# THE COURSE

LEADER MANUAL

BRIDGECOURSE.ORG

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# WELCOME

Thanks for joining us. I think you're really going to enjoy the Bridge Course. We've designed the Bridge to be a relaxed, fun way to explore the Christian faith. Over the next 10 weeks we're going to explore questions that many people wrestle with: How can God allow suffering? How good are you? Why doesn't God just forgive everyone? What will really satisfy? Can we really trust the Bible? One of the things that makes the Bridge so engaging is the open discussion, where no question is too simple or too hostile. It's a great place to explore spiritual issues in a non-threatening environment.

Maybe you're coming to the Bridge and you really don't feel like you need help or change—you're happy with where you are in life. Maybe things are falling apart and you're desperate for help and some answers. Maybe you just came out to appease a friend. Whatever the reason, I'd encourage you to approach the course with an open heart and an open mind. I always tell people up front, just test drive the course for the first 3 weeks. If you don't like it after that, then don't come anymore. We'll never pressure you. You'll never be cornered or called on. Our goal is to create a safe and friendly environment where you can explore the bigger questions of life at your own pace. So grab some dinner, get a cup of coffee, relax, and enjoy your journey on the Bridge.

- Jim Donohue

# TALKS

Week 1: How Good Are You?

Week 2: Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

Week 3: How Can God Allow Suffering?

Week 4: How Could God Send People to Hell?

Week 5: Can We Really Trust the Bible?

Week 6: Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

Week 7: Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Retreat 1: What Will Really Satisfy?

Retreat 2: Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?

Retreat 3: What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

Retreat 4: Is Hearing Enough?

Week 8: How Do We Know Jesus Rose From the Dead?

Week 9: Is Christianity Really Worth It? Week 10: Where Do We Go From Here?

Celebration Dinner: Who Really Needs God?

# TRAINING

### For Leaders and Assistant Leaders

### 1. What is the Bridge Course?

- The Bridge Course is a 10 week practical introduction to Christianity.
- Each night starts with dinner followed by a talk on different topics.
- The talks take a relevant question and answer it by using a particular passages from the Bible.
- The topics are:
  - 1. How Good Are You?
  - 2. Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?
  - 3. How Can God Allow Suffering?
  - 4. How Could God Send People to Hell?
  - 5. Can We Really Trust the Bible?
  - 6. Is Jesus Really the Only Way?
  - 7. Why Did Jesus Have to Die?
  - 8. How Do We Know Jesus Rose from the Dead?
  - 9. Is Christianity Really Worth It?
  - 10. Where Do We Go From Here?
- The talks are followed by an open, questions are welcome type discussion.
- There is no pressure in the discussions.
- They're a safe place to explore Christianity and interact with the talks.
- The Bridge Course is done in groups that are broken down by age.
- Each group has 2 leaders and 2 assistant leaders and approximately 8 to 10 guests.
- As a leader or an assistant leader, you will eat with your group, listen to the talk in your group and have a discussion in your group.
- After week 7 or 8 there is an overnight retreat.
- The retreat starts on Friday night and ends on Saturday at 5:00pm.
- After week 10 of the Course, we have what's called the Bridge Celebration Dinner.
- This is a special dinner to celebrate with those who have completed the course.
- The Bridge Celebration Dinner is a great opportunity for folks that have just completed the course to invite co-workers, family members, classmates and friends to learn more about what they've just experienced.
- The Bridge Celebration Dinner functions both as the end of one course and the beginning of another course.

### 2. What are the aims of the Bridge Course?

- We want to provide a safe, non-threatening environment where people can explore what true Christianity teaches.
- We want people to respond to the message of the gospel by repenting of their sins and trusting in Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation with God.
- We want people to encounter friendship and community as they experience the corporate body of Christ genuinely loving them and joyfully serving them.
- We want to see people added to a gospel centered church so that they can grow in their love for Christ and for others.

### 3. What makes for a successful Bridge Course?

### Prayer

- One of the reasons the Bridge Course has been successful is that we have made prayer a major priority.
- Prayer properly communicates our dependence on God and God loves to answer prayer.
- Everything we're trying to accomplish in the Bridge Course can only be accomplished by God.
- Prayer is a requirement when serving in the Bridge.
- "When we depend upon organizations, we get what organizations can do; when we depend upon educations, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but when we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do." A.C. Dixon

### 3. What makes for a successful Bridge Course?

• "Those who are short of breath in soul winning will never be successful. If they are not saved after twenty years of prayer, follow them up to the gates of hell! If they once pass those gates, your prayers are unallowable and unavailing, but to the very verge of the infernal pit follow them with your prayers. If they will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? Your prayers can reach them. Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, God has a voice which they must hear. Speak to him, and he will make them feel. Though they now treat you despitefully, rendering evil for your good, follow them with your prayers. Never let them perish for lack of your supplications." 2 – Charles Spurgeon

### Outreach

- Jesus wants us to be friends of sinners.
- Let's each take a step of boldness, reach out to someone in friendship and invite them to the Bridge Course (a co-worker, neighbor, family member or friend).

### 4. What happens during an evening course?

- **5:30** Prayer Meeting
- 6:30 Registration
  - Guests will register and receive a Bridge Manual, Bible, "How Good Are You?" booklet.
- 6:45 Dinner
- 7:20 Welcome and Announcements
- 7:40 Video
- 8:15 Dessert Break
- 8:30 Discussion Groups
  - Be sure to introduce yourself and co-leaders.
  - Do the name game icebreaker on week one.
  - Go over the ground rules for discussion on weeks 2 and 3 if you have new guests join the group.
    - ✓ Show mutual respect.
    - ✓ There is no such thing as a dumb question.
    - ✓ No one has to talk.
    - ✓ Only one person will talk at a time.
    - ✓ Please don't dominate the discussion.
  - Let your folks know that it won't be a successful group without their thoughts and input.
  - There is no pressure to participate and no question is too dumb.
  - The goal of this time is for the guests to talk, not the leaders or assistant leaders.
  - Your goal is to facilitate discussion by inviting participation, listening well and drawing out thoughts and opinions.
  - Please don't dominate the group or begin answering all their questions.
  - Be sure to introduce yourself and co-leaders.
  - Stick to the questions found in manual under "Discussion Starters".
  - Even though we know there are right and wrong answers, we don't want to correct people who are saying things that might be unbiblical.
  - We want to affirm people when they participate by thanking them for sharing or mentioning that what they shared was interesting.
  - It's important that we love people by listening, understanding and respecting what they think.
  - But we also don't want to leave people with the idea that all answers are correct.
  - What do you do if people are not coming up with a sound answer?
  - First, try to allow everyone to weigh in if possible, "What do others think?"
  - If the group is still producing unbiblical answers, bounce their thoughts off the talk.
  - Say something like, "Jim mentioned that none of us can get to God by our good works. How do you reconcile that with what you are saying?"
  - If that still doesn't work, draw your assistant leaders into the mix.
  - Don't call on them by name because guests may fear that you will call on them next.
  - When assistant leaders bring out the truth, you can move onto the next question.

#### 8:30 Discussion Groups

- Do not answer any questions that the quests ask you until they begin to really press you for the answers.
- This usually doesn't happen until a few weeks in.
- Don't pray to close the discussion until the end of the course, usually around week 8.
- Be comfortable with silence...
  - ✓ Wait for people to open up don't jump in and fill silence too soon.
  - ✓ You can say, "I know it's a difficult question or it can be hard to go first but take your time."
  - ✓ Restate the question and be patient.
  - ✓ Don't keep adding to the question.
  - ✓ If it's not working, move on to the next question.
  - ✓ Assistant leaders can also jumpstart the discussion if no one is answering.
- As a group leader, you have to let a lot of stuff go (many tangents).
- If you are an assistant leader, please lay back in the discussion.
- You should only speak when looked to.
- Also, the discussion doesn't have to stick to the talk.
- If the group has other questions, then go where they are.
- If they ask a hard question, sometimes it's best to point them to one of our books that covers this question. Ask them to read it and let them know that you can discuss it next time if they still have questions or it may come up in a future talk.

9:00 End

### 5. What makes an effective leader or assistant leader?

An effective Bridge leader is someone that is committed to prayer and someone that is committed to building friendships.

### Lessons From A New Bridge Leader:

- **To listen to people**. In my sinful pride, I can tend to dismiss what people are saying because I am eager to speak myself. In the discussion groups, though, listening is one of the primary keys to effectively ministering to others (and it's one of the primary ways we love people).
- **To pray**. Frankly, I have never in my life been to a prayer meeting like our Bridge prayer meetings! What a joy! As others prayed, I heard faith, expectation, sound doctrine, exaltation of God, concern for the lost, and so much more! These prayer meetings are alive, and no doubt they are critical to the success of this ministry.
- To expect God to work. God has greatly increased my faith for evangelism and for His work at large through my participation in Bridge. I didn't just hear about people's lives changing, but I also saw it firsthand.
- To function as a member of the body. I sinfully tend to act as a "lone ranger" many times. If I think something needs to be done for the Lord, then I'll just start doing it without seeking support from others. That is not the case with the Bridge. It was a terrific example to me of how we are to function as the body of Christ. Bridge would be nothing without the kitchen, child care, administrative, and facility workers. I learned so much from watching these people serve behind the scenes.
- To pour myself out for others. In the training, it was recommended that we go out of our way to develop friendships with those in our group. My wife and I followed this advice by inviting the group over to our house for a social function. In these ways and others, we were able to develop relationships of friendship and trust that God has used.
- To recognize my weakness. I can't save anybody! I knew this abstractly, but not so well practically. In Bridge, I saw the difference it made when the Holy Spirit came upon a person to convict of sin and change the heart. No amount of pleading on my part, no "magical" sinner's prayers on their part, could replace God's active presence to regenerate. I noticed this especially at the Bridge retreat.

### How do you prepare as a leader?

- Pray for your guests!
- Spend time looking at the leaders manual and circle 3 or 4 questions you hope to get to.
- Just stick to the discussion starters.
- Don't try to turn it into a bible study or re-write the questions.
- Ask God to help you to love the guests with the love of Christ.
- For the first night, be sure to call guests ahead of time. Tell them that they will be in your group and that you are looking forward to meeting them. Ask them if they know how to get to the location, remind them of the time and see if they have any questions.

### Some other tips for leaders:

- Make sure people are comfortable.
- Look for ways to serve them.
- Avoid weak leadership-not being prepared, not praying, letting one person do all the talking.
- Avoid dominant leadership-doing all the talking.
- Ask simple questions (what do you think? how do you feel?).
- Please stick to the discussion questions in the leaders manual.
- Treat everyone with respect and interest.
- Be sure to give encouragement when someone shares something.
- Keep the focus on the gospel not on morality.
- Consider using the "How Good Are You?" booklet outside of the discussion times to help explain the gospel.

### Some tips for the assistant leaders:

- You will probably have to lead at some point (leader might be sick or can't make it) so be prepared.
- It's best to have the assistant leaders take over if the leaders can't make it since they are already part of the group and have made connections with the guests.
- Provide feedback to the leaders on how to improve discussion.

### 6. Can the Bridge be done in less time?

- Yes, the DVD's are the perfect way to do the course in less time.
- And the course has been designed to be used in different contexts like a work place, a home, dorm room or anywhere you can show a video.
- You can even do the course one on one with a co-worker, neighbor, relative, classmate or friend. It's better to have more folks but one works just fine.

### 7. What happens on the retreat?

- The retreat takes place on a Friday night and Saturday after week 7 or 8 of the course.
- One of the things we focus on is the person of the Holy Spirit.
- The retreat also affords a wonderful opportunity to connect relationally.
- We do four sessions on the retreat:
  - 1. What Will Really Satisfy?
  - 2. Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?
  - 3. What Does the Holy Spirit Do?
  - 4. Is Hearing Enough?

• The schedule for the retreat looks like this:

### Friday Night

**6:00 pm** Depart and eat on road **8:00** Retreat Talk 1

### Saturday

8:00 amBreakfast9:00Retreat Talk 210:00Discussion10:30Break

10:45 Retreat Talk 311:30 Worship and prayer

 12:00 pm
 Lunch

 1:00
 Free time

 3:00
 Retreat Talk 4

 3:45
 Discussion

4:15 Worship and testimonies4:45 Group picture and depart

• Most of the course is focused on teaching and discussion - the time of ministry allows guests to encounter God in a way that they might never have encountered Him.

### 8. How often should the Bridge Course be run?

- An evening Bridge Course can be run 3 times a year in the Fall, Winter and Spring.
- We start our fall course in the middle of September, skip the week of Thanksgiving and end the first week in December.
- Because of the holidays, we do the Bridge Celebration Dinner on the first week of January.
- We then start the winter course in the middle of January and finish up before Easter.
- But we always have the Bridge Celebration Dinner immediately after Easter so that we can invite Easter vistors to join us for the Bridge Celebration Dinner.
- The Spring Course runs right after Easter till the end of June.
- It's usually best to finish up before July 4th and then take the summer off.

### 9. What happens on the Bridge Study?

- When the Bridge Course ends we encourage each group to do their own Bridge Study.
- It's a 4-6 week bible study that helps the guests grow in understanding the Christian life.
- During the Bridge Course we are facilitating a very open discussion but in the Bridge Study, we are free to be a little more direct and to seek to disciple folks.
- "I do not become excited when denominations or churches react to their lack of growth by merely adding a new program. I know that the reason so few conversions are happening through my church is not because we lack a program or staff. It is because we do not love the lost and yearn for their salvation the way we should. And the reason we do not love them as we ought is because such love is a miracle that overcomes our selfish bent. It cannot be managed or maneuvered into existence. It is an astonishing miracle. Examine yourself: Does it lie within your power right now to weep over the spiritual destruction of the people on your street? Such tears come only through a profound work of God." " John Piper



### How Good Are You?

### Romans 3:19-25

- 1. How do we know what "good" is?
- 2. How good do you have to be?
  - Not by Works (Romans 3:19-20)
  - You shall have no other gods before me.
  - You shall not make for yourself any idol.
  - You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.
  - Matthew 12:36 "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."
  - · Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.
  - · Honor your father and mother.
  - · You shall not murder.
  - 1 John 3:15 "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."
  - You shall not commit adultery.
  - You shall not steal.
  - · You shall not lie.
  - · You shall not covet.
  - James 2:10 "For whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it"
  - Romans 3:10, 23, New Living Translation When we compare ourselves to God and His law, we can easily
    affirm what verses 10 and 23 say: "No one is good not even one... For all have sinned; all fall short of
    God's glorious standard."
  - But by Grace (Romans 3:21-25)
  - Good people don't go to heaven. Forgiven people do.

### **Discussion Starters**

- What did you think of the talk?
- How surprising was it to learn that the Bible teaches that it's impossible to get to God by being a good person?
- How do you feel about not being able to earn your way to God?
- What do you think of the word 'holy' as a way to describe God?
- How did you feel when we went through the Ten Commandments?
- How do you think you would feel if you encountered God?
- What do you think about the idea of Jesus dying to pay the penalty for your sins?

### **Book Recommendation**

How Good Is Good Enough?, Andy Stanley

# TALK 2

### • Why Doesn't God Just Forgive Everyone?

### Genesis 3:1-13

### Where does sin and evil come from?

- 1. Ignoring God's Word, Genesis 3:1-3
  - Revelation 12:9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan the deceiver of the whole world."
- 2. Ignoring God's Goodness, Genesis 3:4-5
- 3. Ignoring God's Consequences
  - Shame (Genesis 3:6-7)
  - Separation (Genesis 3:8-13)
  - Sentence (Genesis 3:14-19)
  - Leviticus 17:11 "For the life of a creature is in the blood."
  - Hebrews 9:22 "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

### Why doesn't God just forgive everyone?

• It would be unjust for Him not to punish our sin.

### **Discussion Starters**

- How did you feel about the talk?
- What do you think about there being consequences to sin?
- Are there things that have made you question God's goodness?
- What do you think about the idea that sin is not just breaking God's commands but also preferring things over God?
- How do you feel about the idea that God doesn't run away from us when we sin?
- What do you think about Jesus's dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins?
- Do you ever feel like you're hiding or running from God?

### **Book Recommendation**

• The Prodigal God, Tim Keller



# • How Can God Allow Suffering?

1 Peter 2:18-25

### 1. Is God judging me when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:19-25)

- We suffer because we live in a sinful world.
- We suffer because others sin against us.
- We suffer because of our own sin.
- Galatians 6:7 We reap what we sow.
- Proverbs 19:3 "A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord."

### 2. Is God able to redeem my suffering?

- · Suffering can bring us to God.
- Suffering can bring maturity.
- James 1:2-4 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
- Suffering can bring a longing for a better place.

### 3. Is God there when I suffer? (1 Peter 2:21-24)

· God suffers with us.

### **Discussion Starters**

- How do you feel about this message?
- Have you ever experienced suffering because of the sin of others?
- What do you think about the idea that we sometimes suffer because of our own sin? Does anyone have an example from their own life?
- How has this talk changed or challenged your view of suffering?
- Can anyone see how God could use your suffering for good?
- Jim said, "God's goal for us in our short time on earth is not just temporary happiness and bliss—it's to prepare us for eternity." What do you think about that?

### **Book Recommendation**

- Is God Really In Control?, Jerry Bridges
- Where is God When Things Go Wrong?, John Blanchard



### How Could God Send People to Hell?

### Revelation 20:11-15

### Some Common Objections to Hell:

- 1. I haven't really done anything that bad.
  - "Most of the time, our running away from God has not taken an 'active' form like being Adolph Hitler, or murder, or being the school bully. Rather, it mostly takes a 'passive' form: gossip, greed, hypocrisy, racism, anger, deceit, lust, insensitivity, stubbornness, being uncooperative, manipulation, lies, pride, envy, and so on. The list is endless. Our sin might be sophisticated and respectable, but it makes us guilty just the same. Our lives are riddled with idolatry as we pursue the created things rather than the Creator himself, and this is an offence in the sight of God that is punishable by death and hell." 1 Kim Hawtrey

### 2. The punishment is too great.

• "I've always said, you know, that I don't respect people who don't proselytize (share their faith). I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make society awkward. How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that."<sup>2</sup>

- Penn Jillette

3. Jesus is about love, not hell.

### Some Common Myths About Heaven: (Randy Alcorn)

- 1. We'll be so different in heaven.
- 2. Heaven is just a state of mind.
  - "To our minds this present existence is solid and real, whereas our coming existence seems shadowy and insubstantial. Paul teaches us that the reverse is true. The life which is to come is strong, permanent and real; the present life is lived among the shadows." A Randy Alcorn
  - "Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before." 4 D.L. Moody

### 3. Heaven is boring.

"You can't exhaust heaven- you can only go in deeper to discover more and more and delight more and more
in what you discover. On earth, when we find what we've been looking for our delight often diminishes. In
heaven it's the opposite. Delight keeps increasing- no wonder, since unlike anything on earth, what's in
heaven is what we were actually looking for all along." 5 – Randy Alcorn

### **Discussion Starters**

- What are your thoughts or reactions to this talk?
- How do you feel about a book (The Book of Deeds) filled with everything you have ever done, thought, or said?
- What did you think of the story called 'the Room'?
- Do you think the punishment of hell is too extreme? Why or why not?
- Jim mentioned that God's wrath flows from his justice and fits with our God given sense of justice. What are your thoughts about that?
- What did you think about the Bible's teaching on heaven?
- Do you think you can know for certain that your name is in the Book of Life? Why or why not?

#### **Book Recommendation**

• In Light of Eternity, Randy Alcorn



### Can We Really Trust the Bible?

### 2 Peter 1:16-21

### Seven Reasons We Can Trust the Bible

### 1. The God Reason

- 2 Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."
- 2 Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophec was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

### 2. The Testimony Reason

- 2 Peter 1:16 "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."
- 1 John 1:1-2 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life [Jesus] - the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it."

### 3. The History Reason

• "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."6 - Archeologist Nelson Glueck

### 4. The Manuscript Reason

• "In the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."7 - F.J.A. Hort

### 5. The Science Reason

### 6. The Prophecy Reason

#### 7. The Personal Reason

 Hebrews 4:12 - "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

### A few tips to help you make it personal

- Read the passage.
- Ask yourself questions: What does the passage say? What does it mean? How does it apply?
- Put into practice what you hear from God.
- Matthew 7:24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

#### **Discussion Starters**

- · What did you think about this message?
- Which of the reasons listed did you find most helpful? Why?
  Have you read much of the Bible? What has been your experience?
- Do you think science and the Bible are friends or enemies?
- What do you think about the idea that the Bible is the 'Word of God'?

#### **Book Recommendation**

- ESV Study Bible
- The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel
- New Testament Documents: Are they reliable? F.F. Bruces

# TALK 6

# Is Jesus Really the Only Way?

John 14:1-11

### 1. Jesus alone can bring us to the Father. (John 14:1-7)

 "Most people in our culture believe that, if there is a God, we can relate to him and go to heaven through leading a good life. Let's call this the "moral improvement" view. Christianity teaches the very opposite. In the Christian understanding, Jesus does not tell us how to live so we can merit salvation. Rather, he comes to forgive and save us through his life and death in our place. God's grace does not come to people who morally outperform others, but to those who admit their failure to perform and who acknowledge their need for a Savior."8 - Tim Keller

### 2. Jesus alone is fully God and fully man. (John 14:8–11)

- Exodus 3:13 "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you."
- John 10:30-33 "I and the Father are one. 'The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

How can we test Jesus' claim that He is God? There are three possibilities:

- He was not God and He knew it. (Liar)
- He was not God and He didn't know it. (Lunatic)
- He is God. (Lord)
- "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the Devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse... but let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."9 - C.S. Lewis
- The teaching of Jesus:
- "Love your enemy, do good to those who hate you." (Luke 6:27)
- "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12)
- · The works of Jesus:
- John 14:11 "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."
- · The love of Jesus:
- "When you've eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." 10 Sherlock Holmes
- "We are faced then with a frightening alternative. The man we are talking about was (and is) just what he said or else a lunatic or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that he was neither a lunatic nor a fiend; and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem. I have to accept the view that he was and is God. God has landed on this enemy occupied world in human form."11 - C.S. Lewis

### **Discussion Starters**

- · How did you feel about the talk?

- Did anyone try reading the Bible in the last week? How did it go?
  What do you think about Jesus being the only way to get to God?
  Do you think it is arrogant to claim to be the only way, or loving and humble to comand make a way?
  What do you think about the statement, "all religions are basically the same"?
- How does the "Liar, Lunatic, or Lord" argument affect what you think of Jesus?
  What do you think about Jesus being fully God and fully man?

#### **Book Recommendation**

Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis



### • Why Did Jesus Have to Die?

Mark 15:16-39

### 1. To Fulfill Scripture. (Psalm 22)

- Isaiah 53:12 "He was numbered with the transgressors."
- Psalm 31 "Wine mixed with myrrh"
- Psalm 69:21 "and wine mixed with vinegar."
- Psalm 22:1 "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?"
- Psalm 22:7-8 "All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads 'He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" (Psalm 22:7-8)
- Psalm 22:16-18 "For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet - I can count all my bones - they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

### 2. To Ransom Us. (Mark 15:33–34)

- Mark 10:45 "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."
- "God forsaking God, who can understand that?" 12 Martin Luther
- Mark 1:11 "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
- Matthew 12:18 "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased."
- John 5:20 "For the Father loves the Son."
- John 8:29 "And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."
- John 17:24-26 "... you loved me before the foundation of the world... I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."
- John 14:31 "But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me."
- "Thirty-three years earlier there had been brightness and music at midnight when Jesus was born. Now there is darkness and silence at noontide as he dies." 13 R. Kent Hughes
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."
- "Once he had done that, God the Father had to forsake all that sin. When Jesus was wearing our sin on the cross, God the Father could not bear to look at the sin or at his Son. He had to avert his gaze. He had to shield his eyes. He had to turn his back. He had to condemn and reject and curse and damn that sin." 14 Phillip Ryken

### 3. To Bring Us Near. (Mark 15:37-38)

#### **Discussion Starters**

- What are your thoughts about this talk?
- Why do you think that the death of Jesus was different than other deaths?
- How does the death of Jesus by crucifixion make you feel?
- What do you think about Jesus being forsaken by God in our place?
- How do you feel about the concept of people needing to be redeemed?
- Jim said that Jesus died to bring us near God. Do you feel that you are near to God, or far away?
   Has that changed since the start of the Bridge Course?

#### **Book Recommendation**

• 50 Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die, John Piper

### • What Will Really Satisfy?

Jeremiah 2:12-13

### 1. The Lord is the fountain of satisfaction. (Jeremiah 2:13a)

• "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing." 15 – C.S. Lewis

### 2. People prefer broken cisterns. (Jeremiah 2:13b)

- "...it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." 16 C.S. Lewis
- John 4:10 "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
- John 4:13-14 "Everyone who drinks this water [water from a well] will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

- · What was most striking about this message?
- What are some of the broken cisterns in your life?
- Do you see Jesus as a spring of Living Water? Why or why not?

### • Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit?

### 1 Corinthians 2

### The Holy Spirit reveals:

- 1. The Centrality of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)
  - "The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history." Jerry Bridges
  - "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Stephen Covey
- 2. The Wisdom of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:6–8)
  - Romans 10:17 "Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God."
- 3. The Wonder of Christ Crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:9–12)
  - 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 "There are two kinds of people: natural and spiritual."
  - 2 Kings 6:13-17 "You need the Holy Spirit to see Christ and to understand the Gospel."

- What did you think about the message last night?
- Did anyone respond last night by praying at the end of the message?
- Do you have any questions about the Holy Spirit?
- Do you have any fears about the Holy Spirit?

### • What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

### 1 Corinthians 12:1-20

- 1. The Holy Spirit is the giver of all gifts.
- 2. The Holy Spirit is the giver of different gifts.
- 3. The Holy Spirit gives every Christian gifts for the good of others.
  - Some specific gifts the Holy Spirit gives: healing, prophecy, tongues.
- 4. How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit?
  - Ephesians 5:18 "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit."
  - Believe
  - Thirst
  - Pray
  - Receive

- How did you feel about the talk?
- What gifts do you think you may have?
- Why do you think the Bible reminds us that the gifts we have come from God?
- Why do you think that God gives people different gifts?
- · How have you observed or experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit?

### • Is Hearing Enough?

Luke 8:4-15

### The Story of the Four Soils

- 1. Some respond to the gospel with a hard heart. (Luke 8:12)
  - Romans 1:18 "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness."
- 2. Some respond to the gospel with a shallow heart. (Luke 8:13)
- 3. Some respond to the gospel with a crowded heart. (Luke 8:14)
  - "If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great." John Piper
  - There are three things in this passage that are designed to stuff us with the world so that we have no appetite for Christ.
  - Cares
  - Riches
  - Pleasures
- 4. Some respond to the gospel with a good heart. (Luke 8:15)

- What did you think about the talk?
- Which heart do you feel most closely represents your own?
- What are some of the things that can choke or crowd our hearts?
- What would you have to leave behind in order for your life to produce fruit?



### • How Do We Know Jesus Rose from the Dead?

Matthew 27:57-28:15

- 1. How do we really know Jesus rose from the dead? There are four possibilities:
  - The disciples stole the body.
  - Jesus did not die on the cross.
  - The religious leaders stole the body.
  - He rose from the dead.
- 2. Why does it matter that Jesus rose from the dead?
  - 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied."
- 3. How should we respond to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead?
  - You can ignore Him and neglect Him.
  - You can believe that He has been raised from the dead.

#### **Discussion Starters**

- Where do you think Elvis is?
- · What did you think about this talk?
- Which of the four possibilities do you think best explains the empty tomb: The disciples stole him, Jesus didn't die, religious leaders stole him, he rose from the dead?
- Are there things in your life that cause you to not want Jesus to be the risen Son of God?
- Do you think that Christianity falls apart if Jesus didn't rise from the dead? Why or why not?
- How do you think the resurrection should affect your life?

#### Book Recommendation

• The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel



## Is Christianity Really Worth It?

### Matthew 13:44-46

Three Idols that Bury the Treasure of Christ and Hide the Value of Christianity:

### 1. The idol of money

• Matthew 19:16-22 - "And behold, a man came up to him, saying, 'Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'All these I have kept. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

### 2. The idol of sex

### 3. The idol of success

- "I have an iron will, and all of my will has always been to conquer some horrible feeling of inadequacy.... I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being and then I get to another stage and think I'm mediocre and uninteresting... Again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible fear of being mediocre. And that's always pushing me, pushing me. Because even though I've become Somebody, I still have to prove that I'm Somebody. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will." 20 Madonna
- "In the most radical way, God has adjusted to us in his incarnation and atonement. In Jesus Christ he became a limited human being, vulnerable to suffering and death. On the cross, he submitted to our condition as sinners and died in our place to forgive us. In the most profound way, God has said to us, in Christ, 'I will adjust to you. I will change for you. I'll serve you though it means a sacrifice for me.' If he has done this for us, we can and should say the same to God and others." 21 Tim Keller

#### How do we uncover this treasure?

- · Recognize His worth
- · Respond with joy

#### **Discussion Starters**

- How do feel about this message?
- What are some reasons you see people resist Christianity?
- What do you think about the idea that the Kingdom of Heaven is a priceless treasure or pearl?
- Right now, does anything seem more valuable to you than Christ?
- What idols have you seen in your life?
- Which car do you think you are in? Which do you want to be in?
- What do you think you have to do to get into the white car?
- Is there anything that you think God wants you to joyfully give up for Him?

#### **Book Recommendation**

· Counterfeit Gods, Tim Keller

# TALK 10

### • Where Do We Go From Here?

Acts 2:37-47

- 1. Repent. (Acts 2:38)
- 2. Be baptized. (Acts 2:38, 41)
- 3. Join a local church. (Acts 2:42-47)
  - "The freelance Christian, who would be a Christian but is too superior to belong to the visible Church upon earth in one of its forms, is simply a contradiction in terms." 22 C.E.B. Cranfield

### Why do we need the church?

- It's central to God's purposes.
- Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
- "If the church is central to God's purpose, as seen in both history and the gospel, it must surely also be central to our lives. How can we take lightly what God takes so seriously? How dare we push to the circumference what God has placed at the center?" 23 John Stott
- · It's central to our growth.
- 1 Peter 5:8 "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour."
- It's central to our experience of God.
- "God will manifest his presence to you in congregational worship in ways you can never know, even in the most glorious secret worship. That's because you are not only a temple of God as an individual, but the Bible says, and far more often, that Christians collectively are God's temple. God manifests his presence in different ways to the living stones of the temple, when they are gathered, than he does to them when they are apart." 24 Donald Whitney

### 4. Devote yourself to spiritual disciplines. (Acts 2:42-46)

- · Read the Bible.
- Listen to teaching.
- Fellowship with other Christians.
- · Pray.

### **Discussion Starters**

- What are your thoughts or reactions to the talk?
- Jim read the list of "Excuses to Neglect Church." Which of the excuses do you identify with?
- What do you think about being baptized?
- · Where do you think you stand with God as a result of the Bridge Course?
- What do you think God wants you to do next?
- How do you feel about joining a church

#### **Book Recommendation**

· Stop Dating the Church, Josh Harris

# CELEBRATION DINNER

### • Who Really Needs God?

Luke 15:11-32

### The Story of the Prodigal Son

### 1. Reckless

• Luke 15:11-13 - "And he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living."

### 2. Regret

• Luke 15:14-16 - "And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything."

### 3. Repentance

- Luke 15:17-20 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father."
- · Come to your senses
- Get up (arise)
- · Go to your Father

### 4. Reception

- Luke 15:20-24 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."
- "Jesus was underlining the fact that despite assumptions to the contrary the reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn upon us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible to us that the Father could love us... [The problem is,] the guilt-ridden son was calculating on the basis of his sin, rather than on the basis of his father's character." <sup>25</sup> Sinclair Ferguson

### 5. Refusal

- Luke 15:25-32 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"
- "What is the problem? Pride in his good deeds, rather than remorse over his bad deeds, was keeping the older son out of the feast of salvation. The elder brother's problem is his self-righteousness, the way he uses his moral record to put God and others in his debt to control them and get them to do what he wants." Tim Keller

# NOTES

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