

Coronavirus

Start ▶

God, Jesus and
the journey of
life in six sessions

INTRODUCTION

Start is a tried and trusted Christian Basics Course that has been used by hundreds of churches over many years.

With the present Coronavirus Crisis in mind we thought it would be good to write a special edition which you could encourage individuals to use who are self-isolating.

Start helps people to:

- think about where they are going with their lives
- grapple with questions about God, Jesus and faith
- begin to consider the good news of Jesus for themselves
- consider how they want to respond to him.

HOW TO USE CORONAVIRUS START

You need to point individuals to download the member's notes for the six sessions by clicking on the following link.

<https://bit.ly/3aRwl4n>

Each person will need access to a device (smartphone, tablet, laptop, PC, etc.) that allows internet access so that they can click on the following links to access each 15 minute video on YouTube:

Session 1: https://youtu.be/pOcT_haLYDM

Session 2: <https://youtu.be/azTF9kxt4rA>

Session 3: <https://youtu.be/Hcy-ve0RI-U>

Session 4: <https://youtu.be/dR9pr0XO544>

Session 5: <https://youtu.be/QFuapm0oJUw>

Session 6: https://youtu.be/Cv26rJT2_nc

The video clip for each session lasts approximately 15 minutes. Those taking part are encouraged to pause the video from time to time to do some thinking and to fill in exercises on the member's notes that have been downloaded.

NOTES

- You may prefer to use our handouts and videos as a template to re-film the course. There is always real value in the presentation being done by someone people know. With this in mind we have included the following leader's notes to help you.
- For session 6 it would be good to obtain copies of the START BOOKLET. These are short booklets designed to compliment the Start Course and be something that people can refer to and reflect on time and again. You can obtain these from the LYCIG Website: <https://bit.ly/35aDUSC>
Four Start booklets cost £4 including postage and packaging, twenty-five cost £20 including P&P, and fifty cost £35 including P&P
- For new Christians it would be good to help them obtain a modern edition of the Bible.
- Once we come out of social distancing it would be good to invite people who have completed this course along to a small group, where they can ask questions and be involved in discussion. In a group setting there would be value in using:
The full START course: <https://bit.ly/2YcsdcM> (digital version) or <https://bit.ly/3eXrVMB> (physical version)
MOVING ON: <https://bit.ly/2YbCUw1> (digital) or <https://bit.ly/35dsVb8> (physical)

START: Created by Robin Gamble, produced by Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) and adapted for use during the Coronavirus Crisis of 2020 by Neil Short.

Leaders Notes: Session 1 - Life is for Living

The video clip for session 1 can be found at: https://youtu.be/pOcT_haLYDM

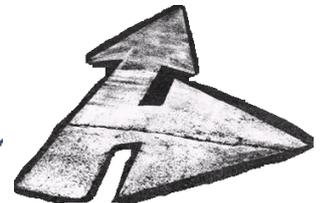
WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

We all have a life. But where is it going? What is it really all about? What's the point of it and where will it end? Let's have a think about life and what it's all about...

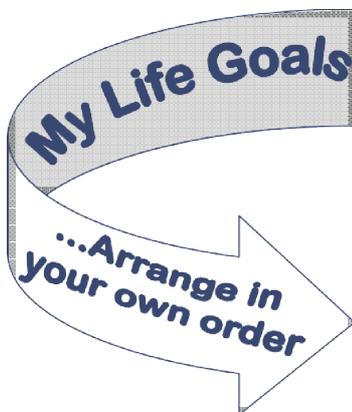
My grandma told me that when you get older, time goes faster. I have discovered she was right. For half an hour each session we are going to stop time, look back at our life so far, see what we are doing and, most importantly, think about what we want to do with the rest of our lives

Here are some phrases to describe life:

- a pile: a matter of collecting material things
- a circle: doing the same thing every day
- a splodge: having no purpose or meaning
- a journey: having all your life goals mapped out



MY LIFE GOALS:



<input type="checkbox"/>	Enjoy my family
<input type="checkbox"/>	Manage my finances
<input type="checkbox"/>	Travel the world
<input type="checkbox"/>	New car
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good personal health
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nice house
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loyal friends
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lots of hobbies
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lasting joy
<input type="checkbox"/>	No worries
<input type="checkbox"/>	Latest gadgets
<input type="checkbox"/>	Inner peace

STOP THE VIDEO

REFLECTION ON THE LAST EXERCISE

- People tend to put Good Personal Health, Enjoy my Family, Inner Peace near the top, and they tend to put Travel the World, New Car, Nice House near the bottom.
- However, many people spend a lot of their time and effort trying to obtain the things they have marked at the bottom.

LIFELINE?

B ----- D

- Put a cross on the line for where you think you are now.
- Put two crosses above the line for two happy and memorable events in your life.
- Put two crosses below the line for sad events in your life.

STOP THE VIDEO

A TRIP TO THE RAILWAY STATION

If spiritual life is like a trip to the railway station, where would you put yourself today?

For example:

- Looking at the map to see where you can go in the spiritual life.
- Asleep on the bench. Up to now not interest in spiritual things.
- Buying a ticket.
- Waiting on the platform for the train to come.
- Getting on the train.
- Already on the train.

.



STOP THE VIDEO

*I have come that you might have life,
life in all its fullness.*

John 10v10

NEXT WEEK

We will be thinking about what is the evidence for the existence of God.

Leader's Notes: Session 2 - Oh My God

The video clip for Session 2 can be found at: <https://youtu.be/azTF9kxt4rA>

EVIDENCE FOR AND AGAINST THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

No one can conclusively prove that there is a God, but then no one can prove that he doesn't exist either. Even the atheist must concede that. Either way it is a step of faith.

Against

- Why is there suffering in the world?
- If God is there why doesn't he prove it?
- What about other religions?
- Hasn't science disproved religion?

For

- Creation
- Anthropology
- The difference God makes in people's lives
- Human Need
- Moral

Evidence for the existence of God

Anthropology

Every Tribe that has ever been discovered worships some concept of a deity.

They may worship the sun, the moon, or a big rock but they worship.

Anthropologists say that there is in every person a desire to reach out and find something beyond themselves.

The Bible says God has made us in his image, and placed a desire within us to find him.

Design in Creation

Most Christians believe in evolution but they also believe in a master designer behind creation.

If I find a watch on the floor, I don't think how did that just evolve. I see how intricate it is and think, I wonder who designed that.

When a baby is born even atheistic dads have said to me: 'That's a miracle.'

Scientists tell us that for life to be created on earth the conditions have to be exactly right:

- i) The accuracy of timing that has to exist between various forces in the universe to make life possible has been described by one scientist, who admits that he is not a religious man, as the accuracy a marksman would need if he wanted to hit a one inch target at the other end of the universe.
- ii) Another scientist, who is also not a Christian, has said "The chance that life on earth are about as likely as a typhoon blowing through a junk yard and constructing a Boeing 747".
- iii) An explosion in a printing works and forming a dictionary.

Human Need

Lots of time people go through life ignoring God. But in times of need they often cry out to God for help, safety or inner peace. It is often said that in the First World War there wasn't a single soldier that didn't first pray before going over the top. It's interesting that during this present crisis we have heard the word PRAYER more often on the TV

Moral

There clearly are things in the world which are Good: mother's love for a child...acts of kindness or generosity...friendship...

And things that are Bad: stealing things...strong oppressing the weak...murder, assault...

As well as living in a physical universe...we also seem to live in a moral universe...

Where did Morality come from

Perhaps there are forces of Good and Evil behind the world we live in?

The Difference God makes in people's lives

For millions and millions of Christians throughout History and around the world...same story...believing in Jesus Christ helps us to become better people...! There is lots of evidence that God makes a difference in people's lives!

- Lad in my youth club who was a troubled soul and always in trouble with the police. Became a Christian. His life was transformed. He now works as a youth leader.

So What is God Like?

God is described as	This means I am a
Shepherd	Sheep
Father	Son/Daughter/heir
Friend	Friend
Creator	Creature

Judge	Criminal/Accused
King	Subject/Servant
Saviour	Saved
Husband	Wife

My favourite picture of God is.....

There is no absolute proof that God exists
 ...but then there is no absolute proof that God does not exist.

But the Bible says that there is a God....and that he is like a shepherd, who wants to love us, care for us and guide us through this life.

I finish this session by reading Psalm 23:

Because the Lord is my Shepherd,
 I have everything I need!
 He lets me rest in the meadow grass
 and leads me beside the quiet streams.
 He gives me new strength.
 He helps me do what honours him the most.
 Even when walking through the dark valley of death
 I will not be afraid,
 for you are close beside me,
 guarding, guiding all the way.
 You provide delicious food for me
 in the presence of my enemies.
 You have welcomed me as your guest;
 blessings overflow!
 Your goodness and unfailing kindness
 shall be with me all of my life,
 and afterwards I will live with you forever in your home.

Leader's Notes: Session 3 - Jesus Who?

The video clip for session 3 can be found at: <https://youtu.be/Hcy-ve0RI-U>

THE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS

Two types of evidence:

1. Evidence left by Christians

- (a) The most important is the New Testament
- (b) Other letters and books



Luke 1v1-4

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

But is it biased?

This is a silly argument: If I want information about flowers who do I talk to? My mate Brian who doesn't know the difference between a Dahlia and a Daffodil, or do I talk to Cynthia who runs the church gardening team? I talk to the expert, the one who is interested in the subject.

The New Testament writers were committed experts. They met Jesus, talked with him, saw what he did....and believed him. They saw him after he was raised from the dead, they were eye witnesses. See Luke 1 v1-4.

2. Evidence left by non-Christians

- (a) e.g. JOSEPHUS. Jewish historian born AD37, who wrote a history of the Jewish people.

"And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led

away many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease; and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out."

(Page 108: "The New Testament Documents. Are They Reliable?" by F.F. Bruce)

(b) Likewise, if we had time, we could look at the greatest Roman Historian of the time Tacitus who likewise refers to Jesus.

Regardless of what we may think, it is a cold, hard fact that Jesus was a real historical figure in 1st Century Palestine.

There is still a great fascination about Jesus today:

- every day 78,000 new Christians
- every week 1,000 new churches in Africa & Asia
- 34% of the world population is Christian
- In this country lots of people have become disillusioned by the Church, but there is still lots of interest in Jesus:
 - lots of films about Jesus
 - books about Jesus
 - TV programmes about Jesus
- and the Bible remains the best seller year in and year out.

The issue is not did Jesus live, but whether what he claimed about himself is true.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT JESUS ALREADY?

Fill in what you know. Some questions are easy, some are difficult and some are trick questions.

Place of birth:	Bethlehem
Date of birth:	4BC?
Religion:	Jewish
Social class:	Upper working class
Father's occupation:	Carpenter / Creator of the universe!
Education:	At the synagogue
Income:	None as an itinerant preacher
Marital status:	Single
Friends/Associates:	Lots/varied
Character weaknesses:	Turning over the tables?

Any unusual behaviour: **Walking on water, feeding 5,000 etc**

Three truths about Jesus

(a) He was human: Mark 6 v1-3

He was ordinary flesh and blood

He had a job

He had brothers – lived in a family

He ate, slept, cried, got tired

If you put a pin in him, he bled

(b) He was divine: John 14 v8-10

When he stilled the storm “what sort of man is this?”

When he taught “such authority”

When he healed “where does he get his power?”

(c) He came to reconcile us to God: 2 Corinthians 5 v19

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”

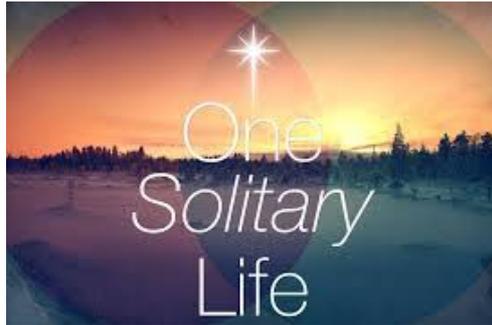
Because he is human:

- he is able to put his hand into our hand
- he understands our situation, the difficulties we face

Because he is divine:

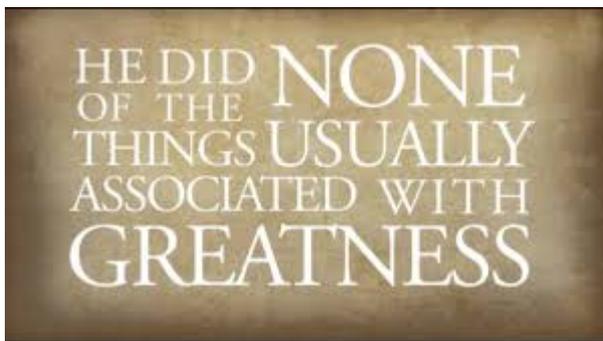
- he is able to put his hand into God’s hand
- he has the power to help us

2 Corinthians 5 v19: is saying Jesus is able to bring our hand and put it into God’s hand.



He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in still another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was 30. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a



house. He didn't go to college. He never travelled more than 200 miles from the place He was born. He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

He was only 33 when public opinion turned against Him. His friends deserted Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. When He was dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race, the leader of mankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on earth as much as that One Solitary Life.

Leader's Notes: Session 4 – What's Gone Wrong?

The video clip for session 4 can be found at: <https://youtu.be/dR9pr0XO544>

INTRODUCTION

- Creation is being destroyed.
- Relationships breaking down.
- Ourselves – we can't seem to do what we want to do and often do the things we don't want.

This week we are thinking about "What's gone wrong?"

MARKS OUT OF 5

We all do things that are wrong.

Some temptations we find easy to resist, some more difficult.

Personally, I don't find getting drunk a problem, I tend to fall asleep a long time before that, so I would mark myself a '1'

However, I struggle with bitterness, so a 5.

Have a go at the exercise

0 if you are a walking angel

5 if you are beyond all hope!

You can't put 3 for them all.

<input type="text"/>	Swearing	<input type="text"/>	Envy
<input type="text"/>	Immoral thoughts	<input type="text"/>	Bitterness
<input type="text"/>	Drunkenness	<input type="text"/>	Immoral acts
<input type="text"/>	Ignoring God	<input type="text"/>	Anger
<input type="text"/>	Lying	<input type="text"/>	Stealing
<input type="text"/>	Pride	<input type="text"/>	Hate

- We all make mistakes.
- None of us are perfect.

- If we only did 3 sins a day, we would be a walking angel.

But 3 sins per day, 21 per week, 1000 in a year, 80,000 in a lifetime.

- Romans 3v23 Everyone has sinned and fallen short... Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa
- **SIN** We all have a big selfish I in the middle of us. Like 'Blackpool' through the rock.

For all of us
have sinned
and fallen
short of
God's Glory.



Romans 3: 23

DAVID, BATHSHEBA AND URIAH - 2 Samuel 11v1-28

- ❖ One spring the aging David decided not to go off to war with the army but to stay home.
- ❖ He gets bored and notices the beautiful Bathsheba.
- ❖ He invites her over; one thing leads to another and they end up in bed.
- ❖ A few weeks later Bathsheba calls to say she is pregnant.
- ❖ David calls her husband Uriah back from the front, so that eventually when the baby is born he is not concerned.
- ❖ Uriah would not sleep with his wife.
- ❖ So, David sends a letter with Uriah to Joab the commander of the army.
- ❖ He tells Joab to put Uriah in the front line and to make sure he gets exposed.
- ❖ Uriah is killed.
- ❖ News gets back to David, and after a suitable time he marries her.

However, 2 Samuel 11v 27 says, 'The thing David had done displeased the Lord.' And from Psalm 51 which David later wrote, it displeased himself.

Read Psalm 51 below and ask yourself the following questions:

- How many times does David acknowledge he is a sinner?
- Does David believe God can forgive him?
- Does David think his life can change?
- Is it fair that God should forgive David?

PSALM 51V1-12

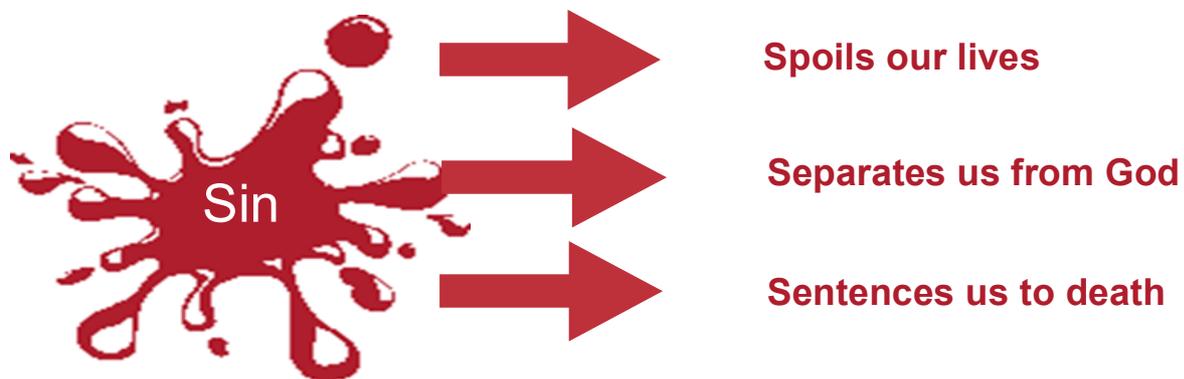
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. ⁵Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. ⁶Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.



Although we often forget our sin and sweep it under the carpet, God cannot do that. He is a God who sees all that we do and remembers it.

Sin has a threefold effect:

- It spoils our lives
E.g. Lady who fiddled her expenses.

- It separates us from God
E.g. Think cloud on a sunny day at Manchester Airport
Prayers bouncing off the ceiling.
- It sentences us to death
"For the wages of sin is death" Romans 6v23
At the end of a life with sin, we pick up the wage packet of eternal separation from God.

Conclusion

- God hates sin.
- But he loves us the sinners.
- He hasn't given up on us ... he wants to solve our problem of sin, and that's what we will be looking at in the next session.

Leader's Notes: Session 5 - Dying to save us

The video clip for session 5 can be found at: <https://youtu.be/QFuapm0oJUw>

Welcome to our 5th session of START the real meaning of Jesus' cross.

- This is the very heart of the Christian message.
- This is where people often disagree
- This is where we part company with other religions
- Take away the cross and there is no Christianity

HYMN: THERE IS A GREEN HILL FAR AWAY

There is a green hill far away,
without a city wall,
where the dear Lord was crucified,
who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
what pains he had to bear,
but we believe it was for us,
he hung and suffered there.

There was no other good enough
to pay the price for sin
he only could unlock the gate,
of heaven and let us in.

Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved,
and we must love him too,
and trust in his redeeming love
and try his works to do.

Underline two or three phrases that speak to you.....

FACT

There is more written about
Jesus' death than any other
part of his life.

- More about Jesus' death than any other part of his life.
- The whole second half of Mark's Gospel is the last week of Jesus' life. This shows how important his death is.

FOUR WAYS TO LOOK AT THE CROSS

1. The Bridge



Ephesians 2v8-9

Going to Church

Good Works

Religion

Baptised

Isaiah 59v2

Romans 5v8
John 3v16
John 5v24

2. The Temple

At that moment the curtain the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
Matthew 27v51

3. The Book on the Hand

All we like sheep have gone astray, each one according to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the sins of us all. Isaiah 53v6

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Mark 15v34

4. The Judge and Son

Reflection

- i) Which one of these four illustrations have you found most helpful?
- ii) With reference to the first illustration:
 - Which side of the ravine are you on?
 - Which side do you want to be on?
 - Are you trying to build your own bridges, or are you trusting in the cross?

Conclusion

Next week we are going to think about how a person becomes a Christian, and I am going to give you an opportunity to say a prayer of commitment.

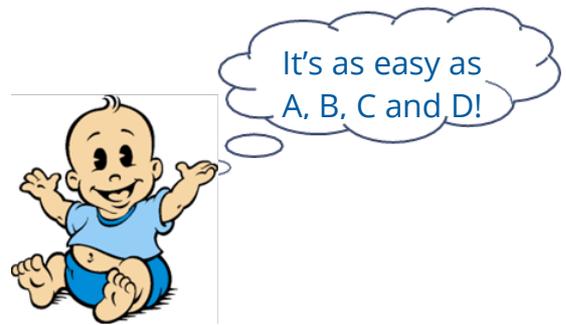
Leader's Notes: Session 6 - Into the Arms of Love

The video clip for session 6 can be found at: https://youtu.be/Cv26rJT2_nc

Different people or churches might talk about being born-again; being saved; being converted; giving your heart to the Lord; and many other terms. When you get down to it, they are basically different terms for the same thing.



Aren't they just different words for the same thing? YES!



In essence it is as simple as **A-B-C-D**.

A FOR ADMIT

We need to start by admitting that we are sinners. Unless we start here, we aren't going to get much further.

- We might not be bad but...walking angel 3, 21, 1,000, 80,000 sins in an average lifetime.
- Drowning man. If a man falls into the sea at Blackpool and he can't swim, what must he do? Shout "HELP, SAVE ME!" We must do the same.

B FOR BELIEVE

- John 3 v16
- Tell the Story of Blondin

C FOR CONSIDER

- Think of the cost – change of lifestyle; what people might say
- Jesus told the parable of the man who decided to build a tower (weigh up the cost before you start).

D FOR DO

- You become a Christian by saying a simple prayer:
- I will give you a chance to do this later.

BIBLE STUDY - John 3 v1-16, the story of Nicodemus

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- Why do you think Nicodemus came at night? Do you identify with this? (Presumably because he did not want anyone to see him).
- What did Jesus mean by being "born again"? (We are all born once by a physical birth. But Jesus says it is possible to be born again spiritually).
- What did Nicodemus stand to lose by giving his life to Jesus? And what did he stand to gain?

(He might lose his job, status and friends. He will gain forgiveness, acceptance and eternal life.

It was Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who took Jesus body from the cross and put it in the tomb. Nicodemus had decided to follow Jesus).

THE "LADDER OF SALVATION"

I now want to really grow

I have told someone what I've done ...

I'm beginning to experience new life ...

Yes, I'm going for commitment ...

I'm nearly there ...

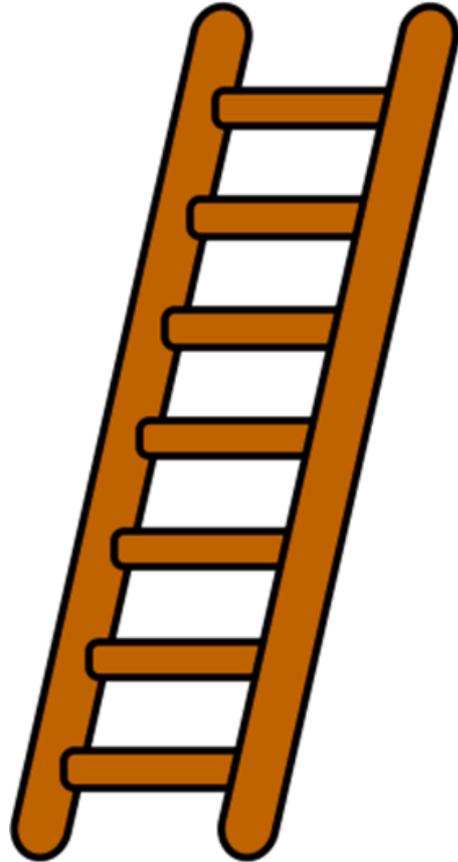
I'm seriously searching ...

Something is happening ...

I've still got serious questions ...

I'm just not interested ...

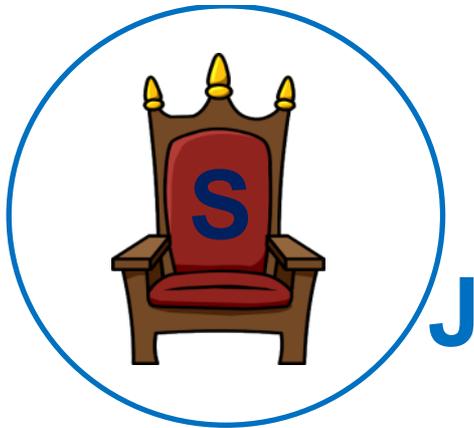
I'm a total unbeliever ...



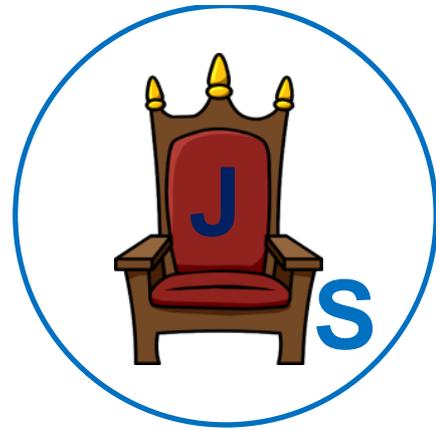
- Put a cross on the ladder where they were at the start of the course.
- Put a cross on the ladder where they are now.

THE CIRCLES OF LIFE

Self-directed person



The Jesus directed person



- Which circle better describes you now?
- Which circle would you like to describe you?

MAKING A NEW START: Explain what is going to happen

- Quiet. A couple of minutes to confess our sins to God.
- Say the prayer slowly so that they can read it with you.
- Pray for them, a prayer of assurance and asking God to fill them with His Holy Spirit.

Lord God

I am ready to make a new start with you.

I ask you to forgive the mess of my past life, to help me believe in you, and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus all of my days.

Amen.

If you have said this prayer and meant it, here are a few first steps as you start your new spiritual life:

Tell Someone: If you talk with your local church leader, they should be able to give you a copy of the START booklet.

Start Praying: Why not develop a brand-new good habit of learning to pray.

Start Reading your Bible: It's probably best to start in the New Testament with Mark's Gospel. If you don't have a modern version, get in touch with your local church leader.

Leader's Notes:

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3. Once we come out of social distancing it would be good to invite people who have completed this course along to a small group, where they can ask questions and be involved in discussion. In a group setting there would be value in using:

The full START course: <https://bit.ly/2YcsdcM> (digital version)
or <https://bit.ly/3eXrVMB>(physical version)

MOVING ON: <https://bit.ly/2YbCUw1>(digital)
or <https://bit.ly/35dsVb8>(physical)