

CRU PRESS

GREEN



INVESTIGATIVE BIBLE STUDY

THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS

This five week study is designed to help a person understand what the Bible says about Jesus Christ and to come to know Him personally. They are aimed specifically at people who have no Christian commitment, or who are uncertain where they stand (though these studies have also proven useful with those new to faith in Christ).

As an investigative Bible Study, content is for a mixed audience of believers and non-believers. This study is ideal for the start of the school year, before more committed discipleship groups have formed, and while you still gathering new students and freshmen.

Content:

Jesus: His Beginnings Leaders Guide

Jesus: His Beginnings Study

Jesus: The Healer Leaders Guide

Jesus: The Healer Study

Jesus: The Teacher Leaders Guide

Jesus: The Teacher Study

Jesus: The Redeemer Leaders Guide

Jesus: The Redeemer Study

Jesus: The Life-Giver Leaders Guide

Jesus: The Life-Giver Study

Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

Leader's Guide



Investigative Bible Studies are four-to five-week topical studies designed to help a person understand what the Bible says about Jesus Christ and to come to know Him personally. They are aimed specifically at people who have no Christian commitment, or who are uncertain where they stand (though these studies have also proven useful with those new to faith in Christ).

Experience has shown that many non-Christian people are open to investigating what the Bible has to say and then discussing it with others. Investigative studies have proven to be very fruitful in helping them come to faith in Christ. These studies are attractive to the non-Christian because they:

- Are short-term.
- Allow open discussion.
- Encourage people to make up their own minds about Jesus Christ.

Investigative Bible Studies have been used effectively both with individuals and in small group discussions. These studies provide an opportunity to give people a better understanding of what Christians believe and why.

Because they are short-term and flexible in nature, Investigative Bible Studies can begin at any time. They are useful:

1. As follow-up for those interested after a Four Laws presentation.
2. As follow-up after an evangelistic event (e.g., film, speaker, team meeting).
3. Within an already existing group (e.g., sorority, dorm floor, athletic team).
4. With friends or classmates.
5. With your movement's fringe contacts.

Setting Up a Study and Inviting People

1. Pray for yourself – for wisdom and grace – and for those you wish to invite.
2. Tell them “I think you may be interested in (or “you may find interesting”) this series of five studies from the New Testament about Jesus, His message and its relevance today. These studies are designed to be discussions and to give you a chance to look into Christianity.”
3. Tell them the series involves meeting for five one-hour discussions along with reading the Gospel of Luke.
4. Set up a time and a place for your first meeting.

Leading Your Study

1. Be faithful to pray regularly for the participants.
2. Show genuine personal interest. Be sure to ask about the person's life: “How are things going for you?” Ask questions and listen; you will become aware of the needs and concerns.



3. Prepare each study thoroughly. The more adequately you have prepared and feel in command of the material, the more you will be able to relax and give your attention to people.
4. Encourage open discussion on what the Bible says. Do not preach or be concerned over getting “the Christian viewpoint” across at every opportunity. Let the Bible speak for itself.
5. As leader your task is to help guide the discussion and keep it from straying off course. You should avoid dominating the discussion. Encourage the participants to contribute, and let them know their contribution is appreciated.
6. Keep the session within the predetermined time frame – preferably one hour.
7. If a participant does not have a modern translation of the Bible, offer to loan one of yours or find him one.

How to Conduct the Investigative Sessions

Follow the simple plan below for each study, adapting it for your group study or for a one-to-one study. Additional information is provided for you in the Session Plans on the next few pages.

1. Offer a friendly, personal greeting.
2. Find a comfortable place with minimal distractions. Take as much time as necessary to establish rapport. Offer some popcorn and soda.
3. Transition to spiritual things by asking about their background, or about what they have thought about your last discussion or contact with them (e.g., “JESUS” film showing, team meeting, Four Laws presentation, the last Investigative session).
4. Introduce the topic for the day. Make sure everyone has an Investigative Bible Study sheet and make sure everyone can see a Bible.
5. Talk about each point on the sheet:
 - Read aloud the information and the Bible verses. (Don’t feel you must use all the verses and all the material.) Ask the participants to read.
 - Use the questions as beginning points for dialogue. Other questions you may find helpful are:
 - What do you think that means?*
 - Why do you think that idea is important?*
 - What have you heard about this before?*
 - Explain briefly the context of passages as necessary, or give background that would be helpful.
6. Close the session by summarizing the topic discussed and by giving a preview of the next discussion.



1. Jesus – His Beginnings

Purpose

To consider together how Jesus' life and work began.

Preparation

Have study sheets for each person and extra Bibles. Be familiar with the passages from Luke and the background information.

Establish rapport

Ask "How are things going for you?" Talk for a few minutes about your week. Or if you are leading a group, have each person introduce himself or herself.

Transition to topic

Ask them what they thought about your previous point of reference (e.g., Four Laws presentation, team meeting, film). Or ask what they are hoping to get from the discussions.

Using the Sheet

Read the introductory statements and the background information. Explain that the materials will present passages and then ask discussion questions. Tell them to feel free to write on their sheets.

Point A—Read the verses (or ask someone to read). Ask the questions encouraging discussion on #3.

Point B—You may need to explain that David was a great king of Israel, and that Jacob was one of the founders of the nation. After #2 ask, "Who, then, was Jesus' father?"

Point C—Encourage people to think of the wider meanings of the words "poor," "captives," "blind," and "oppressed" as well as the obvious, literal meanings.

To Think About

This follows from the discussion in C, above. It may be best to read this question and leave people to consider it on their own.

The first study is not usually the best time to challenge people on their personal response to Jesus. Be sensitive.

Close

Summarize the lesson and briefly preview "Jesus the Healer". Encourage them to read a part of Luke's Gospel each day as this will help them understand who Jesus is and why He came.



2. Jesus the Healer

Purpose

To focus on Jesus' power to change lives, both physically and spiritually. To find comfort in His compassion for people.

Preparation

Work through the questions yourself and decide on which ones you will focus. If there were any difficult areas or questions from last time, look up answers and information.

Establish rapport

Ask personalized questions about something that the person told you in the previous meeting.

Transition to topic

Answer any unanswered questions from last week. Ask what the term *healer* implies to them.

Using the sheet

Reading the sheet gives a good summary and preview.

Point A—After #4: Having read this story, how would you define faith? After #5: How would you react if something like this happened today? What does this incident tell us about Jesus?

Point B—After #5: Why do you think Jesus had this effect on people?

To think about

If you think it is appropriate, encourage discussion.

Close

Preview “Jesus the Teacher.” Remind them to continue reading Luke’s Gospel.

3. Jesus the Teacher

Purpose

To discuss Jesus' teaching about (A) our failure to do good and (B) how lost people return to God. To give an opportunity for reflection about our own attitude toward God, and an opportunity to respond to Him.

Preparation

Work through the session yourself. Answer unanswered questions from last week. Read up on the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

Establish rapport

Ask personalized questions, or ask what they think about some newsworthy event.



Transition to topic

Answer any unanswered questions from previous sessions. Ask what they are getting out of their reading of Luke.

Using the Sheet

Point A—After #3: Why do you think they didn't want to get involved? We often make a distinction between things we actually do wrong and things we fail to do. In this story, the robbers sinned by doing something wrong, but the priest and the Levite sinned by failing to help. The second type of sin is just as important, and Jesus points this out. After #4: Why do you think the Samaritan got involved? What do you think the Samaritan was thinking? After #5: Why do you think Jesus told this story?

Point B—After #4: How true to life is this? Can you think of any examples of this sort of problem in families? What do you think are some of the causes of it? After #5: What prompted Jesus to tell this story? (Luke 15:1, 2, 10) How does Jesus use this story to illustrate our relationship to God?

To think about

Read the entire section. Allow one or two people to answer the questions. Be sensitive. This would be a good time to share your testimony.

Close

A good close is written into the study. Encourage them to think through where they are in their thinking about Jesus and use the prayer if it is appropriate.

4. Jesus the Redeemer

Purpose

To help the individual or group understand that the death of Jesus was not an accident and not a martyr's death. It fulfilled God's central purpose of redeeming men and women, bringing them back into a relationship with Himself.

Preparation

Pray for the people in the study. Prepare your answers. Be familiar with the background notes.

Establish rapport

Again, ask personalized questions.

Transition to Topic

Ask if they have thought any more about the meaning of the story of the lost son.



Using the sheet

Refer to the background notes as needed.

Point A—After #2: What do you think these mean?

After #3: Point out that Jesus' death was on behalf of others. To whom do you refer?

Point C—After #4: Jesus willingly went through incredible suffering, and to His death, even though He was innocent.

Close

Remind participants that the next session is the final meeting. Preview the next session by telling them you will look at the resurrection and how people can respond to Jesus' love for them.

5. Jesus the Life-Giver

Purpose

To show that Jesus really did rise from the dead. To show how people can respond to Jesus, and to give them an opportunity to do so.

Preparation

Pray for the people in the study. Read extra resources on the resurrection from background information. Decide what you will do next.

Establish rapport

Ask how they are doing.

Transition to topic

Ask what has been the most helpful or surprising in the study or in their reading of Luke. Answer any unanswered questions.

Using the sheet

Point A—After #4: If you had lived at this time, how would you have been sure that Jesus was alive again?

Bring in additional information about the resurrection if there is a need or if there is interest.

Point C—Be sensitive to what people have shared about their readiness to become Christians.

Read through the prayer and suggest that those who would like to pray it for themselves do so silently.

Encourage those who have invited Christ into their lives to tell you or someone else at the end of the meeting.



Point D—After READ: What does Jesus expect from us? Deciding to become a Christian is just the beginning of a lifetime spent getting to know God better.

Close

Be ready to suggest at least one of the following possibilities, depending on the needs of the participants.

1. Continue to meet for a few weeks to study some aspects of growing as a Christian (follow-up).
2. Meet individually with new believers for follow-up.
3. Suggest another investigative study for those interested in more information. Encourage anyone who has questions to talk to you personally. If appropriate, close in prayer.



Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

I. His Beginnings

In this study we will see:

- How Luke's Gospel fits into history.
- That Jesus is "the Son of God."
- What Jesus said He came to do.



Background to the New Testament

The New Testament is made up of several short books and letters. Our English Bibles are translations of what the early Christians actually wrote. The experts tell us that we can be sure that the text on which these translations are based has very few mistakes in it. How can we be sure?

In the days of the first Christians, there were many writings about the life of Jesus. But some had a special quality – they had been written by Jesus’ followers or their close friends. These gospels and letters were carefully copied by hand. Over the years, archaeologists have found thousands of manuscripts of bits of the New Testament and even some complete copies. By comparing these, we can get very close to what the New Testament writers originally wrote. Some of these copies are dated less than 100 years after the original gospel or letter was written.

For an idea of how good this evidence is, compare the New Testament with other writings that are about as old as the New Testament. For example, Julius Caesar wrote a book called *The Gallic War* about 50 years before Christ was born. We obviously do not have the original copy. Yet, we do have nine or ten copies, and the earliest of these was made about 900 years after the original. This is a normal gap for ancient writings.

When we examine the historical evidence relating to the Bible, one learns that there are thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament books. Therefore, we have good reason to believe that we know almost exactly what Luke, Paul and the others wrote.

About the Author

The author of this gospel, Luke, also wrote another book in the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles. He was the only New Testament writer who was not Jewish, and he was a doctor. Independent evidence confirms that he was a very careful and accurate historian.

A. Luke’s Gospel: fact or fiction?

Read: Luke 1:1-4

1. Where did Luke get his information? (1:2)
2. How did he write it? (1:3)
3. Why do you think Luke wrote this introduction?

B. Where did Jesus come from?

Luke gives details of the unique origin of Jesus, and the following passage explains how Jesus’ birth was foretold.

Read: Luke 1:26-38

1. What would the future hold for Mary’s child? (1:32,33)
2. How would Jesus be conceived? (1:35-37)
3. Jesus is said to be the Son of God. What do these verses say about Jesus’ “double origin”?



C. Jesus explains his purpose

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the south of Palestine. He grew up in a very ordinary town, named Nazareth, located in Galilee which was in the north of Palestine. Jesus was a carpenter, but at the age of 30, He became a religious teacher, moving from town to town.

In Luke 4:14-22, we read what happened when Jesus began teaching. He went to the synagogue, which was the local place of worship. Although He probably had no more religious education than the average Jewish man, people wanted to hear Him. He was asked to speak at the synagogue in Nazareth.

Read: Luke 4:14-22

1. What kinds of people had Jesus come to help? (4:18)
Who do you think this means?
2. What was he going to announce? (4:19)
What does this mean?
3. What do you think the people in the synagogue understood when He said the words in verse 21?

To think about

Jesus came to help the “poor,” the “captive,” the “blind,” and the “oppressed.” Are there ways in which people today are poor, captive, blind or oppressed?



Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

II. The Healer



In the first study, we saw that Jesus was not just an unusual person; He was God's Son. He came into the world in order to meet the deepest needs of men and women.

In this study, we will look at how Jesus met the needs of two particular people. Everywhere Jesus went, He came across needy people. Often, the people He met had incurable diseases, but He was able to change their lives completely by healing them.

He healed: Simon's mother-in-law, a Roman officer's servant, a man with a paralyzed hand, a crippled woman, a paralyzed man, people suffering from spiritual and mental disorders or skin diseases, blind people, and He even raised the dead. *"All who had friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; He placed His hands on every one of them and healed them all"* (Luke 4:40).

A. A blind beggar is healed

Read: Luke 18:35-43

1. What do you think life was like for this blind man?
2. Why do you think he kept calling for Jesus?
3. What did Jesus do and say once He had heard the man? (18:40-42)
4. In what way did the man show he believed in Jesus?
5. If you had seen this miracle, what would you have thought of Jesus?

This was a blind man to whom Jesus gave "recovery of sight" (Luke 4:18). He healed many people of different physical illnesses. But He also healed people in other ways.

B. Jesus and Zacchaeus

The Romans gave the job of collecting taxes to the highest bidder. Tax collectors did not get any wages for their work. They collected as much money as they could so there would be plenty left over for themselves after paying the government. Zacchaeus was one of these tax collectors – a greedy and unpopular man.

Read: Luke 19:1-10

1. What was Zacchaeus' attitude toward Jesus? (19:3, 4, 6)
2. Many people grumbled about Jesus talking to such a man. What was Jesus' attitude toward Zacchaeus? (19:5, 9, 10)
3. How did Zacchaeus change after meeting Jesus? (19:8)
4. What do you think Jesus meant by "the lost"? (19:10)
5. What does this incident show about Jesus?

To think about

Zacchaeus was "captive" to his own greed. Jesus gave him freedom. Jesus said that he had come "to seek and to save the lost." People changed when they met Jesus. How do you think meeting Jesus would affect your life?



Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

III. The Teacher



In the last study, we looked at “Jesus the Healer.” But people didn’t come just to be healed by Him; they also wanted to listen to Him. Large crowds from all over the country would come to hear what He had to say. He talked about: God’s Kingdom, prayer, wise and foolish lifestyles, love and forgiveness, and also Himself.

Not everyone liked Jesus’ teaching. He was outspoken against the religious leaders who were hypocrites. He had enemies who tried to trick Him with questions, but He always managed to give wise answers. Even when the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus, they found it hard because the crowds wanted to listen to His teaching, “not wanting to miss a single word” (Luke 19:48).

In this study, we will discuss two of the best-known parables (stories which teach biblical truth) that Jesus told.

A. The Good Samaritan

What would you say are the most important things in life?

Many people went to Jesus with their important questions. For one man, his concern focused on what would happen to him after his death. He asked Jesus how he could “receive eternal life.” Jesus got the man to answer it himself, from the Scriptures (Luke 10:27)

Read: Luke 10:25-28

1. What did the man say were the two most important things in life? (10:27)
2. What do you think of these answers?
3. Jesus was then asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He answered by telling the story of the good Samaritan.

Read: Luke 10:29-37

1. What did the priest and Levite do that was wrong? (10:31, 32)
2. Did they break the Law?
3. Did they disobey the principle “I never do anyone any harm”?
4. Due to their religions and cultural upbringing, Jews looked upon the Samaritans (Gentiles) with contempt. How did the Samaritan in this parable show love?
5. How would you answer the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus acts as a good Samaritan toward us. He sees our needs and failures, and Instead of passing by, He reaches out to help.



B. The Lost Son

This is a simple story, yet one of the greatest in the world of literature. It takes the problems that often arise between people to illustrate how men and women react toward God.

Read: Luke 15:11-32

1. What do you think the younger son was thinking as he left home? (15:12,13)
2. Where did he go? (15:13)
3. How do you think the father felt when his son had gone?
4. Things went fine for awhile. What happened when things got bad? (15:14-16)
5. The son changed his mind. Why? (15:17)
6. How did he show that his attitude had changed? (15:18-20)
7. What was the father's attitude? (15:20, 22-24)
8. In what ways do you think this story is a picture of our relationship with God?

This story shows us that God still offers His love in spite of our willful selfishness. It also shows us that we can come back to God, no matter how far we have wandered from Him.

To think about

What do you identify with more: the attitude of the son as he left home or his attitude when he decided to return?

Can you believe that God would accept you as completely as the father accepted his son?

You may be at a point in your life where you know that you need God, and want to return to Him. Perhaps you would like to pray:

Dear Father, I have wandered away from You, and I have sinned against You. I have not loved You or other people as I should. I want to come back to You now, just as the lost son came back to his father. Please forgive me, and come into my life, so that I can be the person You want me to be. Amen.

The next study will explain what Jesus did to make our return to God possible.



Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

IV. The Redeemer



At the trial of Jesus it seemed that both the weak-willed Roman governor, Pilate, and the shouts of the crowd sent Jesus to death. In fact, the Bible tells us that these events amazingly formed part of God's purpose.

Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, "Listen! We are going to Jerusalem where everything the prophets wrote about the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Gentiles, who will make fun of Him, insult Him, and spit on Him. They will whip Him and kill Him, but on the third day He will rise to life." The disciples did not understand any of these things. (Luke 18:32-34a)

(See the section at the end of this lesson for background notes on unfamiliar terms.)

A. The Passover meal and "The Last Supper"

On the last night of His life, Jesus ate a meal with His disciples.

Read: Luke 22:7-20

1. What do you think the atmosphere was like during that meal?
2. What did Jesus say about the bread and cup of wine? (22:19,20)
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said His body was "given for you," and His blood was "poured out for you"?

B. The trial

After the Passover meal Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was taken before the Jewish ruling council.

Read: Luke 22:66-71

1. What did the Jewish leaders want to find out from Jesus?
2. What did Jesus tell them?
3. How did the Jewish leaders respond? (22:71)

C. The Cross

Jesus was not condemned to death for anything He had *done*. He was condemned for who He claimed to *be*.

Read: Luke 23:32-49

1. What did the following groups say about Jesus:(v. 35)
Jewish leaders?(v. 36)
soldiers? (v. 39)
the criminal?
2. How was the second criminal's reply different from that of the first? (23:39-42)
3. What did he recognize about Jesus?
4. What did the army officer say when Jesus died? (23:47)
5. What do you think Jesus' attitude was while He was being crucified? (23:34, 43, 46)



This study is called “Jesus the Redeemer.” To redeem means to buy something back, to recover something by payment. Jesus’ death was for the sake of other people, to bring them back to God.

To think about

As the criminal faced his own death, he asked Jesus to remember him in His future Kingdom. Jesus promised that the robber would be with Him that day in Paradise. In what ways can we have the same hope as that criminal did after hearing Jesus’ words?

Background notes

Passover (Luke 22:7 and following)

The Passover is an annual religious festival when the Jews recall how God rescued their nation from slavery in Egypt. They remember particularly how the angel of death killed the first-born of all Egyptians, yet “passed over” all the Jewish families. God told them they would be protected by sprinkling lamb’s blood on their door posts. It was after this event that the Egyptians finally allowed the Jews to leave Egypt. An important part of the Passover festival was the killing and eating of the Passover lamb.

New covenant (Luke 22:20)

God had promised in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31:31-34) that He would bring in a new era. This promise became known as the new covenant. In the New Testament Jesus says that this era is now beginning and that His death would confirm it. This is the guarantee that God gives to us that He will forgive us and that we will have a special relationship with Him.

Messiah (Luke 22:67)

The Hebrew word “Messiah” means “anointed one.” (To anoint someone with olive oil was to honor him or to appoint him to do some special work.) In Greek, the language of the New Testament, “Messiah” is translated “Christ.” The Jews hoped that the promised Messiah would come as king, to deliver the nation from foreign rule and to set up a righteous, divine kingdom in Israel. There are many verses in the Old Testament that speak of this anointed one who was to come. Although Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, He did not do what the Jews expected. Instead He came as a servant and as one who would suffer. His Kingdom was to be established, not in a palace, but in the hearts of men and women. Yet in the end all things were to be brought under His rule.

Son of Man (Luke 22:69)

To describe Himself Jesus used “Son of Man” most often. In Luke 22:69 He refers to an Old Testament passage (Daniel 7:13, 14) about a son of a man (human being) who was given an everlasting kingdom. The Jews have understood Daniel to be referring to the promised Messiah.



Jesus

Investigative Bible Studies

V. The Life-Giver



The last chapter of Luke gives a clear account of the fantastic miracle of the resurrection. After Jesus' crucifixion His disciples were afraid of the Jews. While they continued to meet, they did so in secret. Suddenly, Jesus came to them.

C.S. Lewis, a famous writer and Christian, wrote: *The New Testament writers speak as if Christ's achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought and beaten the king of death.*

A. The Resurrection

Read: Luke 24:1-53

1. How do you think the disciples felt after seeing Jesus crucified?

News began to reach them that Jesus was alive again. The disciples' reaction shows that they did not expect this. They thought the story was nonsense (v. 11). The two on the road said that they were surprised by the news. (v. 22) and Jesus Himself confirmed that they had doubts in their minds (v. 38). Nevertheless, various people became convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead.

2. What convinced the women? (24:5-8)
3. What convinced the two people on the road? (24:25-32)
4. What convinced the group of disciples? (24:36-43)
5. How did the disciples' attitude toward Jesus change? (24:52,53)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the climax of His life's work. Jesus rose from the dead as He said He would. This challenges us to believe that the other things He said about Himself are also true. The resurrection demands a response from each one of us, one way or another.

B. Responding to Jesus

Let's look at one particular woman about whom Luke wrote, and see how she responded to Jesus.

Read: Luke 7:36-50

This woman had a bad past. Her behavior toward Jesus was very different from the stiff and starchy response of Simon the Pharisee.

1. Why do you think the woman acted as she did? (7:37, 38)
2. Jesus told Simon a story to explain the woman's actions. (7:40-43)
Why do you think He did that?
2. How were the woman's debts cleared before God? (7:48)
3. What does "faith" mean? (7:50)
4. What did "go in peace" mean to this woman? (7:50)

She could be sure that she was at peace with God. Jesus had welcomed, accepted and forgiven her because of His love and mercy. Nothing she had done could have earned His response. But she was now free to live as a new person.



We can be sure in this same way. We can never pay God the debt we owe Him for our sinful behavior. But if we come to Jesus as this woman did, we can know that He forgives and accepts us completely. In the last session we discussed how this happens through Jesus' death on our behalf.

C. Becoming a Christian

The sinful woman came to Jesus and recognized her sin. She trusted Jesus to forgive her and, by her actions, thanked Him for the new life He offered her. We must do the same if we want to be at peace with God, both now and eternally.

You could pray something like this:

Jesus, I realize that I have been running my own life and have rebelled against You. Thank You for dying for my sins. I open my life to You and ask You to be my Savior and Lord. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.

D. Growing as a Christian

These five studies have shown us who Jesus is and why He came.

Luke 6:46-49 teaches that we must not only hear what Jesus said, but put it into practice.

Read: Luke 6:46-49

Your decision to become a Christian is just the beginning of a lifetime of getting to know God better.

If you are interested in more information about the Christian faith, we are available to help.

