



Free: life

Leaders Manual

Free: life

LEADERS GUIDE

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PART ONE

OVERALL AIMS OF **Free: life**

You may well, at this stage, be asking yourself what you've got into and why. Don't worry, this is perfectly normal, and you are not alone, indeed one of the most influential leaders in the old testament felt exactly the same:

"...O lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue... O Lord, please send someone else to do it!"
Exodus 4 v 10-13

These words were spoken by Moses, a man who witnessed the power and authority of God in amazing ways, he may well have felt inadequate to the task, but with God on his side well the rest is history!

Being a leader of a **Free: life** group is kind of the same, nerve wracking, yes, daunting, certainly - but we can be sure that as we follow the call to preach the good news, Jesus' promise to us will stand:

"AND SURELY I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE VERY END OF THE AGE"

Matthew 28 v 20

This promise follows Jesus' famous great directive to his disciples to go and make disciples in all the world. In today's culture one of the most effective ways of doing this is to encourage people who are willing to think about Jesus.

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?...

N.B. This next section should be read or given to all members of the C;U involved in the running of a **Free: life** course.

1) To answer some of the questions about what is Christianity?

For people today, especially in the west, Christianity is seen largely as an irrelevance. An out dated myth, or fable. But Christianity is relevant, people need to know forgiveness, and God's love for a broken world as much as ever. God has appointed us as the ones to tell them. Christianity is seen too as a religion, a set of rules and moral guidelines, when at the heart of our faith is a living relationship with God - healed and restored by the cross.

This **Free: life** material is a way into discussion of such stereotypes, and a chance to share what it really is all about.

We are there to point to God, using the historical documents found in the Bible, and leaving the rest up to the individual and the Holy Spirit.

WHAT THEN SHOULD OUR EXPECTATIONS BE?

Three key things are involved here:

1. God's will.

God's will is that none should be lost:

"He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance." **2 Peter 3 v9**

God's heart is that your group should be fruitful and that the members of it should come to know him.

2. The human factor.

As people we all have a choice to make, and as we shall see in the final study, some may choose to go with God and others may not. God's Spirit leads a person towards Him, a group like this can aid that progress, but the final decision is with the individual.

2. The society we live in...

has changed dramatically in the space of one generation. We are no longer even nominally a Christian country, so peoples awareness of the gospel is far removed from what it once was. We cannot always assume a person will know such things as the Easter story or the parables for example. Nor can we even assume that all people are at least agreed on the life of Jesus being an historical fact.

We must be very careful to listen to their views, and find out where they are at, before launching into a meaningless, 4 point sermon on salvation!

Our aim therefore should be based on God's heart, our freewill and the depth of gospel understanding the group comes with. This doesn't mean that we will never see people make a commitment, pray that they will, and rejoice when they do! It is rather that success is not to be measured by this alone. In God's eyes you

have achieved so much by even attempting to share the good news with someone. Rather than seeing it as failure or success, see it as progress.

ATHEIST 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
CHRISTIAN

Imagine two people arrive at the group...

Person 1 may have been to Sunday school, have Christian parents and go to church at least twice per year. On the scale, where 1 is far from God and 10 is a Christian, this person could well be a 6.

Person 2 however is an atheist who has come to make a bit of trouble. He has never been to church and knows no Christians, thus he may well be a 2 on the scale.

The aim in both cases is to increase their awareness of the gospel and the relevance for them as individuals, in other words to move them up the scale and closer to making a commitment than they were before. **Progress is success.**

The ideal is still a 10 and God may miraculously move them from 2-10, but this is the exception, not the rule in today's western society, and we have not "failed" if we don't see this happen. Keep praying for them, and remember Gods heart is always for them.

HOW CAN WE PREPARE AS A CHRISTIAN UNION?

1. Be committed to this, all the CU might not be involved in the actual running of the meeting's but all need to be behind it.

- Praying together
- Inviting people m
- Making people welcome at CU events

2. Be ready in the run up to the group take the opportunity to get some training.

You could:

a. Get to know **Mark's gospel better**. A general outline of this is found on the following page

b. Get some **training in Evangelism** from someone who has done it before, a local church, U.C.C.F or emailing **FESTIVE** could help you with this

c. Get to **know more about the person of Jesus**, an excellent video "WHO IS THIS JESUS?" has 3 x 20 minute sections to help with this and encourage you to share Jesus today.

3. **Be inviting.** Often friends of CU members will be willing to come along to a 5 week discussion group and they will already know a bit about what will happen because they know you! But out in the campus there will be others who, if you invite them, will give it a try, this is where Student Surveys, "special meetings" like Pancake Day or a CU party could work well. Contact **FESTIVE** for more help!

HOW CAN I PREPARE AS A LEADER

- On top of the above:

1. **Prepare the sessions** (see later notes on the role of a leader)

2. **Delegate and organise** the practical side.

Room booking ,notifying the college, do you want posters and invites, prayer letter to local church(?) etc. Think ahead.

3. **Care for those who come.** Make sure everyone is welcomed, comfortable and followed up after the meetings.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO MARK'S GOSPEL

(FOR ALL THE C.U)

WHO WROTE IT?

John Mark or Mark ,was probably the cousin of Barnabas (Acts 4v36-37) and the son of Mary, an early Christian, who held meetings at her house(Acts 12v12) He was a friend of the apostle Peter , from whom he gathered much of his information , and of Paul who he accompanied on some of his journeys.

WHO WAS IT WRITTEN FOR?

For all people, but with special emphasis on Gentiles(non Jews), and new believers..

WHEN ?

Probably about. AD. 60 - 65,

KEY THEMES:

1. Humanity of Jesus .

Mark, perhaps more than the other Gospel writers paints a picture of a very human Jesus. He is shown at times as weary (8v12) , angry (3v5) or even limited by other peoples perspective of him (6v1-6) . His is a very real life grounding the extraordinary in the everyday.

2. The Son of Man

This term used frequently by Jesus for himself has 2 meanings, both found in the Old Testament, firstly to denote an everyday person human and very different to God. Secondly however it referred back to a figure in **Daniel 7v13-14**. One who was given

"dominion glory and kingdom, that all peoples nations and languages should serve him."

This then is a very different image to the first use of the term. By referring to himself as **Son of Man** Jesus would immediately ring bells in the minds of his *Jewish* audience. What he was claiming for himself was not just an everyday phrase, but a highly provocative title.

3. The Messiah.

Like the phrase Son of Man, the word Messiah would mean a lot to Jews in the 1st century, for them he would be Gods messenger , His Chosen One sent to lead the people out of political oppression into a new era, a new state for Israel. Jesus knew how wrong their concept had become, God's Messiah was always

intended to rescue his people from something far greater than political repression. God's Messiah would rescue them from their own sin and separation from God.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions. he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed " **Isaiah 53v5f**

It is because Jesus knew how far astray their thinking had gone, that he is often shown demanding silence from those who called him Son of God or Messiah. His true identity could only be grasped in light of the cross and resurrection. Thus Mark's gospel is very much posing and answering the question: **WHO is Jesus?**

STRUCTURE

- CHAPTERS 1 V 1-15 THE PROLOGUE
- CHAPTERS 1V16-8 V 26 THE PUBLIC MINISTRY
- CHAPTERS 8 V 27-END PARTING (OR DEATH NARRATIVE)

THE ROLE OF A LEADER

I'm sure as you read this you will have in your mind the "perfect" **Free: life** group leader, and that picture, probably, isn't really very like you! Be encouraged then from the start that there is no perfect leader. There are simply unique ,imperfect individuals with a unique and perfect God on their side...right, that's cleared that up...

What then is the leader there to do.....?

1. To love and care for the group.

Paul in his letter to the church at Thessalonica talked of a similar small group of people

" for what is our hope our joy or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when he comes. Is it not you? Indeed you are our glory and crown ." **Thessalonians 2 v 19-20**

Being a leader means involvement and investment in people's lives, not just seeing them as potential converts but people!

2. To allow God through the Bible and His Spirit to speak to us

3. **To be a listener** .It is easy to just plough through the material but we do need to hear what people are saying! This does not mean allowing one person to hijack the discussion or get side tracked on red herrings. It is a good idea to make a list of questions people ask and deal with them at the end of the meeting.

4. **To be aware** of different personalities, and to facilitate good group relations.

5. **To be honest** about your own faith, in all aspects

PRACTICALLY.....

1. Read through all of Marks gospel for yourself!!

This may sound daunting but can be done as though reading through any other short story. Use other formats to supplement this, such as the Message version, by Eugene Peterson, or try listening to a tape of the gospel being read.

2. Get reading through the **Free: life** material to familiarize yourself

3. Get praying and get others praying for you.

4. Get the whole C.U involved, from praying to providing the drinks

ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS

Many Christians will have a fear of all things evangelistic simply because they feel unable to answer tough questions. In their minds all non Christians have a Phd in theology and are just waiting to outsmart the nearest Christian!

For those people, it will come as a comfort to know that God calls us to be his children, not his encyclopedias! Don't be afraid of not knowing everything, and certainly don't let that be an excuse to avoid starting up a group.

There are 2 main reasons why a question may be tough:

1. We don't know the answer

2. We don't know why they are asking it

Firstly then, there will always be questions we cannot answer this side of eternity. Be honest, don't try to blag your way out ! Say that you will go away and try to find out for them.

Use the Bible itself, a concordance, books on apologetics , or people you know such as church leaders, **Festive** or UCCF staff workers. Make an effort and show that they, and their questions, matter.

Secondly, WHY are they asking this question . Listen to the person as a whole not just the question.

...Perhaps they are asking because there is a need in their life, for example, people who ask about the question of suffering may well be facing such an issue in their life. Get to know these people don't just answer their questions.

People may also ask questions to sound clever or to impress others. Such questions are often very academic and may well simply divert the group from the real issues. As with all such questions, treat the person with respect but be aware of time restraints, maybe you could meet after the group to discuss it further.

Whatever the reason, tough questions may well arise, but don't be discouraged, God has promised that his word will not return without having made an effect. It is up to us to declare his words but leave results to him...

THE FIRST MEETING

1. Invite friends of the CU or people you have met on outreach to attend a **Free: life** group .
2. Meet as soon as possible and when most convenient
3. Find a room to comfortably hold everyone, somewhere relaxed and convenient.
4. Make sure there are more non Christians than Christians. You only really need 2or 3 volunteers from the C.U
5. Make sure you arrive early to set up the room .
6. If possible provide food and drink (it could just be sweets or doughnuts, be creative!) and have music in the background. Such things help to provide a friendly and welcoming environment
7. Introduce yourself and others, and explain exactly what will happen each week
8. Relax! God is in control and he loves you very much!

PART TWO – The Course

Introduction – Week 1.

There are **TWO** options for an introduction. An *informal Introduction* which may be more laid back and for the creative mind or the *formal Introduction* – about worldviews. This may suit an academic, philosophical mind much better... **Know your group and College and choose what's best!**

OPTION 1!

Informal Introduction:

As this is the first introduction session, try to make every effort to create a welcoming environment (see above notes on the first meeting)

Session 1 differs from the format of weeks 2 - 5 and is divided into 2 sections, the newspaper report and the bible bit.

THE REPORT

This needs 2 people to read out loud as though it were an interview. The 2 characters are representing 2 quite different viewpoints

John Mark or Mark is caught up in the midst of the early church. He is a strong believer and open about the good news of Jesus.

The interviewer represents the stance held by many people today, a mixture of Skepticism and yet interest.

GET STUCK IN!

Mark 8 v 27-29. Explain it is from the part of the Bible you will be looking at over the next few weeks.

Key things to bring out of the passage

- Jesus as a figure caused mixed reactions from people around him
- John the Baptist and Elijah were both prophets or messengers of God. They were both powerful men but only human.
- Peter's answer shows that he sees Jesus as more than these 2 people. He calls him Christ, which means *one set apart by God to deliver his people*.

- Jesus as a figure is still very controversial today. Who would WE say he is?

End by thanking everyone for coming and remind them of the next meeting.

TO DO FOR NEXT TIME

Pray. Collect pictures of famous people in the news. Ask a CU member to prepare a testimony.

OR

OPTION 2!

Formal Introduction – Worldviews. 'Exploring what I believe'

MAIN AIM

To help people understand what beliefs they already hold about God.

MAIN THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE LEARNT

What they believe.

What – if anything, is illogical about those beliefs.

-That whilst you cannot prove Gods existence it is not illogical to believe in Him.

HOW TO

Use the first part as an introduction, so work through it to set the scene.

The question where does God fit into all this is not the right question for a Christian to ask, but is best asked in this way at this stage. Don't invite answers at this point but work through the step by step section letting people comment where they want. Some will be reflective and say little, others will respond verbally and want to engage you. Unlike the other sessions, this is not the time to draw out the quiet ones, let them mull it over.

Only bring Mark 8 in if you think it is helpful at this point

SUMMARY

This may have been tough going, don't worry these are BIG issues and don't get solved in 1 hour. Just having a go will get people thinking.

TO DO FOR NEXT TIME

Try to talk to individuals afterwards in case they have questions they need answering before the next session.

WEEK 2 - WHO IS JESUS?

MAIN AIM:

To show that Jesus is no ordinary person but **The Son of God** whose coming was promised long ago.

MAIN THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE LEARNT:

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God not just another Religious Leader.
- God says He loves him and is pleased with him.
- His Ministry is no accident but was promised long before

INTRO:

Bring in any resources you have found of famous people, and use them in the intro

Session.

Q.1 John Mark's testimony

a) Key things are that he calls Jesus, the well known " local boy ", two surprising things. The CHRIST and SON OF GOD .

b) Try to draw out the father son relationship, but be aware of the exclusive nature of Jesus relationship to the Father in contrast to ours. Do not get side tracked into issues of the Trinity but there may be members of the group who will need to explore this, especially if they have had dealings with Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons or Muslims.

c) Having such a prediction of Jesus' ministry shows just how important an event it was, and how important the consequences must be.

Q2 John the Baptist's testimony

a) Untying someone's sandals in middle eastern culture is a dirty messy job!! It was the task given to the lowest of servants, yet John doesn't feel worthy to do even this for Jesus.

Jesus is thus an amazing and powerful character, far above any other person This contrast is also shown in the difference between the two men's baptisms. John's baptism could only be an external washing with water whereas Jesus would baptize a person from the inside with the power of the Holy Spirit

SUMMARY

Pick up the theme from the intro session of "**who do you say I am?**"

TESTIMONY

Keep this brief, a couple of minutes or so, maybe bringing out the idea of who Jesus is to the individual.

TO DO FOR NEXT TIME

Pray. .Get a group from the C.U to do some of the student surveys (see enclosed sheet on how to do student surveys). If not already done as a way of inviting people to **Free: life**, using these would be extremely useful.

WEEK3 - WHAT IS THE MAIN PROBLEM OF OUR TIME?

MAIN AIM

Jesus sees Sin as our main problem and says He can deal with it.

Main things people should have learnt:

- Whatever we think, Jesus shows that to Him – Sin is the biggest problem.
- Jesus claims He can forgive sins, something only God can do.
- He is not put off by the opposition this brings from religious people.

INTRO

If you have had time to do the student surveys you might want to look at the results of those. If not, ask the group what they think?

GET STUCK IN:

- a) b) Bring out the concept of people seeing Jesus as just a healer or good man, Look back at 1 v32-39. This explains why the crowd and the friends were gathering round him.
- c) Jesus as usual looks beyond the surface issues and sees the real need which is spiritual, not physical healing
- d) SIN should be seen as never being able to reach Gods perfect standards, or of missing the mark. It doesn't matter if you miss by a little or by a lot , a miss is still a miss!
- e) Sin has eternal consequences

TO DO FOR NEXT TIME

Pray. Meet up with the other C.U members involved to discuss and pray.

WEEK 4 – IN OR OUT OF HEAVEN'S DOOR

MAIN AIM:

Jesus criteria for making it to Heaven is not the same as the world believes.
He assumes it involves ransom (or rescuing) by his death.

MAIN THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE LEARNT:

Getting to Heaven can't be earned or worked for, It takes a **ransom** -
- **Jesus' life on the cross for ours.**
The life of a follower of Jesus will be one of service and giving.

INTRO

Pick up on some of the issues raised last time. The ultimate idea being that none of our actions will ever be enough to meet Gods perfect standard and thus get us into heaven.

-Something, or rather someone else is needed to help us. **The standard is not what we do but in whom we trust!**

Qa)b)c)

Try to bring out the concept of priorities and aims in this life. What we value most highly will affect how we act. Jesus' mission was to give up his life as a ransom, A Christian believer's life should be one modeled on Jesus – living for Him first and serving Him and others! ...While John and James wanted the best seats in heaven.

IMPORTANT! This whole area is very important if we are to tell people the whole truth about being a Christian. It is too easy to tell people to become a Christian for all the "benefits" whilst forgetting that to mention Jesus call to take up your cross. **Literally to be willing to die to a self centred way of life in order to live God 's way!!**

d) This will help people to think through what they believe about their life and life – after – death. It may be the first time they have faced this question, or it may be the first time they have reflected on their beliefs since starting to read about Jesus. It will help them through what they think and what Jesus says.

If someone after today's session wants to become a Christian or ask more – don't hold back to week 5 because there is a time for that then. Pray with them, meet them for a tea – try to answer their questions!

TO DO FOR NEXT TIME:

Pray. Offer to meet up with people individually to discuss any further points.

WEEK 5 - RSVP

THEME

Individual response to what we have learnt.

MAIN AIM

To show that we have a choice as to how we act on what we hear about Jesus.

MAIN THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE LEARNT:

- There isn't a neutral position in all of this
- Everyone responds in some way to Jesus

INTRO

Ultimately Jesus' death on the cross made a way for people to come before God and begin to live a life for him. Many people haven't chosen to accept such a way and the majority of people still live selfishly and sinfully.

A society built of such people inevitably causes huge problems, such as racism or homelessness.

Jesus death on the cross did away with the penalty of sin, but the consequences of sin are still around and affect us all, even Christians who are still far from perfect!

Qa)b)

Again, emphasise that the character of Jesus has always created division in who people say he is. Many will choose to reject him.

N.B v12 can seem a little confusing at first. Jesus here is using irony, almost being sarcastic about the state of people's heart, and their stubbornness to turn to him.

The Message Bible puts it well: people are like those:

"... whose eyes are open but don't see a thing, whose ears are open but don't understand a word. Who avoid making an about face and getting forgiven

c) Turning means to deliberately take a different direction in life. Being forgiven is like having a clean page in front of you to replace the old grubby and useless one you had before. The person who is forgiven by God stands before him as clean and pure as Jesus...WOW!

d) The Christian life is to be lived fully and part of that means bearing fruit. Being so amazed by God's love and mercy that it shows in everything you do, and thus causes those around you to want to know more.

The Christian life is also that of a servant, serving God and others above ourselves is ultimately the only path to greatness.

SUMMARISE

Allow for more question time now and be prepared to meet and talk things through 1-1 with individuals.

...WHAT TO DO NOW?

A group exploring the claims of Christianity isn't designed to be a self-contained lecture on how to become a Christian.

Rather it is the starting point of dialogue between the C.U and non Christians. So how have people reacted?

SOME MAY BE UN INTERESTED

- 1) Thank them
- 2) Pray for them
- 3) Continue to meet as appropriate
- 4) Invite them to other events when appropriate

SOME MAY BE OPEN AND INTERESTED

- 1) Thank them
- 2) Pray for them
- 3) Continue to meet, maybe do a follow up 1-1 bible study
- 4) Invite to other things and to a good local church

SOME MAY WANT TO MAKE A COMMITMENT

- 1) Ask what they think the gospel is in their own words
- 2) Explain about the joys and the struggles!
- 3) Pray with them, confessing their need of forgiveness and their desire to know God and live for him themselves.

Don't be afraid, there is no magic prayer for new Christians!

- 4) Get them meeting someone of the same sex to do some follow up and to provide support.
- 5) Invite them to a church

If you are hoping to run a **Free: life** course or similar, please contact us at

info@festive.org.uk

So that we can **pray** for your CU and the individuals attending.

Please also contact us for more advice about running an Evangelistic Bible-Study and ideas on how best to introduce your mates to Jesus!