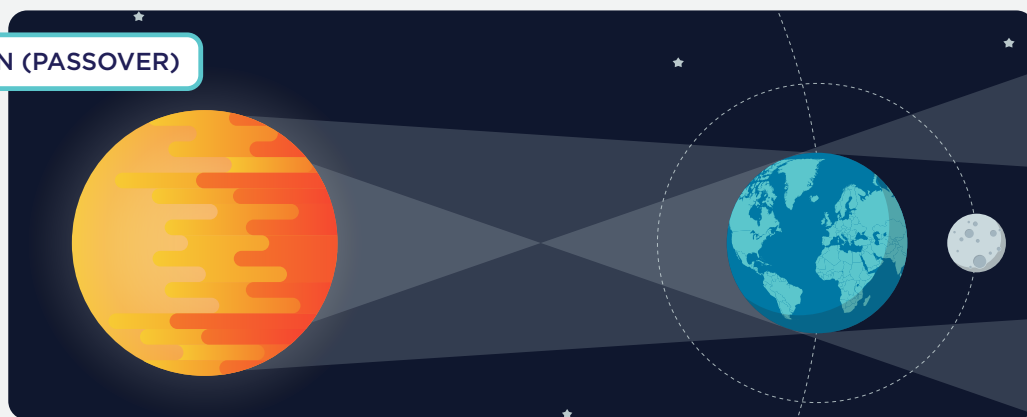
#### Review of Previous Sessions

Give a short review of the first study to refresh people's memories.

## SOLAR ECLIPSE



## FULL MOON (PASSEVER)



## THE SECOND STUDY

### The Meaning of the Cross

Explain that Jesus dying on the Cross is recognised as the central fact of Christianity. The Cross has become the symbol of the Christian Church.

*Jesus was on the Cross for six hours before he died. But what actually happened during those hours? What does his death mean? Mark's account gives us the answer to these important questions.*

**Read Mark 15:33-39 through in its entirety.**

Then reread the passages indicated for each topic below and give a brief explanation before moving onto the next.

#### 1. The darkness (Mark 15:33)

This supernatural darkness indicated a supernatural act was taking place. It could not have been a solar eclipse, as they occur when the moon is between the earth and sun, which only happens during a new moon, yet it was a full moon during Passover.

A solar eclipse also only lasts a few minutes, not three hours. (See diagram above)

A lunar eclipse is when the earth is between the sun and the moon. This may occur at a full moon, but it is the moon that darkens, and not the earth, so it couldn't have been a lunar eclipse either.

#### 2. The cry (Mark 15:34-37)

*Some people feel that this cry, "Why have you abandoned me?" expressed some loss of faith by Jesus in God. But we must face the reality of this cry, that at least to some extent God had forsaken Jesus on the cross.*

Explain the concept of substitution using The Book Illustration (see page 25). Explain that Jesus took both our guilt and our punishment (that is, God's wrath) totally in his body on the Cross.

*The resurrection demonstrated God's satisfaction with the work Jesus had completed on the Cross. We will look more at the resurrection in the next session.*

### 3. The curtain (Mark 15:38)

Briefly describe the layout of the temple using the visual aid for assistance.

*The temple was made up of a smaller and a larger room. The smaller room symbolised the dwelling place of God; the larger was for the priests as representatives of the people. There was a curtain that separated the two rooms. When the curtain was torn in two at Jesus' death, the barrier that existed between God and us was removed. We now have access directly to God because of what Jesus did on the Cross, and he is now our mediator.*

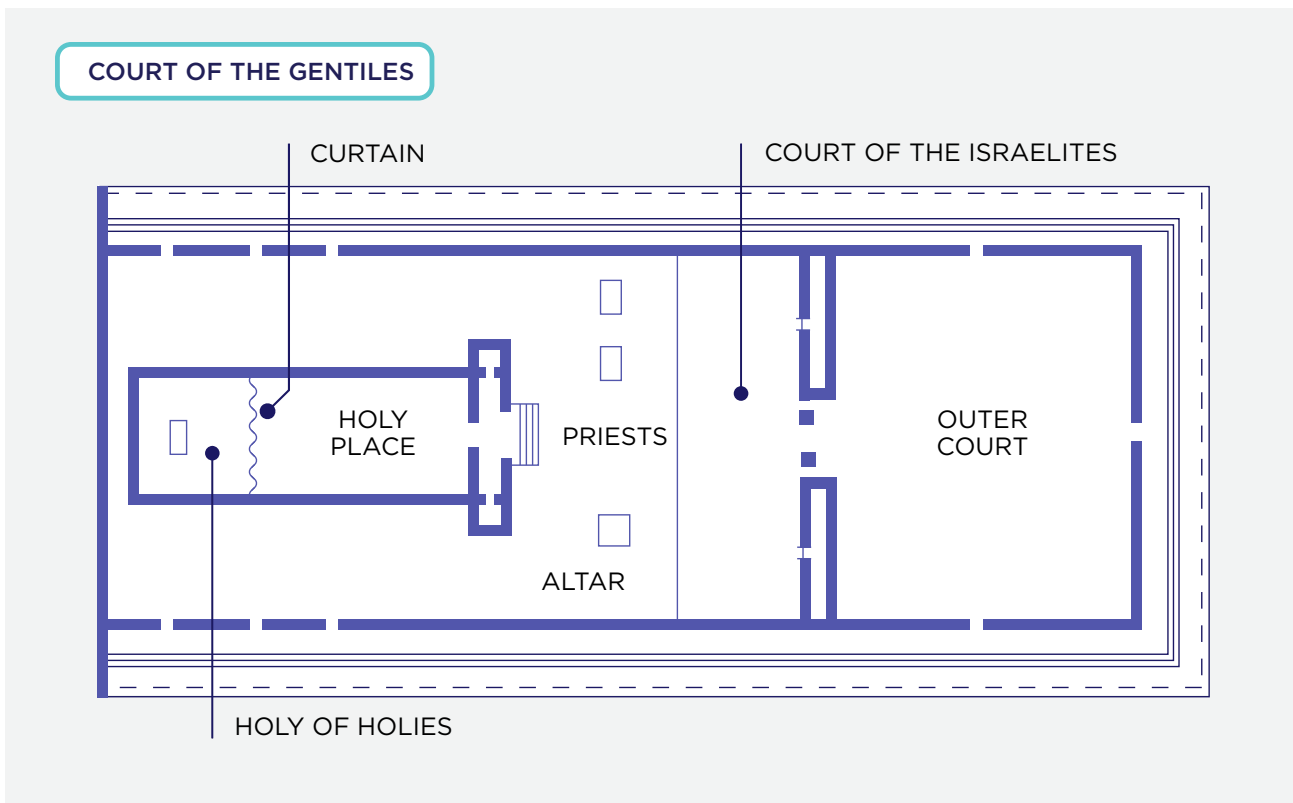
### 4. The ransom (Mark 10:45)

Explain the concept of ransom.

*Ransom is the payment of a costly price to buy back something or someone who has been lost, captured or enslaved, a price that they cannot pay themselves.*

Use one of these illustrations to further explain the concept of ransom.

- In Roman times, important soldiers who had been captured by the enemy in battle could be ransomed, that is, purchased back by paying the price demanded by the enemy.
- Similarly when a person is kidnapped, the kidnappers may demand a ransom payment from the family to return them safely.





## CONCLUSION

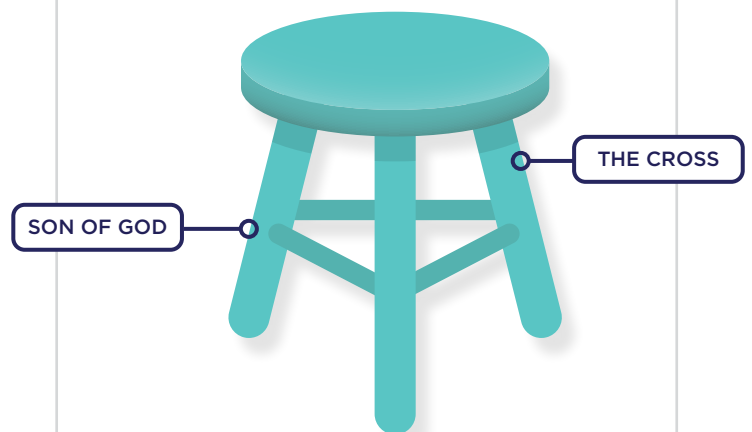
We have seen in this study:

- a) The key facts of Jesus' death on the Cross - the darkness, the cry, the curtain and the ransom.
- b) The importance of the symbol of the Cross in the Christian Church.

Point out that Jesus' death is sufficient for the sins of any person. However, God's forgiveness is not automatically conferred on everyone. If a person does not accept what Christ has done, he or she is, in effect, saying to God: "I don't want anyone to bear my sins - I'll bear them myself." And so they will, on the last day. We must individually accept by faith the Jesus of the Cross.

### The Three-Legged Stool

Place the illustration of the three-legged stool down in front of participants and point out that we have now seen two of the three fundamental concepts which are at the heart of Christianity. The first concept is Jesus is the Son of God. The second concept is Jesus died on the Cross.



## HOMEWORK

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the 'At Home' section asking them to read Mark chapters 6-10. Ask them to note any passages which they do not understand or which they would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these questions at the beginning of the next session.

## Illustration for Session 2

### THE BOOK ILLUSTRATION

The object of this illustration is to show visually the meaning of the crucifixion, especially in terms of substitution.

You will need a large, thick book (not a Bible). Tell participants that this book represents the life story of any person present – from birth (page 1) until the day of his or her death (last page).

*In this book is written every time we have broken any of God's laws – every wrong deed, every wrong word, every evil thought. For example, Jesus says to hate another person is as bad as murder, according to God's outlook. To lust after another person is to commit adultery in the heart.*

Tell the group that there are many dark pages in your own book which you would not like them to read, and, if they are honest, the same will be true for all present.

Hold out your left hand, palm facing up, and say:

*Now suppose this hand represents you, and let us say that the ceiling represents God. Now the Bible says that between us and God is what the Bible calls "the unfavourable record of our debts" (Colossians 2:14 GNB).*

Place the book on the upturned palm of your left hand and keep it there throughout the following explanation.

*So our sins separate us from God. In fact the Scriptures say that God is so pure that even if only one line was written in this book – that would be enough to separate you from God. But sin is more than doing, saying or thinking wrong things. It is an attitude of rebellion against God, whereby we ignore him and run our lives our own way. This is what the Bible means by sin. This attitude of rebellion is the motive or reason for our many sins.*

*Let me make the picture even clearer. The Bible says that, although God is love, he is also a just judge. God hates all evil and must punish our sin. One prophet in the Bible describes God in this way: "you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil." (Habakkuk 1:13).*

*So we have two problems. First, we all have much evil written in our books. Second, God must*

*punish all our evil. Now let me try to illustrate what happened during that time Jesus was hanging on the Cross. Suppose now that this hand represents Jesus.*

Hold out your right hand, palm facing up. The left hand with the book on it should still be held out.

*Again, the ceiling represents God. There was no 'book' between Jesus and God. He always perfectly obeyed the will of God. He always pleased his Father. While Jesus was on the cross, God took the sins of people in every age and placed them on Jesus.*

Now transfer the book from the left hand on to the upturned palm of the right hand.

*The Bible explains this in different ways so that we can better understand. It says "He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross" (1 Peter 2:24). The Bible also says "Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin..." (2 Corinthians 5:21 GNB).*

*You could say that on the Cross Jesus became the most sinful man the world has ever seen, as the sins of millions and millions of believers in every age were poured into his body. Then an amazing thing happened. Remember, God must punish all evil. Well, at this moment, God poured upon his own Son on the Cross all the wrath and anger and punishment that should fall on you and me. You could say God executed his own Son! Jesus died of the punishment of God. To show that he had completely dealt with our sins and punishment, three days later God brought him back to life!*

Now refer people back to the left hand, now empty, still with the palm facing up.

*Well now we must ask – how much sin remains between the person who believes in Jesus, and God?*

Press the point until someone answers "none".

*So then, when a person believes in Jesus Christ, God counts him or her as absolutely sinless and perfect in his eyes – in fact, as perfect as Jesus Christ himself.*

Go on to stress that this forgiveness is not automatically conferred on everyone, but only on those who accept God's grace by receiving the giver of this gift, Jesus Christ.



# Jesus [His resurrection]

## SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session examines the ministry and resurrection of Jesus and what this means for us. We look at the final concept that a person must believe in order to be a Christian – that Jesus was physically resurrected after his death on the Cross.

### Session 3 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- The Meaning of the Resurrection Flash Cards
- Three-legged stool visual aid, concept 1 – Son of God, concept 2 – The Cross, and concept 3 – The Resurrection
- Session 3 handout

## REVIEW

### Homework Review

The participants were asked to read Mark chapters 6-10 at home. Ask if they have any questions that arose out of this, or any other questions about some aspect of the Christian faith that the passage raises. Don't forget that you may put some questions off if they relate to the topics of future course material - let participants know that their questions will be answered in the upcoming sessions.

### Review of Previous Sessions

Give a short review of the first two studies to refresh people's memories.

## THE THIRD STUDY

### The Resurrection

#### 1. The resurrection was predicted

Begin by pointing out that Jesus, on many occasions, foretold his own death and rising again.

**Read Mark 10:32-34**

#### 2. Jesus was seen in a resurrected physical body

**Read Luke 24:36-43**

*Mark's account of the resurrection is the briefest of all the Gospel accounts. There are at least ten separate occasions on which Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death. He invited his disciples to physically touch him. He also ate a meal in front of them.*

### The Meaning of the Resurrection

Ask the group:

*"As a child did you ever try to imagine what the world would be like without you? A world where you had died?"*

*The question of death, and life after death, has haunted people in all ages. What happens after death? Is there a heaven, a hell, or nothingness?*

*People are often frightened about death and are particularly frightened about what comes after death.*

*In the Bible the answers to these questions are found in the resurrection of Jesus.*

**Read Acts 10:39-43**

Point out that the speaker is Peter who was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter has been speaking to Cornelius, a non-Christian man. Notice what Peter is saying. These are the things that Jesus commanded to be taught (verse 42).

**Re-read Acts 10:42, making a brief comment on each of the following topics and placing the flash card down in front of participants.**

### Flash Card Layout

Lay out the flash cards in the following way as the study proceeds.

All people will be raised

All people will then be judged

The risen Jesus will be the judge on that day

All people will be divided into two groups

#### the positive side

**Read Acts 10 v43**

Those who believe in Jesus *now* are forgiven *now* and are accepted by Jesus *then* on Judgement day (heaven)

#### the negative side

**Read Mark 8 v38**

Those who reject Jesus *now* will be rejected by Jesus *then* on Judgement day (hell)

This division is forever!

#### 1. All people will be raised

Verse 42 refers to "the living and the dead". The Bible looks to a day when all people living and dead from all ages will be raised. This sounds good, but it may not be.

All people will be raised

#### 2. All people will be judged

This verse refers to the "judge of all - the living and the dead". On the day of judgement, we must all give an account of our lives. Every single one of us will be judged.

All people will then be judged

#### 3. The risen Jesus will be the judge

This verse also states that Jesus is appointed by God to be the judge of all. That is why the resurrection of Jesus is so vital. It not only guarantees our resurrection, it also guarantees our judgement. It is to Jesus we are accountable!

The risen Jesus will be the judge on that day

#### 4. All people will be divided into two groups

##### Read Acts 10:43

The positive side of this division is that all people who believe in Jesus now, are forgiven now, and are accepted by Jesus then on Judgement Day. Those who are saved by grace enter heaven.

All people will be divided into two groups

##### Read Mark 8:38

The negative side of this division is that all people who reject Jesus now, will be judged by Jesus then on Judgement Day. Those who are rejected by Jesus enter hell.

Many of Jesus' parables speak of this division. He talked simply about the division between wheat and weeds, sheep and goats, good and spoiled fish. The division is between those who are accepted by Jesus, and those who are not. You may want to refer to these, but remember that participants may not know what is meant by a parable.

#### 5. This division is forever

##### Read 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

In the Bible there is no concept of a second chance after death. This life, now, is our one and only opportunity.

Your attitude to Jesus in this life is the same as his attitude to you in the next.

If you accept him now, he will accept you then.

If you reject him now, he will reject you then.

This division is forever!

## CONCLUSION

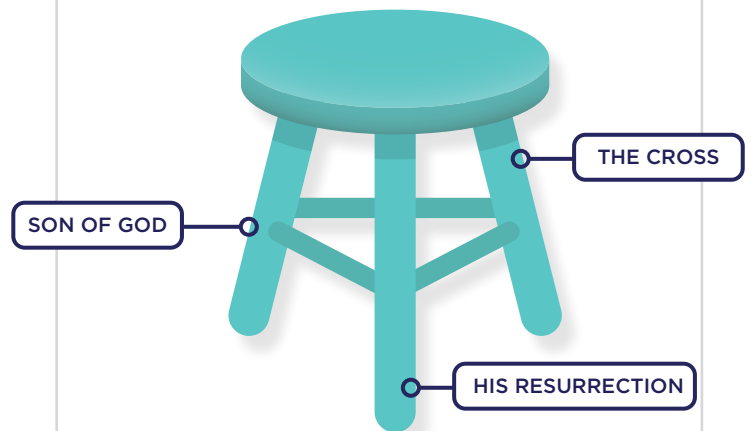
We have seen in this study:

- a) Jesus was physically resurrected
- b) This resurrection was predicted many times
- c) All will be judged by Jesus

Remind participants that the judgement we receive is based on the sin in our life (remind them of The Book Illustration), and that the only way to be judged as innocent is to accept the gift Jesus has given us by taking our sin as his own.

### The Three-Legged Stool

Place the illustration of the three-legged stool down in front of participants and point out that we have now seen all three of the fundamental concepts which are at the heart of Christianity. The first concept is Jesus is the Son of God. The second concept is Jesus died on the Cross. The third concept is Jesus was resurrected.



## HOMework

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the 'At Home' section asking them to read Mark chapters 11-16. Ask them to note any passages which they do not understand or which they would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these questions at the beginning of the next session.



## SESSION 4.

# God's Gift [Not our works]

## SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session teaches the challenging concept of salvation by the grace of God alone. It can be challenging because it is a concept foreign to our sinful nature where many believe that they can earn their salvation. We look at what it means to be saved by God and emphasise that this is not earned by our own efforts or works.

### Session 4 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)
- Pens/Pencils
- Paper
- Prepared envelopes for envelope activity
- Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet) (optional - see our recommendation in the 'Prayer of Commitment' section on page 11)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- The Meaning of the Resurrection Flash Cards
- Completed Three-legged stool visual aid
- Good Works & Salvation Flash Card
- Session 4 handout

## REVIEW

### Homework Review

The participants were asked to read Mark chapters 11-16 at home. Ask if they have any questions that arose out of this, or any other questions about some aspect of the Christian faith that the passage raises. Don't forget that you may put some questions off if they relate to the topics of future course material - let participants know that their questions will be answered in the upcoming sessions.

### Review of Previous Sessions

Give a short review of the first three studies to refresh people's memories. Use the completed Three-Legged Stool to highlight the key learning of the first three sessions.

A person cannot be a Christian in any biblical sense of that word without accepting three fundamental beliefs.

- Jesus, his sonship (his divine nature)
- Jesus, his cross (his atoning death)
- Jesus, his physical resurrection (his lordship)

## THE FOURTH STUDY

### Thinking Questions

Give each participant a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. You are going to ask them two questions and have them write down their answers. Explain that no one else will see their answers, it is for their eyes alone.

*Do you know for certain that you have eternal life – that is, if you died right now you would go to heaven?*

Give them a moment to write their answer until you see all participants have finished writing.

Most people will answer, “No” or “I’m not sure.”

*In the next few minutes, I’d like to share with you how you can know this for certain. Before I explain this, may I ask you another question that will help clarify the situation?*

*Suppose you were to die tonight, and you stood before God in heaven and he asked, “Why should I let you into my heaven?”. What would you reply?*

Once again give them some time to write their answer. This may take them longer than the first question.

**THE WRONG ANSWER**

**Salvation by works** → **What I have done** → **my good works**

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### Preparing the Envelope Activity

Prior to the session, prepare two envelopes for this activity in the following way.

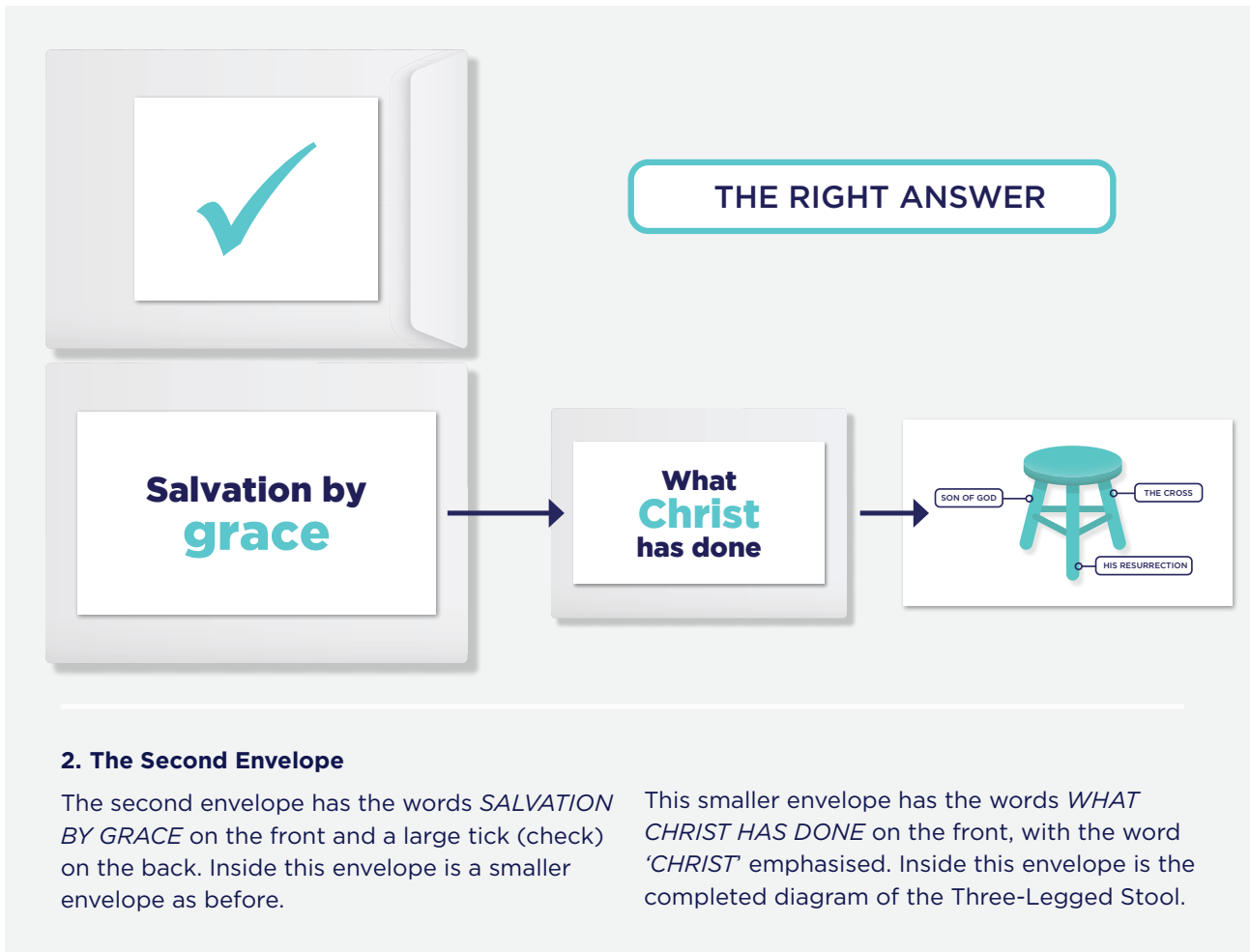
- 1. The First Envelope**

The first envelope has the words *SALVATION BY WORKS* on the front and a large cross on the back. Inside this envelope is another smaller envelope.

This smaller envelope has the words *WHAT I HAVE DONE* on the front, with the word ‘I’ emphasised. Inside this envelope are several cards that have different examples of ‘good works’ that people often use to justify why they should get into heaven.

Some examples are below, but they may need to be adapted for different cultural contexts.

- I keep the Ten Commandments
- I don’t kill, lie or steal
- I give to charity
- I am a kind person
- I am a good citizen
- I work hard
- I am bringing up my family well
- I read the Bible
- I pray
- I go to Church
- I have been baptised, confirmed, or participated in Holy Communion



### The Envelope Activity

After they have written down their answers, produce these two large envelopes. Explain that there are only two answers to the question 'Why should God let you into his heaven?'. One is wrong and the other is right.

#### 1. The wrong answer: What I have done

Explain that you are going to look at the wrong answer first. Show the envelope with the cross on the back. Then show the words 'Salvation by works' on the front. Explain that *Salvation by works* emphasises *what I have done*. Take out the smaller envelope inside and show the words 'what I have done' on the front. Then take out the cards inside, one at a time. Lay each card down in a similar way to the diagram above.

Explain that this is how people try to get right with God. But not one of these good works individually, nor all of them collectively, can qualify us for heaven.

Ask the rhetorical question: 'Why can good works never get us into heaven?'

**Read Mark 7:20-23**

*God's standard is 100% perfection and by this standard we all fail. This is why no one can be saved by good works.*

*Secondly, sin is not just a matter of doing, or saying, or even thinking wrong things. Jesus says here that from within, out of the heart, come all the evil things that he lists.*

*Suppose you are covered from head to toe in terrible red sores, and you are really unwell. You go to the doctor and they diagnose you with measles or another serious disease. Imagine they then tried to cure you by putting band-aids over all the sores! You would say, "Hold on, the sores are only the symptoms - the real disease is inside me, in my blood-stream!"*

*So it is with sin. When we do, say or think wrong things, these are only the 'symptoms' of sin. The real problem is that from within, out of the heart, comes the 'disease' of sin. In our hearts, the Bible says we are in rebellion against God, actively or passively, and doing a few good works cannot cure this rebellion! Doing a few good works is like putting spiritual band-aids on the problem. The central problem is that we each want to run our lives our own way. We want to live apart from God and push him out. This is sin.*

## 2. The right answer: What Christ has done

Show the envelope with the tick on the back. Then show the words 'salvation by grace' on the front.

Ask the rhetorical question 'What do we mean by grace?'. Explain that this means an undeserved free gift. Take out the smaller envelope inside and show the words 'what Christ has done' the front. Then take out the Three-Legged Stool diagram inside. This shows what Christ has done on our behalf.

### Read Ephesians 2:8-10

*It is grace through faith alone that saves us.  
This salvation is the gift of God.*

Lay side by side the two smaller envelopes, contrasting 'what I have done' with 'what Christ has done'.

*It is the finished work of Christ alone that saves us.  
We must respond to his finished work by faith.*

At this point you may get an objection that could come in a variety of forms, but which will go something like this: "If salvation is a free gift, doesn't this mean that I can live any kind of life I like - and then so long as I believe, God will forgive me? Does this mean good works are not important?"

Regardless of whether someone raises this objection or not, it is advisable to give the following answer, as some participants may be thinking it, or may come to think of it later.

Good works → Salvation

**BUT**

Salvation → Good works

Explain from Ephesians 2:10 that God wants us to lead a life of good works, but this is to be the fruit of salvation. Use the Good Works and Salvation Flash Card to illustrate this point.

Encourage participants to notice carefully that good works do not produce salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9), but salvation produces a life of good works (Ephesians 2:10).

### Read Mark 10:15 where Jesus says that the Kingdom of God must be received like a little child.

Here Jesus is talking about child-like faith, not childish faith. What that means is a faith that is trusting and based on the promises of God, not on our own feelings.

## CONCLUSION

Remind participants that you promised to show them how they could know for certain that they have eternal life.

We have seen in this study:

- Eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and a place in God's Kingdom cannot be earned or deserved by us.
- This gift is given by grace alone, through what Jesus did on the Cross

As with any gift, it must be received. We cannot earn eternal life, but we can know for certain that we have it if we have accepted this gift given by Jesus. In the next session we will talk more about how to receive the free gift of eternal life.

## HOMEWORK

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the 'At Home' section asking them to read select verses from the book of Mark (Mark 1:15, Mark 7:20-23, Mark 8:34-38, Mark 9:43-48, Mark 10:29-31) and underline what they think are the most significant words for them.

Also give each person a copy of the Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet) (if you have chosen to use one), or direct them to the Prayer of Commitment on the back of the weekly handout. Ask participants to read it carefully and have a quiet reflection on the prayer by the next session. They do not need to pray the prayer, just to read it, as we will talk about it in the next session.



## SESSION 5.

# Repenting [What is a Christian?]

## SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session aims to answer the question, 'What is a Christian?'. We look specifically at repentance, what repentance means and how we are instructed to repent.

### Session 5 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)
- Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet)  
(optional - handed to participants in session 4)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- Putting Jesus First Flash Cards
- House Floorplan
- Turn, Trust, Travel Flash Card
- Session 5 handout

## REVIEW

### Homework Review

The participants were asked to read a selection of passages from the book of Mark and underline what they felt were the most significant words for them. They were also asked to read the Prayer of Commitment in the Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet) or on the back of the weekly handout. Ask if they have any questions that arose out of this, or any other questions about some aspect of the Christian faith that the passages raise.

### Review of Previous Sessions

Give a short review of the first four studies to refresh people's memories.

## THE FIFTH STUDY

### Thinking Questions

Suppose we decide to go to the shopping centre to conduct a survey. We have only one question: "In your opinion, what is a Christian?". What kind of answers do you think we would get? We may get such answers as: a good person, someone who goes to Church, someone who keeps the ten commandments, someone who lives in a Christian country, and so on. We may also get some unkind answers, but regardless, we would most likely get a variety of opinions on what a Christian is. In this session we are going to talk about this one question: 'What really is a Christian?'

**Read Mark 1:15: "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"**

In one sentence, a Christian is someone who belongs to the kingdom of God. That is, when Jesus becomes the King and Master of your life.

*Jesus says there are two things a person must do to belong to the kingdom of God. What are these?*

- Repent
- Believe

*Today we look at what it means to repent.*

### What is Repentance?

Repentance is an old-fashioned word, it means to turn from living your life your way, to living the way God intended for you. It means taking the crown off of your own head and putting it where it belongs, on the head of Jesus.

*Repentance means recognising sin in our lives and how offensive it is to God, turning away from that sinful way of life and turning towards a God-honouring way of life.*

### Putting Jesus First

Make a brief comment on each topic below and place the associated flash card down (one at a time) in front of participants in the following way.

**I am willing for Jesus to be first in my life...**

...before my will

...before my ambitions

...before my popularity

...before my???

#### 1. Putting Jesus first

*You become a Christian when you make Jesus Christ the King or Master of your life. In other words, you are willing for Jesus to be first in your life.*

#### Read Mark 8:34-38

*What does it mean, in practical terms, to repent? It means I put Jesus first in the following things.*

(place the first flash card down)

**I am willing for Jesus to be first in my life...**

#### 2. Before my will

*Jesus says a person must forget (or deny) them self, carry their cross and lose their life. Now the cross was an instrument of death. Jesus tells me that if I am to follow him, I must go through a kind of death experience. I must die to the right to run my own life (which is sin). I am to surrender to the God-given right of Jesus to be my King.*

**Use The House Illustration to help explain what this means (see page 36).**

(add this flashcard)

...before my will

### 3. Before my ambitions

#### Re-read Mark 8:36-37

People everywhere are trying to 'gain the whole world'. To a greater or lesser degree, their aim is to accumulate power, money, popularity, pleasure, prestige, business success, or just keep ahead of the neighbours.

Now these things may not be wrong in themselves, but they are sin if they are things we live for above everything else. When Jesus is number one in our lives, these things fall into their right perspective.

Jesus says: "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else ... and he will give you everything you need" (Matthew 6:33).

(add this flashcard)

...before my ambitions

### 4. Before my popularity

#### Re-read Mark 8:38

It is not popular to follow Jesus sincerely today. Friends or family members may regard me as strange – some may not want to associate with me anymore. But if I'm ashamed of Jesus in this life, then he will reject me on Judgment Day! I must follow Jesus openly. He is not interested in secret disciples.

The most obvious way to start doing this is to belong to a Church. People who avoid Church may claim that it is boring, but often they are just ashamed to be associated openly with Christ and his people.

Emphasise that members of the group may have a spouse, relative or friend who disapproves of their faith. But you must put Jesus first (politely) even if it means ridicule (again, we are not suggesting a person should leave his/her spouse!).

(add this flashcard)

...before my popularity

### 5. Before my...

#### Read Mark 9:43-48

Jesus does not literally mean that I am to cut off body parts. He means that if anything or anyone is stopping me from entering God's kingdom, then cutting those things out of your life may be necessary.

Pride is often the cause of this. Ask yourselves this: Am I too proud to accept salvation as a gift? Am I too proud to submit to Jesus as King? What in my life is stopping me from following Jesus?

(add this flashcard)

...before my???

### 6. Too hard?

#### Read Mark 10:29-31

It may sound hard to follow Jesus, but he makes two promises when we do.

- a) In this life, he will repay us "a hundred times" for any cost we suffer.
- b) In the next life, he will give us eternal life.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen in this study:

- a) There are two things we must do to belong to the Kingdom of God. The first is to repent.
- b) Repentance means putting Jesus first in your life, and turning away from anything that causes you to sin.

Draw the group's attention to the Prayer of Commitment (in the Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet) or the weekly handout). Suggest that they could use this prayer, privately at home, to indicate real and genuine repentance towards God. We will look at this prayer again in the next session.

## HOMEWORK

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the 'At Home' section asking them to read select verses from the book of Mark (Mark 1:8, Mark 2:10, Mark 10:30) and fill in the blanks to identify the gifts that God promises to those who repent and believe.

# Illustration for Session 5

## THE HOUSE

The purpose of this illustration is to explain the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives.

It illustrates that when I become a Christian, Jesus comes to live in me spiritually, by his Holy Spirit. Then, over the days and years ahead, the Holy Spirit wants to change me from the inside out, to make me more like Jesus.

You will need the House Floorplan printed resource.

Point out that when you buy a house, there are two stages:

- a) Move-in Day (This happens only once).
- b) Renovation and redecoration (This goes on progressively for a long time).

The same is true of the Christian life - there are two stages:

### 1. Becoming a Christian

This occurs when God gives me the grace to repent and surrender to Jesus Christ, when he

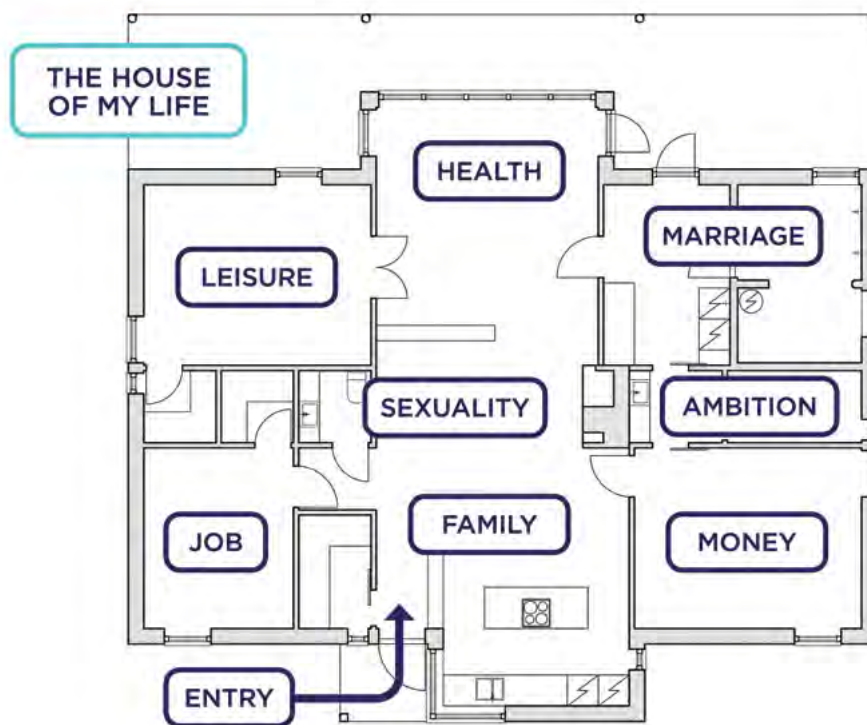
‘opens the door’ and, by the Holy Spirit, comes to live with me. This happens genuinely only once, although many Christians cannot specify the exact day on which it took place. We call this new birth, when the believer is justified.

### 2. Being a Christian

Point out that the various rooms in the illustration represent all the aspects of my life: marriage, family, money, ambition, study, leisure, sexuality, etc.

The Holy Spirit is not content to remain in the entrance hall. Once he has entered my life, he will want to change me into his image of what I should be like. This does not happen all at once - this is a progressive or gradual work, like renovating a house. We call this new life or progressive sanctification.

The point is clear, when I become a Christian, I must be willing for Jesus to become Lord of all. This willingness is the beginning of repentance. What this means in practice will be worked out progressively as I grow in this new life, by his Spirit.





## SESSION 6.

# Believing [What is a Christian?]

### SESSION OBJECTIVE

This session aims to give further understanding of what it means to be a Christian. We look at the concept of faith and give guidance to participants on what to do next if they wish to accept Jesus into their lives.

#### Session 6 Resources

- Bibles (provided by facilitator)
- Knowing God Personally (Mini Booklet) (optional - handed to participants in session 4)

Resources below can be found in the Copying Masters booklet that accompanied this Leader's Guide. A free digital version can be downloaded from our website for easy printing.

- Faith Flash Cards
- Course Assessment Sheet
- Session 6 handout

### REVIEW

#### Homework Review

The participants were asked to look at three passages from the book of Mark and fill in the blanks about the gifts that God promises to those who repent and believe. Check that they filled it in correctly. It should read "Holy Spirit", "Forgiveness" and "Eternal Life". Ask if they have any questions that arose out of this, or any other questions about some aspect of the Christian faith that the passages raise.

#### Review of Previous Sessions

In the last session while exploring the question 'what is a Christian?' we saw:

- A Christian is a person who belongs to the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), that is, has Jesus Christ as King.
- To belong to this Kingdom we must repent.

## THE SIXTH STUDY

### Introduction

#### Read Mark 1:15

*The second thing we must do to belong to God's Kingdom is to believe.*

#### What is Faith, or Believing?

Explain that we are going to look at three incidents from the gospel of Mark which illustrate faith.

Make comment on each of the following points and place the flash card down, one at a time in the following way, before moving onto the next.

#### Faith is...

...taking Jesus at his word

...reaching out to Jesus

...having child-like trust

...knowing God accepts me

...receiving Jesus as your King

#### 1. Taking Jesus at his word

##### Read Mark 5:21-24 and Mark 5:35-43

*How would Jairus have felt when the message came that his daughter was dead? Faith here is trust in Jesus' word despite all the evidence to the contrary. It is based, not on how we feel, but on the facts of what Jesus says: "Don't be afraid. Just have faith" (Mark 5:36).*

#### Present the Facts, Faith and Feelings Illustration (see page 40).

(place the first two flash cards down)

#### Faith is...

...taking Jesus at His word

#### 2. Reaching out to Jesus

##### Read Mark 5:25-34

*The woman's faith was small - a secret touch of his garment. Jesus said: "If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible" (Matthew 17:20). A mustard seed is extremely small. The vital thing is not the quantity, but the direction of faith!*

*Jesus does not allow the woman to remain hidden in the crowd. She was required to show herself publicly. If I am to follow Jesus, I must do so openly, and not be ashamed of him.*

(add this flashcard)

...reaching out to Jesus

#### 3. Having child-like trust

##### Read Mark 10:13-16

*The child-like trust that Jesus speaks about is not childish faith. This is more than giving mere assent with my mind. It means trust, such as a child places in its parents.*

#### Present the Blondin Illustration (page 40).

(add this flashcard)

...having child-like trust

#### 4. Knowing God accepts me

##### Read John 5:24

*This tells the believer something about the present and something about the future.*

a) Present

*Jesus says a Christian has eternal life. Point out the present tense, **have**. It is not boasting to say, "I know I have eternal life." It is just taking God at his word. It is faith.*

*Nor is it saying, "I am good". It is saying that what Christ has done, not what I have done, makes me acceptable to God.*

b) Future

*Jesus says a Christian will not be condemned. He is talking here about the judgement which determines our eternal future, heaven or hell. The believer will not face that judgement, as no charge can be brought against him/her.*

(add this flashcard)

...knowing God accepts me

#### 5. Receiving Jesus as your King

Recall Jesus' words: "Anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15).

*We have seen that, to receive the Kingdom of God, a person must receive Jesus Christ as their Lord or King, and their Saviour from sin. This is a personal step. No one can take it for you.*

(add this flashcard)

...receiving Jesus as your King

## CONCLUSION

At this point you can conclude by offering the opportunity for participants to ask Jesus to become their Lord and Saviour.

Say something like this:

*During this course God may have been speaking to you spiritually and you may feel that you are ready to take the step of receiving Jesus Christ as your King and Saviour.*

Give participants the handout for this session and direct them to the Prayer of Commitment on the back page. Read the prayer aloud. Then add this comment:

*I am going to pray this prayer slowly. If you wish to take this step, I invite you to pray this prayer with me either silently in your head, or aloud if you would like to. Or if you are not ready to take this step yet, can we encourage you to keep searching.*

Pray the prayer aloud, slowly, together.

You may have some in the group indicate that they have taken that step and have prayed the Prayer of Commitment. This is something to rejoice. Encourage them to keep learning and to grow in their faith.

## A Word of Caution

The Holy Spirit is sovereign in evangelism. Only he can truly convert the heart and mind of a person. It brings no honour to God if we trick or manipulate people into making decisions they are not ready to make, merely to gratify our own egos. Do not pressure people to take this step.

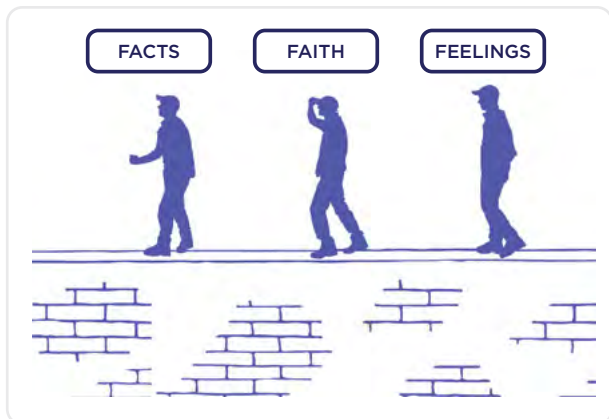
## COURSE ASSESSMENT

Give each person a copy of the Course Assessment Sheet and a pen or pencil and ask them to complete it. Be sure to collect the sheets at the end of the session – if participants take them home it will be difficult to retrieve them.

## FOLLOW UP COURSE

Draw particular attention to question six on the Course Assessment Sheet. If a participant has agreed to do the follow-up course, make arrangements for someone to begin this with them.

## Illustration for Session 6



### FACTS, FAITH AND FEELINGS

The purpose of this illustration is to demonstrate that Christian faith does not depend upon our feelings, which are always changing, but upon the facts of what God has done through Jesus, as recorded in the Bible. These facts never change.

You will need the Facts, Faith and Feelings printed resource.

Three men are walking along the top of a narrow wall. The first man is called Facts, the second Faith and the last Feelings.

As long as the middle man, Faith, keeps his eyes on Facts, he can walk securely and steadily on the wall. If he turns around and looks over his shoulder at Feelings, he starts to wobble and feel insecure.

Similarly, in the Christian life, solid faith is based on the facts about Jesus as learned in the Bible. If we go by feelings, our faith will always be unsteady and weak.



### A STORY OF BLONDIN

The object of this illustration is to explain the concept of faith.

It is possible to believe the Gospel academically and theoretically without being committed to Jesus Christ personally.

Blondin was a famous tightrope walker and acrobat in America. In the mid 1800's he stretched a wire rope across the top of Niagara Falls and walked across it.

Then he took his stunt a step further, and pushed a wheelbarrow backwards and forwards along the wire over the falls.

Next he announced that he was going to wheel a man in the wheelbarrow across the wire.

A newspaper reporter came to interview Blondin about this proposed stunt: "Do you think I can do this great feat?" Blondin asked the reporter.

"I really believe you can," replied the reporter. "I think you are the greatest stunt artist of all time!".

"You believe I can do it?" asked Blondin, "Well then, you get in the wheelbarrow!".

There is a great difference between believing something or believing in someone theoretically, and being willing to commit your life into his or her hands by faith.



## Other Resources

# Other versions of Christianity Explained

The Gospel is such a powerful and important message. The love of Jesus, and his sacrifice for us, is key for our salvation and is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Christianity Explained was developed as clear and structured way to explain what Christians believe. The purpose is to help anyone to come to understand who Jesus is, what he has done for us, how to accept the free gift

of salvation and what to do if you want to follow Jesus and become a Christian.

In presenting the Christianity Explained course over many years, it was recognised that there was a need for different versions of the course for different contexts. Detailed here are the alternate versions that are available on the Christianity Explained website.



## Christianity Explained (Kids Edition)

Often in Sunday School, children are taught that God loves them and wants to be their friend. They are typically taught Bible stories like Noah's Ark, David and Goliath and so on. While these are important and helpful, children can come away without an understanding of the Gospel. The Kids Edition has been developed to present the Gospel to children in age-appropriate ways.

The intent is that Churches, or individuals, can run a Sunday School program over six weeks plus a revision week that takes them through the same topics that are covered in the Christianity Explained course. Not all children will necessarily be able to come to each of the six sessions, so the revision session creates an opportunity to fill any gaps in their knowledge from the week's they may have missed.

We would encourage parents to ask the children at the end of each session what they have learned. We have seen even four-year-olds able to give a clear explanation of the Gospel after doing the Kids Edition of Christianity Explained.

There are two versions of the Kids Edition for two different age groups (Ages 3-7 and Ages 8-12). Each version contains a Leader's Guide set out with a key theme, learning goals, memory verse and materials list for each session. In the Leader's Guide you will find activities, games and group discussion questions. Each key theme has an associated icon to aid with retention of the theme.



There are also posters that can be printed with the key themes of each week.

## Christianity Explained (Youth Edition)

Often in Churches, teenagers are caught between the adult service and Sunday School. They are too old for Sunday School and can often find that adult Church is too sedentary for them. The teenage years are a very important developmental time. Having something specifically tailored for them, that treats them respectfully and allows them to be active in Church can be immeasurably helpful for them in these formative years. The Youth Edition is designed to allow them to ask questions, to seek answers and to feel that they have a voice, while exploring the Christian faith.

The course has been developed to include two versions; however these are not for different age groups like the Kids Edition. Rather they are two different delivery methods to cater for different contexts, with one version suiting a smaller group

or a context that does not have the ability to show a PowerPoint presentation, while the second caters better to large groups who are able to utilise a PowerPoint presentation. Both versions include a Leader's Guide and printable handouts.

The course has been developed for teenagers in a way that encourages them to ask questions and to test the scriptures in a structured manner based on the original Christianity Explained course. Over the six sessions, teenagers will cover the same topics as the original course, but in a more discussion based and interactive style of learning. It is essential that leaders are practiced in facilitating discussion with groups of teenagers, and guiding them towards correct answers to questions based on the biblical truths detailed in the course materials and Leader's Guide.

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## Christianity Explained in other languages

Christianity Explained is available in a number of other languages, and we are continuing our mission to expand into even more.

Visit the Christianity Explained website for more information. [www.christianityexplained.com](http://www.christianityexplained.com)

# The 20 most asked questions

## 1. What are demons or evil spirits?

**Mark 1:23-27**

The Bible takes seriously the reality of an unseen spiritual world. This spiritual world has both a good side and an evil or malignant side.

The devil, or Satan, is not just some impersonal evil force at work in the world. The Bible depicts Satan as personal and powerful. His work is totally opposed to God and directed against God's people.

Evil spirits and demons mentioned in the Gospels are the devil's agents in this work. Although Satan and his angels are immensely powerful, the New Testament shows Jesus to be Lord over Satan, and to have defeated him through his death and resurrection.

## 2. Why did Jesus tell healed people not to tell anyone?

**Mark 1:34 & Mark 7:36**

Jesus did not want to become like a sideshow with people coming just to see signs and wonders. He rejected such people (Mark 8:11-13 & John 4:48). If people would not respond to the preaching of the Kingdom of God calling for repentance and faith (Mark 1:15), miracles alone would not convince them.

Miracles attract people, and it is possible that Jesus saw that the curious crowds would hamper his ministry, which is just what happened (Mark 1:45).

## 3. Why did Jesus call himself the Son of Man?

**Mark 2:10**

Jesus wanted to identify with mankind, so he preferred to be called Son of Man rather than being called Son of God. Son of Man is a Jewish term meaning simply "a man". The prophet Ezekiel was often called "son of man" in this sense (Ezekiel 33:1).

Son of Man is also a well-known title used in the Old Testament for the Messiah (see Daniel 7:13-14). In this vision, Daniel saw "one like a son of man" (i.e. like a human being). God then gives to this Son of Man an eternal kingship over all the nations of the earth.

The religious leaders in Jesus' day would have interpreted Jesus' use of 'Son of Man' as a veiled claim to be the coming Messiah, the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy.

## 4. What is meant by the reference to patching old clothing with new, and putting new wine into old wine skins?

**Mark 2:21-22**

People were complaining that Jesus was not observing the religious rules and traditions of his day (Mark 2:18). The Pharisees had literally thousands of laws and religious regulations, and they taught that a person had to observe these rigorously in order to please God.

Jesus was saying that the faith he had come to bring was totally incompatible with the Pharisees' system. Jesus could not be "fitted into" their legalistic religion. He came to bring a living relationship with God, not rules. He came to bring grace, love and peace, not religious formulas.

Christianity is not a religion. "Religion" is from the Latin word meaning "rules". Christianity is not a set of rules, but a personal relationship with the living God.

## 5. What is the "eternal sin"?

**Mark 3:29**

The context here is the key. The religious leaders had observed Jesus' miracles and heard his teaching first hand. However, their assessment of Jesus was: "He is possessed by Beelzebub" (Mark 3:22) – an old name for the devil.

They had hardened their hearts against the work of God's Spirit through the ministry of Jesus. This unrepentant, continuous attitude is the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Mark 3:29). This has nothing to do with swearing at the Holy Spirit – in simple terms it means to continuously reject Jesus' claim upon a person's heart and life.

For this there can be no forgiveness, for they have refused the only way of forgiveness that God has provided.

Of course, it is only unforgivable for as long as a person goes on doing it! Many of the religious leaders did repent later on, and so were forgiven (Acts 6:7).

This is a vital personal concept. If I reject Jesus, I can never be forgiven!

## 6. Why did Jesus teach in parables?

### Mark 4:10-12

Many people have trouble with this passage. On the surface it sounds as if Jesus taught in parables so that people would not understand, which would be very strange indeed.

However, we need to see that there are two groups mentioned here: the disciples and “those on the outside”. The disciples were spiritually intrigued by the parables and drawn nearer to Jesus to hear the explanation. There is a spiritual principle here – “to everyone who has, more will be given”.

However, to “those outside” the band of disciples, the parables just remained baffling stories. Their spiritual interest was not aroused. They “hear, but do not understand”. All people are either like moths or bats. They are either attracted to the light of Jesus’ teaching, or repelled by it. Jesus’ words, including his parables, always act in this twofold way. See also Mark 4:33-34.

## 7. Did Jesus have brothers and sisters?

### Mark 6:3

This passage mentions four brothers by name and at least two sisters. These were presumably the natural children of Joseph and Mary conceived after the birth of Jesus. See also Mark 3:32.

Some Christians hold that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus, and that the brothers and sisters mentioned here are really cousins. The Greek word adelphoi can also mean “cousins”. However, Matthew 1:25 seems to imply that Joseph and Mary entered into a normal sexual relationship after Jesus’ birth.

## 8. What is meant by throwing the children’s food to the dogs?

### Mark 7:24-30

The key to this difficult passage lies in the fact that the woman was not a Jewess – she was a Gentile, from near the pagan city of Tyre (verses 24, 26).

Jesus’ ministry at this stage was exclusively to the Jews, the chosen descendants of Abraham. He forbade his disciples, at this period, to preach to the Gentiles or Samaritans (Matthew 10:5).

Jesus says to her: “First I should feed the children – my own family, the Jews. It isn’t right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs”.

The term “children” here refers to the Jews, and “dogs” was a common, unflattering expression for any Gentile person. So Jesus is saying, in fact: “It isn’t right to take what belongs to the Jews and give it to you Gentiles.”

In her reply in verse 28 the woman is, in effect, saying; “Yes Lord – I acknowledge that as a Gentile woman I have no claim upon you, the Jewish Messiah. But at least give me a few moments of your time to deal with a problem I have!”

Jesus is impressed by her faith and her persistence and grants her request (Matthew 15:28).

## 9. What is the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod?

### Mark 8:15

“Yeast” means influence. Just as a tiny amount of yeast has a large effect on the whole batch of dough, so Jesus warns against the “yeast” of the Pharisees and Herod.

The Pharisees were the most influential religious party in Jesus’ day, though they were few in number. They taught that rigorous law-keeping was the path to God. Jesus called them “hypocrites”, for they valued their public displays of religion and self-righteousness above actually living a Godly life.

The yeast of Herod refers to Herod Antipas who was a ruler in Jesus’ time known for his political power and worldly and sinful actions including murder, adultery, pretence of piety and also his hatred of Jesus, and the prophet John the Baptist.

Jesus warned against both the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. Unbelief in Christ is the common thread between them. The Pharisees’ unbelief stemmed from their hard hearts, while Herod’s unbelief stemmed from his love of power and self and fear of Roman reprisal. Jesus cautioned his disciples (and us) to avoid any influence that could lead them away from their faith.

So, Jesus is warning against outward religious show (the Pharisees), and crass worldliness (Herod).

## 10. Why did Jesus say “Do you still not understand?”

### Mark 8:17-21

Twice Jesus had fed large crowds of Jewish people in a desert place where no food was available. Surely, as Jews, they would have been reminded of the way God fed the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses, and gave them the manna in the desert.

Surely, too, they would have remembered Moses' prophecy towards the end of his life, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15). Could the disciples not yet understand that Jesus was the predicted Moses-like prophet – the prophesied Messiah?

It is perhaps no accident that in the very next section Peter declared: “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29). He has understood, at last!

## 11. What is meant by the Kingdom of God arriving in great power?

### Mark 9:1

This is a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Following the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:1-4), the Day of Pentecost commemorates when God sent his Holy Spirit to empower the apostles and other disciples to begin advancing his Kingdom here on earth.

The Kingdom of God came with the entry of Jesus into the world. It then came with power at the pouring out of God the Holy Spirit. Followers of Jesus today continue to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out God's mission in the world.

## 12. Who is Elijah?

### Mark 9:11-13

In the last statement of the Old Testament, God promised that he would send again Elijah the prophet before the day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5-6). Elijah was a prophet in the 8th century BC, and he dressed in a distinctive way, wearing animal skins and a leather belt (2 Kings 1:8).

When John the Baptist appeared, he was dressed in a similar manner (Matthew 3:4).

Jesus makes it clear that John was the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning Elijah.

Does this mean that John was a prophet like Elijah, or that John was Elijah come back to life again? Undoubtedly the former. Although it is not made clear in the Gospels, the Bible gives no indication that a person can return to this world to live another life. In fact, the opposite – after death we must meet God (Hebrews 9:27).

## 13. What does it mean to cut off your hand, etc?

### Mark 9:43-48

Jesus obviously did not intend that a Christian should physically cut off a hand or foot, or pluck out an eye!

Jesus employed hyperbole to drive home his point: “If anything is hindering your entry into the Kingdom of God, it's better to take drastic and perhaps sacrificial measures to rid yourself of that obstacle, whatever it may be, than to end up in hell forever.”

The logic is obvious: temporary pain is better than eternal punishment!

## 14. What does Jesus say about divorce?

### Mark 10:1-12

Jesus makes it clear that divorce is always against the perfect purpose of God. God's plan, since creation, is that married people should live together for the whole of their lives (verses 6-9). This is God's perfect plan.

Jesus also emphasised that if people institute divorce because they have found another partner, such action is adultery (verses 11-12).

However, because people's hearts are still hard (verse 5), divorce has always taken place. The danger is that we treat divorce as the unforgivable sin, where a divorced person can never again be acceptable to God.

Christ came to die for all sin, including the sin of divorce. In talking to the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, Jesus knew that she had already been divorced five times and was now living with a sixth man. No doubt in some of these divorces the woman had been in the wrong. But even knowing these facts, Jesus still freely offered acceptance and forgiveness to her when he said “*If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me and I would give you living water*” (John 4:10).

It is not our role to be moral policemen. Like Jesus, we must freely hold out the water of forgiveness, cleansing and eternal life.

If the subject of divorce becomes a major issue in your Christianity Explained group, it may be advisable to arrange an extra session, and involve a minister or counsellor who can explain the Biblical position lovingly.

### 15. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?

#### Mark 11:12-14 & 20-25

This action has perplexed many Christians, as it was Jesus' only destructive miracle. Two suggestions can be made.

- a. Jesus was teaching his disciples about the power of prayer. Certainly, that was the interpretation that he himself gave in the following verses (verses 22-24). Jesus was saying in effect, "This power is available to you too. If anyone says to this mountain..."
- b. Many commentators have suggested that we have here what is called an 'acted parable' or a parable without words! Many such acted parables were used by the Old Testament prophets. In verse 11 Jesus went to the Temple, which should have been the most spiritual place on earth. He looked around at everything and saw, in fact, spiritual bankruptcy – a commercial racket going on.

The next day he cleansed the Temple (verses 15-19). Wedged between these two incidents is the cursing of the fig tree.

Some suggest that the fig tree represents Israel and the Temple worship. Instead of finding spiritual fruitfulness in the Temple, he found barrenness, like the fig tree. Just as the fig tree was cursed, so too Israel would come under God's curse and condemnation for her spiritual emptiness.

This idea of the coming destruction of the temple is taken up more fully in Mark chapter 13.

The Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Roman armies in AD 70, about 37 years later.

### 16. What does all that about the seven brothers and only one bride mean?

#### Mark 12:18-27

What is the point of this trick question? In Jesus' day there were two major religious parties: the Pharisees, who believed in life after death, and the Sadducees, who said that death was the end – there was no hope of life or resurrection beyond the grave (verse 18).

So the Sadducees came up with this question (verses 18-23). In his answer to them in verses 24-27, Jesus says two things.

First, there is life beyond the grave, but no marriage relationship as such. This does not mean that married couples will not know each other in heaven – just that sexual relationships will have ended.

Second, God did not say: "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob..." but, "I am the God of Abraham. I *am* still their God, because they live on!" The hope of the resurrection is the central Christian hope.

### 17. What is the "sacrilegious object that causes desecration"?

#### Mark 13:14

Fortunately, this is one case where the parallel passage in another gospel, in this case Luke, gives us the key. Luke chapter 21 is the parallel passage to Mark chapter 13. Luke has a tendency in his gospel to explain difficult words or expressions. In the place of Mark 13:14, Luke has these words: "And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that the time of its destruction has arrived. Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. Those in Jerusalem must get out, and those out in the country should not return to the city" (Luke 21:20-21).

So in the place of "sacrilegious object that causes desecration", Luke has "Jerusalem surrounded by armies."

In AD 65 the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem after a political uprising. After a terrible five-year war, the Roman armies entered the city, desecrated the Holy of Holies in the Temple, then proceeded to pull down and burn both the Temple and the city. Jesus' words in Mark chapter 13 came to pass.

## **18. Why did Jesus not know the date of his own return?**

### **Mark 13:32**

Some people have suggested that, because Jesus did not know the date of his own return, this means that he is less than perfect, less than divine. Since God is omniscient (knows everything), Jesus cannot be God.

Two comments need to be made.

First, there is a great mystery here. When “the Word became human” (John 1:14), Jesus “gave up his divine privileges” or as other translations put it, he “made himself nothing” or “emptied himself” (Philippians 2:7). As a baby and child, Jesus had to grow in wisdom, just as all human children do. He was not born with complete knowledge built in. It is probably fair to say that Jesus would have known nothing about computers or internal combustion engines.

Second, it is not sinful to lack knowledge. It is sinful to make dogmatic statements on the basis of little or no real knowledge. Jesus freely acknowledged that he did not know the date of his return. If he did not know, we should never speculate!

This is one of those little touches which verifies the truth of the Bible. If someone was making up the story of Jesus Christ, they would never have left in Mark 13:32!

## **19. Was the darkness an eclipse?**

### **Mark 15:33**

It has been suggested that the darkness over the cross of Jesus was caused by a solar eclipse.

However, this idea is not possible. Jesus was crucified at the time of the Jewish Passover, which is always at full moon. At full moon, the heavenly bodies are in an almost straight line like this: Sun - Earth - Moon.

To have a daytime eclipse of the sun, the bodies must be in an exact straight line like this: Sun - Moon - Earth.

Physically we cannot explain this account of darkness adequately. Sufficient to say that it was in keeping with mankind’s darkest deed!

## **20. Why are there different endings to the gospel of Mark?**

### **Mark chapter 16**

Most scholars agree that the gospel of Mark ends abruptly at verse 8 in a rather unsatisfactory manner. The women have seen the empty tomb and been informed of the resurrection of Jesus, but there is no account of Jesus himself appearing, as there is in the other three gospels.

The longer version of the ending of the gospel of Mark appears to be an attempt by well-meaning scribes to add some resurrection appearances to Mark. However, even the style of the Greek original changes after verse 8.

This does not mean that what is contained in verses 9 to the end is wrong or fictional, and many of the details here can be fact checked from the other gospels. It just means that they were probably not in Mark’s original.

# Personal experiences of Christianity Explained

## SITUATION:

### RETIREMENT VILLAGE

*"We write to commend Christianity Explained as a wonderful evangelistic tool. It is a low key, easy to understand course that is non-threatening to those attending.*

*My wife and I live in an over 50's community and after getting to know our neighbours invited them to do Christianity Explained with us. We had a group of six and at the end of the course three were converted and gave their lives to Christ, all six are continuing on in Bible study.*

*One of those converted was Eileen, 89 years old, and her life was completely changed. I asked her what it was like now. She said that before the course she was afraid to die but now that fear had gone, and she had peace about dying. She also said that it was like she had gone through her wardrobe and thrown out all of the old clothes. At 89 years she had a new life in Christ. It has made me realise that the elderly need Jesus in their lives as much as anyone.*

*Thank you Lord for your goodness to all you call."*

**Shane & Wendy**

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## SITUATION:

### MISSIONARY

*"A number of years ago I wrote when I was serving at a Church in Manila, Philippines. I want to let you know what a powerful tool Christianity Explained became in that situation and that the Lord has used it to help bring many into a personal relationship with Himself.*

*I and others found it to be effective across cultural and religious divides. Seekers from Buddhist, Spiritualist, New Age, Shintoist and Taoist backgrounds have found a living faith and gone on in their discipleship journey."*

## SITUATION:

### PERSONAL PROBLEMS

*"After growing up un-Churched I had the Gospel explained to me when I was 17. At the time my life was spiralling down into alcohol abuse, but what my friends would think of me was more important.*

*At age 22 I sought help for my alcohol problem. This put me in contact with some people who had recently become Christians. I had been spiritually searching for some time, exploring New Age practices and beliefs. Finding these fruitless and empty, what these Christians had begun to look very attractive. One of these new friends, Rob, invited me to come to his place for six Wednesdays in a row. Another friend of his, Mick, was going to come over and explain about Jesus and what it means to be a Christian (I found out later it was Christianity Explained).*

*For the first three weeks I tried every excuse not to go. Then, somewhere between weeks 3 and 4 something changed inside me, and I couldn't wait to get there to learn more, starting to devour the things of God. By the end I was asking myself, 'Why haven't I become a Christian yet?'. As C.S. Lewis said, it seemed the only reasonable thing to do.*

*God has led me on an amazing path, and I am now in full-time Christian ministry.*

*Mick has gone to be with the Lord now, but the legacy he has left on my life, through Christianity Explained, continues on."*

**Murray**

## SITUATION:

### RIDICULE TURNED

*“Some years ago I was working for a production house that edited film to be used in TV news and commercials. One of our on-camera presenters, Chris, we knew to be a practicing Christian. I used to mock him for ‘doing Christian things’, and called him words to the effect ‘you Bible basher!’.*

*About five years later I shifted to the coast, needing a job, and a lady turned up at the door with a meal for myself and my children, and an invitation to attend Church next day. At Church there was a plea for someone to do fill-in work at the local school for the next six weeks. Monday morning saw me on the job!*

*Also during that time I began the course Christianity Explained, and by the end of 12 weeks... (yep, it took me that long with all the questions I asked...) I was born again, baptised, and proud to be a ‘Bible-bashing’ Christian. But wait, there’s more! (Starting to sound like an ad don’t you think?). In my walk with Christ, he provided me with a wonderful husband.*

*While we were watching the video of Christianity Explained, to my surprise and astonishment, who should come out to haunt me but Chris, the man I had teased and taunted so many years ago! (An earlier version of the Christianity Explained video was introduced by Chris).*

*Now my husband and I are taking seekers through Christianity Explained. I praise and thank God for all he has done in my years, that he has been faithful and used this course to bring myself and my husband into Eternal Life.”*

**Popi**

## SITUATION:

### THE SCHOOL GATE

*“My son was attending our local kindergarten a few days a week. He made good friends with another boy and would tell me all about him. This made me curious to wonder what was so remarkable about this kid. It took some time before I finally got to meet him and his mother – we were always missing each other at pick up time. When we eventually did get to meet, the conversation of God came up as a general comment about current world crises. She asked me if I was interested in Christianity. This was really strange because I had been looking and calling and thinking about God. She invited me over to her house for a course entitled Christianity Explained. She assured me that there was only one other person who would be there, and I wouldn’t have to do anything. I said yes immediately because I had finally met someone who wanted to talk about God on a personal level.*

*I was excited inside and couldn’t wait. I loved the first lesson instantly. It was my first time of really reading a Bible. I connected straight away with what was being presented. Each week got harder for me, as I know now there began a tremendous war in my head, and it hurt like mad. Scriptures were being put into my heart which were tearing down years of a belief system I learned as a child.*

*By the time we had reached the last session, I knew I had to choose between religion or the Jesus of the Bible.*

*I chose Jesus and although at times it has not been easy, I still rejoice to this day. My life has never been the same since I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.*

*My friend gave me a copy of Christianity Explained, because she knew it had made such an impact on me. I began to share and do the course with others in my town. God seems to place people in my path to witness to, just as he did with me. I love it and pray for it.”*



# Copying Masters

# Session Handouts and Visual Aids

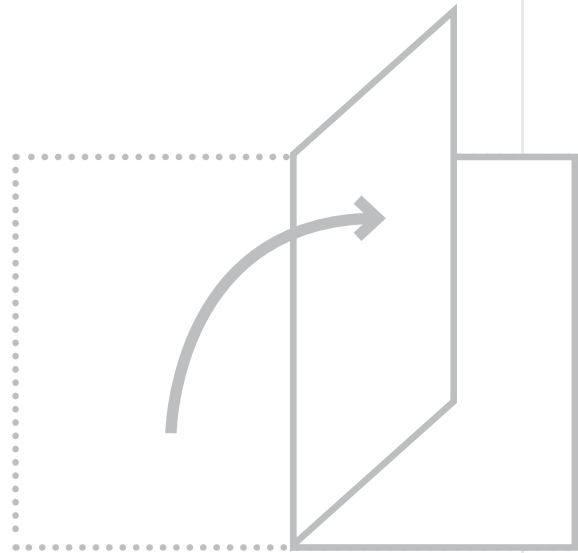
Each session of Christianity Explained includes participant handouts and visual aids to reinforce the key points.

**Handouts** summarise the lesson and are most effective if given out after the session, as distributing them beforehand can lead to distractions. Reviewing the handouts at the end of each session also reinforces the main ideas as the last takeaway for participants.

**Visual aids** are also provided to enhance understanding of key points and engagement during the sessions. Instructions in this guide indicate when and where to use each visual. For durability, consider laminating the visual aids.

Copies of the handouts and visual aids are on the following pages and can be used for photocopying if needed. For easy, high-quality printing, the print-ready PDFs for both are available for free download at:

[christianityexplained.com](http://christianityexplained.com)



*The session handouts are designed to be printed double-sided and folded in half as shown.*

## SESSIONS INCLUDE



**Jesus** [Son of God]



**Jesus** [His death on a cross]



**Jesus** [His resurrection]



**God's Gift** [Not our works]



**Repenting** [What is a Christian?]



**Believing** [What is a Christian?]



find out more



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[christianityexplained.com](http://christianityexplained.com)

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SESSION 1.

## Jesus [Son of God]

## Jesus [Son of God]



**This is God's world, and we have seen that Jesus comes into the world with all the authority of God himself.**

In this study we have seen:

1. Jesus' authority as a teacher  
**MARK 1:21-22**
2. Jesus' authority over evil spirits  
**MARK 1:23-28**
3. Jesus' authority over sickness  
**MARK 2:1-12**
4. Jesus' authority to forgive sins  
(this shows him to be equal with God)  
**MARK 2:1-12**
5. Jesus' authority over nature  
**MARK 4:35-41**
6. Jesus' authority over life and death  
**MARK 5:35-42**

But most importantly, as far as we are concerned today, we have seen:

7. Jesus' authority over people  
**MARK 1:16-20**

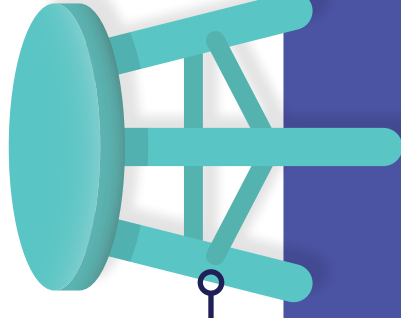
### CONCLUSION

- Jesus has great authority as the Son of God.
- Jesus claims to be divine, that is, God.
- Jesus calls for us to follow him.

*We each need to come to a decision about Jesus – is he a liar, a lunatic or the Lord?*

There are three basic concepts which you must believe to be a Christian. We have seen the first of these:

SON OF GOD



AT HOME:

**Read Mark chapters 1-5**

Note anything you do not understand, or would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these things at the beginning of the next session.





find out more



[hello@christianityexplained.com](mailto:hello@christianityexplained.com)  
[christianityexplained.com](http://christianityexplained.com)

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SESSION 2.

## Jesus [His death on a cross]



## Jesus [His death on a cross]



In this study we have seen:

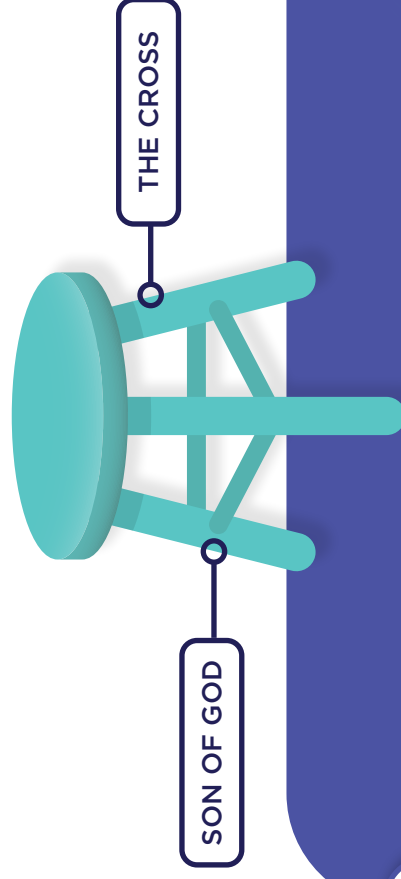
1. **Jesus' death on the cross** MARK 15:33-39
2. **The meaning of the cross**
  - a) **The darkness** MARK 15:33  
Indicates that, in the death of Jesus, God performed a special, supernatural act.
  - b) **The cry** MARK 15:34-37  
Jesus called out: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"  
To some extent, God had forsaken or abandoned his Son when he was on the cross.  
Remember the book, which we imagined was a record of every time we have lived our way instead of God's way. Jesus, who always lived his Father's way, 'bore our sins in his body on the cross', and our sins formed a barrier between him and his Father. Jesus dealt with our sins and their guilt and punishment, and his resurrection showed that God was satisfied with the sin-bearing that Jesus had completed on the cross.
  - c) **The curtain** MARK 15:38  
The curtain was torn exactly when Jesus died, indicating that the barrier between us and God has been removed. People can come back into relationship with God only through Jesus' death.
  - d) **The ransom** MARK 10:45  
This is the price that Jesus paid in order to allow us to have a relationship with God. The price was the giving of his life.

### CONCLUSION

Jesus' death is sufficient for the sins of anyone, but God's forgiveness is not automatically given to everybody. Each of us must individually accept by faith the gift that Jesus gave us on the cross.

There are three basic concepts which you must believe to be a Christian.

We have now seen two of these:



AT HOME:

### Read Mark chapters 6-10

Note anything you do not understand, or would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these things at the beginning of the next session.





SESSION 3.

## Jesus [His resurrection]

find out more



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## Jesus [His resurrection]

In this study we have seen:

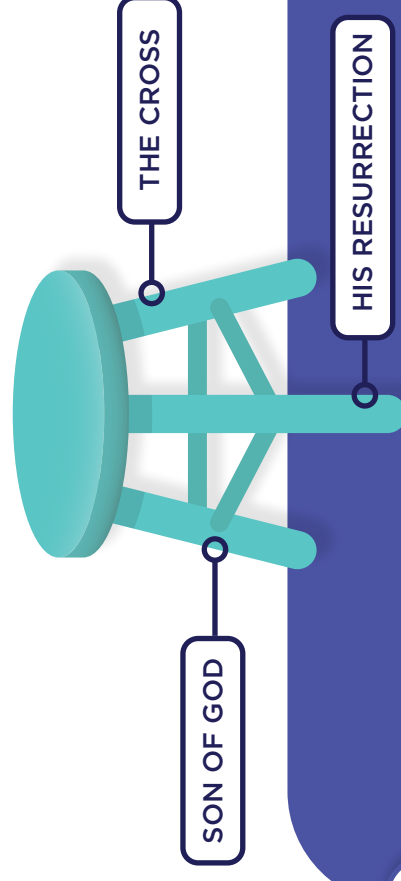
1. **The resurrection predicted** MARK 10:32-34
2. **Jesus was seen in a resurrected physical body** LUKE 24:36-43  
In the Bible there are recorded at least ten occasions when the risen Jesus appeared to his followers. He spoke to them, ate with them and was touched by them.
3. **The meaning of the resurrection** ACTS 10:39-43
  - a) **All people will be raised**  
'the living and the dead'
  - b) **All people will be judged**  
'the judge of all - the living and the dead'
  - c) **The risen Jesus will be the judge**  
'Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge'
  - d) **All people will be divided into two groups** 'everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins'  
**"If anyone is ashamed of me... the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person"** MARK 8:38
  - e) **This division is forever**  
Read 2 THESSALONIANS 1:9-10.

### CONCLUSION

Jesus' attitude to me on the day of judgment is the same as my attitude to him now, in this life.

- If I **accept** him now, he will **accept** me then.
- If I **reject** him now, he will **reject** me then.

There are three basic concepts which you must believe to be a Christian. These are:



AT HOME:

### Read Mark chapters 11-16

Note anything you do not understand, or would like to discuss. There will be a time for discussing these things at the beginning of the next session.





SESSION 4.



## God's Gift [Not our works]

find out more



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## God's Gift [Not our works]

Imagine that you have just died, and that God is judging your life. God says to you: "Give me one good reason why I should accept you into heaven with me?" What would you reply?

### The wrong answer: What I have done

God, you should accept me because I have:

- Lived a good life
- Kept the Ten Commandments
- Given to charities
- Been a good citizen
- Been a good parent
- Prayed and read the Bible
- Been to Church
- Been baptised.

### The right answer: What Christ has done

God, you should accept me because of what **Christ** has done for me, and that alone.

Good works  Salvation

**BUT**

Salvation  Good works



Read Ephesians 2:8-10

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that eternal life, forgiveness of sins and a place in God's kingdom cannot be earned or deserved by us. They have been earned for people by the Son of God, through his death and resurrection.

NOT

WHAT  
I  
HAVE DONE

BUT

WHAT  
**CHRIST**  
HAS DONE

So forgiveness and eternal life is the free gift of God to all who will receive the giver – that is, Jesus Christ.

In the next session we will discuss how we do this. This is the vital question, *What is a Christian?*



AT HOME:

Re-read these passages from Mark's gospel and underline what you think are the most significant words for you:

- A) MARK 1:15
- B) MARK 7:20-23
- C) MARK 8:34-38
- D) MARK 9:43-48
- E) MARK 10:29-31





### Prayer of Salvation

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally.  
I'm sorry for going my own way.  
Please forgive me for all of my sin.  
Thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sin.  
I agree to turn from my old ways and follow you as my Saviour and Lord.  
Please come and take first place in my life.

find out more



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SESSION 5.



## Repenting [What is a Christian?]



## Repenting [What is a Christian?]

**“The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”** MARK 1:15

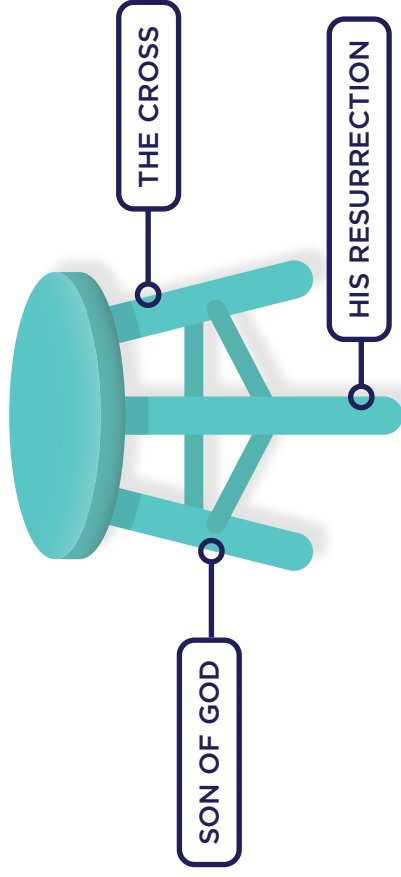
**Q:** What is a Christian?

**A:** *Someone who belongs to the kingdom of God.*

**Q.** How can I belong to the kingdom of God?

**A:** *By repenting and believing in Jesus Christ.*

We have seen that there are three basic concepts which you must believe to be a Christian. These are:



But being a Christian is more than just believing these facts.

### Repentance means:

Recognising sin in our lives and how offensive it is to God, turning away from that sinful way of life and turning towards a God-honouring way of life.

I put Jesus first ...

- ... Before my will
- ... Before my ambitions
- ... Before my popularity
- ... Before anyone or anything else

**MARK 8:34-38 AND MARK 9:43-48**



AT HOME:

What gifts does God promise to those who repent and believe?

MARK 1:8

H

S

MARK 2:10

F

MARK 10:30

E

L





### Prayer of Salvation

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally.

I'm sorry for going my own way.

Please forgive me for all of my sin.

Thank you for dying on the cross to pay for my sin.

I agree to turn from my old ways and follow you as my Saviour and Lord.

Please come and take first place in my life.

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SESSION 6.

# Believing [What is a Christian?]





## Believing [What is a Christian?]

**“The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!” MARK 1:15**

**Q: What is a Christian?**

A: *Someone who belongs to the kingdom of God.*

**Q. How can I belong to the kingdom of God?**

A: *By repenting and believing in Jesus Christ.*

Throughout each of the six sessions, we have seen that a Christian believes certain facts about Jesus Christ.

**“Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” MARK 10:15**

So believing is more than just accepting facts about Jesus. I must personally receive him as my King and Saviour, and by so doing I receive these gifts that are promised by God:

**1. The Holy Spirit MARK 1:8**

Jesus Christ comes to live in me by his Spirit, and begins to change me from the inside out.

**2. The forgiveness of sins MARK 2:10**

I can know for certain that my sins are totally forgiven. Jesus' death is sufficient to pay for my sins.

**3. Eternal life MARK 10:29-30**

I can truly have eternal life with Jesus, because I trust in what he has done for me, and not what I can do.

**Am I a Christian?**

Test yourself. You are a Christian if you can genuinely say YES to these two statements.

I trust in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of my sins.

*(I do not trust my own good works)*

I trust in the risen Jesus to be Lord of my life.

*(I will not insist solely on my own will)*





# Jesus authority

**...as a teacher**

**Mark 1:21-24**

**...over evil spirits**

**Mark 5:1-15**

**...over sickness**

**Mark 2:1-12**



# ...to forgive sins

Mark 2:1-12

# ...over nature

Mark 4:35-41

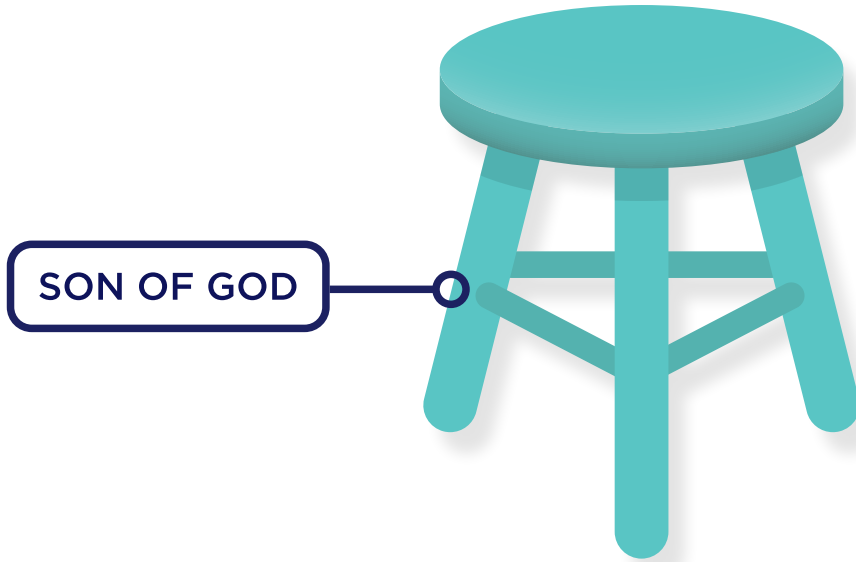
# ...over life and death

Mark 5:35-43

# over people

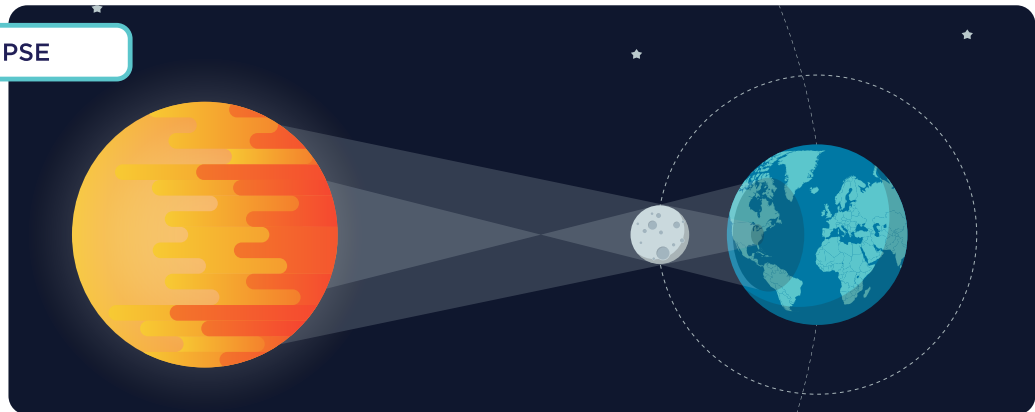
(like you and me)

Mark 1:16-20

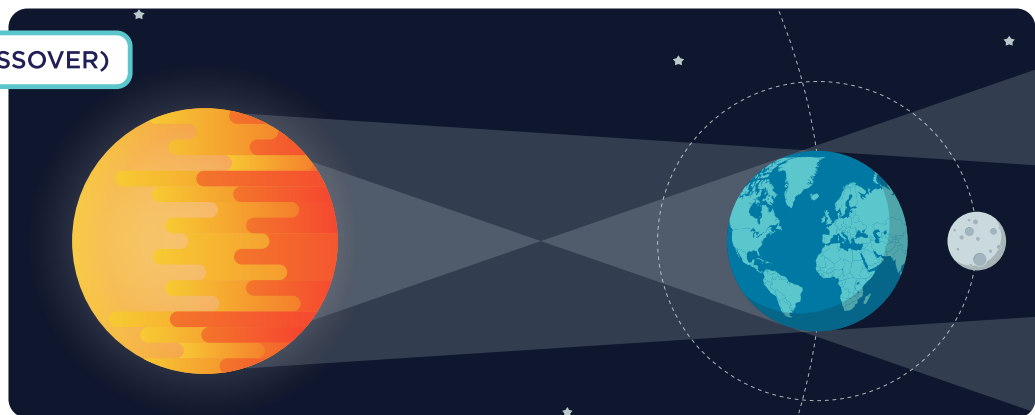




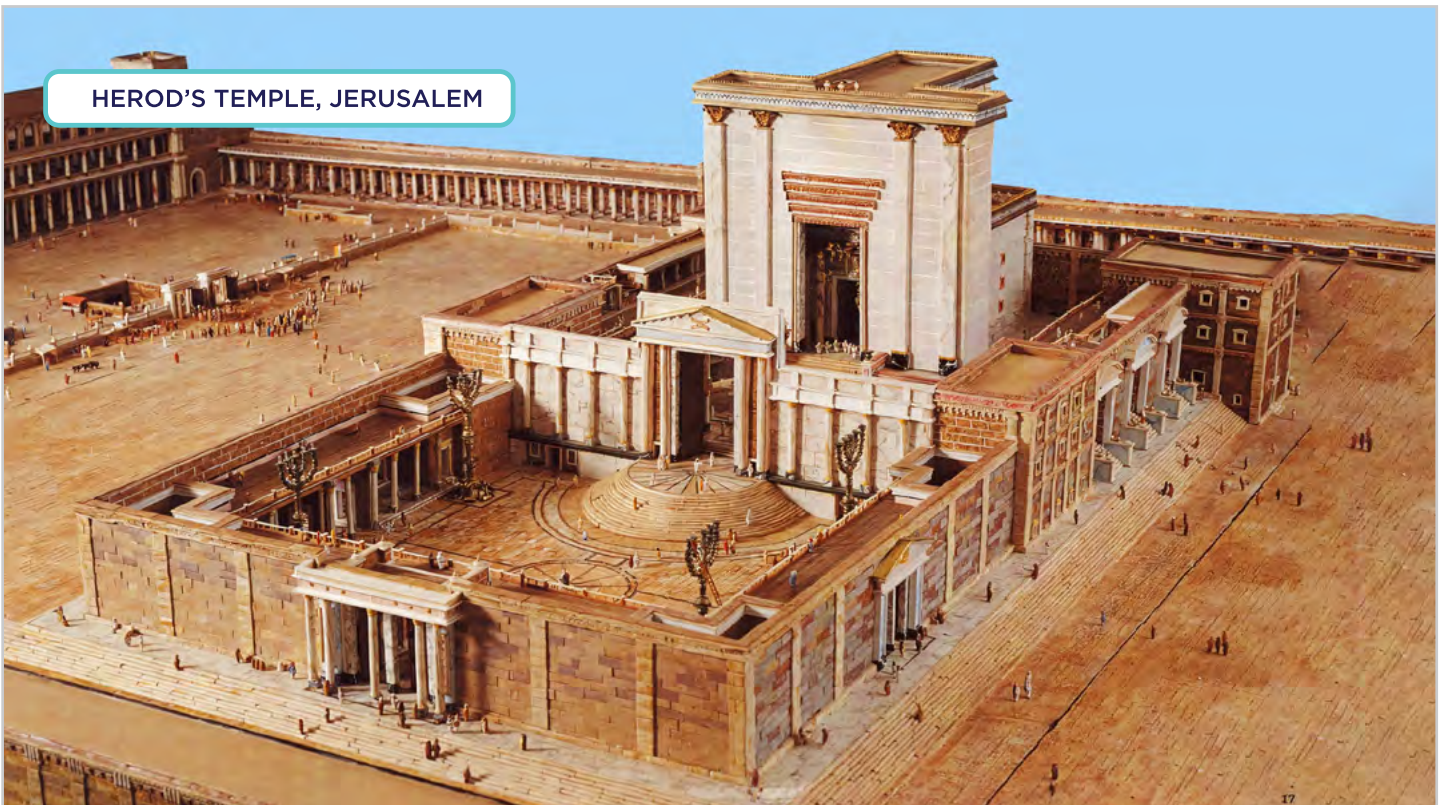
SOLAR ECLIPSE



FULL MOON (PASSEVER)

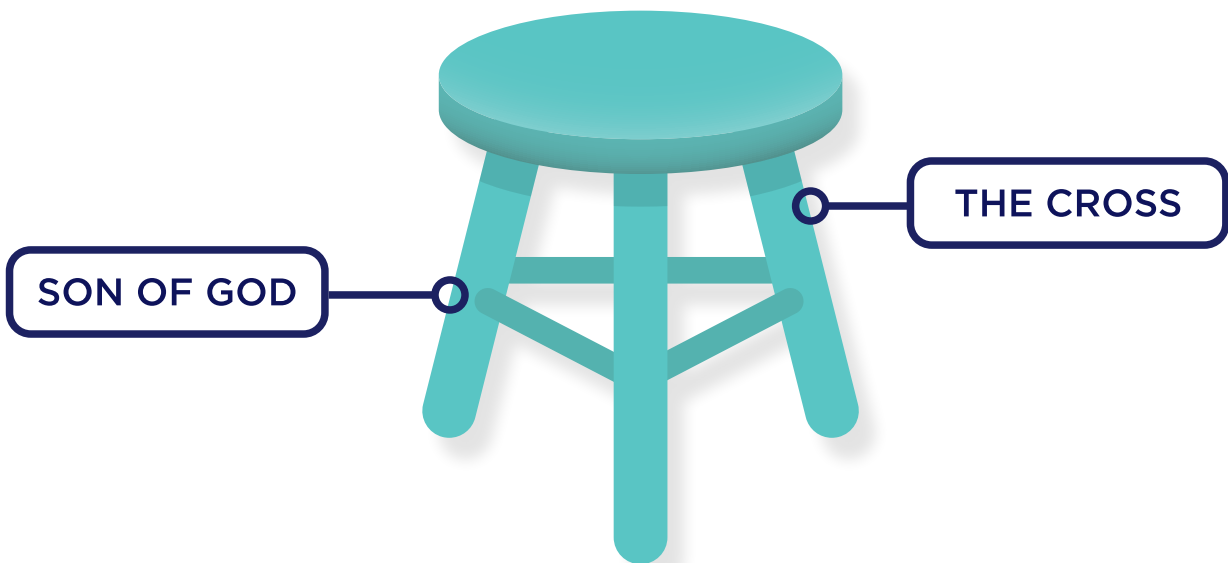
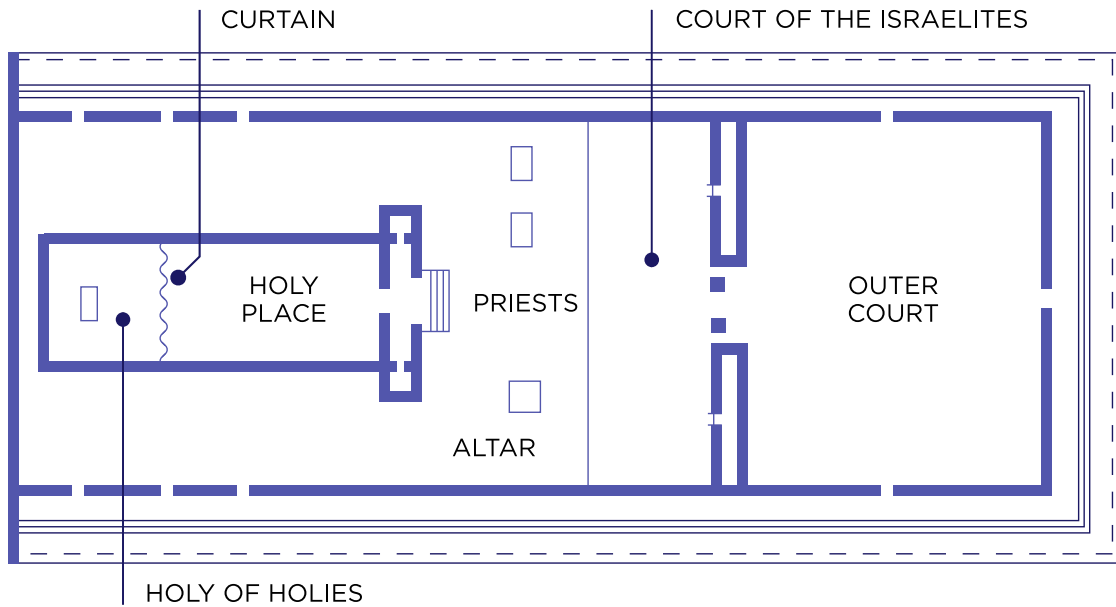


HEROD'S TEMPLE, JERUSALEM





COURT OF THE GENTILES





---

# All people will be raised

Acts 10:42

---

# All people will be judged

Acts 10:42

---

# The risen Jesus will be the judge on that day

Acts 10:42

---

# All people will be divided into two groups

Acts 10:42 Mark 8:38

---



## the positive side

**Acts 10 v43**

Those who believe in Jesus *now*  
are forgiven their sins *now*  
and are accepted by Jesus *then*  
on Judgement day (heaven)

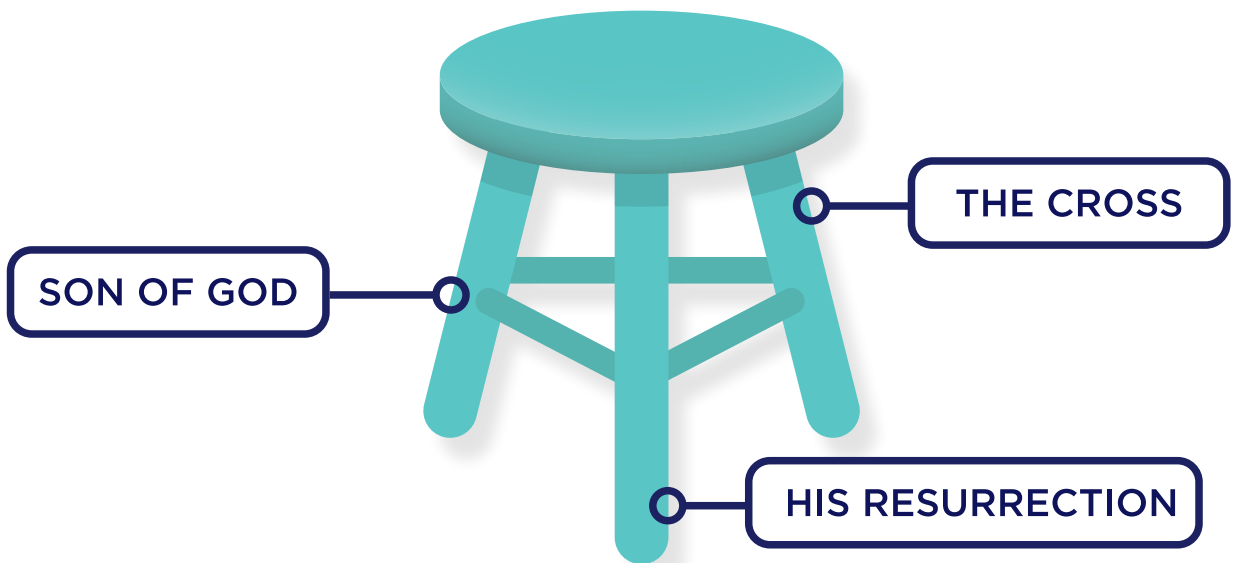
## the negative side

**Mark 8 v38**

Those who reject Jesus *now*  
will be rejected by Jesus *then*  
on Judgement day (hell)

# This division is forever!

**2 Thessalonians 1:8-10**





STEP 1 - Cut this out and paste it to the BACK of a B5 envelope (250 x 176mm) or similar



STEP 2 - Cut this out and paste it to the FRONT of the B5 envelope (250 x 176mm) or similar



**Salvation by  
works**



STEP 3 - Cut this out and paste it to the BACK of a B5 envelope (250 x 176mm) or similar



STEP 4 - Cut this out and paste it to the FRONT of the B5 envelope (250 x 176mm) or similar



**Salvation by**  
**grace**



STEP 5 - Cut this out and paste it to the FRONT of a smaller B6 envelope (176 x 125mm)



**What  
I  
have done**

STEP 6 - Cut this out and paste it to the FRONT of a smaller B6 envelope (176 x 125mm)



**What  
Jesus  
has done**



STEP 7 - Cut up these answers to the Opening Questions and place them, in order, in the "What I have done" envelope.



**God, you should let me  
into heaven because:**

**I keep the Ten Commandments**

**I don't kill, lie or steal**

**I give to charity**

**I am a kind person**

**I am a good citizen**



**I work hard**

**I am bringing up my family well**

**I read the Bible**

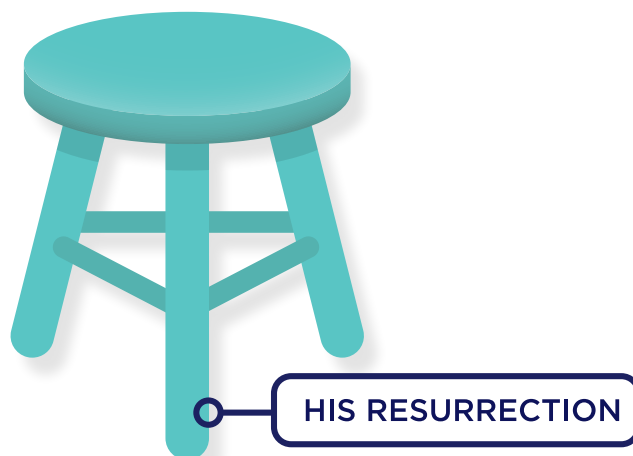
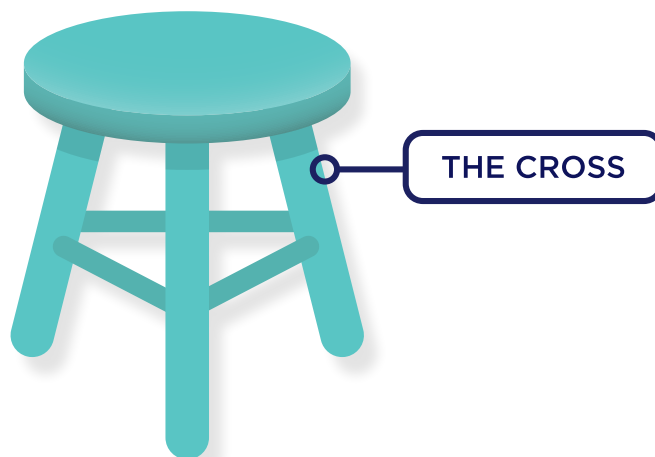
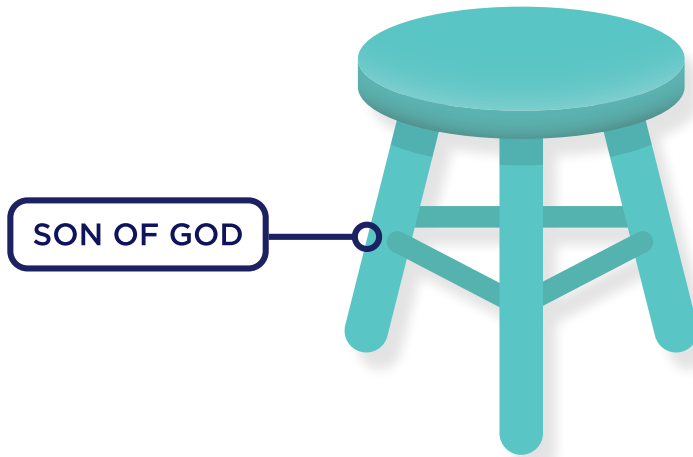
**I pray**

**I go to Church**

**I have been baptised,  
confirmed, or participated  
in Holy Communion**



STEP 8 - Put these diagrams into the "What Jesus has done" envelope





Good  
works



Salvation

**BUT**

Salvation



Good  
works



**I am willing for Jesus  
to be first in my life...**

**...before my will**

**Mark 8:34-35**

**...before my ambitions**

**Mark 8:36-37**

**...before my popularity**

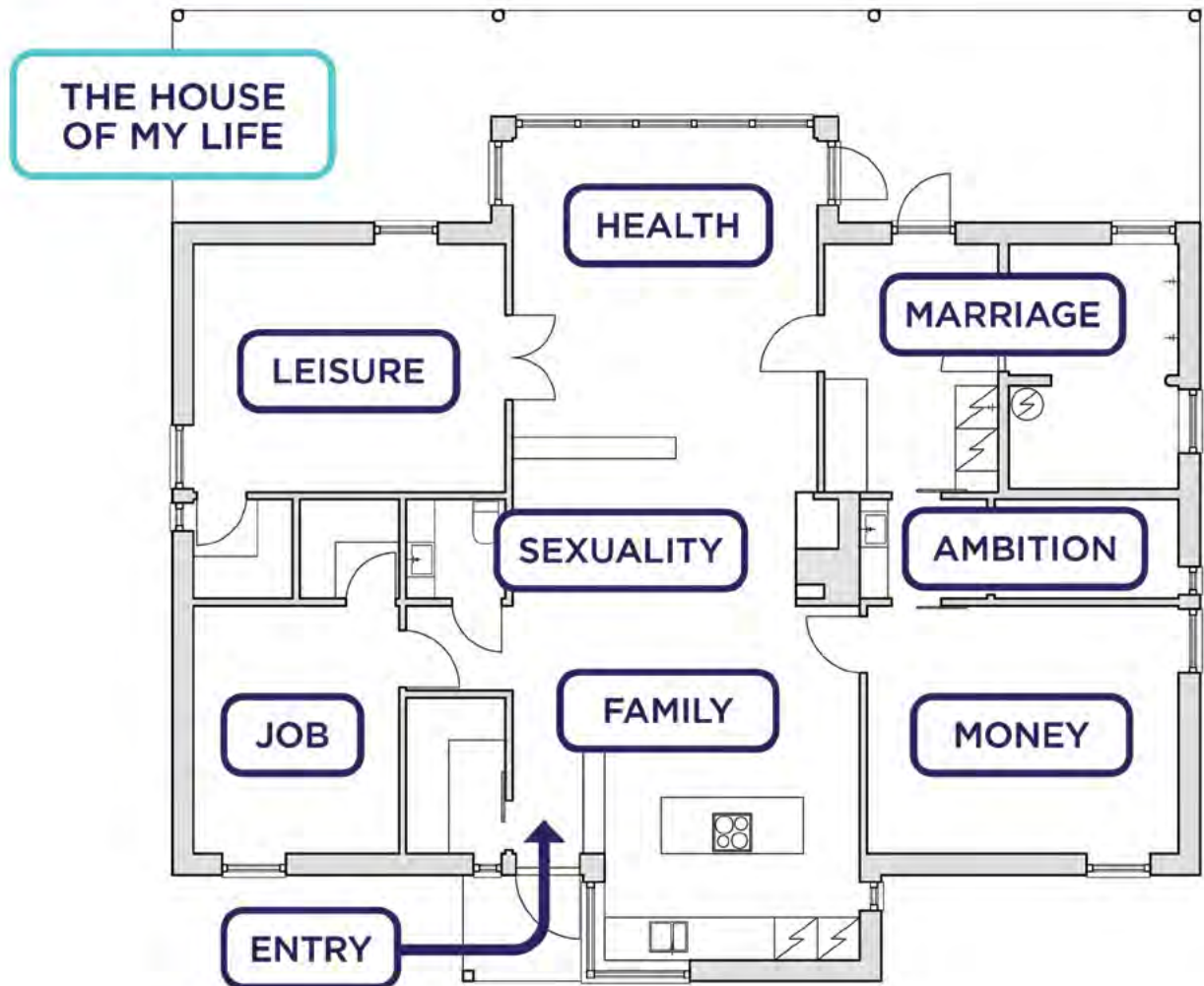
**Mark 8:38**

**...before my???**

**Mark 9:43-48**

**Too Hard?**

**Mark 10:29-31**





# Faith is:

**...taking Jesus at his word**

**Mark 5:21-24; 5:35-43**

**...reaching out to Jesus**

**Mark 5:25-34**

**...having child-like trust**

**Mark 10:13-16**

**...receiving Jesus as king**

**Mark 10:1-5**

**...knowing God accepts me**

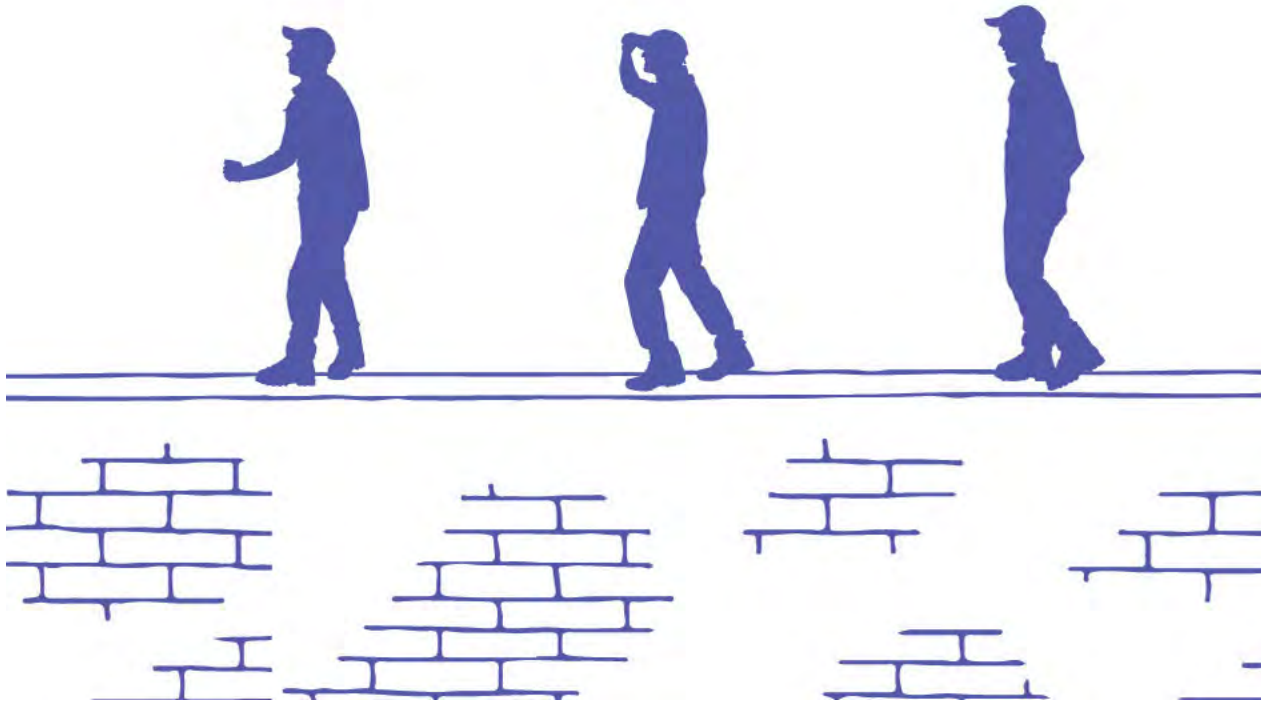
**John 5:24**



FACTS

FAITH

FEELINGS







# Christianity Explained Course Assessment Sheet

Please mark the appropriate answers. Your honesty is appreciated.  
Feel free to skip any questions you would prefer not to answer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Before you began this course, how would you have described yourself?**

- I didn't believe in God.
- I didn't know if there was a God or not.
- I believed in God, but not in Jesus Christ.
- I thought I was a Christian, but now I know I was not.
- A Christian (i.e., a personal commitment to Jesus Christ).
- Something else

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. How would you describe your position now in relation to Jesus Christ?**

- I have genuinely repented and come to believe in Jesus, and I have received him as my Lord and Saviour.
- I'm interested in learning more, but as yet, I have not committed my life to Jesus.
- Other

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. If you have not yet become a Christian, what is stopping you?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Have you reached the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that you have eternal life? If you died tonight, are you confident that you would go to heaven?**

- Yes
- No

**5. Suppose you were to die tonight and you stood before God in heaven and he asked: "Why should I let you into heaven?" - what would you reply?**

- You should let me in because

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Quite often, people who have finished this course want to go on and discover more about the Christian faith. To cater for this need, we offer a further six-week course which looks at what it means to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus Christ. Would you be interested in participating in this course?**

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but later

**7. What is your position on attending Church?**

- I am satisfied with the Church I go to.
- I do not regularly attend Church, but would like to be introduced to a Church where there is warm fellowship and good teaching.
- I do not wish to attend Church at this stage.

**8. What comments would you like to make about the course - either positive or negative?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

find out more



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