



IS THERE **MORE?**



IS THERE MORE?

Informal Bible study

A Bible study for the non-religious

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What is an “Informal Bible Study?”

Introduction

The global youth culture is one of the largest unreached cultures in the world today. Over the years Steiger has found creative ways to go to young people who would not usually walk into a church and relevantly communicate the message of Jesus. Many thousands have responded to this message, but one of the big challenges everywhere is how to offer a next step for these young people who have no church background and would generally struggle to connect immediately with a local church.

Once we've shared the Gospel through an event or an ongoing relationship it's important to offer opportunities for people to learn more before they're ready to make a commitment. An informal Bible study is a great way for people to experience more of God and his word in a neutral and informal setting, whether they have already decided to follow Jesus, or are simply interested in knowing more. It can also be a great way of starting a community in a place with no church.

Vision

An informal Bible study aims at offering community and contact with the word of God as an immediate next step for those who have met Jesus or who are interested in knowing more. It is the next step for young people who meet Jesus at a show, event or any other evangelistic opportunity offered by our missionary teams.

The goal is to form discipleship relationships with young people coming from a global and secular context, lead them into a strong and lasting personal relationship with Jesus and help them get well connected with a local church community.

Audience

An informal Bible study should not be another meeting for Christians. The point is to create an environment where people who have never been to church feel welcome, where they can ask questions, say things you don't usually say in a church, disagree, and discuss relevant topics. If there are too many Christians in the meeting the tendency is that they dominate, answering all the questions and saying things that others don't understand.

The Christians attending should be a select group who understand the vision and are there to support the leader and facilitate the meetings for those new or not-yet-believers. Other Christians who want to come should be lovingly encouraged to be part of their own local church and to not attend the meetings.

Informal Bible studies are catered to people who have possibly never read the Bible or been to a church. That means the leader needs to think about what he will say and how he will say it so that non-Christians can understand. It needs to be open and flexible to accommodate the flow of a community of new-believers being formed.

To draw the right audience the Bible study is designed to start in connection with an evangelistic impact opportunity (Example: a Steiger band like No Longer Music), or a similar type of event relevant to the global youth culture and that leads people to respond to the Gospel message. At this evangelistic event those who respond or are interested in hearing more about the message are then invited to the Bible study. At the first meeting the full concept is presented so that people have the opportunity to commit to a longer period of meetings and gradually become part of a community.

Generally to form an informal Bible study community with the right people it will take more than a one off evangelistic impact event. The team wanting to start a Bible study should be actively involved in the local youth culture. This means regularly attending clubs, parties and concerts so as to know the scene and build relationships. Often once a few key influencing figures from a local youth scene have chosen to attend they are able to draw many others as they invite their friends. For this reason an informal Bible study can work best when organised in partnership with the very young people who you want to reach: young guys and girls connected in the scene, having understood and owned the vision can become key frontline players inviting their friends and creating a movement.

Another important principle to make sure you draw the right audience is to pick the right location...



Location

An informal Bible study should happen in a venue known and of easy access for the audience described above. It might be a café, a club, a cultural center, a community house or anywhere where people naturally gather. Sometimes it can help to start the Bible study in the same location where the initial evangelistic event occurred (Example: a Café on the square where a No Longer Music concert happened, or in the same venue/club where the event happened).

Finding a neutral venue like this is important, as it can be challenging for people to walk into a church when the whole concept is new to them. The idea is to go to where people are, or in the case of a community house to invite them into that informal and welcoming environment.

It is ideal to be able to create a good atmosphere and have the freedom to organise the space for the purpose of the Bible study. So it is worth trying to talk to the owner of the café or club to get permission for this. If this is not possible, simply sitting round a few tables in the café or bar can also work.

Asking some of the new participants, especially those well connected in the scene, for suggestions of location can be really helpful to find the right place and also a good way to encourage ownership with the participants.

Format

This guide presents content for 14 weekly meetings: 1x intro party; 8x Bible discussion meetings going through the Gospel of Luke; 3x topical meetings; 1x event and 1x baptism party. During the period of 14 weeks these different types of meetings alternate keeping the meetings fresh and different each time.

Intro party - This meeting should happen immediately after a band concert or any other evangelistic event. It's an opportunity for people to meet, get to know each other and hear stories. Ideally whoever made the invitation in the evangelistic event (the evangelist artist or speaker from the event) should be there to cast the vision for informal Bible study meetings. This is an invitation for people to join a mission to change the world by first changing ourselves through a relationship with Jesus. This first key speaker can share his story and why he follows Jesus.

8 bible discussions - The group discovers the truth of a Bible passage together through asking and answering good questions and seeking Jesus together in His Word. The leader assists the group in digging into the passage rather than only the leader sharing insights and answering the group's questions.

This way people can discover for themselves the personality of Christ through studying the Bible. We want people to see His frankness, love, kindness, beauty and at the same time His mysterious nature. Our goal is that people will experience the power of God's revelation through His Word. This will also inspire them to read and study the Bible personally at home.

3 topical meetings - In these we cover 3 basic discipleship topics: Bible, prayer and the church. Here we can help uncover wrong perceptions about church, Jesus, faith, etc. The discussions should be creative, natural, and communicating in a way they understand.

1 event - The objective here is to create an event for those in the group to come and bring more of their friends. It is a chance to do something together and also a great evangelistic opportunity.

Baptism party - This should be done at the church, with the local church leadership. This is for those who choose to be baptised after going through the Bible study. In the topical meeting on community, one of the panel participants should explain baptism, that it is a confession of faith in Jesus to a community of believers that we become part of.

Suggested order

Week 1 - Intro party

Week 2 - Is there more?

Week 3 - The Jesus Revolution

Week 4 - Is the Bible a myth?

Week 5 - Something worth living for

Week 6 - God's broken heart

Week 7 - How can I pray?

Week 8 - Event

Week 9 - The ultimate life force

Week 10 - A great tragedy? pt1

Week 11 - A great tragedy? pt2

Week 12 - Power to raise the dead

Week 13 - Community: staying together

Week 14 - Baptism party



Getting Started

Get trained: The first step to lead an informal Bible study is to get trained. Our goal is to be able to offer an in-person 2-3 day training, during which we would cover the content of this guide and practically demonstrate the method. This training is also offered as part of the 10 week training at the Steiger Missions School in Germany. As part of this training in addition to the material in this guide you will need to read two books:

The Reason for God, Timothy Keller, Hodder & Stoughton, 2008
The Bible Study Handbook, Lindsay Olesburg, InterVarsity Press, 2012

Form a team and pray: Find a team of dedicated people who will partner with you in this vision. Meet for prayer and preparation every week and work together in promoting, building relationships and helping the group to know Jesus. Prayer together is key. Pray for God to bring the right people, that they might meet Jesus and for this to have an impact in your city.

Organise an evangelistic impact event: This might be a music concert, a party, an art exposition, an event of any sort, where the gospel can be shared and people can hear about the opportunity to be part of the Bible study. The first meeting should come as soon as possible after the event, and ideally the band, artist or key speaker from the event should be present.

Share what's happening: Promote your meetings by social media (start a facebook page or group, share pictures and posts on any relevant social media platforms) and encourage participants to invite their friends. It is important to use marketing tools and a good visual identity and brand to promote the Bible study. So choose a name for your meetings and ask a designer to help create visuals and promotional material to get the word out. Think of concepts that will communicate well with your audience. For example, in the Russian speaking world, Nuteki created the concept of #6PMBible, with a well marketed brand and visual identity. The Steiger Brazil team advertise their Bible study as a "Bible study for the non-religious". Think of something that fits your context. Feel free to ask other Steiger leaders for help in this.



Leader Training

Global Youth Culture

The current urban generation, connected by consumerism, social media and the entertainment industry form the largest global culture to ever exist. It spans the globe, sharing the same values, listening to the same music, watching the same movies and sharing the same posts.

This global culture is largely influenced by one predominant worldview: Secular Humanism - God is irrelevant and man is at the centre. In this relativistic culture, we are god and consumerism is our religion. This is a generation that does not look to the church for answers but believes it to be a dead and empty tradition of the past. Either there is no God, or, if he is there, he doesn't really interfere with our lives.

Global: Our world has under come a massive transformation. The majority of today's world population lives in urban centres that are connected by globalism. Global consumerism, social media and the entertainment industry connect a generation that now shares a new and ever changing global culture.

Consumer: The globally free economic powers became the game changers and game masters of our society. The main fuel of the global financial structure is consumerism. And for this very reason we have become a consumer society, led by international corporations and franchises that encourage and invest in development that will further increase our consumer capability. Consumerism has affected us in many ways: identity crisis, social fragmentation, numbness, etc.

Secular humanist: Our current form of globalism holds one predominant worldview: secular humanism. It is taught in our schools and universities, used by economic strategies, advertisement and the entertainment industry, emphasised in the consumer life style sold on television and the internet and preached by the majority of this generation on social media.

Desperate: In humanism the purpose of life is centred on man and his search for love and happiness. On the surface humanism is pretty and positive. But losing our reference point is like suddenly having the floor opening up beneath us, we have nowhere to stand and we don't know what to believe or what our purpose is. And it leads us to hopelessness and despair.

Lost, but seeking something: When we make ourselves the reference we realise we are not sufficient, so we look for meaning elsewhere. As we now believe meaning cannot be defined we are on a never-ending search for something we can never find. So this generation is spiritually open and seeking, but never finding answers.



Dissatisfied and restless: We still hope we can change the world. Humanism has that positive perspective, it believes we are progressing and that if we keep fighting we will have a better world. So social and environmental causes are in fashion, people are going to the streets to protest. We want to fight but often we don't know what we're fighting for.

Characteristics

Global

Consumer

Secular Humanist

Desperate

Lost

Seeking

Alone (identity crisis and social fragmentation)

Numb

Dissatisfied

Restless

But God is on a mission and his heart is broken for this lost generation. The message of his love, the Gospel, is for everyone, and it is not right that young people today don't get to hear because we're not making it accessible to them. They don't come to us, so we need to go to them.

Discipling Global Youth

Now we have understood the context of the Global Youth Cultures we need to think about the specific challenges and opportunities that this context presents when we want to help young people meet and start to follow Jesus.

Contextualisation: This means we need to learn to share the Gospel in a language people understand today, communicating through their symbols, the industry of art, music and image, answering the questions they are asking. It means not just a program or a strategy, but to be part of their world, connected to the global culture, part of their lives.

We are in desperate need of a genuine discipleship approach that does not carry unnecessary 'church culture', but engages fully with the world's culture, being 'in the world but not of it' (Jn.17:15-16), being salt and light, different and influential. An informal learning activity, a powerful relational movement, radically impacting individual lives on all levels.

Truth: People are relativists, but they are spiritually hungry. We can look at the mindset around us and the apathy towards Christianity and be fearful to speak, afraid to offend. But if we show people who Jesus really is, and show the cross, then the power of God moves and He is irresistible. Remember that the Gospel is Jesus. People are seeking experiences, so lead them to experience the presence of God and to personally meet Jesus.

Community and action: Consumerism leads to loss of identity and fragmented relationships. It also leads to numbness. People don't have anything to fight for anymore. The solution is a welcoming and active community - an engaged community, lovingly welcoming new people. This is the kind of environment where people will find unity of purpose, a feeling of acceptance of who he is, and a genuine identity. He can really discover the passion of being an agent of change in society.

If discipleship happens by being light in the secular context, instead of creating an alternative church culture in which we format people, then our disciples will automatically continue engaged in their own environment and relationships, leading others to faith. In fact often new believers are the most effective and influential in reaching the secular culture.

These solutions are some of what we hope to offer through an informal Bible study.

Bible

One of the main emphasis in an informal Bible study is helping people who have never walked into a church have contact with the Word of God and meet Him as He powerfully reveals himself through the stories and lessons of scripture.

Most Bible studies or discipleship groups and courses in church are often very structured and follow a lesson or lecture format. One person in the front explains what the Bible is saying and teaches people what the principles are and how they should apply them in their lives. For people who have never been to church these meetings can seem like going back to school. They are too formal and often are using words and terms they can't understand. Informal Bible studies are about reading the Bible for ourselves, learning to observe it and discover its message and the living God behind it. We do this by focusing on the Bible passage itself, rather than a teacher, and asking good questions to discover together as a group what the passage is saying. To do this well it is important to understand a few important principals. These are taken from the book "The Bible study handbook" by Lindsay Olesberg.

Lindsay Olesberg explains how "...most of us tend to pay more attention to the words of experts than to the words of the Bible itself." (pg.30) She goes on to quote Acts 17:10-11:

That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas off to Berea; and when they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so.

The Bereans are called more noble in Acts because they were interested in the message and then turned to examine Scripture to see if it was true. For them the Scriptures were central.

Not only is this a great method to study the Bible, as Olesburg will explain, but it is also something the Global Youth Culture really identify with. In a time of scepticism toward institutions and authorities, young people today are not inclined to just sit and listen to a leader explain what they should believe. For a generation that is used to finding their own answers and making their own decisions, the concept of discovering the answers for yourself by studying a document to see whether what someone is saying is true really resonates.

Putting the Bible at the centre and believing that anyone can come to it, observe, question, discover, learn, and ultimately meet God is the basis for Olesburg's method to Bible study. She follows three basic convictions:

Facts before theories: Often we already come to the Bible with our own assumptions and ideas of what it should say. Then we try to validate those assumptions by finding things in the Bible that confirm our ideas. The danger here is that often our ideas may not be completely accurate. By studying and teaching the Bible this way, to an extent we can make the Bible say what we want it to.



The scientific world describes two approaches to exploring and learning: deduction and induction. Deduction is when we use what we already believe to be true to study and understand reality. Induction is when we explore reality and allow it to teach us what is true.

For the informal Bible study we use the inductive method to study the Bible. As Olesburg says, it is the spiritual discipline of putting facts before theories. It is believing that the Bible is the word of God and true authority in our lives, and therefore making it central. We come to it without assuming we already know what it says, and we allow it to teach us. This is very helpful when reading the Bible with people who have never read it before. As Christians, when we read the Bible our heads are often full of explanations we've heard before. A non-believer doesn't have that, he or she is coming to the passage fresh, with no idea what it would say or mean. By asking questions we can discover together what it means, rather than assuming we already know.

Author determines meaning: One danger in coming to the passage as a group open to discover what it says is that we then allow the pluralistic and relativistic context of our Global Culture to lead us to a subjective discussion where our own opinions of what it says becomes central rather than the Bible itself.

Olesburg gives us an important principal to follow to avoid this. The basic point here is that we don't determine the meaning, rather the author of each book of the Bible in his own context determines what was intended for the audience he was writing to. It means seeking to understand what the author wanted his original audience to understand, rather than what it sounds like to us.

Understanding requires application: It is through this principal that discipleship begins to truly happen. Following the first two principals means we will have a good understanding of the Bible passage and what it means, but it is only when we choose to believe, allow it to sink into our hearts and to apply it practically in our lives that we are truly meeting Jesus and allowing him to change our lives.

Therefore it is essential that as we study and discover God's word together we ask questions not only to understand the passage but that we also question ourselves, our assumptions, beliefs and our lives. These Bible discussions should include questions and points that help us understand how to apply what we've learnt in a practical way in our lives.

Lindsay Olesburg's "The Bible study handbook" is very helpful to understand the type of Bible study we use in Steiger. In this guide we are only laying out the basic principals, but to really learn how to lead this inductive community discovery method you will need to read and study Lindsay Olesburg's book.

Community

Running an informal Bible study is about two things primarily: meeting Jesus through contact with the word of God, and creating a community.

For this socially fragmented and detached youth culture, building a strong sense of community is essential to reverting the chain of lies behind the culture. The fact is that the Global Youth Culture faces a crisis of relationship. And genuine community around the Word is the answer.

A community centred on the Gospel is often a young person's first encounter with authentic

relationships. The unity of purpose and the feeling of acceptance in community allows the discovery of one's own identity in Jesus.

Bonhoeffer considers community to be the greatest privilege of the Christian. Not the common pattern of meeting once a week, but a day-to-day shared life – worshipping, reading the word, praying, eating, working together.

Lindsay Olesburg also talks about the importance of community in the context of studying the Bible:

When we gather together, with the Scripture at the center of our communal life, something beautiful develops. Studying the Bible in community grounds us, feeds us, weaves us together and launches us out into the world to take our part in God's mission.

In this sense we realise that the church, this family that Jesus established, is what this generation is looking for. But often the barriers of a cultural gap between the church and the outside world and the unfamiliarity that a newcomer faces when walking into a church service hinders the forming of a sense of community. This is where an informal Bible study can bridge the gap.

This is an opportunity for community and contact with the Word of God to happen before someone is ready to walk into a church. For that reason it is very important that the team leading the group seeks purposefully to create and nurture an environment that encourages genuine community. These are a few practical points that can help in forming a healthy community around the Word:

Welcome new comers: An informal Bible study should be primarily focused on new people joining. It should not become another church meeting, or a closed club. As you lead think about what it would feel like for someone who has never been to a church or a meeting like this to walk in: Would they understand what is being said? Would the place and atmosphere seem familiar and welcoming? Would they feel part of the group or like an outsider? As you put yourself in the place of a new comer, seek to develop an atmosphere that welcomes and helps people feel part of the group.

Everyone's contribution is important: The approach for Bible study and topical meetings here is an open discussion, welcoming and valuing everyone's contribution. Having a mixed group of mostly non-believers means that people may often say things that you don't agree with or that you feel are off topic. But it is essential that we learn to listen and value every contribution. A good discussion facilitator will know how to listen, interact with everything shared in the discussion, remembering and going back to themes and questions that members bring up and drawing those more introvert personalities into the group.

Time together: The meeting is not only about getting to the Bible study or discussion. Community can only happen if you allow the group to enjoy spending time together. The informal meetings we suggest as part of the program can really help with this, but it is important that in every meeting the group can enjoy spending time together. For this to truly happen, the community around the Word you are forming has to become more than the meetings themselves. The relationships can develop to be something deeper than a weekly meeting, as you welcome people into your life, to your home to share a meal, or to go out together.

Leading and caring for people: The team leading the Bible study should be regularly spending time in prayer for each person who turns up at the group. It is our responsibility to care for the spiritual growth of those who have come seeking to know Jesus. Spending time listening



to their stories, seeking to care for and guide people as they discover what it means to follow Jesus is all part of this important discipleship process.

Purpose and action: Life in community must then lead to action. Bonhoeffer explains that community gives the person the opportunity to put faith into practice by sharing it with others.

Getting young people practically involved in the Kingdom plays a powerful role in discipleship. In finding acceptance, truth and the reformation of identity, we also find the passion to be involved in changing the World around. Involvement in social transformation, sharing the Good News and making disciples is the best remedy for the numbness result of a consumerist society. They can be the best agents of change and trend setters in a globalized society, front-liners in the spreading of the Kingdom in a fast changing world.



Bible Study Meetings

Preparing

The method we are following here is adapted from Lindsay Olesburg's "communal discovery" method. The following text is taken from the article "Leading a communal discovery Bible study" by Lindsay Olesburg:

This method is called "communal discovery" because the community, the group, discovers the truth of a Bible passage together through asking and answering good questions and seeking Jesus together in His Word. The leader assists the group in digging into the passage rather than only the leader sharing insights and answering the group's questions.

The format used for this kind of Bible study is called a "Manuscript" of the passage. The "manuscript format" is just the text of the passage, no verse numbers, chapter divisions, headings, or notes at the bottom of the page. This format helps the participants "see" the passage in a fresh way.

Each "Communal Discovery" Bible study starts with a few minutes of personal time for the group to read and mark their texts. The group spends the rest of the hour sharing what they see in the text, sharing questions that arise from the text, and grappling with those questions as a group as they seek answers from the text. The leader helps summarize the main points or flow of the passage. Finally, the group discusses how the passage relates to them and how they could apply it. The leader's role is to facilitate the discussion and the discovery process.

Study the passage for yourself first. As you study each passage, make sure that you make a personal application from the passage that affects your life. What is Jesus saying to you in each passage, and calling you to do or change? Study first, then apply it for our own lives, then teach it. In this way the passage will have gripped your own heart and life and you can teach it with real power and conviction.

Preparation step by step

Background study

This material goes through the Gospel of Luke, so the first thing you want to do is read through the whole book and study it inductively. As you read pray that God would reveal himself to you and think about the following questions:



- What is the context? (place, time, issues, author, readers)
- What is the writer's purpose?
- What is the order in the book?
- What are some of the themes? Is there a main theme?

After making your own notes on the book, have a look at what some of the Bible commentaries say about Luke. Most study Bibles have commentaries, you can also find various options of commentaries online or to order from book shops.

After this background preparation you are ready to study each specific passage that will be focused on in the meetings. Study the passage like this:

1. **Facts:** What does the passage actually say? What are the facts?

Read the passage carefully, and write down specifics that you see such as who is there, what is happening, when is it, where is it, and how is it happening.

Circle or write down words, phrases or ideas that connect by repeating, contrasting, being similar, going from the general to the particular, or stating a cause that leads to an effect

Put yourself into the passage. If it is a narrative, put yourself into the story. What do you see, smell, taste, and feel? Choose one of the characters and become them.

2. **Meaning:** What does it mean? What did the author intend it to mean?

What questions does the passage raise in your mind? What words, phrases, or concepts don't you understand? Does the passage turn in any unexpected ways? What intrigues you? Write these questions down.

3. **Application:** What is God saying to me and how will I put this into practise in my life?

Step back and read the passage a few times again. Ponder again the points that stand out to you in the passage. What does the passage say or point to about Jesus? Ask Jesus what He has for you personally in the passage. What area of your life is Jesus speaking to?

As you ponder your study, do you sense that God is speaking to any part of your life? Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid? Is there a deeper insight into God or your experience with God? What action are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?

4. **Summarise:** Write down the key thoughts and questions that came up under each step (facts, meaning and application). Identify the main points of this passage. Develop 4 or 5 questions that can help the group come to their own understanding of the passage and the main points you identified.

This guide already presents an introduction and questions for each passage, but it is important that you do your own personal study of the passage to be ready for the meeting. You can use your own questions instead of or in addition to the ones in this material, and ultimately it is the themes and questions that the group bring up that will be your most valuable material to lead the discussion.

Leading the discussion

Don't talk too much, don't preach, don't lecture, and don't share everything you prepared before. Get the group to share what they see in the passage. Have the group itself generate the questions, and then dig together for answers. When you feel it's time to ask one of the prepared questions wait for people to answer. Listen to their answers and ask more to get them talking, be flexible to talk about what they bring up. Always stop and ask if they have questions. At the end conclude clearly. Tell personal stories to give examples.

General outline of the meeting

Free time (10 min)

- Allow free time at the beginning for talking, snacks and drinks, etc.

Introduction (15 min)

- Dynamic creative start to catch everyone's attention. If possible a band playing a couple of songs and the leader presenting the theme. This should be more like an acoustic show style, or lounge music, not worship music (it's not a church service).
- Read the passage out loud.

Group exploring (15 min)

- Share Observations/questions together.
- Help the group by asking "What caught your attention? How would you describe what is happening? What did you understand about this passage? What else did you notice? Make sure you are asking open ended questions and not obvious content questions like "Who did Jesus encounter on the road to Samaria?"
- Don't answer the questions yet, this is a brainstorming time, it should be lively and dynamic, with everyone sharing thoughts and questions.

Questions (20 min)

- Walk through the passage using the key questions that the group identified.
- Use the questions in the informal Bible study material or your own questions when necessary to cover the key sections of the text.
- Encourage the group to seek answers in the passage.

Summary and application (10 min)

- After walking through the passage and answering the questions as a group, a few main themes should emerge. Summarise those with a few sentences.
- Ask one or two questions that encourages personal application
- End with the key application points challenging the group to put what they have heard into practice. The informal Bible study material includes application and conclusion at the end to help end the meeting with a clear and powerful message.
- End with a prayer. Ask if anyone needs prayer. This can be a really powerful time, especially for people who have not prayed much before. If you have the right audience (non-believers) they will not be comfortable to pray themselves yet, so you should pray for them.

Free time (10 min)

- End again with free time for talking, more snacks and drinks, etc.

Total time: 1h20min



Is There More?

Introduction

Welcome to “Is there more?”, a Bible study for the non-religious. This is only the beginning. We believe this time here together can change everything. We want to change the world, but we believe that this has to start inside each of us.

(Share a personal story about a key moment in which Jesus became real to you.)

If you are here it's because you believe there is more to life than what we see around us and what society and the media tells us. You probably heard our message in our show. I don't know what your thoughts are on God and religion, I don't know if you believe in something like that or not. But if you're here I imagine you are at least curious.

Our goal here is to explore the big questions in life, those questions we often think have no answers. We want to hear your thoughts and we want to discover answers together.

We believe God is real and that he is here in this room right now. You are not an accident, you were created by a loving God, who knows you and cares about you. We believe that we can know him by getting to know Jesus. So we want to read the story about Jesus found in the Bible.

Jesus was and is a revolutionary, but unlike other revolutionaries in history who tried to change the system, Jesus' revolution begins inside the human heart.

In the passage we read today Jesus walks into a religious meeting and is invited to read from an ancient Jewish prophecy. As he reads, his voice is so full of power and authority that everyone's eyes are fixed on him. The prophecy describes this moment of hope, when everything would change, something everyone present hoped and believed would happen someday. Jesus puts down the scroll and says “this is happening right here and right now...”

Read: Luke 4:14-22

Questions

What can we find out about Jesus in this passage? Who was he and what was he like?

It says he was brought up in Nazareth. What do you think that would have been like, talking to a crowd that knows you since you were a child?

Jesus seems to be declaring his life mission. What is it? How would you describe it?

What do you think the prophecy meant by the “poor, brokenhearted, captives, blind and oppressed”? Do you think it is literal or figurative?

What did Jesus mean by saying “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing?”

Summary and application

Do you think people today in our society ever feel poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind or oppressed? Do you ever feel this way?

Do you think Jesus is able to fulfil this mission of setting the captives free, healing and bringing sight to the blind today?

Jesus came for the poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind and oppressed. Most people in that time felt like that - they were oppressed by the Roman Empire, and many were waiting for a political leader to come and free them and change the system - but Jesus didn't do that.

Today people feel poor, like something is always missing; captive - by the system, a job, social pressures, drugs, addictions, bad relationships, materialism, etc.; oppressed - suffering for what harm others may have caused them or by remorse for harm they have caused to others; blind - knowing there is truth somewhere out there but never finding answers.

But often the type of freedom we're looking for is not the freedom we really need. We want to change the world around us, the system or our circumstances, but what we really need is a change of heart. There is more to life than this, there is hope and truth, but the change has to start inside our hearts. He wants to set us free inside. He wants to heal our broken hearts and he wants to help us see the truth.



The Jesus Revolution

Introduction

Welcome back! If you were here last time, we are really excited that you are here again. If this is your first time, then you are very welcome here too.

Last week we started by reading a passage in the book of Luke, which is part of the Bible. We were trying to understand who Jesus is. We talked about how Jesus was a revolutionary, but that he was a different type of revolutionary. His revolution starts in the human heart, it changes us from the inside out.

(Share a personal story about how something significant changed in your life as you started to follow Jesus)

The passage we will read today tells the story of a guy willing to do anything to find change. This guy was a real fighter, who didn't accept things the way they were. He was tired of his life the way it was. He wanted to be healed and changed. That's why he went looking for Jesus. But when he found Jesus, the change Jesus brought took him by surprise and went beyond what he expected.

Read Luke 5:17-25

Questions

This is a crazy story! Where did these guys come up with the idea of climbing on the roof with a paralytic man and make a hole to lower him down?! Put yourself in the place of the paralytic man, how do you feel, what are you thinking, what are you expecting?

What did Jesus mean by "your sins are forgiven you"? And why did he start by saying that instead of healing the man?

Why were the religious people angry?

Putting yourself in the place of the paralytic man again, what are you thinking and how are you feeling now after receiving what Jesus had to offer?

Summary and application

So what is this forgiveness of sins, and is it something we still need today? Is there such a thing as sin?

Last week we saw how Jesus came to set the captives free, heal the broken hearted and give sight to the blind. We discussed about whether this was literal or figurative, relating to states of the soul. We saw today that Jesus seems to be offering both - physical and spiritual healing. Freedom in the body and in the soul.

Jesus wants to give us forgiveness - an inner freedom. This is freedom from our corrupt nature and our pride. Interestingly the paralytic man wasn't really looking for that. He hoped for physical healing, but Jesus' first concern was with his heart, not his legs.

Jesus is a revolutionary who came to set us free, but we need to understand what he is freeing us from. This revolution starts within - in our character and in our hearts. Maybe we're looking for a lot of things in this life, but when we find Jesus we discover that what we really need is this inner change - forgiveness of our sins.

The religious leaders were angry because they had power over religious ceremonies like offering forgiveness of sins. They ran a complex and lucrative system of animal sacrifice in the temple to declare people free of sin. Jesus bypasses the system and offers forgiveness free of charge. That is because there is a power in Jesus that cannot be found in any religion. Jesus defeated death, so he can defeat the death that is inside of us. It is his gift to us.



Something Worth Living For

Introduction

(Personal story - Testimony of surrendering to Jesus)

How often do we find something really worth living for? God has called us to have a passionate and real faith, a faith we're willing fight for, that will cost us everything.

Often today it seems like we've lost our passion for life. There seems to be nothing really precious in life. We've become so comfortable. But in Jesus we can find our passion again. Here is something worth living for.

Following Jesus means dying to myself, humbling myself before God and saying "God I need you, I need you to change me". It means complete surrender.

The story we will read today is about a guy who had this kind of radical faith. He was willing to give up everything to follow Jesus.

Read Luke 5:27-32

Questions

Who was Levi?

What can we learn from this passage about how tax collectors were seen in Jesus' time?

What were the costs and consequences for Levi to follow Jesus?

Why were the religious people angry with Jesus?

How does Jesus define his mission in this passage?

Summary and application

Why do you think Jesus compared sin to being sick? What does this comparison say about sin? According to Jesus, what is the cure?

Jesus seems to be suggesting that everyone has this sickness and needs this cure? Do you agree? Is this true today?

When we decide to follow Jesus the first thing he wants to do is that inner revolution we talked about in the last study. We are all sick, and he has come to heal us. This cure comes through repentance, which means to ask God for forgiveness and to surrender everything to Jesus in a radical step of faith.



God's Broken Heart

Introduction

(Share a personal story of love for a family member - child, spouse, sibling or parent etc)

Last week we talked about this radical faith and about surrendering everything to God. But who really is this God we are giving up everything to follow? What is he like? Does he really care about me and my life?

Often when we think of God we think of an old man in the sky, someone far away, or we think of the paintings or stained glass windows of a church. But God is not this distant being waiting to punish us when we make a mistake. He is here right now in this room. The Bible describes him as a loving father. Not an alcoholic father, or a violent father, like we may experience in this world, but a perfect loving father.

Jesus told a story to help us understand God's heart for us. We're going to read that today.

Read Luke 15:11-24

Questions

Lets first put ourselves in the place of the father. How did he feel when his son asked for his inheritance and left? Did the father do the right thing in letting him go? What would you do?

What is the son like, what attitudes did he show?

Put yourself in the place of the son at the moment he decides to return home. What is he feeling? Why does he want to return? Why does he feel he has to offer himself as a servant to his father?

What is the father like, what attitudes and character can we see in the passage?

Who do you think the father and the son represent? Some have said they represent God and humanity. Do you agree with this?

Summary and application

If this story represents God and us, what does it say about our condition before God? What do we need to do about it?

The story began with a son thinking of himself, wanting to be free of his obligations and of the influence of his father. The story ends with the son returning home, loved, accepted and restored. Maybe the most important discovery we make today is about God's attitude towards us, his lost sons and daughters: God's heart is broken for the lost. He is a loving father who patiently awaits our return. This story shows us how Jesus saw the situation between us and God, and it gives us hope: God will forgive those who choose to follow the example of the lost son, who repented and returned home.



The Ultimate Life Force

Introduction

John Lennon, one of the pop culture prophets of our time, once said:

I believe in God, but not as one thing, not as an old man in the sky. I believe that what people call God is something in all of us. I believe that what Jesus and Mohammed and Buddha and all the rest said was right. It's just that the translations have gone wrong.

Jesus is often compared with other religious leaders, philosophers or revolutionaries. He is seen by most people as a good man, someone who lived a good life and said good things. But is that all there is to Jesus? Was he just a good man? Who was he really?

(Share a story about how Jesus showed his power in your life)

For me Jesus is more than just a good man. But if he is more than a man, this is huge, it changes everything, and it should have a huge effect on my life. C.S. Lewis, author of the Chronicles of Narnia, once said that there are only 3 possibilities for what the Gospels say about who Jesus was. Either he was a liar, or he was crazy, or he was telling the truth. We all have to decide which option is right. But one thing is clear, saying he was just a good man isn't one of the options.

So who was Jesus?

Read Luke 9:18-36

Questions

How would you describe what happened in this passage?

How did Jesus react to Peter's answer to the questions of who he was? Why did he react like this? What did Peter mean by "the Christ of God"?

After Peter's answer Jesus says that he is going to be killed. Why do you think he is saying this? Why would someone want to kill Jesus?

What do you understand from this experience on the mountain? Why did Jesus take the disciples to see this?

Based on what we have already learnt and discussed together in this Bible study, if Jesus asked you this questions "who do you say I am", what would your answer be?

Summary and application

In this passage today Jesus declared himself to be the Christ, the son of God. This was the declaration that C.S. Lewis said leads to only three possible conclusions: either Jesus was crazy, or a liar or he was telling the truth. If what Jesus said is true, what does this mean for us today?

A lot of people today say they believe in Jesus. But few know or believe everything he said. Many see Jesus as a good man, an example, someone who said nice things, or maybe even a prophet. But Jesus said he was the Son of God - and in the context of the Jewish culture this meant he was putting himself at the same level as God.

If I want to follow the Jesus of the Bible I need to understand that the Bible is saying he is the ultimate life force, the essence of everything, the creator God. And if I believe that, then it should change everything, because it suddenly becomes the most important story in the history of mankind.

Jesus is not weak, he is not just an ideology, another revolutionary leader, or a great name in history. He is God, greater than anything I can imagine. Thats why I can leave everything behind and follow him with all my life.



A Great Tragedy? (pt1)

Introduction

Now we come to the climax of the story of Jesus. Christians consider this to be the most important and significant moment of Jesus' story - his death and resurrection.

If you think about it, that's a bit weird. In most biographies of important people, the climax is usually some great achievement or discovery, while the person's death is usually a small part at the end.

This is also the climax of our show. We want to show people what Jesus' death was really about. Often we think of the cross as a symbol on a church or a necklace we wear around our necks. But, as we will read, Jesus died a horrible death. And it changed everything.

Our objective in the next few meetings is to discover why Jesus' death is considered such an important event. Some people say Jesus's death was a great tragedy. We need to read the story to find out if we agree with this or not.

Read Luke 22:39-54

Questions

What's happening here? Describe the facts as you understand them so far.

How did Jesus view his upcoming death? What does his prayer show us about that?

What do you think about Jesus' general attitude towards being betrayed, arrested and knowing about his upcoming death?

Read Luke 22:66 - 23:12

Questions

Jesus goes on tour of different courts being tried by different authorities - the Jewish religious leaders, political leaders and the Roman empire. What was the accusation against Jesus? Why was Jesus arrested and sentenced to death?

How did Jesus defend himself in this case against him?

How did Pilate and Herod react to the accusations against Jesus?

Summary

At this point, what is your view of the court case against Jesus? What do you think of the accusations against him, are they valid? Why do you think all this is happening to Jesus?

To be continued...



A Great Tragedy? (pt2)

Introduction

Dynamic and powerful reading of Luke 23:13-56 - Read out loud putting emotion in all the different characters and narration of the story.

Questions

As the court case comes to a close, why was Jesus sentenced to death? Do you consider it to be a just case?

What does this case show about the religious leaders who arrested and condemned Jesus? And what does it show about the Roman authority in charge of keeping peace and justice in the region? Why do you think the case against Jesus was dealt with in this way?

What stood out to you about Jesus' attitude in being condemned and then crucified?

There's a very interesting conversation between Jesus and two criminals being crucified with him. Why do you think Jesus said "today you will be with me in Paradise" to the second criminal? What did he mean by that? Jesus seems to be offering the criminal forgiveness and salvation - do you think he deserved this?

Why do you think it says the veil in the temple was torn in two?

After reading the story, what is your opinion - was Jesus' death a great tragedy? A tragic mistake?

Summary and application

When we started reading the story of Jesus' death we said that it was the climax, the most important moment in the story about Jesus. Why is that? What does Jesus' death accomplish? Why do you think Jesus had to die?

What does it mean to you?

Jesus' death was no accident. Jesus foretold his death, he knew it would happen because this was the purpose for which he came to Earth.

We started this Bible study looking at Jesus as a revolutionary, whose revolution begins in our hearts. We learnt that he changes us from the inside by offering us forgiveness: a second chance, a new beginning. We saw that Jesus wanted to deal with sin - a sickness that we all need a cure for. We learnt of God's broken heart for us and about our condition as human beings, that we are far from God, that we have gone our own way, and that he is waiting for us to return home, like a loving father awaiting his lost son.

And now we see how far God was willing to go that we might have peace with him. Jesus was willing to die a horrible death for me and you. Someone had to pay the debt of sin. Sin leads to death. Far from God we are doomed to death. But Jesus died in our place.

That's why Jesus' death changes everything. It changes our situation before God. It opens the way for us to come home to him. The veil in the temple represented a separation between man and God. As Jesus died that veil was ripped in two, making the way open for man to make peace with God.

All we have to do is follow the example of the lost son, and the criminal crucified beside Jesus. Neither deserved forgiveness. The criminal did nothing to earn salvation. He had no time to do good deeds or prove his heart had changed, and yet Jesus promised him forgiveness and eternal life. All we need to do is ask him, and he forgives and gives life. Eternal life.



Power to Raise the Dead

Introduction

Jesus didn't stay dead. He defeated death! He's alive!

One of the fundamental difference between Christianity and all other beliefs and religions is that it is not based on a philosophy, a list of rules and traditions, or a life style. It is based on a person. Being a Christian isn't about following a set of rules and traditions, it's a relationship with Jesus. The founders and leaders of all other religions are dead, but Jesus is alive and will live forever! He defeated death so he can defeat the death that is in you today.

Let's read Luke's narration of the resurrection of Jesus. As we do this let's look carefully at the facts. We each need to decide for ourselves, is there enough evidence to believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

Read Luke 24:1-53

(Have someone prepare to read it with dynamism and energy, dramatising the reading)

Questions

Why do you think the disciples didn't believe the women when they returned telling what they saw at the tomb?

Put yourself in Peter's place on that morning. How did he feel and what was he thinking when the women told him what they saw, when he found the empty tomb and when Jesus finally appears to them all?

Why did Jesus say "Peace to you" when he appeared to his followers?

Do you think this story could have been made up? If someone told a story like this today how could it be verified?

Why did all this have to happen? (Death and resurrection of Jesus)

What mission does Jesus give the disciples?

Summary and application

So now it's up to you. Do you think it is reasonable to believe that this really happened? Why?

This is the Christian faith: Jesus came to earth on a mission from God, he was unjustly condemned and crucified, and on the third day he rose from the dead. His tomb is empty and his followers spread all over the world preaching this message - that Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and is alive forever. He forgives and saves all those who believe and choose to follow him. And I am part of that, sharing here today that he is alive and that he has the power to defeat the death that is in us. He has the power to raise the dead.

If you believe this story, and want this forgiveness and salvation, if you want the revolution of Jesus to happen in your heart, all you need to do is ask him. And you can do that here and now. He will give you the strength and power to follow him for the rest of your life and to change the world!



Topical Meetings

Preparing

Invite 3 people to participate in a panel on the topic. Ask the panelists to watch the video about the topic (Bible, prayer or community), and prepare some thoughts, questions and personal testimonies related to the topic. For instance, on the prayer topic panelists can share what prayer means to them personally, a story about answer to prayer, or situations which helped them understand prayer better.

Panelists can also find a few Bible passages and quotes or examples from pop culture or writers that relate to the topic. Panelists can share their thoughts with each other before the meeting to think about ways to interact with each other.

General outline

Free time (10 min)

- Allow free time at the beginning for talking, snacks and drinks, etc.

Introduction (20 min)

- Dynamic creative start to catch everyone's attention. If possible a band playing a couple of songs and the leader presenting the theme for the meeting. This should be more like an acoustic show style, or lounge music, not worship music (its not a church service).

Watch the Steiger video on the topic of the meeting (5min)

Panelists share some thoughts (15 min)

- Each panelist can have 5 minutes to share their prepared examples and insights on the topic.

Questions (20 min)

- Group can ask the questions or make comments on what the panelists shared.
- The panelists can also interact with each other, asking questions or commenting.

Summary and application (10 min)

- Summarise the key points, conclusions or outstanding questions
- Choose a key insight you feel would help the group with their questions and struggles, and

end emphasising that insight and suggesting a practical application.

- End with a prayer. Ask if anyone needs prayer. This can be a really powerful time, especially for people who have not prayed much before. If you have the right audience (non-believers) they will not be comfortable to pray themselves yet, so you should pray for them.

Free time (10 min)

- End again with free time for talking, more snacks and drinks, etc.

Total time: 1h25min



Event

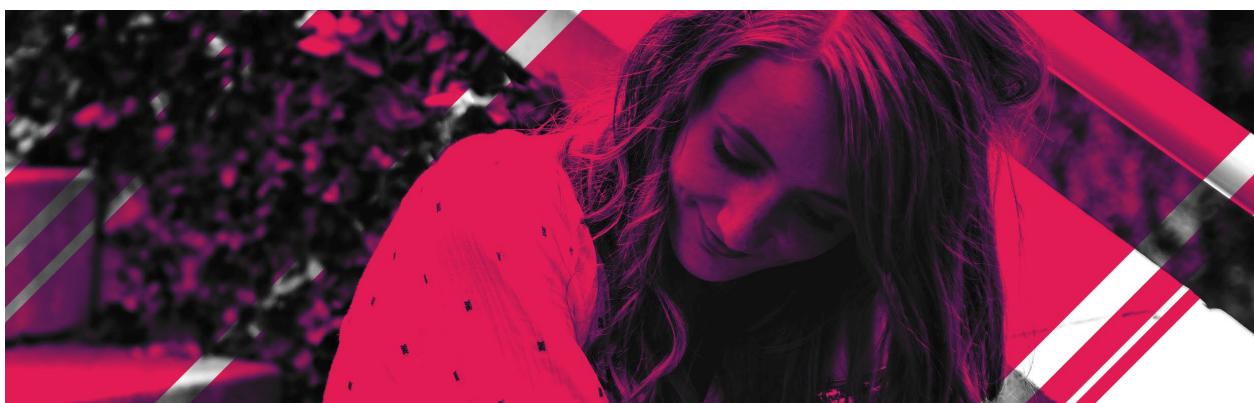
An informal Bible study should be outward focused, always open and welcoming new people. While it is focused on introducing those new or not-yet-believers to the faith and the Bible, it should also be seen as an ongoing evangelistic opportunity. A newcomer arriving at any meeting should be able to join in and feel part of the discussion.

The event is a great way to keep the Bible study dynamic and outward focused. It should be organised by the group together, and the leader should seek to include the participants in the action. Discuss with the group ideas of what kind of event to organise, where to do it and how to invite new people.

We suggest the event be creative and artistic. It can be a film discussion, an art exhibition, a series of workshops or a music concert. Partnering with non-Christian artists is a great way to draw new people. For example, if it is a music concert, invite a few well known local bands who can draw an audience, and one christian band who can share a message. Building relationships in the scene is very important and should be an ongoing effort of the team. Inviting local artists and getting to know them and their audience is a good way to do this.

It is really important to take the opportunity to share a clear gospel message again in this event. If there aren't any christian bands or artists able to share a clear message, one of the Bible study organising team members may be gifted to do this. If the event is a film discussion, choose a film that can lead to a good discussion and a gospel presentation. If it is an art exhibition you can seek an artist who can share his faith through the art and/or through an interview at the exhibition. After sharing the message you can invite people to the Bible study that will continue the following week.

Make sure the promotion for the event is visually attractive, done with relevant language and branding, aiming for high quality design and concept. Get the whole group to share with all their friends and find ways to do the event in the scene and in a location that connects with the scene (a club, culturel centre, etc).



Baptism

Each church and denomination may do baptism in different ways, so it is important to discuss this with your local church (if there is one) and decide together how to welcome these new believers and baptise them. It's important to do the baptism with the local church.

It is very important to invite people to be baptised once they've had the chance to understand who Jesus is and have chosen to believe and follow Him.

In the topical meeting on community, one of the panel participants should explain baptism, that it is a confession of faith in Jesus to a community of believers that we become part of. It's also important to remind participants about what they have learnt through the Bible study and to make sure they understand what they are confessing in the Baptism - repentance and faith in Jesus as Lord and saviour.

The baptism is a great way to end this important time, with a party celebrating new life, and a welcoming into the community of faith. We pray you would see many meeting Jesus and being baptised in the informal Bible study!



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