

Getting your GIIG started!!!

By Mark Ashton

So You Want to Start an GIG!

I was a junior when my InterVarsity staff worker first challenged me to begin a Bible discussion with the non-Christians on my floor. My initial reaction was "What? Do you really think that non-Christians want to study the Bible? Get in touch with the real world!!" Although I did not say these things out loud, my hesitation was obvious. But my staff worker eventually persuaded me to try it.

After my first semester leading an Group Investigating God(GIG), I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that all kinds of people really do want to study the Bible -- and that God's Word speaks loud and clear to them. In addition to that first GIG, I had an GIG for the following eight years as well. Usually it was the most exciting part of my week as I saw my friend's eyes light up when they saw a certain truth from God's word for the first time.

Why are GIGs effective?

1) The Bible is the most effective resource for communicating the gospel. "You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." I Peter 1:23. God has spoken to all humanity through the scriptures and this is the best way that your friends can get a clear picture of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him.

2) *People do not feel as intimidated* studying the Bible if it is with friends or other non-Christians. (They do not feel outnumbered or in the minority.)

3) Because you are looking together to God's Word for answers, your friends will not feel "preached at" and much of *the pressure for clearly presenting Jesus is taken off of the leader* and put right on the Word of God. Your strength as a leader will come from your confidence that GOD WILL WORK in changing people's minds and wills through his word because his word is truth.

4) *Groups Investigating God are process-oriented* People become exposed to Jesus on a continuous basis, rather than in a one-time event. As a person is continually confronted by the person of Jesus, he is more likely to wrestle with Jesus' person and claims. Also, the MD can be tailor-made to fit where people are at in their search for God. It allows them to move toward Jesus from where they are.

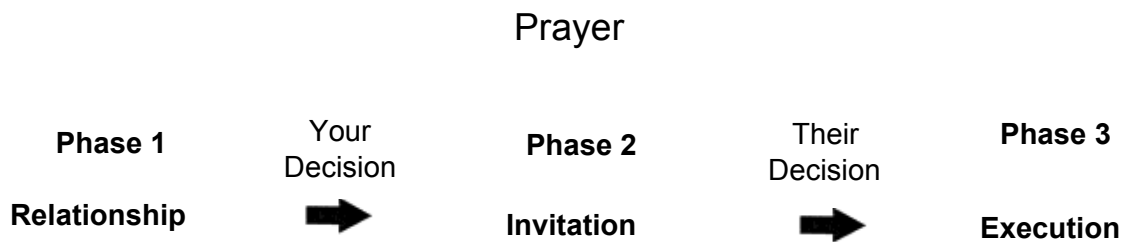
5) Perhaps the best reason that GIGs are effective is that *they provide a context for talking about spiritual things*. The person who would not feel free bringing up questions about God in normal conversations would be more willing once you are already discussing the Bible.

GIGs are the most effective and underutilized tool that Christians have for outreach

How do GIGs Work?

There is quite a bit of diversity in the way that people utilize Groups Investigating God. Some initiate at the beginning of the year while others start later on. Some are done with friends while others are with people who have expressed interest on follow-up cards. Some are one to one while others may have two Christians with a small group of up to twelve non-Christians.

While there are many differences in how GIGs happen, there are some characteristic 'phases' that every person wanting to start an GIG goes through in the process of beginning their discussion.



****Diagram by Jeff Heidkamp**

Phase 1: Relationship

Good relationships are foundational to effective witness. Whatever the format of our outreach, we are commanded to love people. God created our friends with inherent value. Because God values people, we should as well.

The kinds of people who enjoy and benefit from GIGs are as diverse as can be. They could come from any ethnic, economic or spiritual background. You may know them from classes, work, sports, clubs or riding the bus! Be tuned in to who is around you, who God may be caning you to love and who might be interested in spiritual things.

Then simply spend time with a person. Build on common interests (where you live, eat, sports, major, relationships, movies ETC!). Get to know a person on a variety of levels. Become good at asking questions. Find out what makes them tick. At the same time, let them into your life be genuine and vulnerable about the ups and downs of life. In other words, be a genuine friend.

In regards to GIGs, they are most effective when there is already a foundation of friendship. However, some GIGs are led with people who sign an interest card at an event, or may be a casual acquaintance. In this case, the relational phase is shorter - maybe just a half hour over coffee - before the GIG actually occurs.

Once you have a good relationship, it is time for your decision. "Will you try to begin an GIG?" You need to pray and assess the situation to see whether this idea is plausible and beneficial.

Then ask God for the opportunity and boldness to ask people! Whether or not the GIG happens, be sure to care for your friends, not just before the discussion begins, but during and after the time that the discussion is over.

Phase 2: Invitation

The first steps in inviting people are prayer and your conviction that God is preparing people to come. Keep your eyes peeled for people that God may be preparing - you will probably be surprised at who is interested!

Be sure that people who you invite know that they do not have to understand or believe anything specific in order to come - just believe that the Bible is worth studying. Let them know that you will be discussing who Jesus is, what he said and did, and how that is relevant today. They also need to know that it will not be a lecture where you tell them all that there is to know about the passage, but a discussion where everyone is looking to the text for answers. Everyone will be sharing their own ideas and listening to the views of others. Together you will be able to learn from the passage.

It is always best to have a limited amount of time for each discussion (30-45 min. is a good amount). Usually you will want to limit the amount of weeks that you are asking people to come to at first (4-6 weeks works best). When you ask people to come, tell them how long and how many weeks it will be. Most people will feel at ease committing to something for only a few weeks and a short amount of time, whereas they may shy away from committing for an entire semester.

At this point, the people you invite need to make a decision: "Will they come to the study?". **Some people will probably** come. Others will clearly be not interested. Still others will say they will come and not show up. Be sure to continue in prayer, friendship and offering the study. Sometimes timing just does not work out. Even the best GIG leaders have setbacks - those who persevere see good fruit.

Pray that God
will bring the
people he is
preparing to
your discussion

Phase 3 - Execution

Tools of the trade

- 1) At least one non-Christian, At least one Christian (But not more than 2),
- 2) Bibles (the same version) and
- 3) A study Guide - Here are the guides that I would recommend:
 - 1) Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? by Mark Ashton. These studies take 30-45 minutes and focus on the person of Jesus and the message of salvation. They can be used in a 4 to 12 week series.

- 2) Tough Questions by Garry Poole and Judson Poling (Zondervan) uses an apologetics approach at answering the tough questions people have about Christianity.
- 3) Jesus the Reason by Jim Sire (IVP) presents Jesus as the best reason to become a Christian.
- 4) Guides published by Neighborhood Bible Study (NBS). These guides are designed for seekers and go through a particular book of the Bible or topic. Mark and John are quite good.

Preparation

Good preparation for the discussion is also of utmost importance. Plan to spend two times as much time in prep as the discussion will take. In this way you will feel comfortable in the passage and with the questions that you will be asking. Read the passage as if it was your first time - anticipate the reactions of your friends as they read it for the first time, The more time that you spend preparing, the more you will be gripped by God's truth and the more comfortable you will feel leading others through it. I like to go through the passage about a week in advance of the study, to let the main point permeate my life and think of creative and relevant ways to express it. Then, the evening before the discussion, I will go through the particular study and revise the questions accordingly.

You will want to go through the guidelines the first time that you have the discussion (see attached page). Also you will want to explain that you will be looking at various passage in the gospels (i.e. 4 books about Jesus' life). Show them where to find them in the Bible and explain how to use chapter and verse references if necessary.

Leading the Discussion

You will want to approach the Bible as a textbook looking to scripture (not the leader!) for answers. It is the role of the leader to ask members questions that will promote discussion and understanding of the text. The leader should not lecture, teach

or promote himself as the answer man/woman. Allow the members of the group to discover the truth for themselves. If you are a novice GIG leader, use the study guides to learn to ask good questions.

**Scripture, not
the leader, is
the authority in
the discussion**

Do not be afraid of silence! Be sure to give the group time to look through the passage. Silence usually means that people are thinking or reading the text. Encourage more than one response. After the first response, you may want to say something like "That's helpful, what does somebody else find?" If discussion is slow the first time, don't worry - it will pick up as group members get used to interacting together.

Encourage all members to participate, but be sure not to get too far off on tangents - try to stick to the passage as well as to your commitment to end on time. Don't lecture! -- Let people find answers from the text. If you don't get responses at first, try rewording the questions.

The discussion should not look like a regular small group with all Christians. Your friends are there only to understand who Jesus is and what Christianity is all about from Scripture. Therefore, there is no need to include community, prayer and other activities that are normal in Christian small group. Food is always a good ice-breaker, though. Think about having popcorn, snacks or drinks for the group as this promotes a comfortable atmosphere.

Be good about ending on time!! Make sure that if you ask for 45 minutes that you take 45 minutes - this shows respect for the time of your friends. At the same time, you should be willing to stay extra time for those who have further questions that may have been brought up

**About 90% of
GIGs that go *four*
weeks continue
past the initial
commitment**

In a similar way, honor the amount of weeks that you said you would have. At the end of the last discussion you may say "I promised you guys that we would be finished after 4 weeks, but I have really enjoyed it! If I kept preparing studies would you like to keep going next week?" If they are interested, GREAT! -keep going as long as they want to. But, do not make them feel obligated beyond their interest.

Prayer - for every phase

The foundation of a good GIG is prayer. It is God who works according to His purposes in our lives and the lives of those who we are reaching out to. Pray for good relationships with those who do not know the Lord. Be sure that you have prayed about inviting people, and that God would bring those who are ready to hear the message. Pray for every person that comes. Pray that God will work - he will!

You will want to pray every week before the GIG. If you have a partner in the group who is a Christian, it would be good to pray together. Ask other people who are not in the group to pray for you and the discussion. Pray at prayer meetings on campus and at your church. Many GIG leaders ask their small groups to pray every week for the MD. Pray, pray, pray and I say it again Pray!

It is generally not a good idea to pray during the discussion. Your friends will feel extremely uncomfortable as they do not know what to do. We want them to feel as relaxed as possible -they may have some apprehensions coming to the discussion in the first place. Now it must be noted that there are cases where the group wants to pray or it would be appropriate to pray with an individual. (Like if a group member shares that she is going through a life crisis). If this is the case, by all means pray with them! But remember, it is not necessary to pray during the study. Your prayers are as effective before the study as during it.

Helping Group Members Commit Themselves to Christ

It is important to keep up natural contact with group members outside of the discussion. Find out what their other interests are and try to spend time with them doing those things. Eat meals with them, play/watch sports together, go to a movie, road trip or any other variety of things. As you talk with them on many different levels about different topics, it will be very natural to discuss spiritual things as well. If they do not become Christians, continue the relationship and continue to pray. God works in His time, which is not always ours.

**Be alert to what
God is doing
and help your
friends take the
next step closer
to HIM**

It is often awkward to ask individuals to make a commitment to Christ during the study (unless your study is with one person). The study will help an individual to understand the truth while personal contact outside of the group will more likely be the means that God uses to bring that person to himself. It is not necessary that you force or manipulate a person into accepting Christ, but you need to be alert to what God is doing and help your friends take the next step closer to Him. Help your friend along as long as she is interested, but don't push when her interest wanes,

While spending casual time with your friend, you may ask what was most striking to her in the discussion or if it brought up any new ideas in her mind. If the conversation leads in that direction, you may ask your friend "Is there anything that is keeping you from committing your life to Jesus?" or "Would you like to become a Christian and be sure of it?" If she is ready, walk her through a basic outline of the gospel so that she is sure of what she is committing to. After she has become a Christian, encourage her to become a part of the Christian family in the campus fellowship and church, and help her in her new walk with God.

It is also a good idea to introduce our friends to Christian community during their search for truth, not just after they have become a Christian. For a variety of reasons, a community of Christians can be a much stronger witness than any one person. Invite your GIG members to social events organized by your small group, church or fellowship. Set up parties, road trips, meals or sport opportunities and invite both your Christian and non-Christian friends. Some of your GIG members may enjoy going to your fellowship meetings, church services or retreats. Invite them to those activities just as you would to any other activity you think they may be interested in.

**A community of
Christians can be
a much stronger
witness than any
individual
Christian**

You and God

The Holy Spirit tends to work through clear channels. Your walk with God is of utmost importance. God uses people who walk with him. A consistent life of devotion and obedience to God will make all of the difference in the discussion, and as you trust God with the study, your relationship with him will be enhanced.

Your decision to lead the discussion is directly related to sharing God's heart for lost people. The foundation of GIGs is a conviction that God wants to bring the good news to our friends who do not know him. The Holy Spirit initiates and seals the conversion process - we must be in contact with him in order to most effectively join God's process of bringing lost people back into a relationship with him

May God bless you as you seek him and utilize GIGs to help others come to know him fully!

Da Ruiz

by Siegfried Schmalz

1) Feel free to disagree with the leader! If you think what he is saying is a bunch of baloney, say it. A group that always agrees can bore you silly.

2) We start on time and end on time. Is it a deal?

3) Regular attendance is not mandatory, but it sure is helpful and we'd appreciate it. We'd love to have you come every week, but we won't lay a guilt trip on you if you can't make it. If you come, it should always be because you want to, not because we forced you to.

4) If you don't like the way that we are doing something, feel free to speak up. Remember, we won't force you to do anything that you don't want to do. If, for example, we ask you to read a passage or answer a question and you don't want to, just say "I'll pass" and that will suffice.

5) In case of fire, PLEASE DON'T PANIC: Remain calm, and get the marshmallows as soon as possible.

6) Please, be honest about what you think. Don't just say something because you think it is the right answer or an answer that a "religious person" would give. You'd be amazed how interesting things get when people say what they think, and not what they think what they should think!

Using These

Choose the GIG that best fits the needs of your group. For suggestions of a good 4-6 week beginning, see using these studies.

Jesus Teaches the Professor

John 3

On being born again, believing in Jesus, and the light of God.

Jesus Satisfies

John 4

Quenching your spiritual thirst in Jesus.

The Great Judge

John 5

Meeting Jesus as the one who will one day judge our souls.

The Key to Life and Death

John 11

Jesus demonstrates power over death and

He's Alive!!!

John 20

The resurrection of Jesus as a verifiable historical event.

The Four Soils

Matt 13

How open is your heart to spiritual things?

The Return of Jesus

Matt 24

He's coming back. Will you be ready?

Jesus and the Falling Roof

Mark 2

Jesus identity as God and power to forgive.

Following Jesus

Luke 9

The high costs and rewards of following Jesus.

Homecoming

Luke 15

The story of two lost sons and a loving Father.

Torture and Death

Luke 23

Jesus' actions while dying on the cross point to him being God.

Mission Accomplished

Varied

The meaning of Jesus mission and death on the cross.

Appendix A

Write your own GIGs using these passages.

Welcome to Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?!!

The studies are designed to expose an individual or group of non-Christians with the person of Jesus and the basics of the good news of salvation. Therefore, the studies are focused on the life of Christ in passages where elements of the gospel message (Jesus' deity, eternal life, sin & forgiveness, atonement etc.) come out most clearly.

They are designed to be used in a variety of situations - including one to one discussions or group discussions, men or women, Americans or International students. Hundreds of students have used these studies all across the U.S. as well as in such far flung places as Latvia, Japan and Swaziland! They tend to work well in many situations because they are highly relevant and focus on the main issues related to Jesus' person, claims and message.

I have written them to be used in a series from 4 to 12 weeks, depending on the needs of your group. If you start out asking people to commit to only 4, it is very natural for the group to continue on with 5 & 6... if they desire to do so.

Some leaders ask "In what order should I do the studies?" My best advice would be to look through the different studies and see which best fits the needs of your group! Do them in the order that best suits your needs. If you want some general advice, I might suggest:

For a 4 week discussion:

- 1) Matthew 13
- 2) John 3
- 3) Mission Accomplished
- 4) Luke 15

For a 6 week discussion:

- 1) Matthew 13
- 2) Mark 2
- 3) John 3
- 4) John 4
- 5) Mission Accomplished
- 6) Luke 15

Every group will be different, so when using the studies feel free to change which studies you choose to do - and in what order. Also be sure to adapt questions to fit the specific needs of your group. Know the study well enough so that you can skip questions that may have been previously answered or ask further questions if they did not understand the main point of the question.

Types of Questions:

You will notice that the studies are broken into various parts: First there is an introductory question that is completely non-religious. It relates to the study later on, but should be easy for anybody in the group to relate to. Beginning with this question helps break the ice and ease into the study.

Next, there is reading the passage. Sometimes there is a person in the group who is a good reader -ask them to read the passage aloud. Some groups go around the circle each reading one paragraph. Sometimes, various people can take the role of characters in the

read their parts. Feel free to be varied and creative in the reading of the text. Avoid dispassionate monotones.

The heart of the study is the discussion questions. Ask these questions and allow the group to answer. Avoid Lecture!!! If there is a silence, try rewording the question. When somebody answers, encourage multiple responses by utilizing phrases like "That's good - what does somebody else think?" Keep it a discussion, not just a quick question and answer session.

Finally, there are questions labeled "Think about it". These questions are designed to help apply the discussion and drive home the main point of the passage. There are normally multiple questions in that section - All may not be particularly helpful for your group. Choose carefully among them depending on who is in your group and what direction the discussion takes.

If you have never led an GIG and have not received training, ask your staff for some information or training on how to do so. If this is not possible, utilize this guide and further instructions found at www.ivcf.org in the 'Bible Study' section. (You may have received a packet with this one entitled "How to lead and Investigative Bible Discussion" - that is the same as the document on the web.)

May God bless your faithfulness in following his command to spread his word to every comer of the earth!!

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Jesus Teaches the Professor

John 3:1-21

Introduction

Describe a time when you felt like you needed a fresh start. Were you given the opportunity to wipe the slate clean and start over?

Read John 3:1-21

Discussion questions

Leaders Note: If there are questions about verses 13 and 14, the OT account of Moses and the bronze snake can be found in Numbers 21:4-9. You should be sure that you are familiar with this as well as it's parallels to Jesus in case someone asks you about it. However, you should not purposely delve into it because of the limitations on time.

What are some of the facts that we can gather about Nicodemus from v1-2?

Pharisee of Ruling council = Member of Jewish governing body with both spiritual and political power Also respected as a religion professor

Afraid for his reputation - came at night

Teachable & curious

Jesus initial response does not seem to go with the flow of the conversation; Why would he respond as he did?

He saw through to the real needs and questions of Nicodemus and began to talk about them.

Compare Nicodemus' and Jesus' ideas of what Born Again'

According to Jesus, what is his identity and purpose?

How is it that one can gain eternal life?

If a person truly believes in something, how is it reflected in

This question and the following one are not geared toward a lengthy discussion on Lordship issues, but are thereto help people understand that belief in Jesus is not merely intellectual belief, but involves your whole life.



What does a person's lifestyle look like if he truly believes in Jesus and follows him?

If their thoughts are way off on this question, you may wish to challenge them to read the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5-7 during the week)

Jesus Teaches the Professor

continued

What happens to those who do not believe in

What do light and dark represent in these

How can somebody come into the light?

You may wish to refer to John 14:6 at this point

Why don't people in the darkness move to the light?

Where are you in your understanding of spiritual life? Still in the dark? Moving closer to the light?

Think About It

According to Jesus, what must happen in order to have eternal life and enter into the kingdom of God?

How would you compare your own search for God compared to Nicodemus'? More straightforward? More intellectual?

What areas of your life do you want to bring into the light?

Main Point:

God sent Jesus to save us. The mechanism for this to occur is belief in Jesus. At that point we are 'Born Again'. ie. given a new spiritual life.

Jesus Satisfies

John 4:1-30

Introduction

When you were young, who were the people that you were told not to associate with? Which part of the neighborhood were you warned

Think of the type of person that is the most outcast in our society - then put yourself in Jesus' shoes as he deals with the woman in this

Read John 4:1-30

Discussion Questions

Samaritans were hated by the Jews because long before in their history, some Jews intermarried with Gentiles (non-Jews). This group of half-Jews became known as Samaritans. They wanted full rights to the temple and claimed the same God, but the 'pure-bred' Jews despised them. Besides these racial prejudices, what prejudices did Jesus have to overcome in order to help this woman?

Women were regarded in low esteem in that part of the world when Jesus lived and it was not appropriate for men to talk to women in public. Many thought that she was a prostitute because she came to the well around noon (the sixth hour) which is the hottest time of the day when nobody else would come. Certainly she was an outcast, and possibly a prostitute (since she had 5+ husbands). Regardless, Jesus saw past racial, social and gender barriers in order to make contact with this woman.

Obviously the woman is talking about physical water. The 'Living Water' that Jesus refers to would be most commonly understood as a spring of running water that never ran dry and satisfied Jesus always satisfies our deepest longings including the longing for a relationship with God.

What was Jesus' physical condition? v.6-8

What would motivate a tired, thirsty Jew to spend such careful time conversing with an adulterous outcast female Samaritan?

Jesus' habit of reaching out in love and truth was not determined by his condition or by the external characteristics of another. He was looking out for her best interests.

What reason did Jesus have for beginning as he did?

Jesus sets up the theme for conversation by identifying with her needs.

Note the woman's initial reaction (v. 9) Why does it change by verse 11? Why does she get curious?

Compare and contrast the type of water that the woman is thinking of (v. 11, 15) and the type of water that Jesus is talking about (v. 13-14).

How is Jesus' statement in v. 16 a turning point in the conversation?

Jesus Satisfies

Continued

There are many ways that Jesus fills our emptiness. Because we were created for a relationship with God, we will never be satisfied until we have one through Jesus. The unconditional tender love of Jesus helps with our need for a steady relationship. Jesus satisfies our need for truth because he himself is the truth, and he makes sense of the world and our place in it, and therefore he satisfies our longing for truth. Jesus is someone who is always dependable, always sure, and always there.

What further information does this lead to?

Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher and mathematician, once said that we all have a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts that can only be filled by God. People try to fill this vacuum with all kinds of things, but they always end up just as dissatisfied. What does this woman try to fill it with?

What are some of the felt needs and dissatisfactions that people experience today? What are some ways that people try to fill the emptiness in their lives?

How can Jesus' "Living Water" satisfy some (or all) of these needs?

How does Jesus turn the woman's diversion in v. 19 to his ultimate aim in the conversation?

The important thing is not whether someone worships "here" or "there, but that people worship "in spirit and truth. "

Why does Jesus reveal himself here?

He knows that the woman is interested and will take what he

What are the final things that show that the woman is convinced that Jesus is telling the truth?

Think About It

What are the ways that you are trying to fill up your emptiness?

What would Jesus say to you if he walked up and saw you today?

Main Points

See Above!

The Great Judge

John 5

Introductions:

Have you ever been in a courtroom? What was the role of the judge? What was s/he like? (If nobody has been in a courtroom, speculate what a judge might be like - or talk about realistic pictures of movie/TV judges.)

Read John 5:1-30

Discussion Questions

Imagine the scene that Jesus walks into. Who was there? (v.3) Why had they come?

(v. 7- note that many believed that the water had occasional magic healing power when the water was stirred by an angel)

What would you think would be the sights, sounds and smells of this place? What might the general attitude of those present be?

Jesus asks the man if he wants to get well. Why might the man not want to be well?

After the miraculous healing of the man, he is harassed by some religious leaders. Why?

Throughout history, there have been people who have been so concerned about the rules of a religion that they miss the miracles. Do you know of anyone who fits that description?

When Jesus meets up with the man again, he warns him not to continue sinning. What is the 'something worse' that might happen if a person continues a lifestyle of sin instead of a lifestyle of following Jesus? (see v.28)

What is Jesus justification for working on the Sabbath? Why does this make the Jews angry? (v. 16-18)

Describe the relationship of the Father and Son in v.16-23. What role does each have? How are they similar/different? How do they relate to one another?

Main Points

Like it or not, Jesus will one day judge every one. How we live our lives and respond to him has direct implications as to how we will be judged.

The Great Judge

John 5

If Jesus claims are true, then one day we will all face him as our judge. (v.22, 27) What comes to mind when you think of your parents, professors, and public figures standing before the judgment of Jesus?

One day we too will have to account for our moral choices and our response to Jesus. How does that make you feel? When you come before Jesus, will you be found guilty in any area? Remember - this is a morally perfect God who knows everything about you!

What two components are necessary to avoid condemnation and gain life? (See v.24 and 28)

Think About It

All of us have offended a perfectly moral God by our personal immorality. He yearns to forgive us and give us life. Just as Jesus asked the disabled man 'Do you want to get well?' in the physical sense, so he asks us 'Do you want to get well?' spiritually. Some people say 'yes' while others say 'no'. Why might some say 'no'? What is your answer?

The Key to Life and Death

John 11:1-44

Introduction

Have you ever had a time when you needed a friend and they did not come through? How did you feel?

Main Points

Jesus demonstrates power over death. This validates his claim that whoever believes in him will live, even though he dies.

Note: In verse 9 "The connection of thought here is that the hours of the day are not affected by external circumstances. They are there to be used The implication is that Jesus' hour has not come (ie. the 12th hour) and until God wills that it should come, the only course to adopt is to go about one's mission" Donald Guthrie The New Commentary: Revised John, Erdmans, 1970, p.953.

Read John 11:1-44

Discussion Questions

What can you gather about Jesus' relationship with Mary, Martha & Lazarus from this passage? (v. 3, 6, 21-2, 3 5)

How do you think they felt when Jesus waited two days to see Lazarus?

What are the disciples reactions to going back to Judea? (v.8, 16)

Why is Jesus not as



What do Martha and Mary's reactions to Jesus in v.21-2 and 32 show about their knowledge of his power?

After Jesus tells Martha that her brother will rise, he makes a startling claim. (v.25-6) What is the double meaning of this claim?

Jesus cries when he sees Mary and her friends, but he didn't when he first got news of Lazarus -why do you think that is?

if the group has trouble with this question, point them to v. 4, 15, 23, 33 & 42.

What does the fact that Jesus wept say about him?

The Key to Life and Death	<i>Continued</i>
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Describe the situation as Jesus prays in v.41. i.e. what are the sights, sounds, smells? What is the mood of the people? How do you imagine the mood would change as Lazarus came out of the tomb?

Think About It

Read V 25-26a

Jesus' claim and promise here are not just for Martha, but for all people at all times. Comparing your spiritual life to the story of Lazarus, where are you right now - Still in the grave? Watching the stone being rolled away? Alive but still in the grave clothes? Alive and unwrapped?

He's Alive!!!

John 20 & 1 Cor. 15

Introduction

What is the most excited that you have ever been? What prompted that excitement? How did you react in your physical expressions, language and thoughts?

Note: The burial cloth and linen were what Jesus was buried in. Jesus was not stolen by grave robbers because the very cloth he was buried in was left, while his body was gone. It probably appeared as though he was Star Trek "beamed" out of the tomb.

Read John 20:1-31

Discussion Questions

In v. 1 and 2, how did Mary react to the empty tomb?

Why is her reaction

Peter and John ("the other disciple") had to see for themselves. Why did John include the detail about the burial cloth and linen?

How did John respond to this evidence?

Summarize Mary's meeting of Jesus in his first resurrection

Given the cultural status of women, why was Jesus first appearance stunning?

Reread verse 19. What do you think was the disciples emotional state when they first saw Jesus? Why would Jesus need to say "Peace be with you"?

After his appearance, why would the disciples now feel ready to accept Jesus' commission? v.21-3

In verses 24-5, we find that Thomas is skeptical about a resurrection (note doubting Thomas!). Can you identify with him? Why or why not?

What does Jesus do to satisfy Thomas' need for evidence? How do we know that he is satisfied?

Read I Corinthians 15:3-8

Main Points

The resurrection of Jesus is a verifiable historical fact. This fact validates his claims to be God and to teach us spiritual truth!

He's Alive!!!

John 20 & 1 Cor. 15

Discussion Questions

Who are some other people who Paul reports that Jesus appeared to?

What do you notice about the types of people and circumstances that surround the appearances of Jesus?

Be sure to note the great variety of people, numbers and places.

Think about it

Although people have disagreed throughout history whether Jesus rose from the dead, one thing that historians agree on is that *His followers believed and taught* that he rose from the dead. There have been many conjectures to make sense of this belief. Given the eyewitness reports that we have seen in these passages, which conjectures are plausible? Why or why not?

* There was a person masquerading as Jesus who fooled all who thought He rose.

-He would have needed to fool even his closest friends and family

-He was able to persuade even the most doubtful Thomas

* Those who claimed he rose were hallucinating

- For this to happen, different people, in singles, groups and crowds would have had to had similar hallucinations over 40 days with different details and the same Jesus!

- There are no scientific recorded instances of a group hallucination

* Jesus did not die, but just swooned and the coolness of the tomb revived him.

- Would he appear to the disciples as a risen messiah or man in serious need of medical attention?

- How would such a wounded man get out of the tomb, roll away the stone and sneak by the guards?

- How did he get water and blood to gush out separately from his side if he were not dead? (John 19:34)

* His disciples got together and made up this story and all agreed to lie about it

- They would never give credit to a woman as the first to see Jesus

- They would not die for this lie!

How do you account for these reports?

The Four Soils

Matthew 13:1-23

Introduction

Remember the classic Christmas movie 'It's a Wonderful Life'? In this movie, George, a banker, thinks his life has been a waste. After meeting his angel, Clarence, he gets to see what his town would be like if he had never existed. George emerges from this experience a

Main Points:

*The main point:
People respond
to Jesus
differently
depending on
how open their
hearts are to him.*

Between classes, relationships, sports, jobs and extra-circular activities, many of us leave little time for reflection on the whole of our lives. Occasionally a person or event (such as New Year's Day or a death in the family) will cause us to pause and reconsider our lives from a fresh perspective. Jesus was the type of person who often caused others to pause and reconsider the state of their lives.

At what times of year or what events do you re-examine your life, goals and future?

Jesus had been going around Israel teaching people a brand new way to live. In this passage, he talks about some of the reasons people respond to him differently.

Read Matthew 13:1-23

Discussion Questions

List the four types of soils and what happened to each.

What will happen to people who are spiritually dull and show no further interest in Jesus or his teachings? (v. 13-15)

What would be the result if their hearts were not calloused? (v. 15)

Jesus explained his parable to the disciples, giving meaning to each type of soil. The first soil was that on the path. What happens to that kind of 'seed'. (v. 16) What are some ways that God's spiritual seed is snatched away from people's lives today?

The Four Soils

Continued

What happens to the seed on the rocky places? Describe a student today who receives the word with joy, but only lasts a

What happens to the seed that fell among the thorns? What are the worries of life an/or the deceitfulness of wealth that prevent students from fully pursuing God?

Think About It

The primary application for this parable is: receive the word of God like good soil receives seed. There will be dramatic results!

Jesus knew that the Word could promote positive life change if well received. What steps could a person take to be more like the good soil?



What role can this Bible discussion play in helping to gain spiritual perspective?

The Return of Jesus

Matthew 24:36 – 25:13

Introduction

Have you ever ignored a warning? What happened?

Read Matt 24:36-25:13

Note: The leader should also be familiar with the account of Noah in Genesis 6-9.

Discussion Questions

Note: Jesus is not against eating, drinking and marrying, but going about life without any concern for the things of God

What are the parallels between the days of the flood and Jesus' return? Does this look anything like the days of Noah?

According to what we have learned in previous studies, what will be the criteria for who will be taken and who will be left?

Jesus tells 2 stories next - one of a thief and house owner (v.42-44), and one of a master and servants (v.45-51). What is the main point of these 2 stories? What key points does Jesus want to communicate about his return?

Main Points

Jesus could come back at anytime. Are you ready if he comes back today?

What would Jesus want us to be doing when he returns?

In biblical times, a man and woman would get engaged and then the man would go to make preparations for their life together (such as building a house and gaining financial stability). After this was accomplished, he would return one night after dark to find his bride and bridesmaids (virgins) for the wedding. How were the ten women in this story alike? Different?

Think About It

What would be the wise thing to do in awaiting the return of Christ? If Christ returned today, would you be ready?

Jesus and the Falling Roof

Mark 2:1-12 & 12:28-31

Introduction

What is the most that you have ever done to get tickets. to a concert, get into a play or go to see a famous person?

Read Mark 2:1-2:12

Main Points

Our greatest need is the same as Jesus greatest desire: The forgiveness of sins.

Also, Jesus claims and demonstrates his Deity.

Discussion Questions

In Mark chapter I we learn that Jesus is getting a reputation as a great teacher and healer. How do the people of Capernaum respond to him when he arrives?

imagine you are a person in the house where Jesus was teaching. Describe the sights, sounds, smells and emotion in the atmosphere.

What extreme lengths were the friends willing to go through in order to get the paralytic to Jesus? What does this tell you about their attitude toward Jesus?

Judging by Jesus' reaction to the paralytic being let down, what did he see as the paralytic s greatest need? Who else has this same need? Can you think of anybody who doesn't?

Why were the teachers of the law irritated by what Jesus

In verse 9, Jesus asks a rhetorical question. "which is easier to say " Of the two options, which will be easier to see whether it came true or not?

Does the evidence of this passage lead you to believe that Jesus in fact does have the authority to forgive sins? (see verse 11-12)



If your group has problems answering this question, help them to see that Jesus' authority over paralysis (miracles which can be seen) lends credibility to his claim to forgive sins (a miracle which cannot be seen).

Transition

Many of think that we do not need forgiveness for sins because we have never murdered anyone or stolen much or slept with someone's spouse. However, when we really take a close look at ourselves and God's commands, we realize that we fall way short of God's standard for our lives, Let's take a look at a couple of those commands.

Jesus and the Falling Roof	<i>Continued</i>
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Read Mark 12:28-31

What are the 2 greatest commandments that Jesus gives

What would a person's life look like if he followed these commands completely?

Think About It

Can anyone here say that they have followed these for their whole lives? For the past year? For the past week?

Certainly all of us have sinned. Jesus saw the forgiving of people's sin as his greatest mission on earth. During the next week, try to keep in mind the two greatest commandments and keep track of how your life compares to them

Following Jesus

Luke 9:18-26 & 18:18-30

Introduction

If you asked the average person "who do you think Jesus is?", what would they say? A good teacher? A lunatic? A myth? The Son of God?

Read Luke 9:18-26

Main Points:

Following Jesus is a commitment of the whole life of the individual. It requires everything of a person, but the rewards are worth it!

Discussion questions

In comparison to today, who did the crowds of Jesus' day say that Jesus was?

Perhaps the most important question ever asked is in this passage. Let's find out what each of us would answer to it: Who do you think that Jesus is?

What does Jesus say will happen to him in the future? Does he seem to shy away from this destiny?

In Jesus' day, the cross was a symbol of suffering, pain, and even death. Describe in your own words the lifestyle that Jesus is calling his followers to in verse 23.

What does Jesus mean by his mysterious statement in verse 24? What kind of life is he talking about?

You have probably heard the statement "you can't take it with you". How does Jesus' question in v.25 amplify this idea?

According to Jesus can you be a 'closet Christian"? What happens if you are?

Summarize what Jesus asks of his followers in this

Transitions

Following Jesus is certainly a radical pursuit. Jesus asks us to be willing to give up everything, to follow him and not to be ashamed about it. Let's take a look now at how Jesus interacted with a man who wanted eternal life, but loved something else more than Jesus.

Following Jesus

Continued

Read Luke 18:18-30

What did the ruler think was necessary to inherit eternal life?

Was the ruler a very moral man? Was good morality enough for eternal life?

Was the man willing to give up everything to follow Jesus? Which did he love more - his money or Jesus?

Note that Jesus does not always ask us to give up our most important things to follow him, but we must be willing to give up these things. Jesus will ask you to give up anything that is sinful, or gets in the way of following him.

Why is it difficult for rich people to get into heaven? Is it impossible?

What type of life does Jesus promise for his followers here on earth? How about in heaven?

Think About It

What would be the most difficult thing for you to give up in order to follow Jesus?

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

-Jim Elliot, missionary

Homecoming

Luke 15:11-31

Introduction

When you picture God, what image comes to mind? A distant inventor? A cosmic sheriff waiting for you to do something wrong? A paramedic that you call on when you are in trouble? A loving father?

Main Points

God is a loving Father with a great desire for his wayward children to return to Him.

Read Luke 15:11-31

Discussion Questions

How would you feel if you were the father and your son wanted his inheritance before you were even dead?

Describe what the son must be like to have done this to his Dad.

Describe what you think the son did when he was in a distant country.

Why did the son come to his

How would your father have responded to his son's return if he were the father in the story?

From what you know about the father, what do you think he was doing while the son was away?

Does the reaction of the father surprise you when you think about what the son has done to him?

Describe all of the actions of the father when his son comes home.

How would you feel if you were the son and you got this kind of reception?

How does heaven react when a person decides to be a follower of Jesus and his sins are forgiven?

Do you think that the older brother responded appropriately? How would you respond if you were in his shoes?

Homecoming

continued

Note that the people that Jesus is trying to represent by the older son are the Pharisees and religious leaders of 15:2 There may be people in your group who are religious. but do not have a relationship with God Focus on the older son a little more if this is the case. You may even wish to split this into two studies -about the younger son and one about the older.



Even though he shared the same house as the father, did the older son share the father's love for the younger son and outlook on life? Do you think that the older son ever goes in and rejoices with everyone else?

Think About It

If you were to describe your spiritual journey in relation to the younger son, where would you be: Still at home? In a distant country? Coming to your senses? On the way home? Partying with Dad?

What would it take for you to 'come home' to the heavenly Father represented by the earthly father in this passage?

Torture and Death

Luke 23

Main Point:

Jesus behavior as he died on the cross points both toward the credibility of his claims to be God and the significance of his death.

Introduction

Describe a time when you were in excruciating pain. What was your attitude? What were you concerned with?

Background Information

Jesus has had rough week He came to Jerusalem with hundreds of thousands of others during the week of the Passover (the biggest celebration in the Jewish year). After being hailed as a coming king and going through public verbal tussles with the religious leaders, he was unjustly accused of being a criminal After enduring a farce of a trial and getting sentenced to death, he was publicly beaten and scourged Jesus was in the midst of the most difficult day of his life. Crucifixion is the most cruel and painful death ever devised as a means of capital punishment. Let's look at how Jesus, in excruciating pain, endures this distress.

Read Luke 23:32-49

Discussion Questions

If you were enduring the pain of crucifixion, what would your attitude be like? How would you treat the guards who were drilling nails into your wrists and ankles?

Instead of cussing them out, what is Jesus' response to the guards' actions? What does this reveal about the purpose for his life and

In v.35-39, who are some of the people at the crucifixion? How do they treat Jesus?

Who gave Jesus the respect he deserves? What about his comments shows that he has a realistic grasp on the situation?

What is Jesus response to this criminal? What did the criminal do to deserve Jesus' favor?

Some people are afraid to talk to God because they think they are not good enough. What can people like this learn from the criminal?

Torture and Death

continued

Background note →

In the center of the Temple in Jerusalem was a room called the Holy of Holies. It was thought to be the place where the very presence of God dwelt. The high priest was the only one who could enter - and even he could only go in once per year. The room was separated from the rest of the temple by a floor to ceiling veil, 6 inches thick, made of cloth. No body dared go past the veil for fear that they would be consumed by the presence of God

Given this information, why is the tearing of the veil significant? What does it symbolize in terms of how we can relate to God? (v.45)

The centurion had probably overseen dozens, maybe even hundreds of crucifixions. Why would the behavior be so stunning to him? (v.47)

In ancient Israel, beating ones breasts was a symbol of remorse and repentance. What attitudes and behaviors would the audience be remorseful of?

Think About It

Since Jesus had claimed to be God, there are three choices of who he really was. Either he was not God and he knew it - in which case he would be a pathological liar seeking power and fame. Or perhaps he was not God, but was mentally deranged and thought he was God. It is also possible that he really was God and wanted to come to save us from our sins. Based on his behavior on the Cross, which of these do you think is most probable?

Mission Accomplished

Various passages

If the group asks about Jesus calling Peter "Satan" explain that Satan wanted to get in the way of Gods ultimate plan (Jesus crucifixion). Peter was not possessed by Satan, but was saying things that were more in line with Satan's plan than Gods.

Introduction

Have you ever been to a funeral? How would you feel and react if you saw the dead person walking around, talking and eating a few days later?

This study is different than all of the rest because it moves around from passage to passage much more. You may wish to explain this to the group before you begin.

Read Mark 8:31-33

Did Jesus know ahead of time that he was going to be killed? Did he do anything to avoid this?

What does this tell you about his purpose for coming to earth?

If this is not clear to the group, it may be good to explain that somehow Jesus mission is related to His death and that is why he never tried to avoid this destiny. The specifics will become clear as we continue the study.

Read Mark 15:37-41

Were unbelievers as well as Christ's followers able to verify the fact of Jesus' death? Name some of

Read Romans 5:6-9

According to this passage, why did Jesus need to die?

Transition:

Jesus' followers made the incredible claim that they saw him after he had died! Reactions to this claim were as varied in their day as they are today. (Some threw those who believed this to the lions and others were willing to be thrown to the lions because they believed so strongly!) Let's take a look at the historical accounts of these claims.

Read Luke 24:36-43

Was the resurrected Jesus

Which of the 5 senses could verify this?

Mission Accomplished	<i>Continued</i>
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Read I Cor 15:3-8

Who were all of the people who saw Jesus risen from the dead?

According to this passage, why did Jesus need to die and what was the response of the Corinthians who heard it?

Think About It

Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins and then was raised from the dead?

You may wish to wrap up by reading Romans 10: 9

When confronted with such an abundance of evidence for the resurrection, many skeptics will challenge the reliability of the New Testament if you think this may become an issue, prepare to defend the reliability of the NT in a discussion after the study. If nobody challenges it's reliability, there is no need to bring it up.

Main Points

Jesus death was not just a sad ending to a good man - it was exactly what he had planned His mission was to die in our place. He then demonstrated his power over death and sin by raising from the dead

Good passages for GIGS

Appendix A

Encounters with Jesus

Follow me

Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9-13, Mark 1:16-20, 2:13 -17 Luke 5:1-11,6:6-11
Luke 7:1-17

Jesus' power

Luke 7:36-50

Jesus at the party (forgiveness)

Matt 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20,
Luke 8:26-39

The demoniac

Matt 9:18-26, Mark 5:1-20,
Luke 8:26-39

Main Points

Write your own discussion questions using these passages!

Tailor your discussions to fit your group.

Jesus and Jairus

Matt 9:18-34

Jesus heals many

Matt 18:1-14, Mark 9:33-50,
-Luke 9:46-50

Greatest in the kingdom

Matt 8:18-22, Luke 9:57-62
Matt 23

Tough life

Luke 14:25-35

Hated hypocrisy

John 9

Cost of Following

John 8: 1 -11

The man born blind

John 13:1-20

The woman caught in adultery

John 14:1-24

The great servant

John 18&19:1-16

Where Jesus is going?

John 19:16-42

The unjust trials

The death of Jesus

Parables of the Kingdom

The two foundations

Matthew 7:24-29

The good seed

Matthew 13:1-23

The value of the kingdom

Matt 13:44-6

The weeds and the net

Matt 13:36-43 and 47-52

The evil tenants

Matt 21:33-46 & Luke 20:9-19

The ten bridesmaids

Matt 25:1-13

The good neighbor

Luke 10:25-37

Riches and God

Luke 12:1-34

The huge party

Luke 14:15-24

Lost and Found

Luke 15:1-10

Lazarus in heaven

Luke 16:19-31

*Note: These do not include the passages found in "Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?"