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THE GREAT GIVEAWAY



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INTRODUCTION

The what and why of another training course

“One beggar telling another beggar where to find some bread!”

That’s what sharing our faith should be like.

Unfortunately, however, this is not how it often appears. It seems like any Christian who opens their mouth with a bit of confidence in the gospel is labelled ‘arrogant’ and ‘narrow-minded’. Regardless of how it is *said* to non-Christians it often *sounds* like Christians believe they not only hold the bread, they own the whole bakery.

This is very often the result of wrong ‘hearing’ rather than wrong ‘speaking’. Our multicultural society is very proud of its all-embracing tolerance, so anyone who sounds like they’re threatening this tolerance is rejected. But sometimes it is our fault. Sometimes what we say and how we say it leaves non-Christians with no other reasonable conclusion than: “These Christians are so conceited!”

Some of us might put such criticisms down to ‘sin’ – theirs not ours – and comfort ourselves that the gospel is occasionally the “stench of death to those who are perishing” (2 Cor 2:16). But surely the fault is sometimes ours also (it’s certainly been mine often enough). Surely, what lies behind a number of those bad ‘evangelistic encounters’ is our lack of experience and training, not their hardness of heart. Because religion is not a high priority in our ‘post-Christian’ culture, and talking about it is quite rare, pulling off a successful gospel-conversation takes some fore-thought and a bit of practice too. This is not to say that sharing our faith is hard – it can be surprisingly easy – it’s just that some of our own anxieties and assumptions about ‘evangelism’ can get in the way of talking openly and naturally about Jesus Christ. *Unlearning* some of these can be as important as learning some new things. Hopefully, *The Great Giveaway* will offer a combination of both.

First, one of the ‘oddities’ you’ll soon discover about the course is the rather strict definition of ‘evangelism’ used throughout. Rather than referring to any activity designed to draw someone to Christ – befriending them, inviting them to church, etc. – the word ‘evangelism’ will refer only to an explicit presentation of the gospel. The reason for this is that the New Testament word *euaggelizomai* lying behind our term ‘evangelism’ means simply ‘tell the gospel’. It has no other meaning. This is not to suggest that the only valid thing we can do to reach out to others is ‘telling the gospel’ (or ‘evangelism’). Far from it, as the following paragraph makes clear.

Secondly, *The Great Giveaway* tries to impress upon our minds that the Bible encourages a whole range of activities that can contribute to the salvation of those around us. Evangelism is a vital one but it is not the only one. God’s method of reaching the world is far more holistic and integrated than we may sometimes realise. As we allow all these biblical activities to have their appropriate place in our lives I am sure we will find our effectiveness in sharing the faith with others increased. That’s the aim of the course anyway.

Thirdly, and related to this, *The Great Giveaway* tries to allow for the fact that we have different roles to play in reaching out to our friends. Some of us are ‘evangelists’ and some of us aren’t. But that’s OK. We all have a valuable contribution to make to God’s mission. Imagine the Australian athletics coach insisting that all of his athletes – runners, discus throwers, long-jumpers, the lot – jump a two metre tall high-jump. You might get one or two giving it a go but the others would stand back, nervously murmuring to themselves, “I can’t do this!” This would be a tragedy, especially since each athlete is a truly gifted person in their own right, with their own special event to compete in. If this course were to insist that all of us are expected to be evangelists, I suspect similar problems would emerge. Although some of us would rise to the challenge,

others would stand back, nervously murmuring to themselves, “I can’t do this!” Their enthusiasm for the whole task of reaching others – including even the things they feel capable of doing – would perhaps diminish. The good news is the Bible encourages a variety of ‘missionary’ roles, not just one.

Lastly, the method of ‘gospel-talk’ presented in this course is more about passing on bits and pieces of the gospel in day-to-day conversations than delivering the whole package in one large deposit. There is nothing wrong with the ‘one-hit’ method, of course, but what can happen in practice is that when a chance comes along to share *something* of the gospel, we attempt to share *everything* we’ve learnt about the gospel. This works for public evangelistic talks – where it’s important the speaker knows exactly where s/he is going – but it makes for terrible ‘conversations’. And let’s face it, most of the ‘gospel-talk’ we’re going to be involved in will take place in conversations, not sermons. This is not to say the course neglects to teach an ‘entire’ gospel presentation (session four is devoted to learning and presenting an easily memorized gospel outline), it’s just that the focus will be on natural and confident *conversations* about the impact of Christ on the world and in our lives.

With all this in mind, I hope you enjoy *The Great Giveaway*.

John Dickson
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1

**PLAYERS IN
GOD'S PASSION**

PLAYERS IN GOD'S PASSION

TEASER

Apart from faith (of course!), what would you say are your 'passions' in life?
How does your passion affect your life generally - time, money, relationships, etc.?

1) GOD'S PASSION

Whenever we think about *our* involvement in 'outreach' or 'evangelism' we must begin with the knowledge that reaching others for their salvation is first and foremost *God's passion*. It is not something we thought of, and of which he merely approves; from beginning to end, evangelism is God's story, God's idea, God's agenda. It is God's activity and delight. The Creator of the world is 'THE EVANGELIST' (so to speak) of the world.

So, before we begin to consider outreach *activities*, we must begin by looking at the *outreaching God*. Several characteristics of the biblical God make clear that evangelism is a core passion of our Lord. The first is the most obvious.

a) Everyone belongs to God

Please read Genesis 1:1. The first, and perhaps most basic, feature of the Bible's 'theology' (study of God) is its insistence that one Lord created all things. In philosophy this belief is known as 'monotheism' (one-god).

Please read Psalm 96:1-9. The most obvious consequence of monotheism is the realisation that everything in the world belongs to that God.

Question: Reflecting on the psalm just read, what obligations do the nations have toward the one true God?

Here is the most basic idea of outreach: the ONE true God desires/demands the worship of ALL the world.

What makes gospel outreach so important is not, in the first instance, the human need of salvation; it is the divine reality of monotheism. The people around us ought to learn of God's lordship and love for the simple reason that they *belong* to the Lord, as children belong to a parent.

Discussion: How do you react to the statements in the previous paragraph?

Exercise: Picture several of your friends/family who do not yet worship their Creator. In a moment of individual reflection, spend a minute or two pondering what it means that these loved ones belong to the one God. Briefly pray for them.

b) God's desire for everyone

God does not merely *own* the men and women of the world, he lovingly *desires* them. The Apostle Paul makes this very point in discussing the Christian obligation to 'pray for all people'. *Please read 1 Timothy 2:1-7.*

The apostle's logic is simple: we should pray to *one* God for *all* people because this one God 'wills/desires' to save all people.

c) Jesus and the passion of the one true God

The 1 Timothy passage just read mentions Jesus as the “one mediator between God and men.” God’s passion for the whole world is seen nowhere more clearly than in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Jesus embodies the passion of the one true God.

Jesus explicitly taught about God’s ‘evangelistic’ passion on a number of occasions. *Please read Luke 24:45-47; Matthew 28:16-20.* It is clear from these texts that the Church’s mission was not dreamed up by Christians. It was instituted by Jesus as a continuation of his own ministry. Modern Western Christians need to be very careful not to believe the rhetoric of our culture. Christianity is not a private affair to be kept to yourself; it is a public treasure to be offered freely to everyone. Gospel outreach was Jesus’ passion (as it was God’s) and if we follow him it ought to be ours as well.

2) THE NATURE OF OUR MISSION

We turn now to the *nature* of our involvement in God’s passion: What is the underlying principle that should guide our thoughts and actions as we reach out to others?

a) Christians are to seek the salvation of others.

This is clear from a comment made by the apostle Paul to the Christians in Corinth:

“... I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, *so that they may be saved. Follow my example*, as I follow the example of Christ.” 1 Cor 10:33–11:1

So then, like Paul (who in turn is like Christ) Christians in general are to seek the salvation of those around them. This is not a special ‘apostolic’ duty, it is a basic Christian activity. The exact means by which this salvation is passed on to others is not clear from this passage. For that we must turn to another text from Paul’s hand.

b) Salvation comes only through the gospel message.

To the Romans Paul writes:

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And *how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?* And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Rom 10:13-15

The gospel message (heard and believed) is the means by which others are saved. Indeed, the Scriptures speak of no other way for men and women to experience God’s salvation.

So then, if all Christians are to seek the salvation of others, and if salvation can only come through the gospel message, this makes clear what is the underlying principle of our mission toward others.

c) Christian mission is all about *promoting the gospel* in what we do and say.

Notice that points (a) and (b) do not imply that Christian mission is all about *preaching* the gospel, only that it is all about *promoting* the gospel. When you pray for others to hear the gospel, for instance, you are both seeking the salvation of others and acknowledging that salvation comes only through the gospel. Thus, prayer (of this type) is every bit as much a part of Christian mission (to promote the gospel) as telling the gospel to others. In fact, we’ll soon discover that the New Testament lists a whole range of activities which promote the gospel without necessarily proclaiming it.

Before we look at what it means to promote this gospel it might be worth looking at some of the factors that may hinder our passion for gospel work.

3) HINDRANCES TO OUR MISSION

- a) **Being overly self-conscious about reaching others:** If we are too self-conscious about reaching others our actions and conversations may become ‘artificial’ and come across as such. Relax! Be natural! Try to ‘integrate’ your outreach rather than tack it on as an additional ‘module’ of Christian living.
- b) **Believing that the only valid means of promoting the gospel is to tell it:** The best kept secret of Christian mission is that the New Testament lists a whole range of activities which advance the gospel. Our silence about these makes those of us without the ‘gift of the gab’ feel inadequate in the task of reaching out. Emphasising them, on the other hand, frees all of us to promote the gospel in whatever ways we can.
- c) **Believing that if we can say *something* about the gospel we must say *everything* about it:** The reality is, most of our gospel opportunities will be ‘in passing’, brief casual comments and explanations in everyday conversation. If we don’t prepare for these fleeting, conversational opportunities, we may find ourselves ‘downloading’ our entire message on the unsuspecting inquirer. This makes for a rather forced conversation, and it may actually demote the gospel in your listener’s mind rather than promote it.
- d) **Believing the embarrassment-factor:** Sometimes we keep quiet about our faith because we half believe the lie that non-Christians think we Christians are ‘weird’. It is true that the media occasionally portrays Christians in a slightly ‘odd-ball’ light. But the reality is, the world’s view of the Christian is far less negative than we think. One can’t help thinking that this lie originates from a source more subtle and sinister than simply ‘the media’. Perhaps the Father of Lies (as Jesus called the devil in John 8:44) has deceived us into adopting an overly negative impression of ourselves, and of how others view us, in order to keep us from being more natural, open and enthusiastic about our faith.
- e) **Apathy:** This is perhaps obvious. Sometimes we don’t get involved in reaching out simply because we don’t love people enough, or perhaps because we aren’t as captivated by the gospel message as we should be. The remedy is simple: repent! It is unconscionable for us to believe that “God so loved the world that he sent his only Son” and yet remain unconcerned about promoting this news to others.

DEBRIEF

Break into small groups and brainstorm ways in which you (as a church or as individuals) could:

- a) overcome these (and other) hindrances, and;
- b) promote the gospel in your context.

Be imaginative, lateral and practical. Create a list.

Then move back into the larger group and share the ideas.

2

**PROMOTING
THE GOSPEL**

PROMOTING THE GOSPEL

RECAP: as a group, briefly recap the main ideas from session one.

The New Testament lists a range of ways to promote the glory of the one true God throughout the world. Today's session will describe these in some detail, and will do so under two headings:

- 1) 'Gospel-proclamation' (otherwise known as 'evangelism')
- 2) 'Gospel-promotion' (sometimes called 'outreach').

1) GOSPEL-PROCLAMATION (or evangelism)

At the heart of promoting the gospel is 'gospel-proclamation' (or 'evangelism'). It's here that we begin with a brief explanation and history of this crucial activity.

- a) **The word 'evangelism'.** In the New Testament, the word 'evangelism' (Greek – *euaggelizomai*. NIV "preach good news") does not refer to *every* activity that promotes the gospel or leads others to salvation. It refers to just one activity, the most crucial one, that of proclaiming the gospel to those who haven't heard.
- b) **The beginning of evangelism.** In fulfilment of an important Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-2), Jesus came as the anointed herald "preaching good news (lit. evangelizing) the poor." *Please read Luke 4:16-21.* Jesus, in other words, was the first 'evangelist'.
- c) **The continuation of evangelism.** In his lifetime Jesus appointed many others to join him in the task of evangelism (for example, Luke 9:1-6; Luke 10:1-9). Within time, these additional preachers of the gospel (or good news) were given the title 'evangelists', which simply means 'gospel-er', 'one who tells the gospel'. *Please read Ephesians 4:11.* As the name suggests, the focused role of the evangelist is to tell the gospel to those who don't know it. According to Eph 4:12 this will result in the church being built up.

Note: An evangelist doesn't need to have a TV show or speak to stadiums full of people. S/he is simply someone given to the church to tell others the gospel. This may involve speaking to audiences, small groups or simply one-to-one.

- d) **Spotting the evangelists.** Chances are, numerous people in our church are 'evangelists'. Here are some suggestions as to how to work out who the evangelists are:

Desire – s/he will have a *desire* to explain the gospel message to others.

Clarity – s/he will be able to explain the gospel *clearly* (since that is the purpose of the role)

Maturity – like any person who performs a ministry for the church (a Bible Study leader for instance) an evangelist will be a godly and mature Christian.

Affirmation – just as with Bible Study leaders, an evangelist will be recognised and affirmed by a congregation for the task of evangelism. For instance, *Simply Christianity* leaders in our church are considered 'evangelists'.

NOTE: But please don't misunderstand the above emphasis on evangelists. The fact that Christ has given "some to be evangelists" shouldn't at all discourage the rest of us from doing whatever we can to tell the gospel to others. Each one of us can share in the privilege of telling the gospel – as our personalities, abilities and opportunities allow – confident that, as we do, God's spirit will be working through us.

2) GOSPEL-PROMOTION (or 'outreach')

It is important to note that gospel proclamation (or evangelism) is not the sum total of gospel promotion. Far from it. While evangelism is at the heart of gospel-promotion, the New Testament lists a whole range of other activities which promote the gospel. There are at least five. The first two concern our support of those who proclaim the gospel to others, the last three concern our own attempts to bring people to Jesus.

- A) **PRAYING** (*Please read Matt 9:36-38; Eph 6:19; 1 Tim 2:1-6*) This is the *hidden* mission activity. We are urged to pray: 1) for *more* proclaimers; 2) for the *success* of these proclaimers; 3) for the salvation of our *non-Christian* neighbours and leaders.
- B) **PROVIDING** (*Please read 1 Cor 9:14; Phil 4:14-19*) This is the *practical* mission activity (not that the others are impractical). Giving money to projects and people involved in evangelism may not seem glamorous, but it is vital and effective. We must begin to see our wallet/purse as a tool of God's mission.
- C) **MIXING** (*Please read 1 Cor 10:27-11:1*) This is the *relational* mission activity. In the ancient Greek world, most of the meat sold at the market had previously been dedicated to a pagan god (a demon). This was a very thorny issue for any Christian that received an invitation from friends or relatives to attend a pagan banquet. Nevertheless, Paul urges the Corinthians to adopt a flexible attitude towards enjoying such meals. Just as Paul's preaching flexibility was designed to make it easier for people to be saved (1 Cor 9:19-23), so the Corinthians' social flexibility (even to the extent of eating 'demon-meat') should be oriented toward their neighbours' salvation. After all, didn't Christ wine and dine with 'sinners' (like Zacchaeus in Luke 19)? Paul's hope here is probably that the relationships, conversations or even invitations to church which might result from such mixing between Christians and non-Christians might actually lead others to Jesus.

This, of course, does not mean we are free to participate in immorality. In fact, it is precisely as we live godly lives in the midst of an unbelieving world that 'mixing' takes on greater mission significance.

- D) **LIVING** (*Please read Matt 5:14-16; Titus 2:10*) This is perhaps the most *fundamental* mission activity. The observably good life of God's people makes the gospel 'attractive' to those who don't yet believe. More than that, it may draw them into 'glorifying/praising' the Father with us.
Someone who lives this sort of life in full view of those that don't yet believe is likely to receive questions (or criticisms) from time to time. We are all to be ready for this.

- E) **ANSWERING** (*Please read 1 Pet 3:15; Col 4:2-6*) This is the *verbal* mission activity. We are urged to respond to the questions and/or criticisms of those that don't believe. On occasion this may lead to full blown 'evangelism' (a telling of the gospel), especially if someone asks, "How do I become a Christian?", or "What is Christianity all about?" Usually, however, it will involve less overt questions and require less comprehensive responses. These are still extremely valuable occasions for promoting the gospel. Because it is principally God's mission – not ours – he is more than able to use our small contributions for his greater purposes.

DEBRIEF

Look back through the above list of activities: Which aspects of your promotion of the gospel do you find most difficult? Discuss what specific things we can do to improve in these areas?

ACTIONS

1. Spend 10 minutes this week praying for more gospel proclaimers and for their success. Spend another 10 minutes praying for three people you know who do not yet believe.
2. Consider whether or not you are an evangelist. In one paragraph write down why you think so, and then ask a Christian friend if they would agree. Also write down the names of 1 or 2 others you think might be evangelists and then encourage them in that task.
3. Set aside some \$\$ and give it to a person or project involved in evangelism (other than to the leader of this course!).
4. Think of your circle of friends/acquaintances. How might you enhance your social flexibility with those that do not yet know Christ. Write down your ideas. Do them.
5. Think of three expressions of practical love ('good works' – Matt 5:16) that you can do for those who don't yet believe. Do them.
6. Consider which are the most commonly asked religious/spiritual questions amongst those you know who do not yet believe. Write them down and bring them next week.

We'll get a chance next week to report back to each other about these actions.

3

GOSPEL BITES

A LIFE WORTH QUESTIONING

RECAP: as a group, briefly recap the main ideas from sessions one and two.

1) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

We saw last session that one of the ‘gospel-promoting’ activities listed in the New Testament is answering the questions of those who don’t yet believe. Two texts make this clear:

Colossians 4:6 reads:

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to *answer* everyone.” (NIV)

1 Peter 3:15 reads:

“Always be prepared to give an *answer* to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...” (NIV)

These passages tell us three important things about our role in God’s mission:

a) We each have a duty to answer questions

While the Bible does not insist that all Christians are ‘evangelists’, it does urge us all to speak for Christ in response to the questions of those who don’t yet believe. The general nature of these two New Testament letters – written to churches rather than to leaders – implies that these two apostles expected all Christians (not just the ‘evangelists’) to be ready and willing to answer those who inquire about the faith. In God’s hands – remember, he is the Lord of evangelism – such ‘answers’ can be powerful instruments in a person’s journey toward faith in Christ.

b) There are two types of questions

Although the English word ‘answer’ is used in both passages, Paul and Peter used different Greek words to convey what they meant. These two words indicate two slightly different types of answers we might be called upon to give to those who don’t believe:

Apokrisis (Col 4:6) is a *response* to a simple query or comment about the faith.

Apologia (1 Pet 3:15) is a *defense* of the faith in response to an accusation or criticism.

BRAINSTORM

Briefly list some of the more common *questions* and *criticisms* raised by those who don’t yet believe.

c) *How* you answer is as important as *what* you answer

The third thing these passages tell us has to do with *how* your answer is given. Notice that Paul insists our responses be “full of grace, seasoned with salt.” The two phrases are probably to be read together and mean something like: “seasoned with the ‘spice’ of graciousness.”

Peter insists that our answers be given “with gentleness and respect.”

NB. A response that lacks ‘cleverness’ but is strikingly gracious, gentle and respectful will often prove more valuable (to the inquirer) than one which is ‘clever’ but lacks these qualities.

DISCUSSION

Briefly discuss what it might mean to answer graciously, gently and respectfully.

2) HOW TO BE QUESTIONED

The clear assumption behind the apostles' statements above is that Christians will be sufficiently 'obvious' in the world that they will provoke questions/criticisms from those around them. Here are some ways to enhance that obviousness.

a) Live the godly life

It is important to observe that both instructions about answering people's questions occur in the context of a broader set of instructions about godly living: *please read Colossians 4:5-6 and 1 Peter 3:13-17*. This suggests that it is our moral lives (our 'wise conduct' and 'good works') which will most provoke interest from those who don't believe. The point of course is that we are to live lives worth questioning.

b) Avoid the 'corporate inferiority complex'

When in the company of Christians we quite freely and unconsciously make mention of things like 'church', 'God', 'prayer', 'bible', 'home group', 'Christianity' and so on. Such speech is not forced; it is perfectly natural. However, when around those who don't yet believe, we tend instantly to drop this talk. We push our faith-vocabulary below the level of our ordinary conversations, rarely letting it bubble to the surface. And so our 'obviousness' is diminished.

This 'corporate inferiority complex' in the church today is completely novel in the history of Christianity and even now is unique to Western countries: Asian, African and Middle Eastern Christians are blissfully untouched by such negative impressions of themselves. Whatever the origin of the Western church's corporate inferiority complex, its effect in hindering our mission is great. We must learn to overcome it.

c) Let your faith vocabulary be heard

In this context, I want to suggest that from time to time we consciously allow our faith-vocabulary to rise to the surface. This is not to be done in a forced manner. It is simply allowing what is real *within* us to find verbal expression *without*, regardless of who's listening. We could call this 'God-talk' (Stephen Abbott, *Everyday Evangelism*) – brief, casual, passing references to your faith in everyday conversation. 'God talk' is not designed to initiate conversations about Christianity, it is simply part of being a relaxed, natural and 'obvious' Christian. It encourages you to throw off the 'corporate inferiority complex' and allows those around you to see that you have a confident faith, one that is worth looking into. Some examples:

- (a) Saying, "God bless ..." as you say good bye to a friend. Also in letters.
- (b) "A friend of mine from church was saying ..." (what your friend said need not be spiritual. This just places you as a church-goer)
- (c) "I once heard my minister say ..." (not necessarily a spiritual comment. This again connects you with church)
- (d) "I'll remember to pray for you about that"
- (e) "God willing, I'll be going to ..."
- (f) Be the first to say, "What did you do on the weekend?" (And when they return the question mention church *among the other things* you did)
- (g) Allow your bible to be seen at work, the café, around the house, or public transport.

BRAINSTORM: think of some further examples of 'god talk'.

The Christian who lives a deeply godly life, learns to throw off the 'corporate inferiority complex', and allows faith vocabulary to rise to the surface, can expect to be queried from time to time about his/her faith. In God's hands, answers to such questions can be powerful tools of God's mission.

GOSPEL BITES

1. What is the 'gospel'?

The 'gospel' is all about Jesus Christ – his deeds and teaching, his death and resurrection, and the salvation he thereby secured (Mark 1:1; Matt 26:6-13; Acts 10:34-43; Rom 1:2-4; 1 Cor 15:3-5; 1 Tim 2:8). This is precisely why the books Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are called 'Gospels'. While aspects of the gospel message can be found in all sections of the Bible (Old and New Testaments), the Gospels, more than any other portion of Scripture, retell the 'gospel'.

2. Using 'bits' of the gospel in our conversations

The 'gospel bites' method tries to apply this gospel-principle (that 'gospel' = the news about Jesus' life, death and resurrection) to the way we respond to the questions, comments and criticisms of those who don't yet believe. In other words, the 'gospel bite' seeks to answer modern questions by pointing people back to some aspect of the narrative about Christ in the Gospels. It involves a brief retelling of an episode from Jesus' life (a conversation, a miracle, or whatever) that bears directly upon the issue raised by the inquirer.

Sadly, because the 'stories of Jesus' are sometimes viewed as Sunday school material only, we can miss their great usefulness for talking with others about the faith. The reality is, many questions and comments raised by unbelievers relate quite naturally to events in Jesus' life.

BRAINSTORM: create a list of at least 10 important episodes from the 'gospel' of Jesus.

3. Examples of a gospel bite

We'll now practise moving from various modern questions to relevant episodes (or bites) from the Gospels. The purpose of such 'bites' is not to explain the whole gospel message – nor the whole narrative of Jesus' life – but simply to challenge those we're speaking with to investigate Christianity further. Consider the following examples:

a) The topic of 'guilt'

Read Luke 7:36-50, the account of Jesus and the sinful woman

A friend says to you: "Oh, I've done too many wrong things to be a Christian: I'm not the religious type!"

You could reply: "Well then, you are exactly the sort of person Jesus was interested in throughout his life. One of the stories in Jesus' biographies tells of a prostitute (imagine how 'unreligious' she felt) who found out that Jesus was in her town. She went to the house Jesus was having dinner at and gate-crashed the party. She was so overwhelmed to meet Jesus that she burst out crying. Now, the guests were strict religious people and were very annoyed at this 'sinner' in their midst. Jesus did an amazing thing, though. He rebuked his host, who was a religious leader, and stuck up for the woman. Jesus knew she was aware of her shameful lifestyle, so instead of condemning her, he looked her in the eye and said, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Jesus didn't come into the world to pick all the good people. He came to offer forgiveness to those of us who know we are not good.

You could apply the story: You may feel that you are not good enough for God but Jesus assures us that God will accept us into his family anyhow. Perhaps you should think about taking him up on his offer. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?"

The same gospel narrative is relevant to another question as well ...

b) The topic of ‘religious bigotry’

A friend says to you: “I can’t stand religion. It’s so judgmental!”

You could say: “Well then you’re on Jesus’ side. He also couldn’t stand religious bigotry. In fact, it was the religious crowd that hated Jesus. On one occasion, Jesus was having a meal at the home of a religious leader named Simon when a prostitute came into the room and burst into tears and washed the feet of Jesus. Simon wanted Jesus to condemn her and get rid of her. Instead, Jesus defended the woman and rebuked his host. Actually, he declared to all the religious guests that this woman had been forgiven by God, and that it was they, the self-righteous folk, who were disconnected from God, not this woman.

You apply the story: You may hate bigotry but Jesus would agree with you. Just make sure you don’t confuse Jesus with some of the judgmental religious people you’ve met. They are quite different. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?”

4. The three parts of the gospel bite

You may have noticed three aspects of the above examples:

(a) A topic of conversation: A gospel bite begins in response to a question or comment that *relates to Christianity*. Trying to move from a question about tax reform to a story about Jesus meeting a tax collector might be pushing the model too far. If you are on the look out, however, (which is really the first step) you might be surprised how often comments and queries at work, home, university, etc., ‘flirt’ with spiritual ideas.

(b) A story about Jesus: The second part of a ‘gospel-bite’ involves retelling an episode from Jesus’ life. The Gospels were written *by* adults, *for* adults. They are well-crafted sketches of Jesus’ life designed to convince adults that they should follow him. This is how we should be using them. The more familiar we are (as adults) with the compelling events of Jesus’ life, the more equipped we will be to convince our friends and family that they too should trust this great King and Saviour.

Note: In retelling an individual story of Jesus it is not vital that we include every element of the story but only those points which are applicable to the situation.

(c) A life application: Each ‘gospel-bite’ ends with a brief attempt to apply the story of Jesus to your hearer’s particular situation. This is very important. People must see that the Jesus who lived on earth so long ago has continuing significance today. This should not be a ‘pressuring’ comment, but something that throws the ball back into their court. It may simply be a question for them to think about: “Have you ever looked into the life of Christ?”; “What is your impression of Jesus Christ?”; “What has been your experience of religion?”

PLEASE NOTE: The ‘gospel bite’ method is not appropriate for every situation. Not every religious question relates naturally to the life of Jesus. For instance, the issue of whether science discredits religion will need to be answered in its own right without forcing the conversation around to Jesus.

EXERCISE

- 1) In small groups (2-4), choose one of the conversation starters (listed below) and its relevant gospel narrative. Read through the passage carefully, discussing its central ideas;
- 2) Discuss how you would relate the story to the person whose comment you selected;
- 3) Choose 2 people to have a conversation in which the topic/question is raised and the story of Jesus retold as way of challenging the interested (not antagonistic) questioner. The rest of the group should help out.
- 4) Debrief about how the conversation went and what could be done better. Then try another one.

CONVERSATION STARTER	GOSPEL STORY	HINT
<p>1) "It's great that you've got a faith, but I'm just not the religious type."</p> <p>2) "Religion just seems so exclusive. I have a more embracing and accepting outlook."</p>	<p>Matthew 8:5-13 Jesus and the centurion</p>	<p>As a Roman leader, the centurion was the archetypal 'pagan', an outsider to the faith of Israel and of Jesus. Yet Jesus' kindness to him and insistence that he will be saved illustrates why and for whom Jesus came – the religious and unreligious alike. His attitude was to embrace, not to exclude.</p>
<p>3) "I've done too many bad things to be a Christian."</p> <p>4) "Religion seems so judgmental."</p> <p>5) "I wish there were some way to wipe out the past and start afresh."</p>	<p>a) Luke 7:36-50 Jesus and the 'sinful woman'</p> <p>b) Luke 19:1-10 Jesus welcomes a tax collector</p>	<p>Clearly, these individuals were anything but 'good' people. Jesus' response to them tells us about his mission to include sinners.</p>
<p>6) "I might not be perfect but I'm a pretty decent person."</p> <p>7) "As long as your honest and good to people, I don't think God minds whether or not we get religious."</p>	<p>Mark 12:28-34 Two great commandments</p>	<p>Our society often defines being a 'good person' simply as being kind to other people ("love your neighbour"). However, Jesus insisted this was only half the matter. What he required was for us to love our neighbours AND God. Society would (rightly) regard as ugly and hypocritical anyone who loved God but not neighbour. On Jesus' definition, the reverse must be just as unacceptable: loving neighbour without loving the Creator is anything but 'good'. Unbelievers may disagree with this conclusion but at least they will have to recognise that in doing so they are trusting in a definition of 'good' that Jesus Christ thought completely inadequate.</p>
<p>8) "Religion is so corrupt today, I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole."</p> <p>9) "There is such hypocrisy in the Church today."</p>	<p>John 2:12-17 Jesus' rage in the Temple</p>	<p>Jesus' rage against such greed and deceit in the name of religion resonates with how many non-Christians feel about the church. Use this to urge the questioner to investigate Jesus' life and teachings regardless of how 'religion' may have erred.</p>
<p>10) "I just can't bring myself to believe that God is willing to forgive people, just like that."</p> <p>11) "I hate the way religion says you have to follow all these rules and rituals to be a Christian."</p>	<p>Luke 23:32-46 The thief on the cross</p>	<p>This is one of the clearest examples of 'grace' in the Bible. The criminal is rescued not by works or 'religion' but by Christ's mercy.</p>
<p>12) "There are so many religions in the world: how could you ever know which version is the right one?"</p> <p>13) "What makes you think you're right and all the other religions are wrong?"</p>	<p>John 14:8-9 Jesus as God 'in the flesh'</p>	<p>There are many religious claims in the world but only Jesus claimed to offer a personal revelation/snap-shot of God. It's worth at least starting one's investigation with this most bold of claims. Christians don't think <i>their</i> way of thinking is the right one; they just can't bring themselves to believe Jesus was lying when he said "If you've seen me you've see the Father."</p>

4

**TELLING
YOUR STORY**

TELLING YOUR STORY

One of the most important questions you may ever be asked by some enquiring into the faith is: “How did you get into Christianity?” or something similar. Hence, it is important to think about how you might go about answering this question in a way that is most helpful to your hearer.

TEASER

Think of one episode in your life that was embarrassing, funny, sad, interesting, etc. Get two or three people to tell their story to the group.

Sharing your story of faith can and should be just as easy and natural as telling the above ‘episode’.

In the New Testament, the word ‘testimony’ usually refers to an official declaration about Jesus and his resurrection (usually by someone who witnessed the events), not the speaker’s Christian life. For this reason, a story of personal faith will (in this course) be called simply your ‘story’, not your ‘testimony’.

1) THREE KINDS OF STORIES

There are three kinds of stories of faith and each has an important place.

- a) **ALWAYS A CHRISTIAN:** Those who have been brought up knowing Christ have a unique story to tell. It won’t be a dramatic ‘before-and-after’ epic but it will have its own appeal and power. The ‘conversion’ style drama has actually become a bit of a cliché in our society so the ‘always-a-Christian’ story may in fact be more intriguing to many.
- b) **NOT ALWAYS A CHRISTIAN:** As long as ‘before-and-after’ stories are not overstated such accounts of conversion can be very useful in helping interested non-Christians picture what it is like to move from their own position to a Christian one.
- c) **RETURNED CHRISTIAN:** Some believers were brought up loving God but turned their back on him for some time before returning with renewed faith. This type of story will have elements in common with both ‘a’ and ‘b’ above.

2) WHY USE YOUR STORY?

- a) **IT IS INTERESTING:** On the whole people are interesting. A story of someone being or becoming ‘religious’ is an unusual and rare enough tale to keep the average person reasonably (if only briefly) attentive.
- b) **IT AVOIDS ARGUMENTS:** Many people find it daunting to talk openly about ‘God and stuff’. Your story of faith keeps the focus on something less scary - you! Furthermore, discussions about non-personal ideas (such as creation, hell, etc.) are easy to turn into arguments. Your own story, on the other hand, is pretty hard to argue with. People will rarely feel free to attack another person’s personal experience.
- c) **IT IS EASY TO REMEMBER:** Some of us find it hard to remember complete ‘gospel outlines’ and are worried about getting it ‘right’. Telling your own story takes the pressure off a little. With a bit of practice most of us will be able to tell our own story in an accurate and engaging way.

3) THINGS TO AVOID

- a) **FOCUSING ON ‘SELF’:** It is very easy to focus entirely on yourself and forget that what you’re meant to be doing is explaining how you came to follow *Jesus*. Jesus should be the ‘star’ of our own story.
- b) **MISSING OUR DEEPEST NEED:** It is also easy to turn our story into a tale of having our personal, psychological needs met by Jesus, as if Jesus were the ‘great social worker in the sky’. In talking of the needs Jesus meets we should particularly mention our need for forgiveness of sins.

- c) **EMPHASISING 'BEFORE':** Another easy mistake (for those with a 'not always a Christian' or 'returned Christian' story) is talking too much about 'before' and not enough about 'since'. Our emphasis should not so much be on our sinful journey before we knew God but on the impact of God's grace on our lives since coming to know him.
- d) **EXAGGERATING:** "Never let the facts get in the way of a good story", a famous cricketer once remarked. This should never be the case in our story of faith. Christ does not need our 'amazing' story to convince someone to be a Christian. Just tell it like it was and is! If you can make it funnier or more interesting, well and good, but do not stretch the truth.

4) WHAT MAKES A GOOD STORY OF FAITH?

- a) **PREPARE WHAT YOU WILL SAY:** You don't want your story to sound 'rehearsed', but nor do you want it to sound confused. It is a good idea to work out the key moments and ideas that you want to convey to someone who asks you about your faith.
- b) **TELL ACTUAL STORIES AND EVENTS:** Most of us have particular occasions and people that had a big influence on our faith. Try to describe these in some detail so that your listener can picture you in that situation. The more they can picture you, the easier it will be for them to imagine themselves coming to believe in Christ. To give an example, instead of saying, "Someone explained that I needed forgiveness ...", I might say something like, "I'd been invited to the home of my high school Scripture teacher and sitting in her beautiful, comfy lounge chair this middle-aged mum explained in a really simple way that I needed forgiveness ..."
- c) **SPEAK NATURALLY:** When an opportunity arises to speak to someone about your faith, it is all too easy to slip into 'evangelism mode' - the heart pounds, the five points of your gospel presentation race through your head, your voice speeds up and/or gets louder, etc.! This is understandable, but to be avoided. When an occasion comes along, just take a slow, silent breath, say a quick 'Bless me Lord' (in your head), and speak naturally - as if you were telling a joke, a sports story, or something you saw on TV last night. The purpose of the teaser at the beginning of this session was to illustrate the natural style in which stories from your life can be told. Speaking of your story of faith should be no different.
- d) **END WITH A QUESTION:** If someone has given you the chance to talk about your faith, it is only courteous to ask them about theirs. It also may open up a very fruitful conversation. You might simply ask, "Do you have your own beliefs about these issues?", or "What's been your experience of God?", or "What has your contact with religion been like?", or any number of others.

EXERCISE

1. On a piece of paper draw a timeline (from 0 to your current age) down the left-hand side of the page. Note down (in rough order) everything you can think of that contributed significantly to your present faith in Christ.
2. Now select the three or four most important points on the time-line and write down your story on one A4 piece of paper (in note form if you wish).
3. In groups of three or four, read (or just tell) your stories to each other, offering encouragement and ideas for improvement based on today's session.

ACTIONS

1. Read through your written story twice this week, making improvements as necessary.
2. Pray for the chance to tell someone your story of faith.
3. Try to tell your story (without reading the written version) to one person this week. Perhaps just speak to a Christian friend (not involved in the course), or if you prefer, ask friend or relative who is not yet a Christian to allow you to share your story with them.

We'll get a chance next week to report back to each other about these actions.

5

**TELLING
JESUS' STORY**

TELLING JESUS' STORY

BRAINSTORM

A friend asks, "What is the Christian message all about?" What important points would you cover in your answer? In other words, what is the content of the gospel?

1) WHAT IS THE 'GOSPEL'?

In the ancient world, 'gospel' (Gr. *euaggelion*. Literally '*grand news*') was an important word corresponding pretty closely to the modern media term, 'news-flash'. It referred to an announcement about highly significant events (often *good*, sometimes *bad*). The first Christians adopted this word to refer to the highly significant events surrounding God's salvation through Jesus. They had the world's most important 'news-flash'.

The writers of the New Testament often use the word 'gospel' without stopping to clarify exactly what makes up this gospel. They simply assume that their readers know what the word refers to. Rather than simply reading into the word what we, all these years later, already think the gospel is, it might be helpful to look again at the relatively few passages in the New Testament where the content of the gospel is made explicit.

a) THE FIRST 'GOSPEL' SUMMARIES

Within a few years of Jesus' exaltation, the first Christians composed short summaries of the gospel message. These were designed to be said, sung or memorized (like the creeds some of us say in church today). The New Testament contains several of these summaries, and they are a clear window into the heart of the gospel's content. Here are the most obvious ones: **Rom 1:2-4, 1 Cor 15:1-5; 2 Tim 2:8**

Notice how these summaries of the gospel are all about Jesus – his birth, death, resurrection and appearances. In fact, these creeds are virtually 'plot-summaries' of the accounts of Jesus' life found in what we call the Gospels.

b) THE FIRST 'GOSPEL' TALKS

Acts 10:34-43; 13:16-39

Here Luke provides us with brief outlines of what the apostles said in their evangelistic talks. Notice how these 'gospel' presentations follow the same pattern as the 'gospel summaries' we just looked at, though in more detail. They involve a retelling of Jesus' birth, miracles, teaching, arrest, death, resurrection, and appearances.

But notice that they also explain the significance of these events in terms of Christ's *kingship/messiahship* and the offer of *forgiveness*, in other words, Jesus' status as God's Saviour and Lord. These two themes are core to the New Testament understanding of the gospel.

c) THE 'GOSPEL' AND THE GOSPELS

Mark 1:1

In introducing his book with the word 'gospel', Mark indicates that the report he is about to give concerning Jesus' life, death and resurrection is the gospel.

Matt 26:6-13

Jesus says that this beautiful episode from his life will be told wherever the gospel is preached. The word 'gospel', then, must refer to a retelling of the events of Jesus' life.

This fits precisely with what we have just seen in the first gospel summaries and gospel talks. What is summarized in the creeds of Paul and expanded in the sermons of Acts is told fully in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Note: although the gospel properly concerns the whole of Jesus' life, from his birth to his resurrection, the decided focus of these gospel summaries, gospel talks and the Gospels themselves is clearly the final events of his life – his death and resurrection. In fact, although the bulk of the material in the Gospels deals with the events of the thirty years leading up to Jesus' arrest, on average each of the Gospel writers devotes one whole fifth of his book to the events of the few days after the arrest, that is, to Jesus' death and resurrection. This clearly tells us where the heart of the gospel lies.

d) THE 'GOSPEL' AND THE FUTURE

Rom 2:16

In this passage, Paul gives us one more piece of the gospel puzzle. Jesus' life story does not end with his resurrection, appearances and ascension into heaven. The story of Jesus reaches its climax when, as the Messiah, he returns to judge the world on God's behalf. This future event is explicitly mentioned in the sermons we looked at in Acts (Acts 2:35; Acts 10:42) and in the Gospels themselves (Matthew 25:31-46 and John 5:24-29).

Drawing the threads together, then, the 'gospel' is:

A retelling of the events of Jesus' life	(the structure of the gospel)
which focuses on his death & resurrection	(the heart of the gospel)
and shows him to be God's Saviour & Lord	(the significance of the gospel)

2) THE GOSPEL IN TWO WORDS

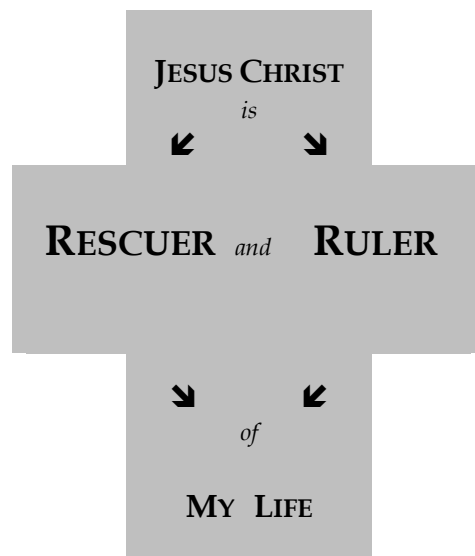
The following gospel outline builds upon this material and upon the Gospel Bites method. It focuses on the life of Jesus, while integrating the important truths about sin, judgment, atonement, grace, faith and repentance. The outline is based on the meaning of the Lord's two names, *Jesus Christ*.

'Jesus' ('God rescues') points to his work as God's **RESCUER**, one half of the gospel message.

'Christ' ('anointed one') points to his status as God's **RULER**, the other half of the gospel message.

These twin themes of 'rescue' and 'rule' (Saviour and Lord) contained in Jesus' two names provide a convenient, accurate and easy-to-remember framework for retelling the events of Jesus' life, especially those of his death and resurrection.

In a few minutes we will learn a full outline of this model but for now, simply acquaint yourself with the simple diagram outline below as the leader offers an example of "The Gospel in Two Words" based on the full outline in appendix two.



NOTE: This outline is not meant to provide a strict set of words that must be delivered in one monologue. It is intended to provide an easy-to-remember framework by which you can retell the news about Jesus **in your own words**, at whatever pace is appropriate for your situation. Remember, conversations usually have lots of interaction. Be open to this. It may be that your listener has questions (or disagreements) about sin, judgment, forgiveness or the historicity of the story about Jesus. In this case, it is appropriate to stop and discuss the issues before moving to the next points.

EXERCISE

1. In small groups, or one to one, carefully read the full outline in appendix two on page 30.
2. Take turns outlining the full gospel **in your own words** using the model you've just learnt. You may use the diagram outline as a prompt if you wish.
3. Once you've done this, try it again, this time integrating your own story of faith (how you came to believe these things) and/or a 'gospel bite' or two into the gospel outline.
4. Leader to conclude by talking through the "Actions for Life" in appendix three on page 31.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: Examples of the 'gospel bite'

1. THE SINFUL WOMAN (LUKE 7:36-50)

a) GUILT

A friend says to you:

(topic) "Oh, I've done too many wrong things to be a Christian!"

You could reply:

(story) "Well then, you are exactly the sort of person Jesus was interested in when he lived. One of the stories in Jesus' biographies tells of a prostitute (imagine how 'bad' she felt) who found out that Jesus was in her town. She went to the house Jesus was having dinner at and gate-crashed the party. She was so overwhelmed to meet Jesus that she burst out crying. Now, the guests were strict religious people and were very annoyed at this 'sinner' in their midst.

Jesus did an amazing thing though. He rebuked his host, who was a religious leader, and stuck up for the woman. Jesus knew she was aware of her shameful lifestyle, so instead of condemning her, he looked her in the eye and said, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Jesus didn't come into the world to pick all the good people. He came to offer forgiveness to those of us who know we are not good.

(apply) You may feel that you are too bad for God, but Jesus assures us that God will accept us into his family anyhow. Perhaps you should think about taking him up on his offer. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?"

b) RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY

A friend says to you:

(topic) "I can't stand religion. It's full of judgmental bigots!"

You could say:

(story) "Well then you're on Jesus' side. He also couldn't stand judgmental bigotry. In fact, it was the religious crowd that hated Jesus. One of the stories in Jesus' biographies tells of Jesus having a meal at the home of a religious leader named Simon. In the middle of the dinner a prostitute came into the room and burst into tears and washed the feet of Jesus. Simon wanted Jesus to condemn her and get rid of her. Instead, Jesus defended the woman and rebuked his host. Actually, he declared to all the religious guests that this woman had been forgiven by God, and that it was they who were disconnected from God, not this woman.

(apply) You may hate bigotry but Jesus would agree with you. Just make sure you don't confuse Jesus with some of the judgmental religious people you've met. They are quite different. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?"

2. THE ROMAN CENTURION (MATTHEW 8:5-13)

a) RELIGIOUS WEAKLINGS

A friend says to you:

(topic) “Religion is mostly for people who are weak! I don’t feel that need.”

You could say:

(story) “There might be some Christians who are weaklings, but you can hardly say Jesus only attracted weaklings. One of the stories in Jesus’ biographies tells of a Roman centurion who approached Jesus. Now you don’t become a Roman centurion by just keeping your boots shined. These were successful combat soldiers who were entrusted with one hundred foot soldiers under their command. Anyway, this man hears that Jesus is in town, walks up to him, and in front of a crowd, addresses him as ‘Lord’. ‘Lord’ is what Roman slaves called their masters, and yet this is how the centurion felt he should address Jesus. More than that, when Jesus offered to go to the centurion’s home, this tough Roman soldier replies, ‘I am not worthy to have you come under my roof’. What sort of person makes a grown man - a Roman centurion no less - feel unworthy to be around?”

(apply) You may have met Christians who appeared to be weaklings, but don’t confuse that with Jesus. The real Jesus was anything but weak, and everyone - weak and strong - felt like saying ‘Sir/Lord’ around him: even people like you and me. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?”

b) NON-RELIGIOUS

A friend says to you:

(topic) “I’m not the religious type. I’m probably the last person you’d expect to get into religion!”

You could say:

(story) “Well then you’re exactly the sort of person Jesus spent much of his time with. One of the stories in Jesus’ biographies tells of a Roman centurion who approached Jesus. Now, Roman soldiers were about as far from the religion of Jesus as you could get. Romans at the time of Jesus were the arch enemies of Jewish people - politically and religiously - and soldiers even more so. Anyway, the point is, instead of avoiding this soldier Jesus invited himself over to the man’s house. The soldier said he felt unworthy of having the great Jesus visit his home. When Jesus heard this, he turned to the crowd - who were all Jews - and praised this Roman centurion for his great faith. In fact, Jesus said that a non-religious man like this one was going to get into God’s kingdom before a lot of religious people.

(apply) My point is, Jesus’ whole life was dedicated not to making religious people even more religious, but finding non-religious people and helping them to become friends with God - without being religious. Actually, you are probably just the sort of person Jesus was on about. Have you ever looked into the life of Jesus?”

APPENDIX TWO: The gospel in two words

Introduce	<p><u>Step 1.</u> JESUS CHRIST</p> <p>Christianity is not primarily about obeying rules or rituals. It's actually about responding to a person, Jesus Christ. In fact, all you need to know to become a Christian is contained in his two names: 'Jesus' and 'Christ'. Let me explain ... (Steps 2 and 3 can be done in reverse order if you prefer)</p>	
Explain	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 2.</u> 'RESCUER' through his life and death</p> <p>Most of our names have some meaning. For example, my name, _____ means _____. The name 'Jesus' simply means 'God rescues', and it captures one of the two main themes of his life. He insisted that people had neglected their Maker and mistreated one another and so deserved to be condemned by God. He insisted also that he had been sent by God to save, or rescue, us from that judgment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Step 3.</u> 'RULER' through his life and resurrection</p> <p>Jesus' second name, 'Christ', captures the second half of the Christian faith. The word 'Christ' is not a surname. It is a title, like 'Prime Minister' or 'King', only far more prestigious. The 'Christ' was to be God's appointed leader of humanity, the one who would speak and act on God's behalf, and at the end of history even decide the eternal verdict of every individual. In other words, Jesus was not only God's 'rescuer', he was God's Ruler.</p>
Describe	<p>Jesus displayed his role as God's Rescuer throughout his whole life. He sought out the religious and unreligious alike and offered them forgiveness or rescue from God's judgement [<i>At this point, any number of stories from Jesus' life, or 'Gospel Bites', illustrating his rescue or forgiveness could be told.</i>].</p> <p>Most importantly, Jesus' rescue mission was accomplished when he died on the cross. At that moment, he took the punishment we deserve, so that we could be forgiven. [<i>At this point, an aspect of your own story of faith which relates to forgiveness could be told.</i>]</p>	<p>Jesus displayed his authority as God's Ruler throughout his whole life. The things he said and did were glimpses of this authority. [<i>At this point, any number of stories from Jesus' life, or 'Gospel Bites', illustrating his authority as the Christ could be told.</i>]</p> <p>Nowhere was his authority more visible than when he was raised to life again. This was God's statement to the world that Jesus, and no one else, was his appointed ruler. [<i>At this point, an aspect of your own story of faith which relates to Christ's leadership of you could be told.</i>]</p> <p>The words 'Jesus' & 'Christ' also help us to understand how to become a Christian ...</p>
Challenge	<p>MY LIFE</p>	
	<p><u>Step 4.</u> If Jesus is God's Rescuer – the one who lived and died so we could escape God's punishment – it makes sense to ask for that rescue.</p> <p>A swimmer caught in a rip doesn't simply paddle silently. S/he yells out, "HELP!" In the same way, the Christian life can begin with the simple request: "Dear God, I know that I deserve your punishment but because of Jesus, your Rescuer, please forgive me!"</p>	<p><u>Step 5.</u> If Christ is God's Ruler – the rightful director and judge of our lives – it makes sense to entrust ourselves to his leadership.</p> <p>Following a brilliant and inspiring leader (in sport, or politics) is a joy and an honour. Following Christ is the greatest joy and honour a man or a woman can experience. Take up this opportunity and say: "Dear God, I entrust myself to the leadership of Christ."</p>

APPENDIX THREE: ACTIONS FOR LIFE

1. At least once a week, pray for 'proclaimers' (evangelists): that the Lord would send out more of them and give them great success. Also pray for those around you who don't yet know Christ.
2. Constantly live an outstanding, godly life that will glorify God, make the gospel attractive, and provoke people to ask you about your faith. Be 'intentional' about it.
3. Once a month, try to provide extra (\$, etc.) for people and projects devoted to evangelism – the Department of Evangelism, CMS, Scripture teaching in schools and so on.
4. Regularly mix with people who are not yet Christians – invite them to dinner, join a local club or gym, attend work related social events, etc. Be adventurous and flexible.
5. Try to introduce 'God-talk' into your regular conversations once every day or so.
6. Look for chances to rehearse your story, then to share it with those who don't yet know the Lord.
7. Become well-acquainted with five or six stories from Jesus' life that you feel offer good bite-sized introductions to the meaning of Christianity. Look for chances to respond to comments or questions from non-Christians by using these 'gospel bites'.
8. Get to know the 'gospel' more and more intimately by reading all four Gospels at least once a year.
9. When you get home mark down three dates in your diary in the next year to read through the full gospel outline presented in this session. Be on the lookout for appropriate opportunities to share this message with those who don't yet believe.

NOTES & SCRIBBLES

