

A simple guide to using the Life course

'I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word'

John 17:20 ESVUK

The recent COVID-19 situation has given rise to many opportunities to share the gospel with our colleagues, friends and family. Putting the Life course videos online will allow us to run the course with our friends at their convenience.

Most of find the thought of reading the Bible with our friends to be an intimidating prospect. This simple guide will hopefully give you all need to run the course well.

1. The life course in six sessions
2. The typical life course format
3. Before, during and after guide
4. How to lead a good discussion
5. Suggested questions for discussions

1. The life course in six sessions

Session 1: revelation—know Jesus has **made God known** (1:1–4, 14–18)

Session 2: response—know there are **only two** main responses to Jesus (1:5–13)

Session 3: promised—know Jesus came to **bring in the promised kingdom** (2:1–11)

Session 4: rescue—know believing in Jesus is the **only way** into the kingdom (3:1–21)

Session 5: whoever—know Jesus' offer of life is open to **anyone** who believes (4:1–26)

Session 6: word—know belief in Jesus involves **trusting his words** (4:27–54)

THE TYPICAL LIFE COURSE FORMAT

The usual format consists of an opening discussion, a chance to read the passage from John, and then two main discussions with short talks from Henry either teeing up the passage, or summarising some of the main things you hopefully began to discuss. Hopefully at the end you can always finish by giving them a chance to ask any questions, either connected to the passage or more generally.

Welcome → Discuss and read → Talk → Discuss → Talk → Discuss → Talk → Q&A

The times of discussion are designed to allow your friend to engage with the Bible passage. The talks that come before and after seek to engage with the kind of questions we anticipate friends having.

If you spend about 10 minutes for each discussion, then it should be possible to complete the whole session within an hour, but please feel free to use your own discretion.

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER GUIDE

It's important we keep remembering the two most basic convictions of gospel ministry: this is a ministry of both prayer and the word (Acts 6:4). As you'll see from what follows, it's important we do both!

Before the meeting

Scan through the videos beforehand so you know what to expect.

Pray! You probably won't be praying with your non-Christian friend but before you meet up please do make sure you spend some time praying, and indeed once the session is over.

Here are some suggestions of things to pray for:

- Give thanks for the opportunity to be opening God's word with your friend
- Pray for God's Spirit to bring understanding, not least conviction of sin and the need for rescue
- Pray for clarity and confidence in the power of God's word—and for wisdom in answering questions

During the meeting

After catching up, watch the video together by sharing your screen on whatever platform you're using.

When it's time for discussion, a grey screen will come up asking you to pause the video. By all means go beyond the 10 minute recommended amount for discussion however it's worth trying to keep the momentum going so it's probably best not to go on too long!

After your discussion, continue to play the video.

When the video finishes, ask for responses and questions. Don't feel like you have to answer every question as the next session may well provide the answers.

Ask if your friend enjoyed it and see if they're keen to arrange a time to do the next session.

After the meeting

Pray! Continue to follow up with your friend.

HOW TO LEAD A GOOD DISCUSSION

Given the power is in God's word, as much as possible, we should try and get our friends looking at the text, reading it and digesting what it is saying.

Here are some suggestions to facilitate that process:

- Give your friend the time to read and process the words—this might mean holding back from pointing things out and being comfortable with silence
- Give your friend the freedom to engage with the text—this might mean allowing them to share what they found interesting or striking at the start of every discussion
- Keep going back to the text—ask which verse they've spotted the idea

You can find some suggested questions for specific passages on the following pages.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS

Here are some possible questions you could use to help facilitate the discussion. Before going straight to these questions, it'd be good to ask your friend what they're thinking—eg anything striking/surprising?

Session 1: know Jesus has made God known (John 1:1–4, 14–18)

Discussion 1: John 1:1–8

1. Can you come up with a CV for the word? For eg his date of birth, his address, his work experience and his strengths
2. Discussion 2: John 20:30–31
3. How does understanding John's purpose help you understand why he writes about the word at the start?
4. How might his purpose shape the way you read?

Session 2: know there are only two main responses to Jesus (1:5–13)

Discussion 1: John 1:9–11

1. 'His own' refers to the Jews. What did they believe they were born into?
2. Why is their response so shocking?

Discussion 2: John 1:12–13

1. How does this response differ from the previous verses? (not from birth)
2. What do you think it means to receive Jesus?
3. What do you think it means to be a child of God?

Session 3: know Jesus came to bring in the promised kingdom (2:1–11)

Discussion 1: John 2:1–11

1. What kind of newspaper headlines might appear the next day in Cana?
2. How impressive do you think the miracle is?

Discussion 2: no passage—discussion on response

1. How does this make you feel?
2. What questions might we hope John will go on to answer?

Session 4: know believing in Jesus is the only way into the kingdom (3:1–21)

Discussion 1: John 3:1–15

1. What do you find most surprising in this passage?
2. How might this challenge common understandings of who gets to go to heaven?

Discussion 2: John 3:16–21

1. What do you find most surprising in this passage?
2. How might this challenge common understandings of how good humans are?

Session 5: know Jesus' offer of life is open to anyone who believes (4:1–26)

Discussion 1: John 4:1–26

1. What are the big surprises in this passage?
2. What do you think the woman at the well is searching for?

Discussion 2: no passage—discussion on response

1. How does this make you feel?

Session 6: know belief in Jesus involves taking him at his word (4:27–54)

Discussion 1: John 4:27–45

1. Recap the surprise of the Samaritans—why do they believe?

Discussion 2: John 4:46–54

1. How does this connect with what we've seen before? (word belief)