

INTERVARSITY



A GUIDE FOR
INTERNATIONAL GROUPS INVESTIGATING GOD





I-GIG: INTERNATIONAL GROUPS INVESTIGATING GOD

INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

made up of one or two Christians and a few international friends

INVESTIGATING GOD

by discussing short Bible texts about Jesus in order to discover who God is and how to know him.

As your friends learn about Jesus, they will begin to see the character, love, and power of God himself. As they see Jesus in you, they may consider joining you in following our Lord. What could be better than that?

CHRISTIANS:

We believe in the winning combination of Christians, international students, and the Word of God!

God wants to reach the world through you. He will use you to introduce Jesus to your seeking international friends. God's Spirit will give you the ability and the courage. We'll give you the training and the tools to begin.

We will pray that you will have the joy of seeing your friends give their lives to Jesus.

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and the I-GIG Writing Team
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA***

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THIS GUIDE IS CENTERED ON FRIENDSHIPS.

YOUR FRIENDS

Which of your friends are not yet followers of Jesus? Would they be open to learning about him? We'll be talking about these friends throughout the guide.

A CHRISTIAN FRIEND

Find a Christian friend who will walk beside you as your "I-GIG partner." Together, you can read the guide and do the activities in the colored boxes. The first box is below.



- ▶ Ask God to help you think of a few friends who do not know Jesus.
- ▶ Talk with your I-GIG partner about these friends. Pray for them together.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! [Ecclesiastes 4:9-11](#)

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REACHING FRIENDS





GOD'S PLAN FOR REACHING OUR WORLD

God created us in his image to love, trust, and obey him. Sadly, we chose to disobey. This separated us from God, and we are lost without him. Yet from the beginning, God has been working out his plan to rescue us.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” **John 3:16**

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”
Romans 5:6

This is good news! Jesus offers forgiveness and new life to those who believe and follow him.

“The right time has come,” [Jesus] said, “and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!” **Mark 1:20** **Good News Bible**

See TOOLS: GOD'S GOOD NEWS for a way to explain this to a friend, pages 60-61.



NOW GOD IS SENDING YOU

God is building a kingdom of believers through his Spirit “from every nation, tribe, people, and language.” See Revelation 7:9. God’s plan is to reach the world through you and other Christians. Before Jesus left the earth, he commanded:

“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” John 20:21

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:19a, 20b

START WITH YOUR FRIENDS

God has sent the world to you. He has put international students in your life. He loves them more than you will ever know. He wants you to love them and to tell them about Jesus.

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Jesus’ words in Luke 19:10



START WITH THE BIBLE

You can trust God with this: when you open the Bible, you open up the power and authority of God’s Word. You will see how relevant it is, even to those who do not yet believe in him. God will speak into your friends’ lives and change them. He will change you, as well.

For historical information about the Bible, see TOOLS: THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF JESUS’ DAY, page 56, THE LAND OF THE JEWS, page 57, HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS, page 58, and BIBLE FACTS, page 59.

“For the word of God is active and alive, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through....It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 Good News Bible

START WITH JESUS

Begin by introducing your friends to Jesus through stories of his life and stories he told. Even a quick look at Jesus will teach them something about God the Father (John 14:9) and God’s overall plan.



Even if you are a new Christian, you have already experienced something of the power of God’s Word. Tell your I-GIG partner about a time when God spoke to you through his Word, or tell one of your favorite stories from the Bible about Jesus. Pray that you will grow in your trust and in your understanding of God’s Word.



START WITH AN I-GIG

In an I-GIG, an International **G**roup **I**nvestigating **G**od, you will read and explore the Bible with your friends and share your personal lives. One international student described it this way:

*“Cakes with coffee and various teas,
wholehearted friendship,
open-minded discussion,
exposure to different cultures,
full of wit and humor, unstopped chatting,
and most of all,
the real joy of finding God’s unfailing love more and more
are what I can’t forget about those meetings.”*

–Yun



Discuss Yun’s description of an I-GIG. Have you ever been in a group like this?



START WITH THE I-GIG BIBLE DISCUSSION GUIDES

We have designed discussion guides that will allow you and your friends to walk through the Bible text together. You do not need experience leading a Bible study, just friends you want to introduce to Jesus.

Before you continue, we suggest you **TAKE THE GUIDED TOUR** on the next page. The actual I-GIG Bible Discussion Guides begin on page 29.



GUIDED TOUR: THE I-GIG BIBLE PAGE

There are two parts to the I-GIG Bible Discussion Guides. This is a sample of the I-GIG Bible page. The actual Bible page is on page 31.

INTRODUCTION

This gives background and context.

OPENING QUESTION

This gets people talking from the start.

BIBLE TEXT

New International Version

VOCABULARY AND BACKGROUND NOTES

These are footnotes with additional information.

I-GIG BIBLE PAGE MARK 1:40-45 HEALED!

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had been traveling all over the Galilee area, teaching and healing. In an age of very limited medicine, his healing brought great hope...and great crowds. A man covered with leprosy heard about Jesus. Leprosy was an infectious skin disease, so the man could not go to Jesus in a crowd. Lepers had to live away from their families and communities so the infection would not spread. They had no hope of going home because there was no cure.

On this day, Jesus and his friends were alone on a road outside of town. The leper saw his chance and came near.

OPENING QUESTION

What have you heard about Jesus?

BIBLE TEXT

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy^a came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. ⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices^b that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

VOCABULARY AND BACKGROUND NOTES

a. According to Jewish law, lepers were unclean. Anyone they touched also became unclean. There were rules for becoming clean again, but lepers had no hope of this.

b. Moses was a leader of the Jewish (Hebrew) people. God gave Moses his Law so the people would know how to live as God's people. The Law provided forgiveness for sins through sacrifices. (A priest killed an animal or a bird to take the place of the guilty person.) Sacrifices were also used in a ceremony after someone was healed of an infectious skin disease. See Leviticus 14:2-31.



GUIDED TOUR: THE I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE

This is a sample of the I-GIG discussion page. It is on two pages in the actual guide. See pages 32 and 33. The activities and questions on this page allow you and your friends to investigate the text together. For a printable one-page version of the discussion guide, see page 51.

READ CAREFULLY

These questions and activities will help everyone “see” the story or event.

READ CAREFULLY

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

These discussion questions will get at the heart or center of the passage.

THINK DEEPLY

1. The leper said, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” What did the man want? Why do you think he asked it in this way?
2. Jesus could heal with just a word, so why did he touch the man?
3. Jesus sent the man to the priest. What could the priest do for the man? What benefit would the priest have in seeing the man healed? What happened instead?
4. Why do you think Jesus warned the man not to tell anyone? What happened instead? In what ways would the result be different if the man had obeyed Jesus?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

These questions will help you (all) understand the text in a more personal way and respond to what you have been learning.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What have you learned about Jesus from this text?

TAKE IT HOME

This is a summary of the main point and a thought or question to consider.

TAKE IT HOME

With one touch, Jesus communicated his love and power to this man. With one touch, Jesus gave him back his health, his self-respect, and his community. We all have difficult problems in our lives at times. If you met Jesus, what problem would you ask him to help you with? If he helped you, how would you respond?

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

“I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Mark 1:41



GETTING READY



STEP 1: GROW YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships take time and trust, so take the time to become good friends.

- Care for your friends in practical ways and let them care for you.
- Share life with them: fun times and hard times. Let them see the “real” you.
- Talk with them about families and beliefs. Love them regardless of what they believe.
- Talk to them about what God has done in your life.

“The first day I arrived at my university, I thought I would be very homesick because I had no family or friends around. Actually...no. I spent my spare time with my new Christian friends and attended their Bible study. I never felt I had so much interest in something before. I just couldn’t get enough time with them.”

–Zhihua



How can you grow closer to your friends who don’t know Jesus? What fun activities can you do with them? Discuss these ideas with your I-GIG partner. Pray that God will open their hearts and increase their desire to know Jesus.



STEP 2: INVITE YOUR FRIENDS

WHO Invite one or two friends.

WHAT Explain the purpose of getting together. Here is one idea:

"I'm inviting a few friends to take a look at Jesus in the Bible. It's going to be informal and relaxed. You don't need to know anything about the Bible. I think your questions and thoughts would add a lot to the discussion. Would you like to come?"

WHERE Look for a comfortable, convenient place to meet.

WHEN Decide how long and how often you plan to meet.

"Let's meet in my apartment. Would Wednesday evenings work for you? We will meet for about an hour, once a week, for four weeks."



Change the wording of the invitation so it fits you better. Practice the invitation with your I-GIG partner.



STEP 3: PREPARE TO LEAD THE I-GIG

YOU ARE THE HOST. TREAT YOUR FRIENDS AS GUESTS

- Remind your friends the day before.
- Set out snacks and drinks.
- Silence phones and turn off electronic devices that might cause distractions.
- Welcome people and introduce them to each other.
- Explain what you will be doing and how often you will meet.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Everything is ready for your I-GIG... and the lights go out or your friends don't show up. Relax! This is God's group, and He will help you through anything.



What are your fears about inviting your friends to an I-GIG? What might help you overcome those fears? Ask God for courage.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

When you talk about your thoughts and experiences, your friends will be encouraged to talk.



STEP 3: PREPARE TO LEAD THE I-GIG CONTINUED...

LISTEN TO YOUR FRIENDS' POINTS OF VIEW

Let your friends ask questions and say what they think, even if they do not know anything about God or the Bible. If you listen to them, they will want to hear your opinions. You do not need to give them all the right answers, for God will speak to them through his Word.

See TOOLS: RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, page 63.

EXPECT GOD TO WORK IN YOUR FRIENDS' HEARTS

God loves your friends. He is already at work in their lives. He will continue to work, so continue to care for them no matter what response they have. Again, God will speak through his Word. He has promised to do that!

“So also will be the word that I speak – it will not fail to do what I plan for it; it will do everything I send it to do.” **Isaiah 55:11** Good News Bible



STEP 3: PREPARE TO LEAD THE I-GIG CONTINUED...

RESPECT YOUR FRIENDS' CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

Learn all you can about your friends so they feel welcomed and respected.

- Some people have special diets.
- Some would only feel comfortable in a group with all women or all men.
- Some people need a long silence before they are ready to say something.
- Some people like to jump into the discussion before others are finished.
- Some, such as Muslims, have great respect for holy writings, so please keep your Bible off the floor.
- Some will appreciate hearing you pray, but others may not. (Prayer can show your friends that your faith is real, but ask first. Keep it short and informal.)

See TOOLS: CULTURAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION, page 62.



What are you going to do to help your friends feel comfortable in your I-GIG?

REMIND YOUR FRIENDS EACH TIME

- This is a **GROUP**; we need to work together to understand the text.
- This is a group **INVESTIGATING GOD**. No question is too simple, too unfriendly, or too difficult, but try to ask questions related to the Bible text we are studying.



STEP 4: PREPARE THE BIBLE STUDY

GET FAMILIAR WITH THE GUIDES

Have you taken the “guided tour” of the I-GIG Bible Discussion Guides? You can follow them step-by-step or use them as a general guide.

PREPARE PERSONALLY

Read the first Bible text, Mark 1:40-45. Write notes and answer questions from the discussion guide. See page 51. As you do, think about what God is teaching you about himself or about yourself. What will he want you to remember? How can you put into practice what you have read?

You will find leader notes following each study. Plan on taking about an hour to prepare.



Share with your I-GIG partner what you learned. You might want to go through all the questions together for practice. Discuss any concerns you may have. See page 23 for ideas for prayer.



STEP 4: PREPARE THE BIBLE STUDY CONTINUED...

PREPARE TO LEAD

When you do the actual study with your friends, lead them through the Bible study in the same way you prepared it. Give each person a photocopy of the I-GIG Bible page for each I-GIG and the printable Bible discussion page. See page 51. This makes the discussion a very simple and open experience – and takes pressure off of you. (The leader notes have additional ideas.)

“Initially, I did not know what to expect from the I-GIG Bible study. However, I felt extremely comfortable as we studied a passage every Friday in a small group setting. What I liked the most was that I was encouraged to ask questions and discover for myself who Jesus was. The passage on the Prodigal Son was the turning point for me – as Christ’s message and love for the lost became very evident.”

–Swati



Swati (in the quote) did not say that some expert gave her answers, she said she “discovered for herself” what the text said. How do you feel about giving your friends the freedom to do this? Talk with your I-GIG partner about this.



STEP 5: KEEP PRAYING

Remember it is God who is at work. Prayer is your foundation.



- ▶ Ask God for wisdom and understanding as you prepare.
- ▶ Ask God to help you see the stories from your friends' points of view.
- ▶ Ask God to open your friends' hearts, and to protect them from the attacks of Satan. See Luke 8:4-15.
- ▶ Talk to God about any personal concerns.

“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified¹ by faith in me.” Jesus’s words to Paul in Acts 26:17b, 18

¹To sanctify is to make clean and holy before God. Note that Jesus does this “by faith in me.”



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NEXT STEPS





NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR FRIENDS

What happens after the I-GIG? What next steps can you encourage your friends to take? Begin by asking them where they are in their journey toward Jesus.

- ▶ **Continue** to pray for your friends, involve them in your life, and invite them to meet your Christian friends, campus fellowship, and church community.
- ▶ **If they want to know more**, you could invite them to join an “on-going” Bible study (one that continues throughout the year). You might want to ask them if they want to continue meeting with you. (You could use the I-GIG format with other stories about Jesus or a Bible study guide.) If they want to know more about God’s Good News, you will find simple ways to explain it in TOOLS, pages 60-61, or on the web at www.intervarsity.org/ism. If they want more background information about the Bible or Jesus, see TOOLS, pages 56-59.
- ▶ **What if they have no interest at all?** Continue to be their friend! Show them that you still care for them.
- ▶ **What if they are ready to follow Jesus?** Rejoice! Check their understanding. Lead them in a prayer where they ask God for forgiveness and new life in Jesus. Get them started with God – on their own and in community. See www.intervarsity.org/ism.



NEXT STEPS FOR YOU

You said “Yes” to God by leading an I-GIG. He has blessed you in many ways. Reflect on what you have learned through your personal study, through caring for your friends, and through the I-GIGs. What might be your next steps in growing as a Christian? Write your thoughts.



Meet with your I-GIG partner to pray about next steps for you and for your friends.

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” | [Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)



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IGIG BIBLE DISCUSSION GUIDES



Welcome to the I-GIG Bible Discussion Guides. You will find an introduction on pages 13-14. Each guide has Bible pages, discussion pages, and a leader's page. Print the Bible pages and the "printable" discussion page for your friends.

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I-GIG BIBLE PAGE

MARK 1:40-45 HEALED!

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had been traveling all over the Galilee area, teaching and healing. In an age of very limited medicine, his healing brought great hope...and great crowds. A man covered with leprosy heard about Jesus. Leprosy was an infectious skin disease, so the man could not go to Jesus in a crowd. Lepers had to live away from their families and communities so the infection would not spread. They had no hope of going home because there was no cure. On this day, Jesus and his friends were alone on a road outside of town. The leper saw his chance and came near.

OPENING QUESTION

What have you heard about Jesus?

BIBLE TEXT

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy^a came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. ⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices^b that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

VOCABULARY AND
BACKGROUND NOTES

- a. According to Jewish law, lepers were unclean. Anyone they touched also became unclean. There were rules for becoming clean again, but lepers had no hope of this.
- b. Moses was a leader of the Jewish (Hebrew) people. God gave Moses his Law so the people would know how to live as God's people. The Law provided forgiveness for sins through sacrifices. (A priest killed an animal or a bird to take the place of the guilty person.) Sacrifices were also used in a ceremony after someone was healed of an infectious skin disease. See Leviticus 14:2-31.



I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE **HEALED!**

MARK 1:40-45

READ CAREFULLY

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

1. The leper said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." What did the man want? Why do you think he asked it in this way?
2. Jesus could heal with just a word, so why did he touch the man?
3. Jesus sent the man to the priest. What could the priest do for the man? What benefit would the priest receive from seeing the man healed? What happened instead?
4. Why do you think Jesus warned the man not to tell anyone? What happened instead? In what ways would the result be different if the man had obeyed Jesus?



I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE

MARK 1:40-45

HEALED!

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What have you learned about Jesus from this text?

TAKE IT HOME

With one touch, Jesus communicated His love and power to this man. With one touch, Jesus gave him back his health, his self-respect, and his community. We all have difficult problems in our lives at times. If you met Jesus, what problem would you ask him to help you with? If he helped you, how would you respond?

“Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’” Mark 1:41



I-GIG LEADER NOTES HEALED!

MARK 1:40-45

READ CAREFULLY

These activities are the same every time. There are general leader notes for them on page 52.

THINK DEEPLY

1. The man wants to be healed, and he believes Jesus can heal him. But he is asking if Jesus is willing to heal him. Maybe this is just the most polite way to ask, but maybe it shows his doubts. Could Jesus really care for a leper?
2. Jesus' touch said more than just that he was willing to heal the man. It showed love and care to a man who had not been touched in a long time. It was like a welcome-home hug. If Jesus were an ordinary man, he would have become unclean. Yet the leper became clean instead. Jesus was more powerful than the illness.
3. The priest would have examined him and seen the miracle. He would have officially thanked God for the healing and officially declared him "clean". Without his word, people might not welcome the man. The priest would also have found out that Jesus did the miracle. Maybe he would have followed Jesus or at least had more respect for him. We cannot know because the leper disobeyed Jesus.
4. Note what happens when the man tells everyone. We can only guess what opportunities were missed because Jesus could not enter a town openly.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You can imagine yourself in the story as the leper, the disciples, a friend of the man, a stranger, or a religious leader. For example, are you like the leper who needed to be healed and welcomed back into a community? Tell your personal story and let the others tell theirs.
2. For example, what would be a modern-day example of touching a leper? What do we learn from Jesus about how we should treat these people? Think about "lepers" around you, people who are looked down on or avoided. It might be an ethnic or religious group, a social class, or people in a certain occupation or political group. It might be a person who has AIDS.
3. Help the group look beyond the obvious fact of Jesus' power over disease. Notice his compassion. He knows what the man really needs: not only his need for touch but also his need to receive the priest's good word. He is not afraid of the man or the illness. He did not stop helping people when troubles came (45).

TAKE IT HOME

We suggest you read this section aloud, as a way of finishing your study. It gives everyone something to think about as they leave. You might have an opportunity to discuss it more personally at another time.





I-GIG BIBLE PAGE

LUKE 7:36-50 FORGIVEN!

INTRODUCTION

A Jewish leader invited Jesus to dinner in his house. Jewish hosts usually welcomed their guests with a kiss of greeting, water for their feet, and oil for their head. At a big dinner like this, Jewish hosts often allowed poor people to come in for food. They stayed quietly off to the side. During this dinner, a sinful woman^a came into the house.

OPENING QUESTION

What do you think the religious leader did to welcome Jesus? What do you think he did to welcome this woman? What do you do to welcome guests?

BIBLE TEXT

³⁶ Now one of the Pharisees ^b invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.^c ³⁷ When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ^d³⁸ and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet,^e he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is – that she is a sinner."

continued...

VOCABULARY AND
BACKGROUND NOTES

- a. There were signs that she was a prostitute: she lived a sinful life (37), and her hair was down (38).
- b. The Pharisees were a Jewish group that thought a person could be right with God by keeping the Law exactly. They made up extra rules just to make sure they knew what to do. See TOOLS: WHO'S WHO, page 56.
- c. For dinner parties, Jewish people would recline on couches or mats with their feet out to the side.
- d. Perfume was an expensive gift. Alabaster was the usual material for a perfume jar.
- e. Prophets faithfully delivered messages from God. Sin is not just what criminals do; it is disobeying or dishonoring God with our thought or action.



LUKE 7:36-50 FORGIVEN!

...continued

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, Teacher,” he said. ⁴¹ “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both.^f Now which of them will love him more?”⁴³ Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said. ⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much.^g But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Bible Gateway Version)

f. A Roman denarius was worth one day's work. Canceling the debts meant they owed nothing. They could have gone to prison instead.

g. Or “...the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven.” (Good News Bible)



I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE

LUKE 7:36-50

FORGIVEN!

READ CAREFULLY

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

1. Why do you think this woman was crying?
2. Why do you think Jesus allowed her to do what she did?
3. Jesus compared forgiveness with the canceling of debt. How are these ideas related? Give examples from your own lives.
4. In Jesus' story, which comes first, love or forgiveness? How does this help to explain the woman's actions?
5. Jesus announced, "Your sins are forgiven." Why was this so surprising? Discuss the opinion of the "other guests" and your own.



FORGIVEN!

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What have you learned about Jesus from this text?

TAKE IT HOME

When Jesus forgave this woman, he canceled her debt and her painful past. He gave her honor and sent her out to live in peace. Imagine yourself coming to Jesus. He knows what you are thinking and everything about your past. What would you say to him? What would you want him to say to you?

“Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Luke 7:50



I-GIG LEADER NOTES

LUKE 7:36-50

FORGIVEN!

READ CAREFULLY

These activities are the same every time. There are general leader notes for them on page 52.

THINK DEEPLY

1. These tears show emotion that is too great to control. The text does not tell us which emotions: perhaps love and thankfulness to Jesus, sorrow for her past, or shame for her actions. We can guess that she already knew something of Jesus' love and respect for her as a person. Jesus must have been so different from the other men in her life!
2. Jesus knew the woman's past. He knew her thoughts and the attitudes of her heart. (Note that he knew what Simon was saying to himself, too.) The Jewish way was to separate oneself from evil (people). Instead, Jesus welcomed her. He did not worry about what others might think. In fact, he used the opportunity to teach Simon.
3. When our debt is canceled, we are free. We no longer need to worry about how to pay it back. When God forgives us, we are free from our guilt and shame. We no longer need to worry about how to earn God's love or escape from God's punishment.
4. Jesus was saying that love is a response to forgiveness. This tells us that the woman's actions showed her love, and her love showed that she had already been forgiven. The woman probably still needed to hear Jesus' announcement in verse 48, and the others needed to hear it too. The woman was "clean" and should be welcomed back into the community.
5. Jesus was doing something that only God could do. This would have shocked the others in the room!

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You can imagine yourself in the story as the woman, the disciples (there with Jesus), Simon, or the others at the dinner party. For example, are you like Simon who questioned Jesus? Or have you ever strongly felt the need to be forgiven for something? Tell your personal story and let the others tell theirs.
2. For example, how do you behave around someone with a bad past? Can we learn anything about this from Jesus?
3. Jesus was a prophet from God, but he was more. He could tell what people were thinking and feeling. He forgave sins. He related to common people and did not fear the leaders. He was intelligent, loving, and good. In the first story, he healed the body. In this one, he healed the heart in more ways than one.

TAKE IT HOME

We suggest you read this section aloud, as a way of finishing your study. It gives everyone something to think about as they leave. You might have an opportunity to discuss it more personally at another time.



A large area of horizontal dashed lines intended for handwritten notes or discussion points.



I-GIG BIBLE PAGE

MARK 4:35-41 SAVED!

INTRODUCTION

After a long day of teaching, Jesus and his disciples got into a boat to cross Lake Galilee. Several of Jesus' disciples were fishermen, and they knew the lake well. They knew that windstorms could come up suddenly. But in this account, the wind was so strong that it was called "furious" or violently angry. You will find many details in this story that indicate this was one storm – and one lesson – the disciples would never forget.

OPENING QUESTION

Have you ever needed to be rescued? Have you ever experienced overwhelming or storm-like situations? Describe your thoughts and feelings.

BIBLE TEXT

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." ³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. ³⁷ A furious squall^a came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹ He got up, rebuked^b the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" (Bible Gateway Version)

VOCABULARY AND
BACKGROUND NOTES

- a. Boating terms: a squall is a windstorm, to swamp is to fill with water, to drown is to die under water, and the stern is the back of the boat. The stern is the only place one can sleep on a cushion.
- b. To rebuke usually means to tell someone to stop doing wrong or having a wrong attitude. But notice what Jesus was rebuking!

**SAVED!****READ CAREFULLY**

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

1. Why do you think the disciples woke up Jesus?
2. What kind of faith in Jesus do you think the disciples had before this event? Discuss what they knew about Jesus and what they might have expected him to do.
3. What did Jesus want from the disciples? Discuss how the disciples' question in verse 38 is related to Jesus' questions in verse 40.
4. Why were the disciples still terrified after the wind was completely calm (verse 41)? What kind of fear is this?



I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE

MARK 4:35-41

*...continued***SAVED!****MAKE IT PERSONAL**

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What have you learned about Jesus from this text?

TAKE IT HOME

The disciples had seen Jesus heal people and even forgive sins. Yet this event shocked them: God was God, and man was man, so how could Jesus control the wind and the waves? The disciples were slow to understand who Jesus was, but he forgave their mistakes and continued to teach them. Little by little, they learned to trust him. Eventually, they came to believe that Jesus was more than a great prophet; God himself was with them. Faith is more than belief; it is trust in a powerful, good, and loving God. Jesus let his disciples learn this for themselves. You are welcome to explore and ask the same questions they did.

“Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” Mark 4:41

There is a printable guide on page 51.



I-GIG LEADER NOTES

MARK 4:35-41

SAVED!

READ CAREFULLY

These activities are the same every time. There are general leader notes for them on page 52.

THINK DEEPLY

1. We cannot know the answer, but we can talk about it. They were afraid and desperate. It seems they had done all they could and they thought they were going to die. But did they wake up Jesus to tell him that? Were they complaining that Jesus was not helping? Were they angry with Jesus for sleeping or for taking them across the lake in the first place? Was this a cry for help? What kind of help?
2. The disciples knew Jesus had power over sickness; think of the leper. They knew he had power to forgive sins; think of the sinful woman. Yet it seems that they never even thought about Jesus stopping a storm. They knew only God had power over nature!
3. Jesus seems to say that if they had more faith – faith in him – they would not be afraid. Jesus wanted them to trust him. After all, it was his idea to cross the lake. If they were with Jesus, they were with God. God would take care of them – even in a big storm, even if they died in the storm.
4. When the wind calmed, they did not fear the wind. Their fear came from being in the presence of God. It is like the feeling we get when we sense there is someone out there, someone with great power, someone watching over us. For the disciples, the power and presence of God was in Jesus.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You can imagine yourself in the story as one of the disciples or as someone who heard their story. For example, have you ever been in a situation where you were afraid that you would die? Have you or your friends ever felt the presence of God (or at least a “higher power”)?
2. What do we do in storm-like situations in our lives? What are we most afraid of? Whom do we trust to help us?
3. See the “Take It Home” section.

TAKE IT HOME

We suggest you read this section aloud, as a way of finishing your study. It gives everyone something to think about as they leave. You might have an opportunity to discuss it more personally at another time.



INTRODUCTION

Luke 15:1 reads, “The tax collectors and ‘sinners’^a were all gathering around to hear Jesus.” The tax collectors worked for the Romans. They were bad people, according to the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders stayed far away from people like that. They complained, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them”(Luke 15:2). Jesus responded by telling three stories. This one begins, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’” An estate is everything that someone owns, such as land and animals. It is usually divided at one’s death.

OPENING QUESTION

What would happen in your culture if a son asked his father for this?

BIBLE TEXT

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered^b his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine^c in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.^d ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.”

continued...

VOCABULARY AND
BACKGROUND NOTES

- a. The word “sinners” is in quotes here to show that these people were not the only ones with sin in their life. After all, they were listening to Jesus while the Jewish leaders were not. See footnote “e” regarding “sin.”
- b. To say he “squandered his wealth” meant that he wasted his money.
- c. A famine is a time of no rain and no food.
- d. Jewish law states that pigs are unclean. This is one of the worst jobs for a Jewish man. See Deuteronomy 14:8.



LUKE 15:11-24 WELCOMED HOME!

...continued

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.’^e ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. ^{20b} “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ^f ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

e. At its center, sin is turning away from a relationship with God: not trusting, not obeying, not believing, and not loving God first.

f. These gifts had special meaning. A robe was for an honored guest. A ring gave him the authority to act in the father’s name. Sandals were only for free men.



I-GIG DISCUSSION PAGE

LUKE 15:11-24

WELCOMED HOME!**READ CAREFULLY**

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

1. Why do you think the father gave the inheritance money to his son?
2. It seems that the son did not remember his father until he was in trouble. How did his troubles help him “come to his senses”?
3. When he “came to his senses,” he was finally able to see that living for himself had been wrong. He prepared a speech. “Father, I have sinned against you.” Sin includes both actions and attitudes. Use several words to describe the sinful attitudes the son had. Describe the change that took place.
4. What kind of welcome was the son hoping for? What kind of welcome did he receive from his father? Discuss the change in their relationship throughout the story.



WELCOMED HOME!

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What is Jesus trying to tell us about God with this picture? How is this different from your past picture of God?

TAKE IT HOME

If you met the younger son in the city, you might have said, "That man has a bad father!" Is it true? Perhaps the wise father knew that the son was already "lost" before he left his father's house. Perhaps he knew that the only way to save his son was to let him learn the hard way. It was a very costly plan. God also made a very costly plan. God created us with the ability to love him freely, even though he knew that we would choose to live for ourselves. Refusing this relationship with God is the beginning of sin, and sin brings death. We need to "come to our senses," like the younger son, and turn towards "home," but we cannot make it back to God by ourselves. That's where God's plan comes in. When Jesus gave his life, he paid for the sins of the whole world. He canceled the debt of sin once and for all. He not only showed us the way, he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). This story is about a journey all of us take. Where are you on this journey – going away from God or "coming home"?

"For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Luke 15:24a



I-GIG LEADER NOTES

LUKE 15:11-24

WELCOMED HOME!

READ CAREFULLY

These activities are the same every time. There are general leader notes for them on page 52.

THINK DEEPLY

1. It is difficult to explain how the father could be so generous to a rebellious son. The father must have felt great sadness, worry, and disappointment, but he did not force his son to stay. Perhaps he was choosing to hope that his son would learn his lesson and someday come back to him.
2. The son's troubles include ones he brought on himself and also the famine. He had lost everything and was very hungry. This caused him to think, and to finally see his life the way it really was. Note: not all the storms and troubles in our life are caused by our sin. If questions about this come up, see TOOLS: RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS.
3. The son had been selfish, cruel, rebellious, immoral, and more. (Have you ever had these attitudes?) However, his troubles did not cause him to become angry. Instead, he was sorry for what he had done. Note that when he was really able to see the sin in his life, he was also able to see the goodness in his father. It made him want to turn towards home. This is a picture of repentance.
4. The son was hoping the father would take him back as a "hired man" or servant. Instead, his father was waiting for him. He ran to him, something a father in that culture did not usually do. He welcomed him as a son. Discuss the difference between son and servant. See the footnote with the text.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. You can imagine yourself in the story as the son, the father, a servant in the house, or someone who met the son during his journey. You can share about your own family relationships as well. Tell your friends the story about the older brother who stayed with the father. They might be able to guess how he felt and then later read his story in Luke 15:26-32.
2. What troubles have you or your friends had that caused you to take another look at the life you live? What lessons are there about families and forgiveness? Save time for the additional question (#4).
3. Let your friends come to their own conclusions. Our Father God is kind to us beyond what we deserve. He is ready to forgive us. This is how God describes himself in Exodus 34:6-7.
4. Note the question at the end of "Take It Home." Tell your personal story and see if others might want to share.

TAKE IT HOME

We suggest you read this section aloud, as a way of finishing your study. It gives everyone something to think about as they leave. You might have an opportunity to discuss it more personally at another time. See NEXT STEPS FOR YOUR FRIENDS and NEXT STEPS FOR YOU, pages 26-27.



I-GIG BIBLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

READ CAREFULLY

1. Read the Bible text together including the footnotes.
2. Take turns describing the scene (WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE).
3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?)
4. Read it again, to yourself this time. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it.
5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story.
Not all the questions need answers.

THINK DEEPLY

Each I-GIG has different discussion questions.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. Do you see yourself in any of these characters? (Have you ever had similar attitudes or experiences?)
2. Can you relate this situation to one today? What lessons are there in this text for our lives?
3. What do we learn about Jesus from this text? -or-
What is Jesus telling us about God? How is this different from your past picture of God?

TAKE IT HOME

Each I-GIG ends with a summary of the main point and something to think about.



LEADER NOTES FOR “READ CAREFULLY” SECTIONS

THESE NOTES ARE FOR ALL I-GIGS. THE ACTIVITIES ARE THE SAME EACH TIME.

Instead of asking basic questions, we give activities that help you read carefully. Take as much time as needed in this section so that intelligent discussion can follow.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Read the Bible text together, including the footnotes. | Take turns reading together. Read the footnotes at the beginning or end. |
| 2. Take turns describing the scene. (WHO,WHAT, WHEN, WHERE) | Ask each person to add a bit more information. This means that the first person should not give all the information. Once you have the basic facts, think together about the scene as if you were there. |
| 3. Tell the story to each other. (WHAT IS HAPPENING?) | Ask one or two to tell the story briefly without reading it.
Optional: Tell the story or act it out from a character’s point of view. This will give you and your friends a different way of seeing what is happening. |
| 4. Read it again. Pay attention to the people, especially Jesus. What are they like? How do they interact with each other? Underline information and talk about it. | Give everyone a few minutes to read and underline the text. Use the following questions if your friends need help. When you think about the people in the story, don’t forget the disciples. They are usually with Jesus.
Actions – What do they say about each other, or how do they act toward each other?
Feelings – How do they feel about each other? (Notice what the text says.)
Attitudes – What do they think about each other?
Responses – How do the people respond to Jesus? |
| 5. Did anything surprise you as you read? Take turns asking questions about the story. Not all the questions need answers. | “I wonder...?” Wondering and asking questions will help everyone think at a deeper level. The idea is not to find answers, but to ask lots of questions about the text. As you prepare, try to ask the questions your friends might have. If you are concerned about questions your friends might ask, see TOOLS: RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, page 63. |



TOOLS



CHRISTIANS:

You have all you need to lead an I-GIG.

However, many of you have asked for more Bible study tools, such as background information, maps, and ideas for leading. The tools in this section begin to answer that request.

Some of these pages would be good for your friends, as well. We have more tools and Bible studies on our website.

www.intervarsity.org/ism

I-GIG Writing Team

International Student Ministries Department

InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA



I-GIG TABLE OF TOOLS

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THE JEWISH PEOPLE OF JESUS' DAY

The Old Testament tells the early history of the Jewish people. Their ancestor Abraham was a faithful man. God promised to bless the whole world through his family. They were called Hebrews, and later, Jews. They became the nation of Israel. They believed God provided for them and protected them. He gave them his Law to keep them from evil. Obeying God's Law set them apart from others. It showed they were the people of God.

However, they were not always faithful to God. They were not always different from their neighbors. They turned away from God many times and suffered because of it. God forgave them each time. However, in 587 A.D., they lost their land and were taken to Babylon as slaves. By the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were back in their land, but it was under Roman rule. Their temple was rebuilt, but by the pagan¹ King Herod. They still believed that they had a responsibility to stand up against evil and keep themselves separate. However, they longed to have God make everything right.

God had promised to send his "anointed one," the Messiah². The first-century Jewish people were waiting and looking for him. The Messiah was going to "make right" the effects of sin and be their king forever. However, the Jewish people thought this meant the Messiah would rescue them from the Romans and be king of a free Israel. The true Messiah was different from what they imagined. Jesus did not come to rescue the Jews from the Romans; he came to rescue people of all nations from their sin. Jesus did not come to be king of Israel; he is building a spiritual kingdom of the true people of God, those who believe in him.

WHO'S WHO AMONG THE JEWS

Religious Leaders: The Jewish rulers were the high priests, the ruling council (Sanhedrin), and leaders of the two groups listed below.

Sadducees: This group believed only in the Torah, the five books of the Law. They did not believe in the writings of the prophets. They did not believe in a resurrection at the end of time.

Pharisees: This group believed God's laws helped the Jews stay clean and separate from others. They tried to follow God's laws exactly. To help them do this, they added lots of extra rules. They believed in the resurrection of the righteous: those who kept God's Law. Only the people who kept God's Law would be with God.

Scribes: Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees had scribes. They were "teachers of the law" – experts in God's Law, the Torah. Other Jewish groups: The Zealots called for the violent overthrow of Rome, and the Essenes separated themselves from the world.

¹ There were several words for a non-Jewish person: pagan, Gentile, heathen, or "the nations."

² Messiah means "the Anointed One". Kings and priests were anointed with oil on their heads to set them apart for their special service. The Old Testament says that THE Anointed One was coming. In Greek the word is "Christ."



THE LAND OF THE JEWS

Jesus lived in the small Roman province of **Judea**, “Land of the Jews.” A thousand years earlier, it was part of the great King David’s **Israel**. By the time Jesus was born, it was under a **Roman** ruler called King Herod the Great. He was a cruel pagan (not a Jew). When he died, the Romans divided the land into smaller provinces, including the Jewish regions of **Galilee**, **Judea**, and **Samaria**.

Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** of **Judea**. It was near the ancient capital, Jerusalem. **Jerusalem** was the center of Jewish life. Jewish people came from all over the ancient world to worship and bring offerings to the temple. Jesus made several trips to Jerusalem. He died outside the city walls by order of the Roman governor.

Jesus grew up in a carpenter’s family in the village of **Nazareth** in **Galilee**. Several of his disciples came from the fishing village of **Capernaum** near the large inland lake called the **Sea of Galilee** (or Tiberias). Jesus taught throughout the region, including Samaria and the land of the Gentiles (non-Jews) east of the Sea of Galilee.

Samaria had been part of **Israel**. However, the Samaritan Jews had mixed their race and religion with foreigners. The Jews from Israel would not accept them. They went out of their way to avoid Samaria. To get from **Galilee** to **Judea**, they would cross the **River Jordan** into the eastern desert area (**Perea**) and cross back near **Jericho** and the **Dead Sea**.

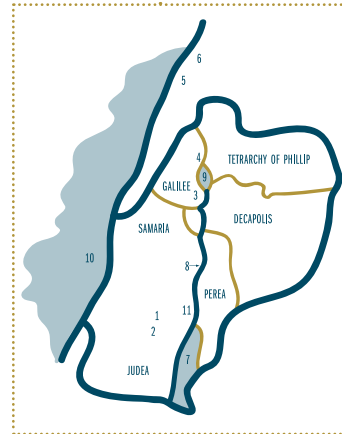
The land of the Jews would not have received much notice, except that it was near an important trade route linking **Africa** with **Asia** and **Europe**. The Romans did not want to lose this land. They knew that the Jewish people wanted to be free from Roman rule, so they watched them carefully and killed anyone who caused trouble. The religious leaders were also worried about trouble with the Romans. They had a certain amount of freedom to keep their Jewish laws and a certain amount of authority over the people. They did not want Rome to take that away from them.

The area looked peaceful, but the peace did not last. On Jesus’ last trip to Jerusalem, he crossed over the hill called the **Mount of Olives**. From there, he could see the whole city, and he wept. He predicted that the city was going to be destroyed (Luke 19: 41-44). His words came true in 70 A.D. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. They gave Jerusalem a pagan name in 135 A.D. and changed the “Land of the Jews” to **Palestine**.

The center of the Jewish faith was gone, but by that time, Jesus offered it a whole new center – namely, himself.



- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1 Jerusalem | 7 Dead Sea |
| 2 Bethlehem | 8 River Jordan |
| 3 Nazareth | 9 Sea of Galilee |
| 4 Capernaum | 10 Mediterranean Sea |
| 5 Tyre | 11 Jericho |
| 6 Sidon | |



EVIDENCE FOR JESUS

WAS JESUS A REAL PERSON? Does the Bible tell the true story of his life? How can we know? For a short answer to that question, we will look at the historical evidence for Jesus and the New Testament. Sir Isaac Newton stated, “There are more sure signs of authenticity in the Bible than in any secular history.”³

First, Jewish and Roman historians (Josephus, Pliny the Younger, and Tacitus) wrote about Jesus by 110 A.D. Other historians have studied documents from that time or ancient copies of the Bible. There are far more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than of any other ancient historical book.

Second, the four accounts of Jesus’ life are carefully recorded and accurate. The writers had been with Jesus or reported directly from those who had. They wrote about people and places with historical facts and details. They wrote while the people were still alive and the places could be visited. Also, all four accounts give details about Jesus’ death. This is amazing in itself because a death on a cross was considered a curse.⁴ It should have been the end of the story. Yet the details of his death were important to the disciples because they were completely convinced that Jesus did not stay dead. God raised him from the dead “on the third day.” This fact is central to the Christian faith.

The Romans and the Jewish leaders wanted to stop the talk of a resurrection, but they had no evidence. There was no body in the tomb. The frightened disciples were now confident and ready to die for Jesus. Within a short time, Peter declared, “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.” See Luke 23–24 and Acts 1–4 for the story. Peter did not die that day, but he was later killed for his faith in Jesus. So were most of the other disciples.

The science of archeology is providing more evidence for Jesus. Since Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., anyone writing at a later time would not have been able to describe its streets and buildings. Yet when you read the New Testament, you find details about the city and the names of rulers. For hundreds of years, there was no proof that many of these details were accurate. Science is now uncovering evidence to prove that they are. For example, many thought the pool described in John 5:2 was not a real place, but it has been discovered.

“Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.”

Take a look at the evidence for Jesus. The church grew from a few disciples. Within 30 years, there were churches around the Roman Empire, and within 300 years, Christianity was its official religion.

³ Authenticity means true and genuine. Secular means non-religious.

⁴ A curse is a sign of God’s disapproval. See Deuteronomy 21:23. We see in Galatians 3:13 that Jesus had to die in this way to rescue us from the punishment of sin.



BIBLE FACTS

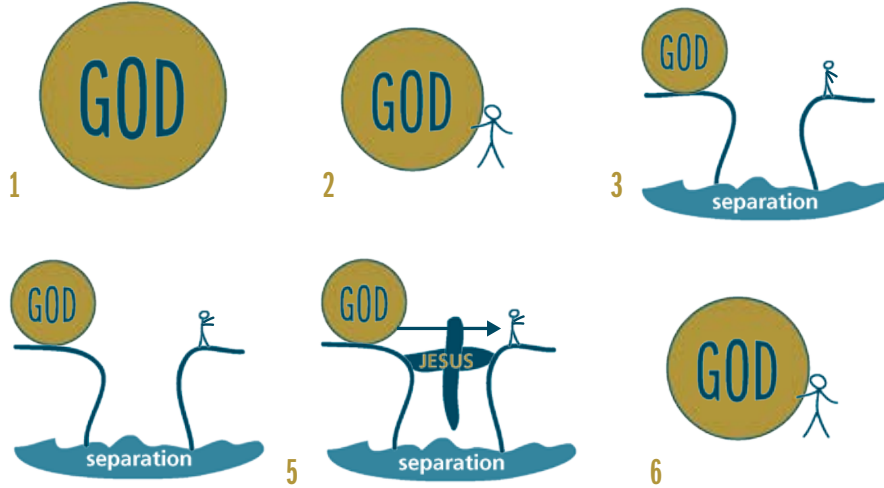
- ▶ The Bible is called the “Word of God.” God did not dictate the words; he chose human authors, and they wrote exactly what he wanted.
- ▶ The Bible is a library of 66 books. Its different human authors, from 1850 B.C. until 90 A.D., tell one story of what God has been speaking and doing in the lives of people.
- ▶ In the Old Testament (meaning “covenant” or “agreement”): 5 books of the **LAW** tell the beginning of God’s plan and people, 12 books tell the **HISTORY** of Israel, 5 books of **POETRY** show God in a personal way, and 17 books of **PROPHECY** tell what God is doing and will do.
- ▶ In the New Testament: 4 **GOSPEL** writers tell of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, 1 book tells the **HISTORY** of the first Christians, 21 **LETTERS** were written to the first churches, and 1 book gives **PROPHECY** about the future.
- ▶ More copies of the Bible have been printed than any other book in history, and the Bible has been translated into every major language.
- ▶ The oldest surviving Bible manuscripts (dating about 100 B.C.) are the Dead Sea Scrolls. They represent every book of the Old Testament except Esther.
- ▶ In the Old Testament, there are over 300 prophecies (predictions) about the coming of Christ, written more than 400 years before the birth of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled them all!

TIMELINE



GOD'S GOOD NEWS

In some ways, God's Good News is simple. Memorize the statements and Bible verses below, and you can quickly share it with anyone. The small drawings will help you build the picture while you are talking. However, we thought you might want a better explanation for yourself; we offer it on the next page. Our website is linked to other tools, such as the "Broken Family Diagrams." See www.intervarsity.org/ism.



1. The one true God is completely holy, powerful, loving, and good. **Exodus 34:6-7**
2. God created us to love him and reflect his character. **Genesis 1:26, Luke 10:27**
3. However, we chose not to trust and obey. This separated us from God and brought death. **Isaiah 59:2a, Hebrews 9:27, Romans 6:23a**
4. We try to reach God, but with sin in our heart, we all fall short. **Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9**
5. God loves us so much that he sent his Son to die in our place. **John 3:16**
6. God offers us the gift of forgiveness and new life in Jesus. "Turn back to God and believe the good news!" **Revelation 3:20, Mark 1:15**



GOD'S GOOD NEWS

1. WHO IS GOD? The one true God is completely holy, powerful, loving, and good.

"In the beginning...God," only God. He is complete in himself, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." He is the creator and ruler of all: "I am the Lord*, and there is no other." He is personal and living. He speaks and acts in history, and judges all things fairly. He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, full of love and faithfulness. He forgives sins, yet he does not let the guilty go unpunished.⁵

2. WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE? God created us to love him and reflect his character.

God created humans in his likeness so we could love him, worship* him, and reflect his character in the world. One way we reflect his character is by obeying his Law. Jesus summed up the Law this way, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...strength and ... mind;" and, "Love your neighbor as yourself." When we do this, our lives are filled with purpose and joy. The first man and woman walked with God. They were caretakers of the earth, and he gave them everything they needed.⁶

3. WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD? We chose not to trust and obey. This separated us from God.

Sadly, however, the first humans chose not to trust and obey God, their Maker. God's Enemy* told them they could "be like God." They wanted that so they disobeyed. This is sin. It separated them from God and brought death. Their relationships were broken. Their lives no longer clearly reflected the character of God in the world. Their children and all generations of people continue that sin, and the whole world has felt its effects.⁷

4. WHY AM I NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOD? We try to reach God, but with sin in our heart, we all fall short.

We sometimes think we can reach God by being good enough or religious enough. Although we try, no one is able to keep God's Law. God is completely good, 100% pure and holy, and we all "fall short" of that. God loves us, but he is completely opposed to sin. With sin in our heart, we cannot come to God. And we cannot clean our heart by ourselves. Without God we are "without hope." Yet from the beginning, God had a plan to rescue us.⁸

5. WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE? God loved us so much that he sent his Son to die in our place.

The cost of sin is death. God's justice demands it. But the Bible has a great surprise. "God so loved the world" that he gave his Son to die in our place. Jesus died a human death so we could come to God: cleaned and forgiven. Jesus lives (was raised from the dead) so we can live forever with God. Jesus not only showed us the way, he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."⁹

6. WHAT SHOULD WE DO? God offers new life in Jesus. "Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

God is offering us a gift. We receive the gift by asking for forgiveness, believing in Jesus, and following him as Lord and King.* As Christians, Jesus "lives in us" through his Holy Spirit. We have a place in his family of believers from all nations. He calls us to a life of love and service so we can once again reflect God's character in the world. One day, Jesus will return to judge the earth, but we will not be condemned, for we have "crossed over from death to life." We will live with God forever. Jesus is standing at the door and knocking. "Turn back to God and believe the Good News!"¹⁰

⁵ Genesis 1:1, Exodus 34:6-7, John 4:24, Romans 1:20, Matthew 28:19, **John 1:1-3**, Isaiah 45:5-6 *'Lord' means master or ruler.

⁶ John 6:28-29, Romans 10:9, **Mark 1:15**, Ephesians 1:13, Romans 2:16, John 5:24, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Revelation 3:20, *Trusting him as Lord means accepting him as the ruler of our life.

⁷ Genesis 3, **Isaiah 59:2**, Hebrews 9:27, Romans 6:23 *Satan, God's enemy, is just a powerful angel who rebelled, but he has power and influence in this world.

⁸ Romans 3:23, Galatians 3:21, **Ephesians 2:8-9**, Ephesians 2:12b

⁹ **John 3:16-17**, Romans 5:8, Isaiah 53:5 in 1 Peter 2:24, John 14:6. See Hebrews 2:14-15. Satan has been defeated and we have been set free. (He is still powerful, but his end is near.)

¹⁰ Acts 26:19, John 6:28-29, Romans 10:9, John 14:17, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Romans 2:16, John 5:24, Revelation 3:20, **Mark 1:15** *Trusting him as Lord means accepting him as the ruler of our life.

CULTURAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION

We all want to communicate clearly. This is especially true if we are speaking with people whose home language and culture are different from our own. We may feel that we are missing the right words or that our pronunciation is getting in the way. We repeat ourselves and check for understanding. However, even when we are comfortable with our language, we can still have communication problems. Listen to what these people are thinking:

ANN: How boring! She just sits there and doesn't say anything. ~ MARY: *How rude! She talks and talks and never lets me say a word.*

JOE: He's not listening. He won't even look at me. ~ JOHN: *The way he looks at me makes me uncomfortable.*

What can we do with problems like these? The best answer is to go out of our way to show interest and respect as we speak. However, we have different WAYS of showing interest and respect. Our style or pattern of communication can differ from culture to culture, family to family, and yes, even between men and women. These differences often cause us to send – and receive – wrong messages. But if we see the problem, we can make small changes to adjust to the other person's style.

ADJUST YOUR STYLE

voLUME Try speaking a little louder or softer.

B EY E LANGUAGE Try looking at the person when he is speaking to you, or stop looking so directly at him if he seems uncomfortable.

S P A C E Try standing a little closer or further away.

PACE Pace has to do with timing. Here we mean the time we wait between one speaker and the next. Some people speak as soon as someone else finishes and others wait several seconds. The first group thinks "jumping in" shows you are interested, and the second group thinks the others are rude. If you are in the first group, try W..A..I..T..I..N..G for others to speak. (Count to ten.) If you are talking with those who jump in, learn how to jump in politely. Watch what happens when you do!

JUMPING IN...	SHARING AND DISAGREEING...	CHECKING...	ENCOURAGING...
Uhm... Let me see... Just a sec... Excuse me. I have something to add here... Uhm, I have a question about that... Could I interrupt for a second? Could I go back to something you said?	In my opinion... It seems to me... My feeling is... What if...? <hr/> Actually... Well, actually... Another way of looking at this is... I am not sure I completely agree.	Do you (Did you) mean...? ...Can you give me an example of that? ... I'm not clear on that, could you explain it to me? ... Let me see. You said... Could you say more about...?	Do you have the same opinion? ... Do you agree? ... What's your point of view... You haven't had a chance to talk. What do you think? That's a great idea... I like that idea because...

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:6



“HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?”

Before you answer, you might need more information.

Are they asking....

1. How can you believe in something outside of the natural world?
2. How can you believe in God with all the suffering in the world? (Or another problem...)
3. What reasons do you have for believing in God?
4. How did you, personally, come to believe in God? What is your personal story?
5. What does it feel like to believe in God?

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Our culture and personal history influence what we believe. However, we each choose our beliefs for ourselves. For this reason, we need to listen to each other without pre-judging what another believes. Ask lots of questions and pray for understanding. Sometimes it is more important to listen to your friends than to answer their questions.

1. RESPOND TO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS BY SHOWING INTEREST.

That's a good question.

That's an interesting point. ("Interesting" is not good or bad.)

2. TAKE THE TIME TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY MEAN OR WHAT THEY ARE REALLY ASKING OR SAYING.

Is there a specific reason why you ask? (Note: Use a polite tone.)

What leads you to think that?

3. LET THEM KNOW HOW AND WHEN WE WILL RESPOND TO QUESTIONS.

Would you like to take a few minutes to talk about it right now?

We don't have time to discuss that now, would you like to meet me for coffee later?

I'm not sure how to answer that. I'll check on that and we can talk about it next time.

I don't really know how to explain that. I'll work on it and get back to you.

4. SOMETIMES IT IS BEST NOT TO RESPOND, BUT WE CAN STILL SHOW INTEREST.

That's interesting, I never thought of that before.

We have invited our friends to come and share their ideas. They may have mistaken ideas about God, but if we correct them right away, they may not want to continue to share. Also, we may not want to take time in the group to talk about it. A short comment that shows interest is often enough, and then we can continue our discussion.

5. DURING THE BIBLE STUDY, HELP EVERYONE TO STAY CONNECTED TO THE TEXT.

Let's take a look at that. Where in the text do you see that?

Good point. How did you come to that?

Does this connect with the text in some way? (You can use this whether their idea is correct or not.)

Let's try to stay with the text for now, but we can discuss that later, if you like.

I can see your point. I'm not sure I completely agree, but it's possible.

If our friends have a comment about the Bible text, we can ask them to show us how they got their answer. That will help others to see it. If their idea does not come from the text, questions can help that person (and others) see what the text does say. Even a mistaken idea can be corrected gently by asking questions. Try to keep everyone in the Bible text, but be patient and let the Bible speak for itself.



www.intersvarsity.org/ism/go/i-gig