

AIM

- To introduce you to the Bible and to its central theme / main point / key character – Jesus Christ. Therefore, this study will perhaps challenge your preconceptions about Christianity.
 - Being a Bible-believer or a Christian is NOT about religion, but about a relationship.
 - **Illustration:** Someone calculated that if you took all the people who sleep through church services on a Sunday, and laid them end-to-end on the floor ... they would be a lot more comfortable!
 - Most of us have probably had bad experiences with the religious institution of Christianity—rules, regulations, manipulation, hypocrisy, power-hungry politics. That is not what Cross Impact is all about; but we are all about the Bible and what it says is important in life—namely, Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him.
 - While your experiences with Christianity may have left you feeling as if religion and the Bible have nothing to do with real life—are hopelessly irrelevant and out-of-touch—I want to suggest that you were never really introduced to what the purpose and message of the Bible really is.
 - I have to be honest and say that I understand those who find the Christian faith useless, meaningless, unappealing or unbelievable. But the problem is that, often, what they have written off is not the real thing.
 - The *Christianity Explored* course is designed by people who once felt that way too. The course exists to clear away all the misconceptions about Christianity so that you can examine the facts for yourself.
- To challenge you to discover what the “good news” of the Bible is by making time to come to this course and by reading Mark’s Gospel.
 - On this course we will discover from Mark’s Gospel (1) who Jesus is—HIS IDENTITY, (2) why he came into the world—HIS MISSION, and (3) what it means to follow him—HIS CALL. This is big news, and it is great news.
 - We’re not going to listen to preachers, popes, religious experts, etc. We’re just going to let the Bible tell us all about the real Jesus.
 - **Illustration:** It is rather like admiring a car that is for sale, and the person who is selling it hands you the key and says you can test drive it for a few weeks – to put it through its paces, see how it works, and discover if it is a car you would like to own.
 - On *Christianity Explored* we are saying: “Here is Mark’s Gospel – here is the ignition key to Christianity. Take it for a test drive for seven weeks. Ask any questions you like, put the Christian world-view through its paces, see how it works, and discover if it makes sense of life in a way that nothing else does.”
 - So, we will encourage you to write notes in your outlines each week as you listen to each talk.
- To be your friend and help you in any way we can.
 - You will NOT be asked to read aloud, pray, sing, or do anything by yourself.
 - We’re NOT going to pester you about coming back, although you’ll probably hear from us again—because, hey, we want you to be your friend and hang out with you at this weekly Bible study and our activities. But we WON’T pester you.
 - We WILL encourage your questions, or you can just feel free to sit and listen.

EXPLORE

- *What is the best news you have ever heard?*
- *If you could ask God one question, and you knew it would be answered, what would it be?* (throughout this study, we will deal with these at some point)
- *Think about the god you are asking that question to. What is that god like?*
- Each week, we're going to progress through Mark's gospel, allowing this book of the Bible answer some of our questions and teach us about Jesus and this "good news."
- On your notes, you'll see four sections:
 - *Explore* – we will read the Bible together and talk about what we read
 - *Listen* – we will watch the DVD and make notes in our talk outline
 - *Discuss* – we'll discuss some points from the DVD
 - *Follow up* – we'll read Mark for ourselves throughout the week, noting our questions
- If you don't have a copy of the Bible, we have one for you, or you can download a Bible on your phone or tablet. The DVD that we watch will be using the *New International Version*.

LISTEN (DVD)

- Mark 1:1 – "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ."
 - When we look at the natural beauty of the world and the design of the human body, the question is: did this all happen by chance? Or, did someone create it?
 - The Bible says God is the One who created the universe we live in and the bodies we inhabit. So, how can we know Him?
 - We can know God by looking at Jesus Christ.
 - Christianity is about Christ—a title that means "God's only chosen King."
 - Christianity is the "gospel"—the good news—about Jesus Christ.
 - When Jesus was baptized, God the Father announced, "You are My Son."
 - God has revealed Himself in human history through Jesus Christ. When we look at Jesus, all the guessing games about God stop.

DISCUSS

- *Was there something in particular that stood out or stuck you from the DVD?*
- *Is there anything that intrigues or puzzles you about Jesus?*
 - *Key Point 1* – "I need to tell you that encountering God's promised King – Jesus – in Mark's Gospel takes us into a whole different realm. But I would encourage you to realize that exceptional events beyond human ability are bound to be part of the scene when God the Son steps into human flesh and comes to the world he has made."

- *Key Point 2* – “What John is saying is absolutely stunning. He is claiming that Jesus Christ will not only offer complete forgiveness to all those who put their trust in him. He will also fill those people with God’s Holy Spirit, who will radically transform their lives. To those who know they are not the people they want to be, let alone the people God wants them to be, this is the best, the most remarkable news in the world.”
 - *Key Point 3* – “And let me reassure you that if all this seems a bit too much for Session 1, in his first chapter Mark is giving us a glimpse of the end of the process, God’s Spirit coming to live in us. **[Illustration]** It is as though he meets us at the factory gates where the finished product leaves. He shows us the end of the process. But he will take us along the assembly line and explain step by step who Jesus is, how much we need him and how we can have a full and joyful relationship with him.”
 - *Key Point 4* – “And that is exactly what Christianity Explored is all about. At the heart of the gospel message is the astonishing truth that God has not remained distant but has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity is Christ. The real Jesus is worth meeting. That’s why Christianity is worth exploring.”
- *So, how do you feel about taking a seven-week test drive?*

FOLLOW-UP

Sometime during this next week, I encourage you to read through Mark 1:1-3:6 and answer the 3 questions that are in your notes. Let’s answer the first one so that you know how this works.

1. Read Mark 1:1-20 – The word “gospel” means “good news.” Mark begins his book of good news with three statements about Jesus.

- *a. by the Old Testament prophets (messengers) (Mark 1:2-3)*
- *b. by John the Baptist (or Baptizer) (Mark 1:7)*
- *c. by God Himself (Mark 1:11)*

What do they each say about Jesus

- *a. The Old Testament prophets pointed to Jesus as the Lord. They said someone would come before Him to prepare the way for Him.*
- *b. John the Baptist, himself a great prophet, said that Jesus is “more powerful” than him.*
- *c. God describes Jesus as His own Son, whom He loves and with whom He is pleased.*