

Makes You Wonder



**Exercises in communicating about Jesus in fresh
ways.**

Series 4: THE STORY

by Ian Robinson



THE STORY
is dedicated to
Rev Dr Dean Drayton

Creative scholar, kind pastor, listening
leader, desert adventurer, who listens to
God with bold inspiration and questions

THE STORY



What makes Jesus so special? What are the two main models used by Jesus and the apostles to present this gospel? How can we respond when people ask the really tough questions of suffering, of lack of proof, of hypocrisy in the church, and the cost of discipleship? What sorts of evidence support the gospel story? What are the challenges of our lives and times, the defining moments that summon us to take our place in the bigger picture? How can we invite others to Make A Difference (MAD) in this world in the Jesus' way?

1. God is Like Jesus
2. Turn the Page
3. Lamb of God
4. Nutshell
5. Problems of Truth
6. Problems of Suffering
7. Problems with Christians
8. Problems about the Cost
9. Y points – destiny, reality, morality, history.
10. Fear of the Fire

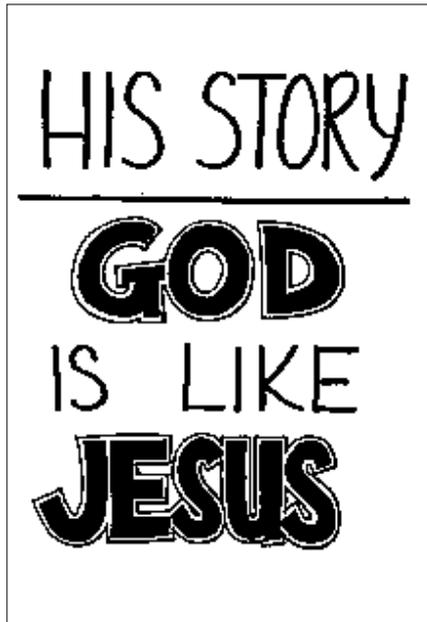
Leader's Notes for each topic are written in full, followed by participants' pages at the back, if you choose to use them. Copy any other pages (e.g. the *Y Point* sheet) for participants that you wish.



1. GOD IS LIKE JESUS

GOAL

To tell the fascinating story of Jesus and show that everyone is invited and accountable to Him.



INTRODUCTION

“THE Story” means that we must tell the true story about Jesus, which is for everyone. Many people today know almost nothing about the story of Jesus Christ, or are actually seriously misinformed. He still holds a fascination for many others, evident in the many film interpretations that have come out.

Key Question

Take a moment to think how you would answer this question in one minute as put to you by an international student (superb English) who comes from an atheist country where nothing of this tradition is known. Note: Do not focus this time on your personal experience of Christ (my story), nor on the long history of interpretation of the church (our story). This is the time to be more objective.

KEY QUESTION

WHAT HAPPENED THAT MADE JESUS SO SIGNIFICANT?"

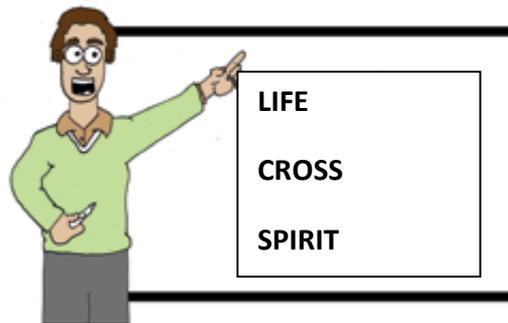
The Leader starts by giving an example of how one might answer.

Form groups of 3, each person to tell their version of an answer.

Many people go on for ages, blinding people with too much information, because in their heads they are imagining and already defending a number possible objections or questions. However, those questions have not been asked yet! Be free enough to let new questions arise if they really need to. Just tell it simply.

SO What are the points your group would make? Each group writes down on one list all the bullet points of the story which they share. Then give the triads three minutes to talk it over a bit.

Together



List on the board the content of their stories, into the categories – **LIFE - CROSS - SPIRIT** of the JESUS FRAME.

We start with the story of the lived Life of Christ, his Death and Resurrection, and the 'afterlife' of Jesus as the Holy Spirit continues his work.

DISCUSSION POSSIBILITIES

- (a) How hard was it to get down to the simple story? What did you assume that people already knew?
- (b) Essential to any description of Jesus' life and teaching in biblical terms is his INVITATION or CALL to follow him as Lord and Saviour, and his role as Judge over every person's response to that invitation.
- (c) Ask them to suggest other three point summaries. Write these up to aid memory. The effort and time involved is very good for both retention and practise.
- (d) We cannot say everything to everybody. Keep it short and simple and engaging so that people can grasp at least this much clearly, then ASK them for their questions, their point of view.
- (e) Compare how New Testament Evangelism broadly follows two roads, both emphasising **Christ** and **repentance** but in two different ways. See these exercises.

SOME NOTES ABOUT THIS EXERCISE

- Mention the "Jesus" video or "The Passion" as a tool for lending to people.
- Few groups mention the Last Day although it is in all apostolic preaching. IT has gone out of favour. It may be worthwhile to show how this is the helpful "day of setting things right", a happy day for the poor and broken who have been exploited for generations without redress.
- Some people often treat this as another "Jesus-in-me" exercise, despite the request not to. Enforce the distinction between "subjective" v "objective" OR "my experience of the truth" v "the events of Jesus life" OR "my journey" v "the map" OR "what I have received" v "all that there is to receive" OR some other simple way of explaining this distinction.
- It can be fun and helpful to come up with some Billboard one-liners out of this exercise. E.g. "If you want to see God, look at Jesus". "To follow Jesus, means on Jesus' terms". "All life and love are from God and, in Jesus, he is renewing the offer. Don't miss out." Write these up with felt pens on sheets of paper and then blu-tac them around the walls of your room. Put them all up. Discuss which ones are affirmative and inspiring and which are sounding more defensive or aggressive.
- We are not just talking to atheists and agnostics. Followers of other religions (or none) are our neighbours. This exercise is not about abstract and philosophical doctrines of Christ but about the person of Jesus Christ. They will

almost certainly have view, but do not assume that you know what it will be. Religious ideas travel between religions, and ideas are inspired or borrowed. If you disagree, it is 'interesting' not 'wrong'. The Story of Jesus is history, and therefore public property, and he is discussed not just by the Christians. Everyone is entitled to their view. Our hope is that the Gospel is catching.

Other questions to try. Answer these by telling THE STORY, not by telling MY STORY this time.

- "Jesus was a great teacher but no more or less than other great prophets."
- "I believe God is everything, is you, is me. The trees are God too."
- "God was here but he left early - a creator maybe, but I'm agnostic after that. After all, I haven't seen Him."
- "There is more evidence for the rule of chaos than for the rule of a personal God."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere."
- What do you really want people to know about Jesus?
- What are people losing out on if they ignore/turn away from following Jesus?
- You could use the resource on the next page, "One Solitary Life".

CONCLUSION

Christianity is true, Jesus has happened. Christ is the centre of all time and space. All people must now give explanation for these events.

MYW4.1 GOD IS LIKE JESUS

Participant's
Page

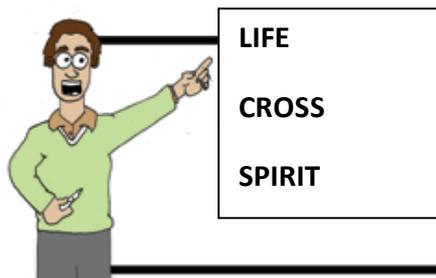
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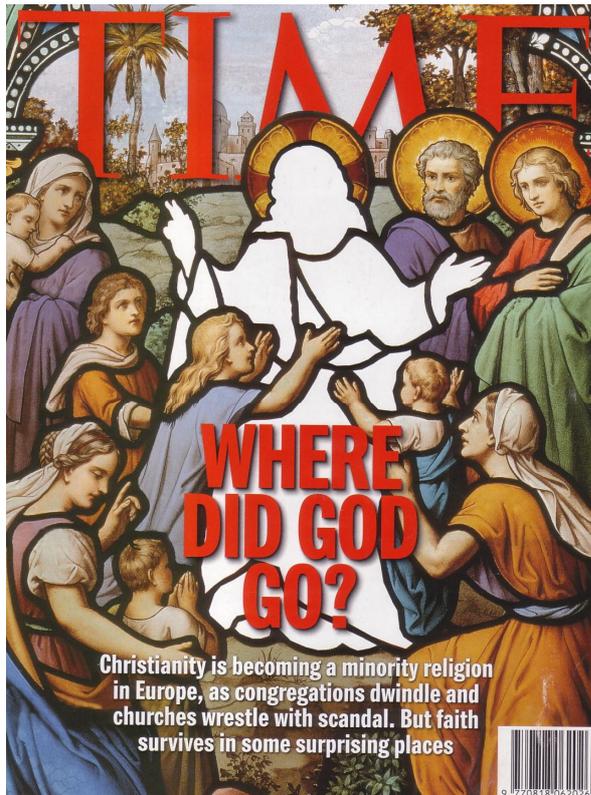


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One Solitary Life

Adapted from *Dr James A Francis*,
© 1926

He was born in a stable in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.

Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. Miracles came from his hands and he was placed under investigation many times. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to university. He never visited a big city. He never traveled 300 kilometres from the place where he

was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies, and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves on the city dump. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on Earth. When he was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave. Some saw him alive again and ran through the whole known world and beyond to proclaim the good news.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is a central figure of the human race, esteemed in Christianity as Saviour and Lord, in Islam as a great prophet, in Judaism as an early rabbi. His growing global movement is legendary in sacrificial community service, though they too are often faulty and sometimes corrupted.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliament that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man on Earth as much as that One Solitary Life.

Q. Upon reading this long-standing popular piece, where did you go 'yes' and where did you go 'not'?

Q. How would you change what it says to fit today?