

Coming to Jesus

Introduction

This half term we are thinking about coming to Jesus. We are hoping this will challenge and inspire you to continue in your walk with Jesus and grow in love for God and others.

The life of Jesus and his meetings with others can help us think about how we approach Jesus and how we feel about doing so. Through exploring stories together hopefully we will begin to discover new facets and details from the stories previously unnoticed, as well as growing in understanding and applying Christian faith throughout our lives.

Growth Group Notes

Oct-Dec 2015



Coming to Jesus

1: ...with confidence

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Ask everyone to think about two famous people who they would like to spend time with. Ask them to share with the group who and why. You could even create your own Celebrity Big Brother House!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Ask everyone to think of three words they would use to describe God (eg. Loving, powerful, holy). Place a piece of paper and a couple of pens in the middle of the room and spend some time in quiet. Ask people to come forward and write their three words on the piece of paper at some point during the quiet time. Allow the group time to contemplate the different words people have written.

WORD

This series is about coming to Jesus. We will be thinking about some of the people who met Jesus when he walked the dusty roads of Israel.

Read Mark 5:21-43

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

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Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- How does Jairus approach Jesus?
- How do you think Jairus felt when Jesus walked with him? What do you think he felt about the crowds?
- How does the woman who was sick approach Jesus? How is this different to Jairus? Is one way better than another?
- How would you feel if your child was dying and the one person who could help her stopped to chat about faith to someone who he had already helped?
- The people from the house of Jairus report the little girls death. They tell Jairus not to bother Jesus anymore. What does this tell you about their confidence in Jesus?
- Who in this story best reflects the confidence you have in Jesus? Why?
- Jesus says not to be afraid, but to just believe. What does he mean by this? How easy or difficult do you find this?
- The crowd mocked Jesus. Have you ever had your faith mocked or ridiculed? What happened afterwards?
- Why do you think Jesus tells the people present not to tell anyone?
- Both the sick woman and Jairus fell at Jesus' feet. Is this significant?

WHAT NEXT?

- You may want to think about your own confidence in Jesus and share with the group.
- Think of someone you know who needs to be healed. Could you offer to pray for them?
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for (confidentially)

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2: ...in Worship

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Share what your favourite place is (eg home, a holiday destination, a specific hill or field). Why is this?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Listen to *Land of hopes and dreams* by Bruce Springsteen or the cover version by Martyn Joseph. Think about who is 'on the train' and your places on it.

WORD

Read Luke 7:36-50

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What is your most prized possession?
 - * Would you give this away if you felt God wanted you to?
- The woman's perfume was worth more than a year's wages (Mark 14:5) Why does she pour out a year's wages at the feet of Jesus?
- Why is what the woman does worship and not waste?

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- Jesus uses a little story to explain the relative difference in forgiveness (you could compare this to Matthew 20:1-17). Do you feel forgiven by God? How does that make you feel?
- Jesus tells the woman her sins are forgiven after this act of worship. How do you think worship and forgiveness are related?
- What is worship?
- Why do we worship?
- Considering what the woman gives in order to worship, are songs in church enough to worship God?
- What can we give to worship God?
- Think of the most horrible person you have met – one who you found extremely annoying or was mean to you or violent to you. Imagine eating a meal with that person and with Jesus. How would you feel about their presence? How would you react if they worshipped Jesus? How would you react if Jesus seemed to show more favour to them? How would you feel?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last week's prayer record. Have any prayers been answered? Take some time to thank God in your prayer time if so.
- Think about what worship is. How can you worship God other than in church buildings or at Growth Group in the next two weeks?
- Pray for each other and record what you pray for
- Read through a whole gospel (Mark or Luke are good choices) in one or two sittings

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3: ...with Questions

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Two truths, one lie. Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to write two true facts about themselves and one lie. Take it in turns to read them out to the group and see if you can work out which one is a lie. (Obviously this is a game and lying is not a helpful habit in general life).

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Do an internet search for pictures of Jesus and print some different ones off. You may like to search for 'African Jesus' or 'conceptual Jesus' to produce more variety. Spend some time contemplating the different images of Jesus. Ask each person to consider which picture most resonates with their understanding of Jesus. You may wish to share these ideas as a group

WORD

Read John 3:1-21

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

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Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Why does Nicodemus come to Jesus at night? When do you find it easiest to talk to Jesus?
- Jesus talks about being born again. What does this mean?
- Jesus seems to talk in riddles in this passage. You could try rewriting what Jesus is saying to help you think more deeply as a group.
- What is Jesus talking about in verse 14? (See Numbers 21:4-9)
- If we only have to believe to get eternal life does that mean we can carry on doing wrong (Romans 6:1-7)?
- When Jesus died the curtain in the Temple split into two. Why is this significant?
- What does Jesus mean when he says that people love darkness instead of light?
- Nicodemus has questions. Do you think he is satisfied with the answers Jesus gives?
- Write down three questions about God/life/faith you struggle with. You could discuss some of these as a group.
- If we knew all the answers to all the questions, who would we be?

WHAT NEXT?

- Look at last time's prayer record, and the time before. Have any prayers been answered? Spend some time thanking God.
- Talk to someone in the next couple of weeks about questions you have. Allow someone else to ask you questions too. Remember it is all right to say 'I don't know.' Authenticity is best.
- Pray for one another and record what you pray for.

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4: ...in the End?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Ask each member of the group: If you were an animal what animal would you be and why?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

In this exercise ask everyone to close their eyes and remain silent.

Invite everyone to imagine themselves in one of their favourite places.

They hear footsteps and look up to see Jesus walking towards them.

Ask the group to imagine themselves conversing with Jesus. What do they say to Jesus? What does Jesus reply? Allow some time for this to happen. You could ask people to share how they found it at the end if you like.

WORD

Read Luke 23:26-43

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Is asking God for forgiveness important? Why? (You may want to ask this question several times in the following conversation)

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- Luke does not record that the criminal who Jesus says will be with him in paradise asks for forgiveness. How can Jesus welcome him into paradise without this? What does this tell us about Jesus and forgiveness, if anything?
- Two criminals are crucified with Jesus. They know they are going to die very soon. How would this make you feel? How would you feel if it was a loved one?
- One criminal is able to mock Jesus, despite or because of his torture and execution. Does suffering cause us to be better or worse people?
- The other criminal rebukes the first. He then asks Jesus to remember him. Jesus says he will. How does this make you feel?
- Do you think people can be forgiven by God just before they die?
- What if they have lived a life of terrible evil in which they have tortured and killed many people? Can they still ask for forgiveness just before death and expect to go to Heaven? Is this fair?
- Do you think people can be forgiven by God after they die?
- What happens to people who do not ask God for forgiveness before death? Why do you believe this? How does this make you feel?
- Jesus “has done nothing wrong,” but is crucified. We have talked about asking God for forgiveness just before death. Jesus asks for forgiveness for others before his death. What does this tell you about Jesus? How does it make you feel?

WHAT NEXT?

- Read through the prayer record. Remember to thank God for answered prayers.
- Has the discussion this week challenged you in any way. How? What will you change in the next week as a result of this?

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Extra Stuff!

If you'd like to spend more time on stories about coming to Jesus as a group or as individuals, you could try this...

- Read through a gospel and record every time someone meets Jesus. You could make a tally chart of whether it is healing, or talking, or challenging each time.
- Look at different theories of atonement and discuss them as a group
- Ask each group member to share their favourite story from the life of Jesus (one that is not a parable, but an encounter with someone). You could look at each of these in turn.
- Write your own testimony. Does it involve an encounter with Jesus. Did you come to Jesus or did Jesus come to you?
- Take one thing which has challenged you in the past few weeks and tell someone about it, and tell that person what you're going to do about it. Ask the person to check you have done it to make sure you then do it!