



One life. Pure and simple.

Christianity Explored Universal Handbook (2nd Edition)
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Before we begin

Over the next eight sessions we will explore Christianity by seeing what the Bible has to say about Jesus Christ. In particular, we will explore three questions about Jesus:

- Who is he?
- Why did he come?
- What does it mean to follow him?

The Bible contains 66 books. Many human authors wrote these books over 1500 years. God's Holy Spirit inspired each author. This means that when we read the Bible, we are reading God's words – exactly what he wants us to know.

The Bible is divided into two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written before Jesus was born and the New Testament was written after Jesus was born.

In this course we will read the book of Mark (also known as Mark's Gospel), which is a historical account of Jesus' life. Mark's Gospel is divided up into chapters and each chapter is divided into individual verses, all of which are numbered. So **Mark 1:1 – 3:6** refers to the book of Mark, chapter 1, verse 1, through to chapter 3, verse 6. All the Bible references in this handbook are written in this way.

During the course we will study various passages from Mark's Gospel. You may also ask any questions about Christianity, no matter how simple or difficult you think they are.

What is Christianity?

- If you could ask God one question, and you knew it would be answered, what would it be?

- What do many people think Christianity is about?

- Christianity is about being a good person
- Christianity is about going to church
- Christianity is a western religion
- Christianity is about following the teachings of Jesus Christ
- Christianity is _____

Christianity Explored takes us through the Gospel of Mark so that we can discover the real answer to the question: “What is Christianity?”

Session 1

WHO WAS MARK?

Mark was a friend and companion of Peter, who was one of Jesus’ closest friends. Peter was an “apostle”, someone chosen to tell other people about the life, death and resurrection (rising from death) of Jesus.

Peter wrote two of the letters in the Bible (known as 1 and 2 Peter). In his second letter he said: “I will make every effort to see that after my departure (death) you will always remember these things” (2 Peter 1:15). He meant the things he saw and knew about Jesus. He passed them on to others like Mark.

Peter died about 30 years after Jesus died. The evidence tells us that Mark wrote his book around then. Mark’s Gospel is one of four books in the Bible telling the life story of Jesus. The others were written by Matthew, Luke and John.

Read aloud Mark 1:1

Are there any words you do not understand?

Look at the Bible words list to help you.

1 What do we learn about Christianity from this verse?

2 Some people criticise Christianity. They say:

“It is a list of rules.”

“It is about going to church and pretending to be a good person.”

“It is boring.”

How does Mark answer these criticisms in Mark 1:1?

BIBLE WORDS

Mark 1:1

v1 gospel. Good news.

v1 Christ/Messiah. God's only chosen King, who God promised to send into the world.

Read aloud Mark 1:9–11

Are there any words you do not understand?

Look at the Bible words list to help you.

Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan river. As Jesus came up out of the water, God the Holy Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove, and God the Father spoke.

3 What did God the Father say about Jesus?

4 Is there anything that surprises, interests or puzzles you about Jesus?

Summary

Christianity is the good news (the “gospel”) about Jesus Christ.

Mark tells us that Jesus is God’s chosen King, known as the Christ or Messiah. Mark also shows that Jesus is the Son of God.



BIBLE WORDS

Mark 1:9–11

v9 Nazareth. A town in the north of the country of Israel. Jesus grew up in Nazareth. See map on page 4.

v9 Galilee. The northern area of the country of Israel. See map on page 4.

v9 baptized. John baptized people in the Jordan river by dipping them under the water. Baptism is a symbol or picture of turning away from sin and being washed clean on the inside.

v10 Spirit. The Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that there is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (that’s Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit.