

JESUS IS _____.

jesus-is.org.au

JESUS IS _____

How would you finish this sentence: *Jesus is* ___?

Knowing Jesus is the heart and soul of Christianity. Yet many people have different impressions and beliefs about who Jesus is.

In March this year we are having a Regional Mission in partnership with Moore College from March 18-25. In preparation for the mission and to prompt deeper reflection and thought, we have a series of bible studies around the theme of Jesus is _____.

Our aim is to start a conversation *with people about who Jesus really is:*

- Those who already attend church will usually respond with a positive answer.
- Those who are outside our fellowship may answer with a negative.

So the bible studies we have planned are a balance of both to prepare and equip us.

This is not an apologetics series. Our aim is to answer people's questions and statements with an episode from Jesus' life and teachings. Instead of argument, we are aiming to use story. We hope to start a conversation and to turn the conversation to Jesus as soon as possible.

We also want to encourage Christians to really listen to what our non-Christian friends and neighbours are saying, to walk a mile in their shoes. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus gives Scout the crucial piece of moral advice that governs her development for the rest of the novel, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Likewise, we are taking time at the start of each study to listen to and resonate with the comments of our culture as we explore who Jesus is _____.

Our prayer is that God will help us all have a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and a compassion for those who are yet to meet Him.

Yours in Christ's service,

Stephen Gibson (St Luke's Miranda) and Matt Redmond (Soul Revival Sutherland Shire)

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 1 2018

Week commencing		Reading Plan	Page Number
5 th February	<i>1. Jesus is the Son of God</i>	John 1:35-51	6
12 th February	<i>2. Jesus is irrelevant</i>	Matthew 11:1-24	10
19 th February	<i>3. Jesus is a fairy tale</i>	John 20:24-31	17
26 th February	<i>4. Jesus is trustworthy</i>	Luke 6:43-49 John 18:28-40	21
5 th March	<i>5. Jesus is a bigot</i>	Luke 6:27-36 Luke 10:25-37	26
12 March	<i>6. Jesus is just one way among many</i>	John 14:1-14	31
19 th March	<i>7. Jesus is truth & love</i>	Mark 1:29-2:12	36
26 th March	<i>8. Jesus is dead & buried</i>	Luke 23:32-56	41
2 nd April	<i>9. Jesus is alive and risen</i>	John 20:1-18	46
9 th April	<i>10. Jesus is coming back</i>	Matt. 24:42-51 2 Peter 3:1-13	50

Bible Studies written by Stephen Gibson and Matt Redmond
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St Luke's Anglican Church, Miranda and Soul Revival, Sutherland Shire

JESUS IS a user's guide

Welcome to the “Jesus Is _____.” series

The Bible teaches that Jesus is for us. He has not abandoned us in our sins but gave His life as a ransom for many. And surely we want our friends to realise this great truth too: that Jesus is for them! The “Jesus Is _____.” mission in March will give us an opportunity to let others know that Jesus is for them.

There are a number of ways you and your group can prepare. One essential way of preparing for the “Jesus Is _____.” month of mission is by prayer – that the lost might be found. We encourage everyone in your group to use the “Jesus Is _____.” bookmarks provided with these studies. We invite each person in your group to name one or two people, who as far as you know are not Christians, but whom you'd love to discover that Jesus is... for them!

Another way to prepare is by using these bible studies through term one in the lead up to our month of mission. These studies have been prepared first of all to discover the truth about who Jesus is as presented in the Bible. Second, these studies have been prepared to help us to listen well before we engage people in a conversation about Jesus. Understanding who our family and friends think Jesus is, often is the first step towards opening up a conversation that will be truly be full of grace and seasoned with salt. [Col 4:6]

How to use these studies

This series of studies has been designed to be done before the sermon each week. This gives you and your group an opportunity to study the passage, understand it and apply it to your own lives before you hear the theme preached and explained. Some studies are longer than others and that's OK. Do not feel you have to answer every question. If you prepare well, before your group meets, it will give you an idea of where each study is headed and help you to know how to best craft the study to suit your individual group's needs. Feel free to make them your own.

How the studies are written

Each study is broken up into five parts.

First, most of the studies begin with a real life scenario. The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. So, treat these scenarios as if you are experiencing them and think about how you would respond in each situation.

Second, there are questions to help you **resonate with what you have heard**. These are questions to help you empathise with the way other people view Jesus and who he is. We call this **RESONANCE**.

Third, we take a look at one or more passages from the bible to **find a gap**, a way in to talk about Jesus. In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. We call this **DISSONANCE**

Fourth, we try to **open up the conversation** wider by thinking through **THE GOSPEL SOLUTION** for each of our scenarios found at the start of each study.

Last of all, we pray. Pray for what we have learned, pray for our own lives to be changed by the person of Jesus and pray for those people we've written down on our bookmarks whom we'd like to discover Jesus for themselves.

We hope that you find these studies helpful.

Your brothers in Christ

Stephen Gibson and Matthew Redmond

Study 1 - JESUS IS the Son of God

Intro: Welcome to this Jesus is___ series.

As Matt Redmond and I met to discuss this series at a local coffee shop, Matt asked three tables nearby how they would complete “Jesus is___”. I was surprised to hear all three tables said “Jesus is the Son of God”.

Q. Should I be so surprised? Do we run the risk of overestimating the negative views of those around us and therefore becoming too reluctant to speak up?

The Perils of Perception

Despite the publicity surrounding the 2016 Census figures showing:

- 30% of Australian now state No religion
- Still over 60% state a religion, and
- Over 50% state Christianity

NB: also despite what you hear in some media reports, No religion doesn't mean atheists (usually just a few %). Most are simply not committed and we know that some of those people would certainly say they have a spirituality, some kind of connection with God but they just don't identify with institutional religion.

The media would have us believe that Christians, and those identifying with any religion, are a minority group. We have all heard the derogatory terms – dinosaurs, ancient, out of touch, etc. Many Christians have overestimated the negative views that surround us and are less willing to speak up for Jesus, identify as a Christian, or invite someone to church.

But the reality is fascinating. Surveys consistently find that it is *the minority* of Australians who identify themselves as ‘irreligious’. Or, to put it another way, *the vast majority* of people in our country identify themselves as religious in some way. This is completely consistent with other surveys that reveal:

- 72% of Australians believe in miracles;
- 68% believe in heaven;
- 68% believe that Jesus is the Son of God;
- 66% believe in the resurrection

- 78% of the general population are willing to listen to a Christian talk about their faith!

(see: The Rev Dr Raj Gupta, Jan 8, 2016; sydneyanglicans.net/blogs/ministrythinking/the-perils-of-perception)

Apart from the theological need for people to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour to be saved, Christians can still have confidence that there is much common ground with the vast majority of Australians. We should speak the truth even if this were not the case, of course. But the current point is that Christians have much in common with the majority of our society's beliefs in a number of areas.

You are not alone. Many are all too ready to listen.

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

1) In what ways do you resonate with The Perils of Perception article above?

2) When did you overestimate people's disinterest or unbelief? When were you surprised by someone's interest?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

Belief is not instant and in the gospels we see Jesus' own disciples take time to work out who Jesus is. Some doubted and others were initially quite sceptical. Also coming to faith is seen as a process requiring inviting, hearing, and relationships. We see this among Jesus' first disciples.

READ JOHN 1:35-51

3) List the names of the five disciples that come into contact with Jesus and briefly note how each one met Jesus. (Note: the apostle John is probably the unnamed disciple in verse 37).

4) Andrew is referred to in verse 40 as Simon Peter's brother. He probably lived in the shadow of his more illustrious brother who was to become the leader of the early church. In John's gospel we discover one consistent trait of Andrew (see also 6:1-9 & 12:20-22). What is it?

From these same passages plus **John 14:5-10**, what insight do we gain into the character of Philip?

5) Andrew told his brother "we have found the Messiah" (the Christ v41) & Nathaniel declares of Jesus, "you are the King of Israel" (v49). In what ways would Jesus meet their expectations of the long awaited Messiah?

In ways did he need to reshape their expectations?

6) In v34 and again in v49, Jesus is declared to be "the Son of God". What does this title mean?

7) Jesus said "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (v51). What truth is Jesus conveying about Himself in this verse? (see also Genesis 28:10-12; John 3:13 & Daniel 7:13-14).

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (The Gospel Solution)

8) Everyone who comes to Jesus in this chapter does so because of someone else's witness and invitation. Is witness and invitation the role of special people or every Christian?

"It is quite possible 'Andrew' is the subject of the first clause. In that case Andrew first (v41) found his brother Simon Peter, and then found Philip ... if Andrew is the subject, there are no exceptions." (see D.A. Carson 'John' p157).

Do some people, like Andrew, have a particular gift of witness and invitation?

9) Nathaniel was astonished that Jesus knew him before their conversation. John Calvin wrote: "We should gather from this passage a useful lesson, that when we are not even thinking of Christ, we are observed by Him".

Discuss the implications of this for you and those you will witness to this term during Jesus is____.

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God for the people who witnessed to and invited you to Jesus.
- Pray for those who you might witness to this term. Insert some names here

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- Pray that we will not be put off by negative thoughts or perceptions.
 - Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 2 - JESUS IS irrelevant

Josh, was an American college student who thought Jesus was a great leader in the past, but was not relevant for our lives today. To him, Jesus came to take the fun out of life by giving his followers impossible rules to live by.

One day Josh sat down at a student union lunch table. Next to him was sitting Jenny, a vibrant young student with a radiant smile. Intrigued, he asked her why she was so happy.

Her immediate reply was, "Jesus Christ!"

"Jesus Christ?" Josh said, firing back.

I'm fed up with religion; I'm fed up with the church; I'm fed up with the Bible. Don't give me that garbage about religion."

Unfazed, Jenny calmly leaned forward and opened her mouth to politely speak...

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

1) The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. In what ways do you resonate with Josh?

2) Here are the top six reasons why Australians do not go to church.

47% Irrelevant to my life

26% Don't accept how it's taught

24% Outdated style

22% Issues with clergy/ministers

19% Don't believe the Bible

18% Too busy to attend

http://www.mccrindle.com.au/the-mccrindle-blog/church_attendance_in_australia_infographic

Why do so many Australians see the church and it's teaching as being irrelevant today?

Who do your non-churchgoing friends, family and acquaintances think Jesus is?
When was the last time you asked them?

What is the general perception of Jesus' relevance in the news, media and wider community?

READ MATTHEW 3:13-17 & MATTHEW 11:1-3

- 3) At the beginning of Matthew's gospel, John says that he should be baptised by Jesus. John's account of Jesus' baptism includes John the Baptist saying of Jesus "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" About a year later, we find that John the Baptist has been put into prison by Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great) because he had preached against the king for taking his brother's wife. While in prison, John questions the identity and relevance of Jesus saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" Why? Discuss.
- 4) Consider those living in Jesus' day. What kind of "spiritual Messiah" were the Jewish people expecting?
- 5) How were their expectations misguided?

- 6) Now consider those living in our time. In the 2016 Census 52.1% of Australians said they identified with the Christian religion. <http://www.abs.gov.au>
Some areas in Australia reported results as high as 78% of people who identified with the Christian religion. However, only 8% of people attend church at least once a month and far less than that are regular and involved in bible believing churches. Why the discrepancy? What kind of “spiritual saviour” (Messiah) are the majority of people who say they are Christian actually seeking?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

- 7) In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. Let’s go back to our scenario above. Step into Jenny’s shoes. You’ve just listened to Josh’s thoughts about the irrelevance of religion and church. You lean forward and open your mouth to respond. What do you say?

- 8) We’ll come back to that question a little later to see how Jenny replied to Josh. But, before we do, let’s see how Jesus responded to John the Baptist’s question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Read **Matthew 11:4-6**, Jesus answers John’s question by quoting a number of passages from Isaiah about what the Messiah should be doing. You may wish to read both Isaiah 35:5-6 and Isaiah 61:1. How does Jesus use His answer to teach John about what his future holds?

How does Jesus use His answer to teach about His own mission and purpose?

9) In response to John's question, Jesus affirms that He is the Messiah. He has performed many miraculous signs already - the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers healed, the dead raised and the good news of the kingdom of God has been preached to the poor. However, Jesus stops short of quoting the second part of Isaiah 61:1 - "to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." How does Jesus' omission of Isaiah 61:1b inform or change the way you might answer questions 11 and 12?

If Jesus' mission is to 'free' people who are held 'captive' from spiritual darkness and sin, how relevant is Jesus for the world?

10) Read Matthew 11:7-19. In God's salvation plan, how have things been laid out to show the people exactly who Jesus is?

According to Jesus' condemnation, how relevant is He to "this (His) generation"? Why?

Jesus compares some of the people in His day to children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to others. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach the crowd?

What was so difficult about John the Baptist's and Jesus' teaching that so many turned against it?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (THE GOSPEL SOLUTION)

Let's go back to our scenario with Josh and Jenny.

Jenny's reply to why she was so happy was, "Jesus Christ!"

Josh as we saw said: Don't give me that garbage about religion."

Unfazed, Jenny calmly leaned forward and informed him,

"Mister, I didn't say religion, I said Jesus Christ!"

Josh McDowell was stunned. He had never considered Jesus more than a religious figure, yet here was this joyful Christian woman talking about Jesus as someone who brought meaning to her life. Josh McDowell would later try to disprove the resurrection of Jesus only to become convinced of it and write the classic Christian book "More than a Carpenter".

www.koorong.com/search/product/more-than-a-carpenter-josh-mcdowell-sean-mcdowell/9781850788461.jhtml

Skeptics like McDowell who originally scoffed at Jesus' resurrection, have discovered that there is compelling evidence that it really occurred and that Jesus offers answers and meaning to life's most important questions such as who am I, why am I here and where am I going after I die.

<http://y-jesus.com/wwrj/7-jesus-relevant-today>

- 11) Jenny brought the conversation immediately back to Jesus. Why was this a clever thing to do in response to Josh's negativity about religion?

12) Read **Matthew 11:20-24**. “Jesus becomes relevant to us only when we fully understand ourselves and the human condition”. Would you agree or disagree with that statement? Why or why not?

13) According to Matthew 11:20-24, if we see Jesus as being relevant, what will we do?

On ABC’s Q & A, Monday 4 November, 2013 - From the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, LISA MALOUF asked the panelists: “Which so-called dangerous idea do you each think would have the greatest potential to change the world for the better if it were implemented?”

Here is how the conversation played out between Peter Hitchens, British journalist and author, and Tony Jones, the host of Q & A.

PETER HITCHENS: *“The most dangerous idea in human history and philosophy remains the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God and rose from the dead and that is the most dangerous idea you will ever encounter.”*

TONY JONES: *Just quickly, because I think you can't really leave it there, why dangerous?*

PETER HITCHENS: *I can't really leave it there? Because it alters the whole of human behaviour and all our responsibilities. It turns the universe from a meaningless chaos into a designed place in which there is justice and there is hope and, therefore, we all have a duty to discover the nature of that justice and work towards that hope. It alters us all. If we reject it, it alters us all as well. It is incredibly dangerous. It's why so many people turn against it.*

www.abc.net.au/tv/qanda/txt/s3868791.htm

14) What is your gut reaction to Peter Hitchens' most dangerous idea?

15) Peter Hitchens says that the most dangerous idea "remains the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God and rose from the dead" because "it alters us all". How has your belief in Jesus altered you?

16) If Jesus has not altered your life, what will that say to others about how relevant you think Jesus is in answering questions such as who am I, why am I here and where am I going after I die?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

One of the best ways we can help our friends and family to see how relevant Jesus is, is by first and foremost seeing him and his teaching as being relevant in every area of our life and being joyful because of it, as Jenny was.

- Thank God that Jesus is extremely relevant by giving us meaning and purpose to life.
- Pray you will apply Jesus' teaching in every area of your life.
- Pray for the list of friends that you would like to see follow Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 3 - JESUS IS a fairy tale

Intro: Did Jesus exist? Are you sure? Was Jesus real?

Here are Brittany's thoughts:

"I've been a Christian pretty much my entire life. Honestly, I've never really questioned whether or not Jesus was real or God exists because I grew up believing it to be true. My parents, my minister and my Sunday school teachers all told me that it was true, and honestly, that was all the proof that God exists that I really needed.

*Except that now, as an adult, I can see that that's not very good proof. After all, I could believe in all kinds of things: **Santa, the tooth fairy & the Easter Bunny.***

If Jesus of Nazareth wasn't a real person, everything we believe is nothing more than a fairy tale, a myth, and a waste of time. Yes, Christianity may make you a better person, but **if it isn't true, then what's the point?** (see also 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

Q. In what ways do you resonate with Brittany's concerns? When do you have doubts?

DID JESUS EXIST? We don't have photographs or personal items that belonged to him. What we DO have, though, is a wealth of quotes, references and discussions from and about Jesus, written from shortly after he died all the way up until the present day.

1) **The Bible.** Without a doubt, the biggest source of evidence that we have that Jesus existed is the Bible. And while some may be quick to dismiss the Bible, since it is a religious book with an agenda, the truth is that it is an important historical document as well. And even if we only look at the Bible through a historical lens, setting aside all religious thinking and persuasion for the time being, it still provides pretty compelling evidence that Jesus existed.

Are the Bible's independent reports of Jesus helpful? (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John & Paul). Why?

2) **Non-Christian Sources.** Jesus' followers weren't the only ones discussing Him either. You can also find references to Jesus in Jewish or Roman sources, all dating back to within 100 years of His death (three good examples below taken from Paul Barnett's *Is the New Testament History?*):

- **Pliny the Younger:** wrote a report that detailed how Jesus' followers (called "the Christians") would meet together to sing songs and share meals and worship Jesus as (a) god.
- **Tacitus:** writes about how Jesus was executed in Judea while Tiberius was Emperor (AD 14-37) and Pontius Pilate was governor (AD 26-36) and how His followers spread from Judea to Rome.
- **Josephus:** mentions Jesus by name on two separate occasions and that he was called "the Christ" and that His brother was James.

Although these sources don't give us a great deal of information about Jesus, are they helpful?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

3) READ JOHN 20:24-31

Jesus' own disciples took some convincing that He was who He claimed to be. A notable sceptic was the apostle Thomas. What did it take for Thomas to believe?

Was he different from the other disciples? How?

How are we different from Thomas and the other disciples? (20:29)

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (The Gospel Solution)

4) Can you doubt and believe at the same time?

5) Must you 'stop doubting' to believe? (John 20:27)

Mark 9:24

Matthew 28:16-20, especially v17

6) Why did Jesus continue to do miracles in front of the disciples? (John 20:30) What does this tell us about doubt and belief?

7) What was John's purpose in recording his gospel of Jesus' life, death and resurrection? (20:31)

8) While Bible scholars may debate who exactly Jesus was, the issue of whether or not He even existed isn't really up for debate. Virtually all trained Bible scholars will agree: Jesus existed, He was a Jewish man, He was a preacher and teacher, and He was crucified during the reign of Tiberius.

In fact, the idea that Jesus never existed in the first place is a story that's been made up as of late. Apparently, every single source that mentions Jesus up until the 18th century assumed that He actually existed—even Jewish and pagan sources. Why is our age so sceptical?

C. S. Lewis famously said in *Mere Christianity*, **Jesus is either Liar, Lunatic, or Lord** – Jesus himself gives people no wiggle room. If Jesus truly existed and is not a fairy tale, the next question to ask is “*what do we think of the claims He made about himself*”?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God for the truth about Jesus.
- Pray for those who have doubts, which might be you too.
- Pray that we may model belief in an age that values sceptics.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____

Study 4 - JESUS IS trustworthy

Susan is a single Mum with three kids, all in Primary school.

“The only person I can trust, is myself” said Susan at the school gate looking agitated.

Listening to the morning news tipped her over the edge.

“You can’t trust what any politician says. I’m sick and tired of the lies”. Susan began to cry.

“I didn’t know you cared that much about politics?” I asked.

“I don’t...it’s just...” Susan took a breath and composed herself. It had been a difficult month.

As we spoke over the coming 20 minutes Susan shared some of her struggles. Her son had been lying to her for months now about his use of the internet. Her colleague at work was always dropping the ball, saying he’d “get around to it” but in the end did nothing and left everything for her to do.

Her sister’s husband last week decided he wanted a divorce and the little money Susan had invested following the advice of a financial planner had been lost.

“I’m just done with people!” Susan said under her breath, “The only person I can trust, is myself!”

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU’VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

- 1) Reflect again on the world around you, the social realities, global events, governments, institutions, and people in general. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being ‘not much’ and ten being ‘very much’), how much do you resonate with Susan’s thinking? Explain your answer.

2) What other social realities and events happening in the world at this time might be helping to contribute to Susan's thinking and lack of trust? What other things might be going on for Susan?

3) The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. In what ways do you resonate with Susan? Be specific and share some of your own story.

4) Consider Pilate's words to Jesus in John 18:38, "What is truth?" Is this lack of trust, a new phenomenon?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

5) In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. "The only person I can trust, is myself" seems like an overstatement in the heat of the moment during a difficult time. Is this an overstatement? In what ways do you find yourself disagreeing with Susan's statement?

6) **Read Luke 6:47-49** Jesus told many stories, called parables. One such story was about reliability and trust. Read the following parable and, as you hear Jesus' words, consider Susan and the themes of reliability and trust. What did the wise man build his house on?

What did the foolish man build his house on?

In this story, what is Jesus telling us about Himself? Allow a good amount of time for various answers.

Jesus is saying "You can trust me. I am trustworthy". From what Jesus says here, what happens in life when you decide to trust Jesus and follow His advice for your life?

7) **Read John 18:28-40.** Look at Jesus on trial before Pilate. What is the immediate context before Pilate says "What is truth?"

How does Jesus describe why He came into this world? What does this mean?

Anyone can say *“trust me! I speak the truth”*. In fact, it’s probably the first thing that any con-artist would say. So, why should anyone trust what Jesus says about Himself? Why should anyone believe that He is trustworthy and came into the world to testify to the truth?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (THE GOSPEL SOLUTION)

8) The difference between a con-artist and Jesus is that Jesus always made good on His promises. Take a look at passages such as Matthew 12:39-40; Matthew 16:21, Matthew 27:62-64. How did Jesus ultimately make good on His word?

9) Most people these days take any so-called “truth” with a grain of salt. In the age of “alternative facts” people are more likely to ask themselves, “Is the person I’m talking with the real deal? Are they authentic? Do their lives match up with what they say” and “Does what they say work in life?” In regards to Susan, how might this thinking be both a benefit and a hindrance to opening up a conversation about Jesus with her?

Consider once again Susan’s situation. What ways could you use Jesus’ story of the wise and foolish builder as a ‘gap widener’, in order to introduce Jesus’ thinking into the conversation?

What other passages could pepper the conversation? How would you use them?
Matt 5:37; John 14:6.

What would you consider to be a positive outcome in your conversation with Susan?

If Susan looked at your life, would she say that you are the real deal? Would she say that your life matched up with the things you say and the convictions you hold? Would she say that you yourself are trustworthy?

10) What observable evidence is there in your life that you are 'trusting' Jesus?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

At the end of the day, we'd have to agree with Susan on some level. Not everyone is trustworthy all the time. Governments, institutions and even churches, led by sinful people, are marred with the terrible effects of sin, which in some cases leave people like Susan with little hope and little trust. Yet, Jesus came into the world to testify to the truth. He died in our place for our sin and rose from the dead, as He promised He would do, not only to save us from the consequences of sin but also to prove that He is completely trustworthy. You can trust Jesus because He never lies and always does what He says. He always keeps his promises. He is completely and utterly trustworthy.

- Thank God that He sent Jesus to testify to the truth.
- Pray that you will place your trust in Jesus each and every day, in all situations.
- Pray for the list of friends that you would like to see follow Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 5 - JESUS IS a bigot

John walked into the High School staff room on Monday morning where he taught English. The other four staff were having a casual conversation about the headline of the morning newspaper. In the article the author labeled all Christians as being “hateful” and “bigoted” and questioned why this seemed to be the case when Jesus taught His followers to “love everyone”.

John sensed by the tone of the conversation that many of the other staff agreed with the article. Everyone knew that John was a committed Christian and went regularly to church. His colleagues were always respectful and genuinely interested in John’s opinions on such topics.

“What do you think, John?” Asked one of his colleagues, “Didn’t Jesus say to love everyone?” John took a long, slow sip of his morning coffee to give himself time to think of what to say.

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU’VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

- 1) The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person’s shoes. In what ways do you resonate with some people’s perceptions that Christians are hateful and bigoted? Can you offer any real world examples?

- 2) Think about the other four people in the staff room that day. Ask four people in your group to take on the persona of one of John’s colleagues. Ask them to create a fake English-teacher’s name for themselves and create a backstory which might contribute to the reason why they might believe Christians are “hateful”, “unloving” or “bigoted”. Have the rest of the group ask respectful questions of each person to dig deeper as to why they might hold this deep-seeded belief. Spend no longer than 5 minutes on this.

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

- 3) In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. Put yourself in John's shoes. Think of the first sentence in your reply. What would you say? How would you make the very first line of your answer be so "full of grace and seasoned with salt" [Col 4:6] that your colleagues would want to hear more about your thoughts on this sensitive topic.
- 4) The author of the newspaper article labelled "all" Christians as being both "hateful" and "bigoted". Consider the Oxford Dictionary's definitions of 'Bigot' and 'Bigoted'. Discuss with your group whether or not these definitions adequately describe Christians. Explain your answer. You may find it helpful to look up the definitions of some other words, such as - tolerant, obstinate, reasonable, etc.
Bigot - a person who is intolerant towards those holding different opinions.
Bigoted - obstinately or unreasonably attached to a belief, opinion, or faction, and intolerant towards other people's beliefs and practices.
- 5) Is it ever fair or reasonable to stereotype or blanket-label any segment of our community? For example:
Genders – "Women can't do as good a job as a man" OR "Guys are messy and unclean."
Cultures – "All Irish people are drunks" OR "All Asians are good at maths."
Careers – "All politicians are liars" OR "All librarians are old women."
Generations – "All children hate healthy food" OR "Old men are always grumpy."
Religious – "All Muslims are terrorists" OR "All Christians are bigots."
- 6) **Read Luke 6:27-36.** Think about some of the commands given to God's people in the Bible. Would you agree that this command to "love your enemies" is the hardest command. Why or why not?

In Luke 6:27-31, Jesus gives seven examples of what loving others (especially our enemies) looks like. Make a list of the seven examples Jesus gives. (Luke 6:29b & 30 are part of the same example).

Consider each example. Discuss how difficult each one would be to practice in reality and why?

Look over Luke 6:32-34. What reasoning does Jesus give as to why we are to love our enemies?

In Luke 6:35-36 Jesus summarises His instruction. What benefits are there to those who listen to Jesus' teaching and do what He says?

7) **Read Luke 10:25-37.** A little later in Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus illustrate this command to love everyone, even our enemies, by telling a parable. Though many of us might know this parable well from Sunday School, Youth or simply by being around church for a long time, let's reacquaint ourselves with the story of the Good Samaritan. What are the two great commands?

How does Jesus define "neighbour"?

How did the Samaritan help the wounded man emotionally, physically and spiritually?

8) Look at the characters in the story: the Priest, the Levites and the Samaritan. Who might these people be today? What would stop you from helping?

How would you describe the Samaritan?

In the parable, did the Samaritan adopt any of the wounded man's beliefs or world views?

9) How does Jesus summarise the main point of this parable? (see Luke 10:37b)

10) In what ways are Jesus' teachings in Luke 6:27-36 & Luke 10:25-37 hateful or bigoted?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (THE GOSPEL SOLUTION)

11) From your knowledge of the Gospels, did Jesus love everyone?

12) How do we know that Jesus loved God and His neighbour as Himself?

13) From your knowledge of the Gospels, did Jesus agree with everyone or adopt their worldview?

14) Is it possible for us to love someone whom we completely and profoundly disagree?

15) Consider the following passages:

In John 1:14 we are told that when Jesus came into the world, He came full of grace and truth.

In Ephesians 4:15, Christians are encouraged to speak the truth in love.

How do these passages (along with all that we have previously looked at) show us how we can hold onto our gospel convictions without coming across as hateful or bigoted?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God that He sent Jesus into the world who came full of grace and truth.
 - Pray that we will see everyone as people made in the image of God who need to know God's love and ours.
 - Pray that we might be able to love, even our enemies, as Jesus commanded.
 - Pray that we might seek to care for the whole person, physically, emotionally and spiritually, etc.
- Pray for wisdom and for the right words to say in sensitive conversations.
- Pray for the list of friends that you would like to see follow Jesus.
 - Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 6 - JESUS IS just one way among many



A group of friends were driving home after going to see the band U2 perform in concert. They were all still energised by the show and each of them was discussing their favourite songs and moments.

"I know it's not everyone's cup-of-tea," said Sarah "but, I like it when Bono gets political. When he pulled down his headband over his eyes to reveal the COEXIST symbol printed across it. That was brilliant!"*

Sitting in the backseat was one of Sarah's best friends, Jenny. Jenny is a Christian but knows that Sarah is not. "What did you like about it?", Jenny asks.

"Well, it's just true, isn't it? There is too much fighting between religions. They really should all just get along and coexist together. They're all worshiping the same God anyway. Just in different ways."

**The Coexist image (often styled as "CoeXisT" or "COEXIST") is an image created by Polish, Warsaw-based graphic designer Piotr Młodożeniec. His original image consisted of the word COEXIST in all capital letters, with the C replaced by an oversized Muslim Crescent, the X replaced by an oversized Star of David, and the T replaced by an oversized Christian Cross.*

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

- 1) The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. Sarah is thinking what many other people think - how can there be so many world religions, and only one be correct? They must all be pointing towards a common universal truth. In what ways can you understand where Sarah is coming from?

- 2) What political and social realities or events happening in the world at this time, might be helping to contribute to Sarah's thinking?

- 3) What other underlying philosophies, logic or concerns might be contributing to Sarah's position?

- 4) What similarities do you see between the various religions of the world?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. For Sarah, she's of the opinion that all paths lead to God and eternal life. For others, they give up trying to know the truth, saying "there are just too many religions. How can I possibly know which one is right"? Often, people who hold either position do not take the time to investigate for themselves what each religion teaches. If they did, they would quickly see that it's impossible to hold the position that Jesus is just one way among many to know God and gain eternal life.

- 5) **Read John 14:1-5.** Who does Jesus ask His followers to believe in?

Where does Jesus say He is going?

Jesus promises His followers four things. What are they? (see John 14:2-4)

Consider each promise. What does each one mean for you on a personal everyday level?

6) How are Thomas' response to Jesus and Sarah's comments in the car virtually the same?

7) **Read John 14:6.** What directions does Jesus give Thomas to show him the way to heaven?

According to Jesus, how many paths are there to God?

8) **Read John 14:8-11.** By what authority can Jesus claim that He is the only way to God?

What double meaning might Jesus' words have when He says "I AM the way"?

9) **Read John 20:19-29.** Who does Thomas finally accept Jesus is?

10) When it comes to the question of "who Jesus is", Christianity is unique. Every other religion does not see Jesus in the same light.

Christianity - Jesus is the divine son of God, the third member of the trinity who is the Christ (the Messiah). He lived a perfect life, was crucified on a Roman cross, died and was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven for the sins of the world.

Judaism - Judaism rejects the idea of Jesus being God, or a person of a Trinity, or a mediator to God. Judaism also holds that Jesus is not the Messiah, but just a man.

Mainstream Jewish scholars argue that Jesus neither fulfilled the Messianic prophecies in the Tanakh nor embodied the personal qualifications of the Messiah.

Islam - Jesus was God's messenger, but just a mortal human who, like all other prophets, had been divinely chosen to spread God's message. Islam rejects the Christian trinitarian view that Jesus was God incarnate or the son of God, that He was ever crucified or resurrected or that He ever atoned for the sins of mankind.

Buddhism - Traditionally, Buddhists as a group take no particular view on Jesus.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_perspectives_on_Jesus

Dr. Michael Green, Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford University, England writes:

“Jesus is unique among religious leaders in claiming to bring God to our world in His own person and making good that claim by such powerful evidences...perhaps the greatest difference of all [among religious views] lies in the Christian assertion that none of us can save ourselves and make ourselves acceptable to God, try as we may. All the other faiths assert that by keeping their teachings a person will be saved, fulfilled or reborn.” “But Don't All Religions Lead to God?” Navigating the Multi-Faith Maze (Baker Book House, 2002).

Compare and discuss what some of the mainstream religions believe about who Jesus is.

Now that you have compared how other religions view who Jesus is, how does that impact the way you view Jesus' claim that He is the one-and-only way?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (THE GOSPEL SOLUTION)

Let's go back to Sarah, and our car load of excited concert goers discussing the idea that all religions (while they might look different) are essentially the same and all equally a pathway to the same God. From what we have seen, this is a logical impossibility. Christianity simply does not allow that to be true because true Christianity is not about a religion, but a person, Jesus Christ. Let's explore the claims of Christianity.

11) **Read 1 Timothy 2:5 and Acts 4:12.** According to the Christian teaching of the Bible, is there any wiggle room to believe that there is another way to come to know God and gain eternal life other than through the person of Jesus Christ?

How would you answer people's objections that Christianity's claim of Jesus being the one-and-only way to be saved is "arrogant", "narrow minded", "intolerant" and "unloving"?

How might passages such as John 3:16; Romans 3:22-24; 1 John 4:9-11; 2 Peter 3:9 help you to answer people's objections raised in Question 17 above?

12) Considering all of the above, if you were Jenny, how would you respond to Sarah's assertion that all religions are essentially the same, worshiping the same God in different ways - that Jesus is just one way among many?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God that He loved the world so much that he sent Jesus into the world to save it.
- Pray for people in the Sutherland Shire to see how illogical it is to assert that all religions are the same.
- Pray that people would take the time to investigate the actual claims of Jesus for themselves.
- Pray for the list of friends that you would like to see follow Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 7 - JESUS IS truth and love

Introduction: What kind of God do you want to believe in, a God of truth OR a God of love?

On Channel 10's Gogglebox recently when the families were watching Magda Szubanski – in a powerful and vulnerable moment – speak to the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney Dr Glenn Davies on Q&A, about her belief that the church should not impose their views on Same Sex Marriage on a secular society. She said: "I accept that the church will never marry me – that grieves me in ways you will never know."

The cameras then cut to the three Silbery women. Kerrie said: "But Jesus was all about love. What would Jesus say? He would say vote 'yes'."

Grandma Emily piped up – "He loved prostitutes, he loved everyone".

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

1) In what ways do you resonate with the *Gogglebox* comments above?

2) Why did Jesus add to the woman caught in adultery: ***"I will not condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."*** (John 8:11)

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

Jesus' own disciples take time to work out the contours of Jesus' ministry and His priorities around truth and love – healing and preaching – compassion and a call for repentance. Jesus reassures John the Baptist about his ministry, *“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”* (Matthew 11:4-6)

3) Why did John the Baptist need reassurance?

READ MARK 1:29-2:12.

4) “News about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.” (v28) Jesus' fame as a teacher, a healer and one who could cast out evil spirits quickly spreads. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law privately then at sunset the whole town gathers at the door seeking Jesus. What impression or portrait of Jesus do we get from His visit to the home of Simon and Andrew?

How does Jesus handle the crowds that evening?

5) “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.” (v35) Why did Jesus need to pray? What patterns can we learn from Jesus prayer?

What priority for His ministry comes from His prayer? (v38)

Do you think this was a surprise or even a disappointment to the disciples?

Despite His priority on preaching, He willingly heals the leper. Why do you think He touches him?

6) Jesus, the master teacher, is not put off by one of the greatest distractions of all time – while speaking to a packed room, the roof is opened above Him and the paralytic is lowered before Him. After the action in verses 1-4, why is Jesus' response in v.5 a little bit surprising? What insight does this give us about the healing Jesus & His kingdom brings?

When Jesus forgave the paralysed man's sins, the teachers of the law became upset and said to themselves, "*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*" Were they right? Had they lost the balance between truth and love?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (The Gospel Solution)

7) Jesus asks the question, “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take up your mat, and walk’?” How would you answer that question? Why is it important that Jesus did both?

As Kingdom people we want to see love and truth – healing and forgiveness – the physical and spiritual. Do we run the risk of driving a wedge between the two?

8) **Read John 1:14**, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” What did it look like for Jesus to come into the world “full of grace and truth”?

9) **Read Ephesians 4:15**, “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ.” What would the result be if we spoke the truth with little or no grace or love?

What would the result be if we treated people with grace and love, but spoke little to no truth?

Discuss ways you can help each other to live out your Christian life publicly, while speaking to people in truth and with grace/love.

10) Back to Gogglebox at the beginning of our study.

Kerrie said: "But Jesus was all about love. What would Jesus say? He would say vote 'yes'."

Grandma Emily piped up – "He loved prostitutes, he loved everyone".

How would you now respond to Kerrie & Grandma Emily?

How should we be organising our church and church ministries to avoid the false dichotomy between truth and love?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

***"Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all His benefits— who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion. AMEN."* (Psalm 103:1-4)**

- Thank God for the people who witnessed and invited you to Jesus.
- Pray for those who you might witness to this term. (Insert some names here _____)
- Pray that we will not be put off by a false dichotomy between truth and love.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____

Study 8 - JESUS IS dead and buried

The conversation around the table had turned to religion. After a lengthy debate about many things, Kate openly declared, "Jesus, did not die on a cross". Not everyone knew each other at the dinner party where there were a mixture of believers and unbelievers. Not wanting to let such an absolute statement pass by, Michael coughed and asked "What makes you say that?" "It's in all the papers," replied Kate "The Telegraph, CNN, they all have the same headline,

*'JESUS, DID NOT DIE ON A CROSS claims scholar', don't you read the news?"
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/7849852/Jesus-did-not-die-on-cross-says-scholar.html>*

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (Resonance)

- 1) The first step toward bringing Jesus into any conversation is listening and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. What can you assume about Kate? What can't you assume?
- 2) Have you ever been in a similar conversation with someone? Share your experience with the group.
- 3) Put yourself in Michael's shoes. Michael is a committed Christian and Kate has just declared that Jesus did not die on a cross denying a fundamental truth of the Christian faith. How does such a headline make you feel? What is your gut reaction? Does it make you feel angry? Annoyed? Frustrated? Glad?

4) What makes you feel that way?

FINDING THE GAP (Dissonance)

5) In most conversations, if you listen carefully enough, you can sometimes find a tiny gap to gently introduce your own thinking, as someone who follows Jesus. If you were Michael, before you state what you believe, what questions might you ask of Kate about the headline?

6) We'll come back to Michael and Kate a little later. In the meantime, let's explore Luke's account of Jesus' crucifixion. **Read Luke 23:32-56** and briefly answer these questions.

Who is Jesus viewed as (even if it is in mockery) by the people, rulers, soldiers and criminals?

How is Jesus' innocence confirmed?

Do you think the darkness at Jesus' crucifixion is describing a literal meteorological phenomenon? Why?

What significance does the tearing of the temple curtain have for us today?

7) In Luke 23:46 we're told Jesus "breathed his last". Why did Luke include this phrase?

8) Why would Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, offer to bury Jesus?

9) **Read Luke 23:53-54; Matthew 27:57-66 and Matthew 28:11-15.** How secure was the tomb of Jesus?

Is there any possible evidence that you can think of, to suggest that Jesus did not die at the hands of the Romans or that the disciples stole His body?

Jesus' death is a fundamental truth of the Christian faith. After He "suffered under Pontius Pilate" The Apostles Creed describes that Jesus was "crucified, dead, and buried". What is the significance of including the seemingly superfluous fact that Jesus was buried?

10) The Heidelberg Catechism gives us some insight as to the theological significance of including Jesus burial in the Apostle's Creed. Question 41 of the Catechism asks "Why was he [Jesus] buried?". The answer the Catechism gives us is simple - "His burial testified that he had really died." It wasn't enough to say Jesus was merely dead. That would never answer the human tendency toward a gnostic denial of Jesus' humanity. Jesus burial testifies that he was "really, most sincerely dead."
<http://www.heidelberg-catechism.com/en/lords-days/16.html>

Hand out the following passages to various people in your group. You may give more than one passage if you have a smaller group. Ask them to read each one and then answer the question ***“What situation would we be left in if Jesus didn’t die?”***

Isaiah 53:9; Acts 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Romans 5:8-11; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:15

Philippians 2:8-11

Acts 2:23-27

2 Corinthians 5:14; Romans 6:3-6

11) What other passage from Scripture can you think of that speak of the fundamental importance of Jesus death and burial?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (the Gospel Solution)

To finish, let's go back to the conversation between Michael and Kate.

"It's in all the papers," Replied Kate "The Telegraph, CNN, they all have the same headline , 'JESUS, DID NOT DIE ON A CROSS claims scholar', don't you read the news?"

Michael had read the news. Thankfully, Michael had read more than just the headline, which was as far as Kate had read earlier that day. If Kate had read past the headline, she would have realised that it was written by a Christian scholar who very much believes that "Jesus was the son of God who was crucified for our sins, [died and was buried] that he was raised from the dead after three days, that he is with God on this very day and will return in glory to judge the living and dead." He just wanted to point out what the Bible says, and what it doesn't say, about the details.

12) Many people build up their idea about Jesus via sources other than the Bible (The crucifixes they see on necklaces, movies and click bait type headlines like the one Kate glanced over). The best source for us to get the real story about the life, death, burial [and resurrection] of Jesus is from the Bible. How might Michael, in his conversation with Kate, have used this opportunity to invite Kate to read the best source of evidence for Jesus?

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God that he sent Jesus to die in our place for our sin.
- Pray that you will never take for granted the enormity of Jesus' love and sacrifice.
- Pray for the list of friends that you would like to see follow Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____.

Study 9 - JESUS IS alive and risen

“If you want me to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then why didn’t He appear before a high court judge or someone important?”

This was the objection that Bob blurted out in the *Christianity Explored* course I was leading.

At one level my sceptic has a point. Why are the key moments of Jesus’ life observed by relative nobodies, especially as far as the first century is concerned?

Shepherds at his birth – seasonal workers employed for the spring lambing season, like modern day backpackers or gypsies who move around following the work.

Women at the empty tomb – grief stricken and emotional followers of Jesus. Far from objective and astute detectives. Neither women nor shepherds were permitted to give evidence in a first century court.

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU’VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

1) Do you resonate with Bob’s objection? Do you sometimes wish the Bible’s evidence was more convincing?

The historical evidence for the resurrection of Christ is very good. Scholars such as William Lane Craig have done an especially good job of detailing that evidence. How do we explain:

The empty tomb in which Jesus was buried, was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion.

Jesus’ disciples real experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ.

The courageous preaching of these disciples, which had the resurrection at its centre, the Christian church was established and grew.

- a) A method commonly used today to determine the historicity of an event is **"inference to the best explanation."** William Lane Craig describes this as an approach where we ought to accept an event as historical if it gives the best explanation for the evidence surrounding it.

When we look at the evidence, **the truth of the resurrection emerges very clearly as the best explanation.** There is no other theory that even come close to accounting for the evidence. Therefore, there is solid historical grounds for the truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Historical Evidence for the Resurrection by Matt Perman
www.desiringgod.org/articles/historical-evidence-for-the-resurrection

- b) **The Criterion of Embarrassment** – William Lane Craig also says: “The discovery of the tomb by women is highly probable. Given the low status of women in Jewish society and their lack of qualification to serve as legal witnesses, the most plausible explanation ... why women and not the male disciples were made discoverers of the empty tomb is that the women were in fact the ones who made this discovery.”

That is, having women make this momentous discovery is embarrassing.

This is an application of the Criterion of Embarrassment, which argues that you’re likelier to delete something embarrassing than add it to your story. And if a story element is embarrassing, that points to its being historical fact.

Women at the Tomb Are Weak Evidence for the Resurrection by Bob Seidensticker
www.patheos.com/blogs/crossexamined/2013/03/women-at-the-tomb-are-weak-evidence-for-the-resurrection/#q843VtrVXIEkZXQx.99

- 2) What comfort do you draw from William Lane Craig’s:

Inference to the best explanation?

The criterion of embarrassment?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

READ JOHN 20:1-9. In this study we will engage with the deep emotions Jesus' followers felt after the death of their friend, and their elation at His return.

3) How does each person react to the news that the stone had been removed?

4) How had Jesus prepared them for this day? (John 7:33-34; John 12:7-8; John 12:23-25; John 13:33)

5) What do you think 'the other disciple' believed? (John 20:7-8)

6) Why does John insert the comment in John 20:9?

7) Does John 16:5-13 help explain?

8) How does the Holy Spirit help us 'see and believe' the resurrection?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (The Gospel Solution)

9) **READ JOHN 20:10-18.** Why do you think Jesus wasn't immediately recognisable? (20:14)

10) Holding on or letting go. Why shouldn't Mary hold onto Jesus? (20:17)

11) What does Mary tell the disciples? (20:18)

12) Why is it so special that the key moments of Jesus' life were observed first by relative nobodies?

PRAY

Help us to delight in the miracle of resurrection, and to be truly thankful for the sure promise of eternal life in Jesus. We pray that this truth would overflow into all of life, changing us to be more like Jesus. AMEN.

Study 10 - JESUS IS coming back



Eternity

*“Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today”
(Imagine - John Lennon)*

RESONATING WITH WHAT YOU'VE HEARD (RESONANCE)

1) Most Aussies live as though there is no heaven or hell – no future judgement – no eternity – no return of Christ – no judgement – Just living for today! Be honest, in what ways do you resonate with the way most Aussies live?

How hard is it to live differently with Jesus' return and eternity constantly in mind?

FINDING THE GAP (DISSONANCE)

2) Waiting/or failing to wait for Christ's return is not a new issue. It is a big theme of Jesus' teaching in His gospel parables. There are at least five parables in the New Testament which teach the sudden, unexpected, dramatic coming of the Lord. All of them teach the importance of readiness. Can you remember one? Look up at least one and reflect on its impact on you.

- *THE DOOR-KEEPER – Luke 12:35-36; Mark 13:33-37*
- *OWNER OF THE HOUSE – Luke 12:39-40; Matt. 24:42-44*
- *SERVANT IN CHARGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD – Matt. 24:45-51; Luke 12:41-46*

- *THE TEN VIRGINS – Matt. 25:1-13*
- *PROPER USE OF TALENTS OR POUNDS – Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27*

Why do you think Jesus tells so many parables about His return?

Do they still have a message for 2018?

3) Christians affirm: Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again.

Jesus said on the night before Good Friday:
*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.
 In my Father’s house are many rooms;
 if that were not so, I would have told you.
 I am going there to prepare a place for you.
 And if I go and prepare a place for you,
 I will come back and take you to be with me
 that you also may be where I am.”* (John 14:1-3)

How are the events of Jesus’ first coming directly linked to His second coming?

But why is Jesus taking so long to come back?

4) **Read 2 Peter 3:1-7.** Peter confronts the denial of the second coming head on. Peter wants to remind us that God’s word can be trusted. “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.” v2. He probably is thinking of passages like:

Malachi 4:1-2 in the prophets: “Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the Lord Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.”

Matthew 24:42 our Lord’s command through the apostles: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

How would these reminders help us? (v1-2)

Why do scoffers think that Jesus will not be back? (v3-4)

What is Peter’s point that the scoffers have forgotten in verses 5-7?

How effective an argument do you think this is against the scoffers:

Then?

Now?

OPENING UP THE CONVERSATION (The Gospel Solution)

5) Read 2 PETER 3:8-13

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” (v8) What is Peter’s point in here?

What reason does Peter give for Jesus not yet coming back? (v9)

What qualities of God is Peter emphasising in this whole passage?

And how does that change the way we live? (v10-13)



6) Last July marked 50 years since the death of Arthur Stace at Hammondville. Internationally recognised as 'Mr Eternity', Stace spent 30 years anonymously writing the word 'Eternity' across the streets of Sydney. More than 500,000 times. At the launch of a book to mark the occasion 'Mr. Eternity: The story of Arthur Stace' by Elizabeth Meyers and Roy Williams, each person who attended was given a piece of chalk to go out and continue Arthur Stace's work.

How do we continue to write eternity before our unbelieving generation?

Discuss ways in which you can help each other live life with Jesus' return and eternity constantly in mind.

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

- Thank God for He is faithful and merciful.
- Pray for Jesus' return, "Come Lord Jesus. Come!"
- Pray that we may model trust in God's promises in an age of mockers.
- Pray for opportunities to hear who people think JESUS IS _____

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 1 2018

Week commencing		Reading Plan	Page Number
5 th February	<i>1. Jesus is the Son of God</i>	John 1:35-51	6
12 th February	<i>2. Jesus is irrelevant</i>	Matthew 11:1-24	10
19 th February	<i>3. Jesus is a fairy tale</i>	John 20:24-31	17
26 th February	<i>4. Jesus is trustworthy</i>	Luke 6:43-49 John 18:28-40	21
5 th March	<i>5. Jesus is a bigot</i>	Luke 6:27-36 Luke 10:25-37	26
12 March	<i>6. Jesus is just one way among many</i>	John 14:1-14	31
19 th March	<i>7. Jesus is truth & love</i>	Mark 1:29-2:12	36
26 th March	<i>8. Jesus is dead & buried</i>	Luke 23:32-56	41
2 nd April	<i>9. Jesus is alive and risen</i>	John 20:1-18	46
9 th April	<i>10. Jesus is coming back</i>	Matt. 24:42-51 2 Peter 3:1-13	50

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