



Introduction

There are 3 studies each of a suggested 6 weeks duration + a DVD that has 38 local persons talking about their Jesus experience

Year 1

**6 week bible study booklet titled “Must have experience”.
plus section 1 of the DVD.**

Every Christian must have had an experience of God Jesus or the Holy Spirit or we have no right to call ourselves Christian. John 1:12,13. For some it has been a one off, for others it is a daily experience but if we are a Christian in the church a head intellectual belief is not what Christianity is about. The DVD has under the heading 1 impromptu interviews with 14 persons who talk about their experience of Jesus. Hit pause after any one of these interviews and talk about what the person has said their experience has been. There are enough interviews under 1 to play and discuss 3 or 4 peoples' stories as a part of each of the studies. Some people add to their story in another part of the DVD section.

The experiences introduced on the DVD include:

A Jesus who: guides; gives hope; fulfilment; assurance; demonstrates humanity; mercy; love; helps make sense of issues; peace; guidance; blessings; gives a different attitude; is diverse; gives a model for living; helps through despair; answers prayers; gives strength

A Jesus who reveals himself in a voice, in my thoughts; in a feeling of love; as a presence; a feeling of euphoria; in the earth as something you can feel touch and see, in a miraculous answer.

How does your study group add to this list?

Year one is focused on helping our people in our congregations get in contact with the excitement the wonder and the awe of their own and others experience of the Grace Holiness and Power of God.

The reason this is important is because we all need to hear about the wonderful grace God exhibits in the way He reveals Himself to so many people in so many different ways. We each are special and unique to God.

Psalm 145: 4-9 'One generation will commend your works to another' 'your acts, your deeds, your goodness, your righteousness, your compassion'
It means a congregation becomes aware of others experience of God and the different perspectives of God given to each individual. It is only when we hear each other do we get a full picture of the body of Christ. This is important in our networking with non-Christians and other believers because we need a big perspective of a God who can relate in different ways to people who are not like ourselves or of the same theological inclination.

How can we use the learnings and discussion from our small groups?

Some congregational ideas have been:

- Share some stories in church services or the Local newspaper.
- Challenge the whole congregation to write a paragraph about a Jesus experience they have had.
- Place stories in a news bulletin.
- Interview in a church service – invite some people to talk about a special Jesus experience.
- Have the study group report to the congregation.



Year 2

6 week bible study booklet 'How has your experience of Jesus changed the way you live your life?' This study explores bible encounters of people with Jesus and how that changed their lives.

Plus Section 2 and 3 on the DVD.

One of the questions raised in Jesus Conversation 1 is: 'How do we know the experience told by someone is from God' The answers can be: It is an experience supported by scripture. God has revealed himself in that way before. The experience does not lead to people living or doing anything not consistent with scripture or historical Christian teaching and experience. Scripture indicates that God reveals himself to people to change their life, their attitudes or grow them in their understanding of Himself. So do we see evidence of this? 'By their fruits you will know them' But Note not everyone changes when they meet Jesus.

The DVD has section 2 and section 3 dedicated to impromptu interviews with a different 14 persons who are asked the questions. What is your experience of Jesus and how has that experience changed the way you live your life. As each person tells their story pause the DVD if you wish and discuss what the person has said. These interviews are meant to be 21st Century experiences paralleling the bible experiences of others in Jesus' time.

The DVD people say their Jesus experience has changed their lives in some of the following ways:

Section 2 - Restored and healed me so I now have a life of hope; Challenged my understanding and my acceptance of the status quo; My level of engagement; My attitude to others; attitude to injustices I see; My congregational connection to the community and the world; My attitude to hospitality; My understanding of servanthood, sonship and following; My faith in a comforting constant presence;

Section 3 - My prayer life; My business, my independence; My integrity; My understanding; the honesty of questioning; Seeing God in all things; Purpose; Perspective on life; No people are exempt from Jesus' caring; Jesus has a plan for the things that happen; Direction and purpose of my life.

Year 2's study and interviews are about how, because of their experience of the Holy, have people changed the way they live their life. This is a study when the rubber hits the road, because you can't get away with just answering this academically or ideologically.

How are your values, attitudes and purpose for your life different in the way you are living your life.

- This is a difficult question because you are asked to think about **'different to what'** Most people answer it by talking about how their life is different to the way they were before.
- As people talk realise it is important for us to also think about and be able to talk about how our lives are different to the way non-Christian live.

The question can become 'how is your attitude, values and purpose in life different to the rest of Australian society'?

- How is Christian parenting different?
- How is a Christian businessman different?
- How is a Christian shopper different?
- How is a Christian retiree different?

There is no right or glib answer. This is because each person is uniquely prepared by God to witness and talk about their own life experience.

Unless we can get our people who go to church to talk about how their experience of Jesus works for them we are not going to ever be the authentic Christian many in our society are saying we are not.



Year 3

6 week Bible study booklet.

Plus section 4 of the DVD.

This years question is a difficult one: It asks How?

“How can you tell someone else about how your experience of Jesus changed you in a way that will encourage them to change the way they live their life?”

- We have to know how we are different!
- We have to know what the issues and problems are that non-Christians have if we want to be able to help them live life differently!
- We have to know ‘How to give the reason for the hope we have’ that makes us different. (1Peter 3 :5)
- We have to gear ourselves up ‘to always be prepare to give an answer’
- We have to do all this ‘with gentleness and respect’

The bible study deals with analysing the way Jesus’ conversation was different for the different people he met. The DVD demonstrates the different approaches a random variety of people have with their contacts in each context.

The DVD has interviews with another 11 people.

These interviews are broken up into 6 separate sections. Choose the area of study you are working on for examples of how these people are talking with people:

1. With illness
2. People of the world
3. People of other cultures
4. Friends
5. Church people
6. Contacts people who are people

The people in section 4 of the DVD talk about how they each talk with different people in usually specific ways that these people are comfortable with.

The people on the DVD suggest:

Empathy opens doors for conversation to tell your experience; You have to listen for clues in the conversation; You have to listen to peoples story; You have to hang out where the people are at; Recognise that all people have a God story of some description; Culture and generation issues influence the way you have conversations; Opportunities come in conversation to tell your story; all people have some level of faith and we are sharing ours; We have to be like Jesus in our generosity our hospitality our business attitude; Be prepared to answer faith and God questions.

Be comfortable and able to share your experiences of faith: Connect with where people gather; Pick up on topics that give you an opportunity to share; You don’t always have to say something you can sometimes say more by doing: ensure people feel you are offering a safe place to share their feelings and ideas; Make them feel loved for who they are.

This years question means that we will have to be involved in our community getting to know and understands its needs better.

‘How can you believe Jesus rose from the dead?’

‘What’s wrong with going out getting drunk every night over the weekend?’

'I believe in God but I don't believe in religion'
'What's wrong with us just living together'.....

The power of knowing other people in our fellowships story became apparent because people can see how they could ask the questioner. 'Would you like to talk to xxx who has found an answer to your question that worked for them.'

OR

People found the value of being prepared and knowing how to tell their story was such a great lead in to redirecting the discussion about some of the real issues and values of life and not some of the peripheral life issues..

OR

Telling their own story was a wonderful gentle way to say 'I don't know? I can't tell you why! But I do know what my experience has proven to me.

We need to remind ourselves of some aspects of the hope, the gospel has for our lives.

- A way to be empowered to understand and face the pain and reality of life.
- A way of life that can transform a life and a community
- A way to find meaning and direction in the lives of individuals and communities.

Two comments were given by some people doing the Jesus Conversation material.

"It's really simple"

"It's do-able"

