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# The world we all want.



Leader's Guide

*Finding your place in the Bible's big story*

# **The World We All Want**

## ***Leader's Guide***

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## INTRODUCING THIS COURSE

We all dream of a better world—a world of security, plenty and friendship. Christians believe that God promises just such a new world. The Bible is the story of God making that promise and keeping it. *The World We All Want* is for people who are interested in the message of the Bible. It is an introduction to the Bible story—the story Christians believe to be the story of our world and its future. The course has been used with people of different nationalities, different social backgrounds and different ages. It has been through many revisions and we are grateful to people within the Crowded House network of churches and beyond for all their ideas and feedback.

## THE DISTINCTIVES

### A point of connection

The course begins by exploring the idea of “the world we all want”. This provides a natural point of contact with people—a common aspiration. It establishes at the beginning of the course a reason why the Bible story is so important. As the course develops, however, it makes it clear that this longed-for world cannot be human-centred; it must be God-centred.

### The Bible story

*The World We All Want* presents the good news of the gospel through the whole Bible story. Many other courses assume too much background knowledge of the Bible, whereas *The World We All Want* retells the story of the whole Bible. This presents the biblical view of the world that people need if they are to understand the work of Christ, as well as offering an engaging way of presenting the gospel to people today.

### A community

Often contemporary presentations of the gospel are unhelpfully individualistic. They focus on an individual’s relationship with God. It then becomes difficult to teach people about the church except in functional terms or terms that contradict the message of grace. The focus of the Bible, however, is on God’s plan to create a people who are his people. *The World We All Want* focuses on the communal nature of the gospel in a way that naturally integrates the church into the message of the gospel.

### The format

We hope you will find the course flexible and we encourage you to adapt it to suit your needs. We have designed the material with two formats in mind:

- 1. As a one-to-one or small-group Bible study.** Work through the Bible studies with people, reading the Bible passages together, looking at the questions, reading the summary paragraphs and answering people’s questions as you go along. Summaries are included to make the material self-explanatory so that new Christians can use it with their friends. The material can even be used by someone on their own.
- 2. With a larger group working in small groups on the Bible study and coming together for a talk.** This is the format made popular by *The Alpha Course* from Holy

Trinity Brompton and *Christianity Explored* from All Souls, Langham Place. Sample talks are available on *The World We All Want* website:

<http://www.thecrowdedhouse.org/twwaw>

*The World We All Want* could also be used for baptism or confirmation classes.

The Bible study is based on, but not dependent on, a passage that participants have been asked to read (with the exception of the first session). Each session ends with a “teaser” (“Before the next session”) that sets up the issues to be considered in the following session.

- Encourage people to ask questions, and answer their questions with respect and honesty. If you do not know an answer then say so.
- Give time to building relationships with people so they can see what Christianity looks like in practice as they get to know you, and so that discussions can be more open. Combining each session with a meal provides a great context in which this can happen.
- Encourage people to share their opinions and responses. You may want to ask people at the end of each session how they think what you have been talking about relates to them.
- Introduce people to your Christian friends so they can see Christian relationships and Christian community.
- Encourage people to read the Bible for themselves so they explore the Bible rather than your opinions.
- You can simply read out loud the explanations in each study, but you might like to put them into your own words or illustrate them from your own experience.

Some questions are designed to create discussion (often phrased “What do you think?” or “What do people think?”). The purpose of these questions is to open up discussion and enable people to contribute at an equal level. Do not worry about getting a “correct” answer. Other questions are about the text. Try to ensure people understand the correct answer. It is best to do this by pointing them to the text of the Bible rather than answering the question for them.

*The World We All Want* has been designed so it can be used with other courses like *Christianity Explored*. *The World We All Want* has been written for people with little background knowledge of the Bible so it may be better to start with this and then move on to other courses. *The World We All Want* uses passages from Mark’s Gospel in its discussion of Jesus to help people who might do, or who have done, *Christianity Explored* make the connections between the story of Jesus and the Bible story as a whole.

## THE TALKS

Sample talks are available on *The Good Book Company* website:

**USA:** <http://www.thegoodbook.com/twwaw>

**UK:** <http://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/twwaw>

**Australia:** <http://www.thegoodbook.com.au/twwaw>

**New Zealand:** <http://www.thegoodbook.co.nz/twwaw>

The talks are designed to pull ideas together and add further explanations and illustrations. Some people may want to use the talks as they are, but we encourage people to adapt them and make them their own. Leaders who are just doing a Bible study may still find it helpful to read through the talks in preparation as they may provide explanations and illustrations that can be used in discussion as appropriate.

A good way to introduce *The World We All Want* to your church or Christian Union is to preach through it or run it among your home groups. This will help people appreciate the good news of the Bible story and get them familiar with the ideas in the course. It could also provide an opportunity to invite friends as a way of introducing them to the course.

## THE PICTURES

The person in the pictures represents a new people and the tree represents a new land or a new earth. These are the two features of God's promise that are highlighted throughout in the course. They have been designed so that anyone can draw them for themselves. You can use the summaries of each session to explain the pictures.

## **THE OUTLINE**

### ***SESSION ONE***

Title: God promises the world we all want  
Bible Passages: Revelation 21 – 22 and Mark 5  
Diagram: No. 7—New creation  
Summary: God promises the world we all want. We know this promise is real because in history Jesus has given us a glimpse of the world we all want.

### ***SESSION TWO***

Title: Jesus shows us God's new world  
Bible Passages: Mark 4 – 5 and Mark 8  
Diagram: No. 4—Jesus  
Summary: Jesus had the power to make God's new world. But Jesus said it was necessary for him to die so we can enjoy it.

### ***SESSION THREE***

Title: We have spoiled God's good world  
Bible Passages: Genesis 1 – 3  
Diagram: Nos. 1 and 2—Creation and rebellion  
Summary: We have spoiled the good world that God made, and God will judge us. But God promises someone who will put it right.

### ***SESSION FOUR***

Title: God promises a new world  
Bible Passages: Genesis 12 and 15 and Romans 4  
Diagram: No. 2—Abraham  
Summary: God promises a people who know God and a land of plenty and security.

### ***SESSION FIVE***

Title: We cannot create God's new world  
Bible Passages: Nehemiah 9 and Ezekiel 36  
Diagram: No. 3—Israel  
Summary: God set his people free and gave them a land of plenty and security, but they could not create God's new world. God promises that he himself will put it right.

### ***SESSION SIX***

Title: We can enjoy God's new world because of Jesus  
Bible Passages: Mark 15 – 16

Diagram: No. 5—The cross  
 Summary: The death of Jesus deals with the problem of rebellion and judgment. The resurrection of Jesus is the promise and beginning of God's new world.

**SESSION SEVEN**

Title: Christians are God's people waiting for God's new world  
 Bible Passages: Acts 1 – 2  
 Diagram: No. 6—The church  
 Summary: Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help us be God's new people while we wait for God's new world. We become God's people through faith and repentance.

**Different structures**

For various reasons, you may want to vary the length of this course. It is possible to run *The World We All Want* in five or six sessions, rather than the 7 sessions it is split up into in the book:

6	Combine Sessions One and Two by moving from the end of Session One to the Mark 8 reading in Session Two.
5	Combine Sessions Three and Four by replacing question 11 in Session Three with the reading from Genesis 12 v 1-7 and questions 3-5 in Session Four.

# Guidance on questions

## **SESSION ONE**

*God promises the world we all want.*

*Revelation chapters 21 – 22 and Mark chapter 5*

### **1. *What kind of a world would you like to live in?***

The course begins by exploring the idea of “the world we all want”. This question focuses on a natural point of contact with people—we all hope for a better world. At this stage, don’t worry if people’s ideas don’t fit precisely with the teaching of the Bible about God’s perfect new world. Much of what people dream of—no more suffering, sickness, poverty, hatred death etc—will be part of God’s promised new world. Most likely, however, people will omit God himself from their ideal world. This will make a great illustration later in the course when we learn about humanity’s rejection of God. The aim of this question is to show people that, contrary to their expectations, the Bible is incredibly relevant to us—it promises the new world that we all want.

### **2. *What is this new world like?***

Encourage people to get their answer from the Bible passage eg: by asking: “Where do you get that from?” or “Which verse tells us that?” **Verse 4:** There will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain. People may also notice that there is no more sea (v 1) and that God will be there (v 3, 4a). If not, however, these aspects can be covered in questions 3 and 4.

### **3. *What surprises you about this new world?***

This is an opportunity for people to share frankly their first impressions of this Bible passage. Answers may include the mention of no more sea (v 1), and of the city and the bride coming down out of heaven (v 2). The paragraph that follows Question 3 gives an explanation of both these things. It will be interesting to see if anyone mentions the description of God himself living with humanity (v 3) and wiping every tear from our eyes (v 4).

### **4. *Who is at the centre of this new world?***

**Verse 3:** “God himself will be with them and be their God.” Read out the paragraph that follows question 3 and emphasise the difference between our world now and God’s promised new world then—we live our lives now without God, but in this new world God will be with his people.

### **5. *What more are we told about what this new world will be like?***

- It is a place of life and healing—the river of the water of life (v 1) and the tree of life (v 2) are there.
- There will no longer be any curse (v 3).
- God’s throne will be there (v 3), his face will be seen (v 4) and he will give this new world light (v 5).
- People will serve God (v 3), be marked with God’s name (v 4) and reign for ever and ever (v 5).

Don’t worry if people don’t understand everything mentioned in these verses. Some of these things (eg: no more curse) will become clearer later in the course. But make