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PARABLES AND STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

This pack brings to life parables and stories from the Bible. Twenty stories and parables have been selected to illustrate a wide range of issues. The stories have been expressed in a particular way which may not correspond with other interpretations.

The benefit of using parables and stories with students is that it is possible to express quite complicated ideas in a simple and entertaining way.

Parables have been used by teachers for thousands of years. This selection is written in simple English avoiding the traditional "Thee and Thou" terminology which often confuses or discourages the modern student. The stories have been expressed without showing preferences for any particular denomination.

This pack compliments the **STORIES AND PARABLES FROM AROUND THE WORLD** pack. For this reason only Christian parables and stories are included here.

PAGE LAYOUT

Each page is laid out similarly.

The first section refers to the story itself.



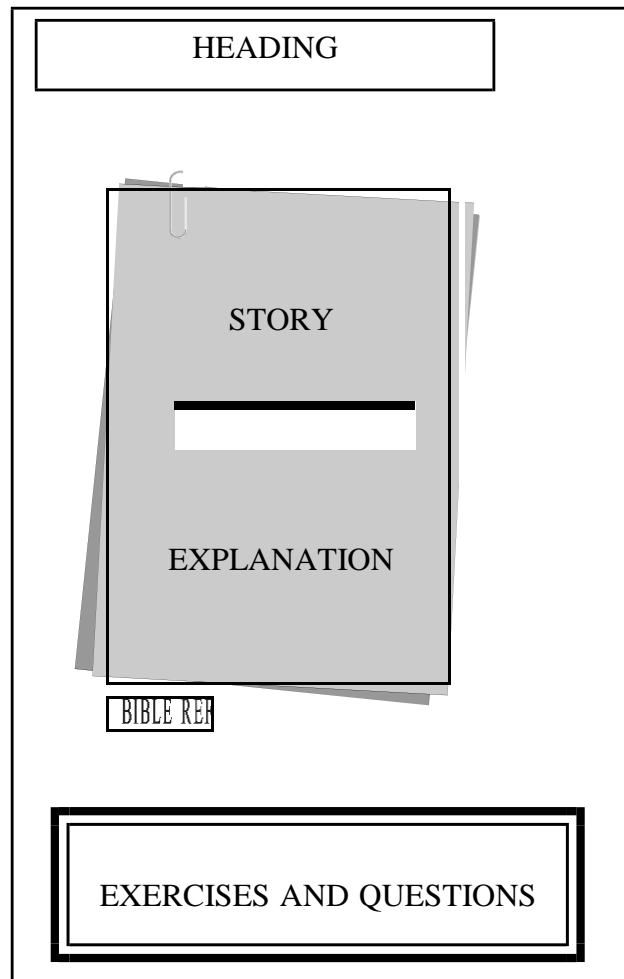
The second section gives a brief explanation of what the story means.



The small box shows which Book and from which Chapter the story is taken. It may be of benefit to refer students to the text itself so they may gain a better understanding of the traditional text.



The box at the bottom asks specific questions which are designed to encourage the student to place the moral of the story into a modern context more relevant to their own experiences.



THE GARDEN OF EDEN

1

When God made the world, he also built a Garden called Eden. He put man and woman in it and told them that they could do anything they liked. He didn't mind them enjoying themselves, and said they could eat fruits from any of the trees and bushes, but must not eat from the Tree of Knowledge, which was a tree in the middle of the Garden.

A serpent came to Eve and told her that it would be alright to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and promised her that her eyes would be 'opened' to reality. Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge and also gave Adam some of the fruit.

As soon as they had eaten the fruit both Adam and Eve realised they were naked and rushed to cover themselves. When God found out that they had disobeyed Him, he punished them by throwing them out of the Garden and imposing a painful childbirth on all women, and said that all people were condemned to work very hard to survive in the future. The snake was punished by being made to crawl on its stomach forever.

Many people spend a lot of time arguing whether the story of the Garden of Eden actually happened or not. This is not important. The main point of all religious stories is to explain an idea which might be difficult to understand, but which becomes easier if it is made into a story.

The Garden of Eden story tells us about temptation. Adam and Eve were given the freedom to do anything and eat from any of the trees and bushes in the garden, except one. But it was that one tree which was not allowed which drew their attention. There are many examples in history of people being drawn by the one thing they are not allowed to do, and which leads to their downfall.

GENESIS CH 2 AND 3

Is it important to believe that the Garden of Eden actually existed?

What is temptation? Is it always a bad thing to be tempted?

Why did Adam and Eve disobey God? Did God deliberately ban the Tree of Knowledge to test them both?

What lessons should we try to learn from this story?

CAIN AND ABEL

2

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain who was the elder and who later became a farmer; and Abel who became a shepherd. When they grew up they both made a sacrifice to God. Cain made a sacrifice from his crops and Abel sacrificed a lamb from his flock.

God preferred the sacrifice made by Abel, and this made Cain jealous. God asked Cain why he was resentful and advised him that if he had made his sacrifice with an honest intention he should hold his head up and be satisfied. God warned him that there was a danger in being jealous.

Cain, however, could not feel anything except jealousy, which then turned into hate. He lured his brother out into the fields and killed him.

God found out what had happened and banished Cain to be a "wanderer on the Earth". Before he was banished God put a protective mark on Cain so that he would not be killed.

This story is about the fight between good and evil both between people and within each person. God told Cain that being jealous was dangerous. He meant that being jealous could lead to even worse feelings. He was right because it drove Cain to murder his brother.

This story also highlights a very basic principle which appears in all religions. It does not matter what sort of 'sacrifice' you make to God; what is important is that the sacrifice be made with a true heart and honest intentions. That is why God said to Cain that if he had made his sacrifice with an honest intention he could hold his head up. But Cain must have had some doubt or self interest in his mind which then led him to be resentful when his brother made a 'better' sacrifice.

GENESIS CH 4

There are stories in many religious texts about people who may only offer one penny but because it was given honestly, it is worth more than a million pounds. When is a penny worth more than a million pounds?

Is it important to keep your mind on your own relationship with God, or should you look at what other people are doing?

What do you think it means when in the Bible it says Cain was cursed to be "a wanderer on the Earth"?

TOWER OF BABEL

3

At one time everyone who lived in and near Babylon spoke the same language. They were also good builders. One day they decided to build a huge tower up to the heavens.

This action made God very angry because the people were trying to reach Him not because they really believed in Him but because they thought their building skills put them on the same level with God.

God went down to earth and scattered the people all over the world and gave them all different languages so that they could not understand each other. God had made their one language into a 'babble' of languages and that is why the tower is remembered as Babel.

This story tells us about the relationship of people with God. The people thought that by building a physical tower up to the heavens they could reach God. All religions teach that God is not of the Physical world. The 'gifts' of God can be seen all around us on the Earth and in Space, but God himself is of the spirit.

When God saw the people wasting their time trying to build a tower, he realised that the people were mistaken about what God is, and he scattered them across the Earth and gave them different languages. This was done to awaken a real understanding of God in at least some of the people.

GENESIS CH 11

Is the story of the Tower of Babel true or not? Does it matter if it is true or not?

Many people undertake religious practices today which are only physical. Is it important to try to understand God through spiritual activity like praying?

Are people very big headed even today? Do people sometimes put themselves on an equal footing with God? Consider things like Genetic Engineering which will allow people to choose the colour of their children's hair, intelligence, height, sex, etc.

Should we be more modest and put more trust in God, or are we like Gods ourselves?

ABRAHAM IS TESTED

4

Abraham was considered to be the leader, (father), of the Hebrew people. Abraham was very religious. One day God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to a mountain and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. God wanted to know if Abraham really believed totally in Him.

Abraham took his son to the mountain. He lit a fire and Isaac asked him; "I see the fire but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham told Isaac that he was the sacrifice.

Abraham tied Isaac up and raised his knife above his head, ready to bring it down and kill his son. God appeared as a messenger and told Abraham not to kill his son. A ram appeared, tangled in a nearby bush, and Abraham sacrificed it instead.

This story is about the difference between believing on the surface, and really believing in God. God wanted to test Abraham to the limit by asking him to sacrifice the thing which was of the greatest importance to him. His son represented something material, whilst God represents something spiritual. The story is about whether we really believe that the spiritual is worth more than the material.

An Indian saint commented; "Don't be content with gifts of God, but seek the giver of the gifts." This means that God gives us the material things in life including children, but it is more important to seek out the giver of these gifts rather than being happy with the gifts.

Abraham proved himself as valuing God more than anything else. It was not necessary in the end for Abraham to kill his son, but he would have done so if God had not intervened.

GENESIS CH 22

Are both material things and spiritual things equally important, or should we concentrate on just the material, or just the spiritual?

Is it fair that Abraham should be tested in such an extreme way?

How far would you go to prove that you believed in God?

DAVID AND GOLIATH

5

When the Philistines invaded Israel, their champion fighter, Goliath, challenged the Israelites to send out one man to fight him. No-one would dare to fight Goliath and he made his challenge every day for 40 days. David heard about the challenge. David, who later became the first king of Judean Israel, was just a shepherd. He took only five smooth pebbles and stepped out to face Goliath.

Goliath looked at David and said; "I will feed you to the birds and the beasts." David was not frightened because he said; "I fight in the name of Yahweh, (God)."

David took out a stone and hurled it from his sling at Goliath. It hit him on the forehead and Goliath fell down. David took Goliath's sword and chopped his head off.

This story tells us about the power of God. Goliath and the army of the Philistines are shown as representing evil, whilst the Israelites and David are shown as God believing.

Although Goliath was much bigger than David, he was defeated because he fought with a sword whilst David fought with the power of God. It is meant to show that even when the odds are stacked against you, it is possible to win if you believe in God.

Faith is an important message expressed in all religious texts. None of the Israelite soldiers were prepared to fight because they knew that in a straight fight they would lose. David knew that he was not fighting with ordinary mortal powers. God directed the stone to hit Goliath in just the right place.

1 SAMUEL CH 17

God is often used as an excuse in major wars all over the world. Does this story just encourage people to fight or has it got a deeper meaning?

How do we know if the power of God is with us or not?

Does good always win over evil? Think of events in history where good and evil have met each other. Don't all people think of themselves as 'good' and their enemy as 'evil'?

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

6

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most important speeches made by Jesus. He said:

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

Blessed are those who mourn
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the humble
for the Earth will belong to them.

Blessed are those who seek to do what is right
for they will be given what they want.

Blessed are those who are merciful
for they will be treated with mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers
for they will be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are treated badly for doing
right
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.



MATTHEW CH 5

This sermon highlights the essential Christian doctrine, that heaven awaits those who are humble, merciful, and who do the right thing even if it might not benefit them personally.

Christianity says that those people who may be down trodden and treated badly will be looked after by God. Many people believed that the only way to have a better life was to be better than others; if someone fights, fight harder, if someone cheats, cheat more than them, etc.

Christianity teaches that we should do what is right, try not to hurt others, and do things in accordance with God's laws, not our own. If we do not get everything we want, it doesn't really matter because this life is only a stage before we go to heaven, (or hell).

Jesus lived in times of great conflict and hardships where there was little respect for human life, and where many people had hopeless lives. The rich people were very rich whilst others who were poor could not hope to ever become so rich themselves.

Study the sermon carefully. Is the message of hope realistic?

Many people say that all religions merely tell people to be meek and do not offer real solutions to their problems. What do you think?

SAMARITAN WOMAN

7

Jesus was thirsty whilst on a journey. He stopped at a well where a Samaritan woman was drawing water and asked her to give him some water. Traditionally Jews and Samaritans were enemies and would not talk, but Jesus recognised no such differences.

The woman asked why he, as a Jew, was talking to her. He told her that he asked her only for water, but if she knew what sort of 'living water', (word of God), he had, she would be asking him for it.

The woman asked Jesus to give her this 'living water'. Jesus told her all about the events in her life, and she realised he was a prophet.

She said that she didn't worship in Jerusalem and that it might be difficult to follow his teaching. Jesus told her that it was not important where someone prayed. It was important how a person prayed.

This story is all about how people feel they are categorised into groups. Jesus did not recognise any difference between himself, as a Jew, and the woman who was a Samaritan. It was also unheard of for a man to talk to a woman he did not know, but Jesus was not concerned with such things.

The woman was concerned that she prayed in a different way and at a different place. Jesus told her that it was irrelevant where or how someone prayed as long as the prayers were honest and said with purity and good intention.

Jesus was trying to spread a universal message which would show the artificial divisions that existed as being irrelevant. Much of the hardship of the time was caused by these divisions which led to people disliking others who were different.

JOHN CH 4

Should people be categorised?

Even in the Christian religion there are different categories; Protestant, Catholic, etc. Is it inevitable that we will always try to put other people and groups into certain categories?

Is it true that if we treated everyone as the same as ourselves, the problems of the world would start to disappear?

WALKING ON WATER

8

One day whilst his disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus went to pray alone on a mountain. He prayed into the night and then went to join his disciples just before dawn.

The disciples saw a figure approaching them, walking on the water. They were all very frightened and thought it was a ghost. Jesus called out to tell them it was he.

Peter said that if he were really Jesus he should be able to allow him to walk on the water just as Jesus was doing. Jesus called on him to walk on the water. As he stepped out onto the water, the wind blew very hard. Peter shouted out; "Lord, save me". Jesus reached out and held him. "You still do not trust me," he said.

Many people spend so much time discussing whether Jesus really walked on water that they miss the real point of the story. It is for individuals to believe or not, but this belief is really irrelevant to the real meaning of the story.

The story is about faith. Jesus was testing his disciples. Jesus did something which is incredible and Peter also wanted to do the same. This indicates that Peter did not believe that it was really Jesus, or he did not really believe that his eyes were telling him the truth about what he saw. When Jesus gave him the power to be incredible as well, he still called out in doubt.

This is the real meaning of the story. We do not believe things even when we see them ourselves unless we can understand them. Jesus was showing that sometimes we must have faith and suspend our own limited understanding. If we never truly have faith we will never be able to reach God. Jesus was showing that faith is very important.

MATTHEW CH 14

Do you believe that Jesus really walked on water? Does it matter?

What is faith?

How much faith do you have in God?

Are we all limited by our own understanding of what is possible? Should we sometimes suspend our own limited understanding in order to understand something else more fully?

Jesus told a story:

There was a farmer who was planting seeds in his fields. As he threw the seeds from side to side the seeds spread widely. Some seeds fell on the path where birds came and ate them. Some seeds fell on rocky ground where there was little soil. These seeds would sprout but then die because there wasn't enough soil. Some seeds fell in bushes where they would never get the sunlight to grow. Some seeds would fall on the rich fertile soil and grow very well.

This story is about the way people understand knowledge of God. The ones who hear about God but are immediately tempted away are like the seeds that fall on the path and are eaten immediately by the birds.

The ones who accept the word of God but reject it when things don't go as they expected are like the seeds which fall on rocky ground. Their faith is too shallow.

The ones who are like the seeds which fall in bushes are people whose lives are tangled up in other matters like greed, and money making. They cannot develop their faith properly.

The ones who are like the seeds which fall on rich fertile soil are people who hear the word of God and are transformed.

Jesus taught that people should be like the seeds which fall on fertile soil, who grow into very religious people. Just as the seed grows into a plant and then produces more seeds, these people grow in understanding and then can convert others as well.

MARK CH 4

Very few people seem to be in the category which grow into truly religious people. Why do you think this is?

Is it very hard to really be religious in a world which puts so much emphasis on material things?

Is it harder to be religious today than it was in Jesus's time?

LOST SHEEP

10

Some people used to complain that Jesus often talked to or involved himself with sinners and bad people. Jesus was not upset by these accusations but told a story instead to explain his actions.

If you owned a hundred sheep, and you lost one of them. Wouldn't you leave the other 99 in order to go and find the one which was lost? And when you found the sheep wouldn't you be overjoyed and tell everyone?

This story is about the importance of spreading the word of God to everyone. Jesus said it was more important to try to convince non-believers than to preach to those who already believed.

If the starting point is that we are all the children of God, then the ones who do not believe are like the lost sheep who must be found. It is the duty of the shepherd, (Teacher), to show the way to those who are lost.

"There will be more joy in heaven for one sinner who reforms his ways than for ninety-nine good people who do not need to."



LUKE CH 15

Do you think that the story of the lost sheep is appropriate today?

Are there more lost sheep today than in Jesus's day?

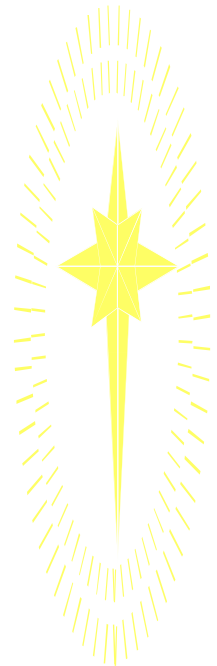
Are you a lost sheep? Do you want to be 'found'?

Jesus said: "You are the salt of the Earth."

He compared his disciples to salt and showed that even a little salt can change the taste of food. In the same way, the followers of Jesus, although only a small number, could change the way people behaved if they spread their message effectively.

He also warned that salt soon lost its taste and after that it was worthless. This was a message to his followers that they should not waste time in their task.

Jesus also used the example of the lamp. He said; "It is impossible to hide a city built on a hill." The lamps of the people who lived in a city built on a hill would always shine for all to see. Jesus told his disciples to shine like the light from a lamp. He warned them against hiding their light under a blanket. By this he meant that people who know about God should shine brightly and be there to help others and to spread the message.



At the time of Jesus there were many people who did not believe and they often made life hard for the followers of Jesus. But Jesus told his disciples not to be afraid.

In many religions today, the debate about how the message should be spread is going on. Some people prefer to keep their understanding of God to themselves. Jesus was very clear, however, about what the duty of his followers was. These two examples leave no doubt.

MATTHEW CH 5

Many people can believe in God themselves but find it very difficult to discuss it with others. Some people are very hostile to those who try to spread the message. Why do you think this is the case?

Is it the duty of every religious person to spread their understanding to others?

Do you mind if people approach you on the street and talk to you about God or religion? Why?

If you went to the door of your friend's home at midnight and knocked he would open the door. If you asked for some bread because you had to feed some unexpected guests, would he stay behind his locked door and turn you away?

He might be upset that you had woken him at that hour, but he would give you the bread. He might not give it to you happily, but you would get it.

Jesus said;

"So I tell you;
ask and it will be given to you.
Seek and you will find it.
Knock, and the door will be opened for you."

This story is about finding God. Many people do not ask God for anything. They would let their unexpected visitor go hungry for the night.

When people pray they might demand something or beg God to give them something. If they try hard enough they will get what they want. God is ever-loving, so he has to give what you ask for as long as you really want it. Jesus is saying 'don't give up'.

If you don't knock on the door, then it will not be opened. Some people think they are calling to God but are not insistent enough. If they don't get what they want immediately they reject God.

The message is simple; If you want something badly enough and pray hard for it, God will give it to you.

LUKE CH 11

Do you believe that God listens to prayers?

Why are there so many people who do not seem to get what they want?

How do you know if you are praying in the right way?

A man had two sons. The younger one of them asked for his share of his inheritance and left home. He went to a far off land and soon spent all his money and became very poor. He had to work for other people and hardly had enough to eat. He thought about his father's home and decided to return. He thought he would be able to get a job on his father's farm.

As he returned home his father ran out and hugged him. He ordered that new clothes be brought for his son and that the fattest calf be killed and a feast prepared.

The older son, who had remained with his father was very upset. He thought that after leaving with half the money and squandering it, the younger brother had no right to return home and be treated so well.

The father said; "Your brother was dead but is now alive, he was lost but now is found."

Just because a person makes one mistake, even if it is a big one, doesn't mean that the person is lost forever. This story shows that people should have forgiveness in their hearts. The younger son had made a mistake. Should he now have to live with it forever? Jesus is telling his disciples that nothing is so bad that it cannot be forgiven.

The older brother is thinking in material terms when he says that the younger brother should not be treated so well after having taking his share and lost it. But the father is thinking in higher terms than just things. He knows that his younger child was 'dead' in that he had lost him. To the father it is important that he has now 'found' his son again.

LUKE CH 15

Should people be held responsible for their actions, even if they show regret later?

Was the father correct in welcoming his son home, or should he have been hard like the older brother?

Why was the older brother more upset than the father?

TAX COLLECTOR

14

Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. A man called Zacchaeus, who was a tax collector wanted to meet Jesus. Tax collectors were generally very disliked and some-times called sinners because they had to impose often unfair taxes on poor people who could not afford to pay.

Jesus saw him and called to him. Jesus went with Zacchaeus to his home. People were upset that Jesus should go to the home of a sinner, but as usual Jesus was not concerned with what other people thought.

The tax collector said that he would give half of his wealth to the poor people and promised that if he had taken too much tax from anyone he would give them back four times as much. Jesus was very pleased that he had saved another lost sheep.

This story shows how someone who has done something wrong or undesirable can atone for their mistakes by better actions in the future.

Zacchaeus had only wanted to meet Jesus but because Jesus wanted this man to change, he also went to this home, ignoring what other people felt about it. For Jesus there were no outcasts or undesirable



LUKE CH 19

Do you think that it is fair that someone who has done something wrong can make it better by future actions? After all, the people who have been hurt in the past might still be suffering.

If we can atone for our actions later, is it a license to do as much evil as we want to in the first place?

Is forgiveness always possible? Can anyone become good?

Jesus went to a temple in Jerusalem and saw that there were money changers with stalls set up. He was very angry that people were using a place of prayer as a base for their businesses. He went up to the stalls and started overturning the tables and smashing up the equipment of these people.

He said; "My house shall be called a House Of Prayer for people of all races." He told the money changers that they were insulting God, and threw them out of the temple.

The priests of the temples, who were guilty of allowing the money changers to use the temples decided that they had to get rid of Jesus because he was interfering with their comfortable lives and business.

Jesus overturned the stalls of the money changers because he wanted to reclaim the temple for prayer purposes. The temples of that time were very different from the churches we have today. Some of the temples were made for rich people only whilst others had different parts for the use of different social classes.

The temples were steeped in divisions, of people who could and could not attend, of styles and types of service. Jesus had a very simple attitude. He wanted everyone to believe in God, and leave their social class and wealth out of their search for God.

The priests were usually rich and were involved in business themselves. Their way of religious belief was often misguided because they were trying to make money out of their position as priests.

MARK CH 11

Are churches any different now than the temples were in Jesus's time? There may not be money changers inside, but there are many people who think they know more than others and feel they 'own ' the church.

Are there any practices which go in modern day churches which Jesus would disagree with?

Jesus knew that soon he was to be betrayed by one of his disciples. He wanted to set an example of service to his disciples so one day he washed their feet.

Peter said: "I'll never let you wash my feet." He missed the point. Jesus was washing his disciples feet because he wanted to show that everyone was the same and that no-one should think themselves superior. By doing such a service he wanted everyone to remember his point.

"You call me Lord , quite rightly, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord, have washed your feet, you also have a duty to wash each other's feet. I have set you an example; as I have done, so you must do to others."

It has happened often that teachers (holy men etc.) have set an example for people to remember by doing something themselves. The main point of doing so is to show that such service is honourable and acceptable.

In Jesus's time there was a clear distinction about what certain people should or should not do, and so this action was particularly significant.

Jesus also knew that a difficult time was coming, when he would be arrested and crucified. This was an action which among other things unified his disciples.

JOHN CH 13

Why was washing feet so significant?

Can you think of other actions which could make such an impression on people?

Is it important that religious people should make such demonstrations regularly? Why?

THE LAST SUPPER

17

Jesus knew that the time of his betrayal was coming and he sent out his disciples to prepare a meal on the Passover day. He told them to follow a man who they would see carrying a jar of water. They should ask him where the room was. They should then go to the room and prepare the meal.

All happened as Jesus had foretold and the meal was prepared. Jesus told the disciples who were seated around the table about the betrayal which was to come; "A traitor is at this table with me."

He also said that this was to be his last meal; "I will never eat again until God's kingdom has come..." He broke the bread and told his disciples; "This is my body given to you." Then he took the wine and said; "This cup is my blood which I poured for you. This marks a new contract between God and man."

Jesus knew everything that was happening. He could have stopped it if he wanted. He let things happen because he was leaving a message for people. He knew that he would not eat another meal. He also knew who would betray him. The whole point of Jesus's life was to leave a teaching for people to follow.

It is very important to understand the references he made to the bread being his body and the wine his blood. The bread possibly represented the life force; wheat being the physical representation of the spirit, and staple diet in the area. The blood was a reference to the blood which Moses had been told about which all Jews had to paint on their doors when they escaped from Egypt.



LUKE CH 22

If Jesus knew that this was his last supper, why did he not do anything to prevent the events which happened? Why didn't he tell Judas not to betray him?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said his body was represented by the bread and his blood by the wine?

Jesus went with some disciples to Gethsemane, the garden of olives. He asked his disciples to stay awake whilst he prayed to God. When he came back the disciples were asleep. He woke them again and went to pray. Again they were asleep when he came back. He woke them again and went to pray a third time.

Then Jesus said; "The time is here. The son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Judas came then with a crowd of people. Judas had said that he would kiss Jesus and then the authorities would know who to arrest. He went up to Jesus and kissed him. Immediately Jesus was arrested.

The disciples were frightened and ran away. Jesus was taken away.

The meaning of the story is to illustrate the temptation of material things, (the gold that Judas got for betraying Jesus), against the greater happiness which is to be found in spiritualism.

Even the disciples had run away and left Jesus to face the authorities on his own. Peter, when asked later, denied ever knowing Jesus on three occasions! The whole episode illustrates the weakness of the human condition.

Jesus had prayed at Gethsemane that his suffering would not be too much. Some people use this admission to say that Jesus was just another person, and not the son of God. Some others say that although he was the son of God he would suffer because he was in a mortal body. He also had to suffer for "the sins of others."

This episode illustrates the battle of ideas and the battle between materialism and religion. Incidentally, the people who arrested Jesus were themselves religious in their own way. It shows the contradictions which lie within religious belief.

MARK CH 14

Was Jesus frightened at the pain he was to suffer?

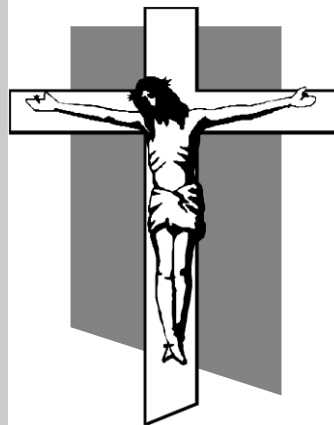
Did the money which Judas got for betraying Jesus make him happy? Why?

Why did the other disciples run away and leave Jesus on his own?

Jesus was tried and condemned to be crucified. He was crucified at nine o'clock in the morning. For the three hours after noon, the sky became dark. Jesus said; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Then he died.

His body was taken down and wrapped in linen. There was a tomb nearby and Jesus's body was taken there.



Many people said that Jesus was only an extraordinary man, not the son of God. They said that he may have learned some tricks but when it came to being crucified he died like anyone else would have done.

Some commentators say that he had to die in order to teach people a final lesson. The crucifixion did in any case make Jesus a martyr.

MARK CH 15

Why did Jesus not perform some final miracle to end the doubt that he was really the son of God?

Why did Jesus have to die like a common criminal?

What do you think happened to his followers at the time of the crucifixion and immediately afterwards?

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early in the morning and saw that the stone which had been placed in front of the tomb had been removed. She ran to find Simon and Peter and told them.

Mary stood by the tomb and wept. When she turned she saw Jesus. He asked her what was wrong and she, thinking he was the gardener, asked where the body had been taken. Then she realised that it was Jesus.

Jesus said; "Don't touch me. I have not yet gone up to my father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to the one who is my father and your father, my God and your God."

To the many critics who said that Jesus should have performed a miracle at the crucifixion the answer possibly lies here. Jesus appeared to some of those who believed in him. Many other saints up to the modern day have written that it is important that one who knows God should not treat his or her special abilities like a circus or performing act. It is also important that people find their own way to God and are not enticed by tricks. People won by tricks are soon lost if the tricks don't get bigger and more and more dramatic.

Jesus appeared to Mary and said that he had not yet gone to join his Father. It was a final message that God was waiting not only for Jesus but for all true seekers of Him.

JOHN CH 20

Do you believe that Jesus really rose from the dead?

Does it matter if he did or not? Why?

What does this story tell us about the faith which his followers had in him, and particularly about those to whom Jesus actually showed himself?

Do you need to see a miracle before you would start believing in God?