

**LIFE LET'S TALK
EXPLORED**

stmatthew'schurch

Welcome

Thank you for coming to Life Explored. We hope that these next few weeks will help you explore some of life's biggest questions. This is a safe space to ask any questions that you may have and we expect people to have all sorts of different opinions and questions. We don't expect you to agree with the course leader and want you to feel open to challenge and questions anything and everything that they say. Although we'd love to hear your views and questions, we don't expect you to do anything you feel uncomfortable with.

How each session will run:

Each week, we'll start with a big question to get us thinking. Then we'll have a short talk that seeks to give a Christian answer to it from Luke's gospel (Jesus' life story as told by Luke). Then there will be the chance to discuss some questions related to the passage and the talk. Once again, all views are welcome, so please don't feel that your question is unwanted or irrelevant.

How to get the most of this course

There are two things that we ask of course participants:

- 1) We'd love you to come to each session. The course has been designed to build on the previous week and to prepare you for the week ahead. If you can't make some sessions, that's OK, but the best thing is to make each one.
- 2) We'd love you to read or listen to some of Luke's Gospel between each session. We'll refer to Luke's Gospel regularly and we think it's really helpful for understanding some of the answers to life big questions. We'll provide a free copy for Luke for you and feel free to make notes, annotate it, scribble on it, or highlight it as you see fit!

Week 1:

The Big Question: *"How could we know if God is real?"*

Talk:

How could we know if God is real?

Luke presents eyewitness evidence...

... that Jesus is the Son of God

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What do you make of Luke's claim that Jesus is the Son of God?

- 2) What difference would it make to you or the situations in your life if Jesus is who Luke claims him to be?

- 3) If God came down to earth, what do you think he would say to us?

- 4) If God came down to earth, what should our response be?

Please read Luke 1-3 and bring questions and reactions next time.

Week 2

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 1-3?

The Big Question: *“What’s wrong with the world?”*

Talk:

The world isn’t as it should be

We can’t fix it

Jesus comes to set us free

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What do you think of Luke’s claim that Jesus fulfils the Old Testament promises?
- 2) Do you think what Jesus says in Luke 4 fits the world as you see it around you?
- 3) If Jesus has come to rescue us, how should that influence our attitude to him?

Please read Luke 4-7 and bring your questions and reactions next time.

Week 3

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 4-7?

The Big Question: *“why do bad things happen?”*

Talk:

Sin causes the world’s evils

Sin is everyone’s biggest problem:

But turning away from sin can save us

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What do you think of the idea that sin is our biggest problem?
- 2) Are you persuaded by Jesus’ answer to why bad things happen?
- 3) What would do you think it looks like to repent?

Please read Luke 8-10 and bring your questions and reactions next time.

Week 4

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 8-10?

The Big Question: *“How could someone win God’s favour?”*

Talk:

How good are you?

Scandalous Restoration

God’s free gift

Discussion Questions:

- 1) According to Jesus, what sort of people need to repent? And who is God offering forgiveness to?
- 2) How do you feel about Jesus’ assessment of humanity and God’s offer of forgiveness?
- 3) What does God’s free gift tell us about how God feels about us?

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Please read Luke 11-14 and bring your questions and reactions next time.

Week 5

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 11-14?

The Big Question: *“How can there be justice in the world?”*

Talk:

We all want justice

God cares about justice too

Jesus' death sets us free

Discussion Questions:

- 1) According to Luke, why did Jesus die? (e.g. 18:31-33, 22:19-20)
- 2) How does God balance both justice and a desire to rescue people? (see Luke 23:41)
- 3) What would be the right response to Jesus if he was dying for people's sins?

Please read Luke 15-19 and bring your questions and reactions next time.

Week 6

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 15-19?

The Big Question: *“Is death the end?”*

Talk:

We all die

Jesus rose from the dead, so we can too

Following Jesus saves our lives

Prayer:

Dear God,

I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you. I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need forgiveness.

Thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven. Thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life. Please forgive me and change me, that I may live with Jesus as my ruler.

Amen.

Discussion questions:

- 1) How could God prove Jesus' resurrection to you?
- 2) What difference would Jesus' resurrection make to you today or in the future?
- 3) What, if anything, stops you from wanting to follow Jesus?

Please read Luke 20-24 and bring your questions and reactions next time.

Week 7

What were your thoughts or questions about Luke 20-24?

The Big Question: *“What do people worship?”*

Talk:

We all worship something

Are you worshipping the right thing?

Marks of true worshippers

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is it possible to worship the wrong things? What might be the consequence of that?
- 2) What do you feel is helpful or difficult about prayer, the Bible and church? What might committing to these 3 things look like for you?
- 3) Do you have any questions that we haven't discussed?

Notes

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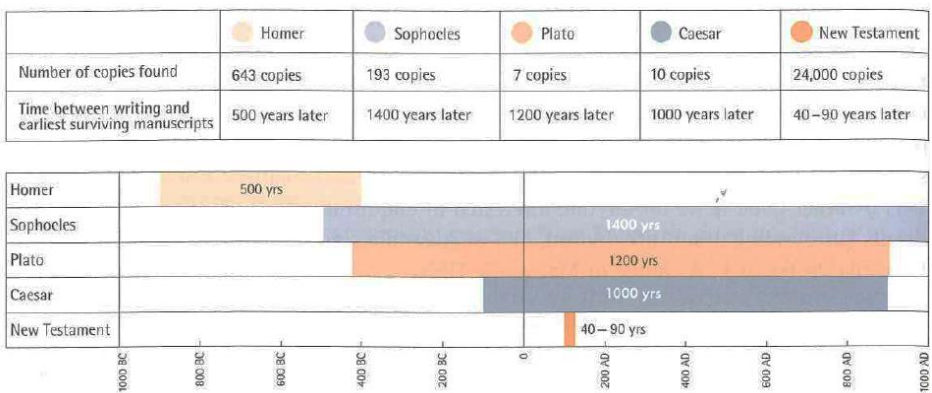
Two questions (and answers) about the Bible:

Are today's Bibles the same as originally written?

The 27 documents of the New Testament are usually dated between 40 and 100 AD. Modern Bibles include footnotes to show where there is doubt about the wording of the original text. You can check those yourself as you read and will see that very few words are in doubt, and nothing that affects any important beliefs. What we have now is almost the same as what was written at the time. Historians are confident about this for two reasons.

Firstly, the **large number** of early manuscripts. Although there are no originals, there are over 24,000 ancient copies (5,000 in the original language).

Secondly, the **closeness in time** to the original, with the earliest portions dating from around 125 AD and copies of most/all of the New Testament from around 200 AD. If that gap sounds long, it is worth comparing other ancient works such as Homer's *Iliad* or the works of Plato, Caesar or Sophocles. Modern scholars accept the authenticity of those others works, yet they do not even come close to the New Testament in either number of manuscripts or closeness in time to the original – as shown below.



Sir Frederick Kenyon, former director of the British Museum puts it like this:

“The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has been removed. Both the authenticity

and general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.” [F. Kenyon, The Bible and Archaeology, Harper and Row]

Why should we believe what they wrote?

The New Testament includes multiple independent eye-witness accounts.

John, wrote a biography of Jesus, 3 letters and Revelation. He writes: *which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim... We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard... (1 John 1v1-3)*

Peter, wrote 2 letters. The earliest records suggest that Mark translated for Peter and recorded Peter’s memories of Jesus as Mark’s gospel. Peter writes: *we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eye-witnesses (2 Peter 1v16)*

Paul wrote 13 letters. Some are dated only 20 years after Jesus. Paul writes: *After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also (1 Corinthians 15v6-8)*

Luke wrote a biography of Jesus and a sequel about his first followers. Luke travelled with them and gathered eye-witness accounts. He writes: *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 eye-witnesses 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. (Luke 1v1-4)*

These accounts meet the criteria secular historians use to assess reliability. For example, it was not in their interests to make it up. They were persecuted for their claims about Jesus. Execution and imprisonment was common. The writers include information even when it doesn’t help their case or doesn’t portray them in a flattering light. The names, dates and places fit what is known from other written sources and from archaeology. Their version of events offers the most comprehensive explanation of known facts.

Where to find out more

'**Explore: Time with God**' is a booklet (also available as an app for your phone) with a Bible reading programme for beginners who want to read for 10 minutes at a time regularly, with questions and background information.

"**A Fresh Start**" by John Chapman is a simple beginners book about how to become a Christian and why.

"**The reason for God**" by Tim Keller makes a rational step by step case for belief in the Christian God.

"**Confronting Christianity**" by Rebecca McLaughlin answers '12 hard questions for world's largest religion' including '**How can you say there's only one faith?**' and '**Doesn't Christianity denigrate women?**' '**How could a loving God send people to hell?**' and '**Doesn't science disprove Christianity?**'

BIBLE AUDIO GUIDE

Free articles, videos for those exploring Biblical Christianity:

www.ChristianityExplored.org

www.bethinking.org

www.twowaystolive.com

Good Christian books and Bible study guides are available from:

The Good Book Company www.thegoodbook.co.uk

10 of those www.10ofthose.com

Contact us

Feel free to get in touch with questions about Christianity or the Bible at any time. The Life Explored team are always happy to meet or send a reply.

office@stmatthews.uk 01223 363545

You are welcome to visit church as little or often as you choose, on any Sunday at 10.30am or 5pm, with no commitment to keep coming.

www.stmatthews.uk

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