



FACILITATOR'S NOTES AND SCRIPT

<p>AIM for this session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To summarise the previous 6 sessions and examine what it means to be a Christian * To challenge attendees to think about making a commitment to Christ (if they haven't done so already)
<p>OVERVIEW of this session (60-90 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. INTRODUCTION (3-5 minutes) 2. REVIEW OF HOME-READING (5-10 minutes) 3. OPENING CONVERSATION (5-10 minutes) 4. MAIN PRESENTATION (30-35 minutes) 5. PERSONAL REFLECTION (15-20 minutes) 6. CONCLUSION (5 minutes) 7. "MINGLING" - (You may wish to allow some time at the end for people to just chat)
<p>INTRODUCTION (3-5 minutes)</p>	<p>Welcome to Session 7, our last for the <i>Discovering Christianity</i> course. Over the last 6 sessions we've looked at the claims that Christianity makes for who Jesus is, we've looked at the purpose of Jesus' life and death, and we've also looked at the evidence for the resurrection and the implications of all of these issues for us today. Last week we had a look at what Jesus believed was the future for this planet, which I hope you found thought-provoking.</p> <p>For this session, we're going to examine the subject of having faith in Jesus. That is, what does it mean to be a Christian?</p> <p>But before we do that let's have a quick review of our HOME-READING.</p>
<p>REVIEW OF HOME-READING (5-10 minutes)</p>	<p>Our home-reading was the final three chapters of Mark (Chapters 14-16) which we've been looking at quite extensively over the last couple of weeks during our discussions. Were there any observations or questions that came up for you during the reading?</p>

Our home-reading was Mark Chapter 12 & 13. I hope you had a chance to look at it. Were there any observations or questions that came up for you during the reading? *(Facilitator: The Main Presentation includes a significant description of Chapter 13 so don't discuss it in too much detail here)*

**OPENING
CONVERSATION**
(5-10 minutes)

Our OPENING CONVERSATION this session is centred around the response of the Roman Governor's (Pontius Pilate) when he spoke with Jesus.

Read Mark 15:1-15

1. Why would the Roman Governor (Pilate) have Jesus crucified if he believed that Jesus was being falsely accused?

(Facilitator's notes)

- * He was feeling pressure from the crowd.
- * He didn't think that the decision would effect him very much.
- * He didn't believe the Jesus was "king of the Jews" (Verse 2)

2. What might you do if you were in Pilate's position?

(Facilitator's notes)

- * Have the attendees reflect on their own responses to who Jesus is even in the face of possible objections by "the crowd" (even family and friends).

**MAIN
PRESENTATION**
(30-35 minutes)

OPENING

Let's turn our attention to the "Main Presentation" for this session - I'd like to look at the topic of "faith" and what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

A biblical definition for having "Faith" is *"...the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."* (Hebrews 11:1)

That's interesting, isn't it? - That having faith is a feeling of confidence in the future and feeling sure of things even if you can't see them. When it comes to putting our faith in Jesus we've seen during this series of discussions that there is ample evidence to confirm Christianity's claim regarding the identity of Jesus. This evidence helps us to live with hope and to feel confident about the future.

It's with this definition in mind of what faith is that I'd like to go back to the beginning of Mark's story. The first words that Mark records Jesus as saying can be found at Mark 1:14-20.

Mark 1:14-20

14 Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. 15 "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!" 16 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon[b] and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 17 Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 18 And they left their nets at once and followed him. 19 A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat repairing their nets. 20 He called them at once, and they also followed him, leaving their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men.

POINT 1

It's interesting that the first words spoken by Jesus in Mark's Gospel are "The time promised by God has come at last!"¹

Jesus is claiming to be the fulfilment of God's promise. And what was God's promise? His great promise in the Bible is to bring deliverance and salvation from the results of human sin. As we've looked at in previous sessions Jesus says that he is the fulfilment of biblical predictions of the Messiah - that is, God in human flesh.

So, the first point for this session on what it means to be a Christian is to **Recognise the Identity of Jesus** (Complete the point in the handout: **Recognise the Identity of Jesus**).

If you haven't already done so, I'd like to invite you to recognise Jesus as the Messiah - that is, that He's God in human flesh.²

As we discussed in Session 2 ("Jesus: Who Did He Claim to Be?") the claims that Jesus makes about himself compels us to make some significant decisions on our opinions of Jesus. To repeat the words of C.S. Lewis:

*"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*³

¹ Facilitator: The NIV translation of "The time has come" doesn't adequately provide the sense of time being fulfilled as the original Greek word suggests (the NKJV = "The time is fulfilled")

² Facilitator: You may wish to promote any Daniel/Revelation Bible study that you have to follow up the Discovering Christianity series.

³ From C. S. Lewis's book Mere Christianity

POINT 2

In the words that follow Jesus' claim to be the fulfilment of God's promise in v15, Jesus says that we need to have a sense of urgency regarding the need to repent of our sins:

Verse 15:

"The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins"

It sounds old-fashioned today to talk of "repenting of your sins" but here is Jesus telling his listeners to do just that. As we saw in Session 3, sin is our selfish attitudes and behaviours that separate us from God. And repentance is about feeling sincere regret for our past selfishness.

And that's the second point for the handout, that coming to faith in Jesus is to also **Regret Your Personal Selfishness** (*Complete the point in the handout: Regret Your Personal Selfishness*).

(Facilitator: You may wish to include a brief testimony here or after Point # 3. I usually share the following: "When I began to read the Bible for myself it became clear to me quite quickly that there was something very special about Jesus. I had no real difficulty in believing that He was the Messiah. The major stumbling block for me was that it involved something personal from me and that was to admit to myself that I was sinful and selfish. I would say to myself, 'I'm quite a nice person. Besides, there are many others out there who are worse than me!')

But God impressed upon me that the 'standard' that I needed to measure up to wasn't other people's goodness, but the goodness of Jesus. And when I honestly looked at myself compared to Him, I realised just how sinful I was and needed to personally repent")

POINT 3

And that leads us to the last part of Jesus' statement in verse 15, which is to:

"..believe the Good News!"

If you were to ask people on what basis does God include people in his kingdom, many people would probably say that God compares your good actions and bad actions and if you come out favourably, you're in! If that is how God decides who is in His kingdom, then it leaves many people who are facing death with the worrying question - "Have I done enough?"

That doesn't produce "Confidence" and "Assurance" about our future that Hebrews 11:1 talks about.

The “Good News” that Jesus is talking about throughout “Mark” is that entry into God’s kingdom is not about what we do but what about God is doing. And what God has done is to come to this planet Himself⁴ to reveal his goodness and to pay the penalty for human sin. That’s “Good News” indeed!

So, the third point for what it means to have faith and be a Christian is to **Rely on the Goodness of God** (*Complete the point in the handout: Rely on the Goodness of God*).

POINT 4

The fourth and final point for your handouts is found in verse 17 of Mark’s first chapter. Jesus says to the fisherman:

“Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

Jesus says that being a follower involves learning from him on how to relate to people. As you’ve read through the Gospel of Mark you will have seen Jesus reaching out to others at a very deep level. Those who chose to “follow him” had their lives changed radically for the good and they learned over time how to relate and teach others the ideals of God’s kingdom.

Jesus wants that relationship with everybody, including you and me today. He wants people to “follow” him and learn from him. He wants people to “come out” of this world and become representatives of His world.⁵

And that’s the fourth and final point for your handouts, that having faith and being a follower of Jesus is to **Represent the Kingdom of God** (*Complete the point in the handout: Represent the Kingdom of God*).

SUMMARY

I’d like to suggest that the first three points that we’ve made from verse 15 can be described as God’s “work of a moment”⁶ in you. That is, that becoming a follower of Jesus starts with moment where you realise who He is, repent of your selfishness, and rely on His unselfish goodness.

I remember the time in my early twenties where I prayed a rather clumsy prayer to God incorporating these three aspects of the being a Christian. With your permission, I’d like to say a prayer at the conclusion of our time together - a prayer of accepting the forgiveness offered by God.

⁵ Romans 12:2 “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

⁶ The theological word for this “work-of-a-moment” is “justification”

The fourth point that we made from verse 17 can be described as God's "work of a lifetime"⁷ in you. That is, that being a follower of Jesus continues over the rest of your life as you learn from Him. How do we do that? Through spending time with Him in prayer, through readings His teachings in the Bible, through spending time with other Christians in spiritual programs and discussion groups.

Being a representative of God's kingdom is an exciting, life-long journey of growth and challenge. It's not an easy journey, but one that Jesus says has its ultimate rewards.

OK, so that's the *Main Presentation* for our final session. Let's turn our attention to the questions in the *Personal Reflection* section of the handout.

**PERSONAL
REFLECTION**
(15-20 minutes)

1. What are the possible reasons people choose to become followers of Jesus?
2. What are your thoughts on Jesus' call for repentance of your selfishness?
3. What are ways people can represent the kingdom of God and the teachings of Jesus?
4. How do you feel about being a follower of Jesus?

CONCLUSION
(5 minutes)

Well, I hope you've enjoyed this session and the series overall. As I said we would, I'd like to have prayer. I'd like to pray on behalf of anybody here who would like to accept the forgiveness offered by Jesus and who wish to become a lifelong follower of Him.

Let's pray: "Dear Lord, we thank you for your sacrifice of coming down from heaven in the person of Jesus Christ and for sacrificing Your life on a cross in order that we might have life to the full. We recognise You as the creator and saviour of the world and the creator and saviour of each of us.

We know in our hearts that we have times of selfishness and that we have been disobedient to Your commands. We are truly sorry for these self-focused thoughts and actions. You have the power to forgive us of these sins, Lord, and it's to that grace and goodness of Yours that we rely on in order to come into Your kingdom.

And Lord, in our moment of accepting your grace, we also commit to being a lifelong representative of your kingdom. We commit to learning more about You and Your teachings. We pray for the courage to follow these teachings, and we also pray for the courage to help others do the same.

Lord, grant us these requests in your holy name, the name of Jesus. Amen"

(Facilitator: I've found it useful to have a cake to celebrate the conclusion of the Discovering Christianity course. During this time you could have people complete the short Feedback Form. This form is useful for improving the delivery of the course as well as obtain some direction on who could be invited on future courses).

⁷ The theological word for this 'work-of-a-lifetime' is "sanctification"



Your thoughts and feedback are very useful in helping us improve
the *Discovering Christianity* course.

1. How would you rate the course in helping you discover more about the Christian faith?
1 – “Poor” , 2 – “Below Expectations”, 3 – “Average”, 4 – “Very Good”, 5 – “Excellent”
2. What characteristics of the overall *Discovering Christianity* program did you find useful or particularly informative?
3. Is there anything that wasn't covered in the series that you would like to have seen/discussed?
4. Would recommend attending *Discovering Christianity* to a friend?
YES / NO
(If you have circled “YES” include your contact details so we can inform you of next *Discovering Christianity* program).
5. Would you like to continue studying the Bible with others?
YES / NO
(If you have circled “YES” include your contact details so we can inform you of other programs).

CONTACT DETAILS

NAME:

HOME & MOBILE PHONE #:

HOME ADDRESS:

EMAIL:

Thank You!