



discovering Christ

a seven-week experience

ask.
seek.
knock.

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Discovering Christ: Participant Guide, 2nd edition

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1. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

Many people do not take the time to consider the meaning of their life. Have you? It is not possible to utilize something to its full potential until you understand why it was created. Is life an accident or intentional? Could the meaning of life be found not in a way of thinking, but in a person?

A. CONSIDERING THE MEANING OF LIFE

- Have you taken time to reflect on the meaning of your life?
- Life circumstances or world events can awaken us to the meaning of our existence.
 - » Subjective Warning Signs
 - » Inevitability of Death

"I get confused when I look around at the world and see everybody running around... Yet no one is trying to figure out what is the cause of death and what happens when you die? That to me is the only thing really of importance and the rest is all secondary."

GEORGE HARRISON, THE BEATLES

B. UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

- We can't fully understand something until we figure out why it exists.

“There are only two ways in which anything can come to be. Either it’s intentional or accidental: that is, either someone intended it or it merely chanced. The thing that is intentional has a purpose; accidents have no purpose. Humanity, like other things, must either be an accident and so purposeless, or else have been made with intent.”

FRANK SHEED, A MAP OF LIFE

- We need a change in our worldview to understand the purpose of life.

C. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR YOU

- God created us for relationship with himself.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

JOHN 14:6

- We find our purpose in Jesus Christ.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

MATTHEW 7:7-8

NOTES:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal dotted lines, typical of primary school handwriting practice paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

WHAT ARE THE GOSPELS AND ARE THEY RELIABLE?

1. What are the Gospels?

The four Gospels are the primary sources available about the life of Jesus. However, upon reading them one might find a work very different than a modern biography. For example, John and Mark overlook the birth and early life of Jesus, and each Gospel devotes a significant portion of the text to the last week of Jesus' life. Furthermore, there is no attempt to take a neutral attitude towards the life of Jesus. Rather, the Gospels enthusiastically proclaim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus gives meaning and fulfillment to our human existence. What then, do the Gospels tell us about Jesus? Although they are very different from modern biographies (with the exception of Luke), they are also much too close to the source (30-60 years) to be considered folklore. The Gospels are a form of ancient biographical writing that seeks to explain who Jesus was using the memories, particularly eyewitness accounts, of people who had encountered Christ. The main focus of ancient biographies is not the sequence of events, but rather the revelation of somebody's character; in this case, the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

2. How does the New Testament compare to other recorded histories of Antiquity?

Work	Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span (yrs)	Number of Copies
Herodotus' <i>Histories</i>	488-428 BC	AD 900	1,300	8
Caesar's <i>Gallic War</i>	58-50 BC	AD 900	950	10
Livy's <i>Roman History</i>	59 BC-AD 17	AD 900	900	20
Tacitus' <i>Histories</i>	AD 100	AD 1000	1,000	20
<i>New Testament</i>	AD 40-100	AD 130 (portions) AD 350 (full manuscripts)	30-300 years	5,000+ Greek; 10,000 Latin; 9,300 others

3. How do we know the four Gospels are the most accurate biographies of Jesus, when compared with other texts about the life of Jesus?

First, the names attached to the three synoptic gospels indicate that there was no attempt to falsely attribute authorship. Matthew,

Mark, and Luke were rather unimportant figures in the New Testament and yet their names are attached to three of the four gospels. Contrast this with the apocryphal Gospels, which tend to use central figures in the New Testament such as Peter, Mary, and James. The relative obscurity of the authors of the synoptic gospels compared to the apocryphal gospels demonstrates no attempt to forge authorship. Furthermore, apocryphal gospels tend to have much later dates of authorship, centuries after the coming of Jesus, and are full of mythological extravagances. For this reason, they excluded themselves from mainstream Christian communities and ultimately the canon of Scripture.

4. How do we know the Gospels accurately reflect the life of Jesus?

The culture of first century Palestine was exceedingly oral, far different than today's culture of written word. Memorization was so integral to the culture that Rabbis would often memorize the entire Old Testament. Additionally, Jesus often spoke poetically that allowed for greater ease of memorization. Finally, the literary style of the text does not necessitate exact quotations. Paraphrases that conveyed the meaning of Jesus' words were acceptable means of transmitting his teachings.

5. How should I read the Gospels?

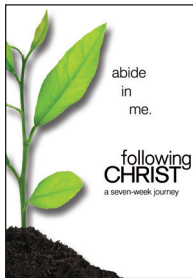
The Gospels, and the whole Bible, for that matter, are not to be studied as merely an academic exercise. According to Peter Kreeft, "Reading the Bible is a form of prayer. It is not just a book, but God's love letter to you. It is God's revelation, God's mind... Reading it is aligning your mind and will with God's; therefore it is a fulfillment of prayer." Furthermore, the Fathers of Vatican II wrote in *Dei Verbum*, "The books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach the truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to be confided to the sacred Scriptures."

References:

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Kreeft, Peter. *You Can Understand the Bible.* 2005
Second Vatican Council. *Dei Verbum.* 1965
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Witherington, Ben. "Primary Sources" *Christian History.* 1998

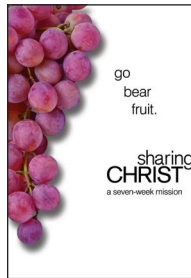
AFTER DISCOVERING CHRIST: RESOURCES FOR FURTHER SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. Continue your walk with Jesus in the ChristLife series.



Following Christ

A seven-week journey that explores Catholic discipleship.



Sharing Christ

A seven-week mission that trains Catholics to share Jesus Christ with others.

2. The Bible

Two recommended translations are the Revised Standard Version-2nd Catholic edition, and the New American Bible revised edition

3. Discover Christ

Dave Nodar and Bert Ghezzi, Our Sunday Visitor

4. Follow Christ

Dave Nodar, Fr. Erik Arnold, and Ally Ascosi, Our Sunday Visitor

5. Hungry for God: Practical Help for Personal Prayer

Ralph Martin, St. Anthony Messenger Press

6. You Can Understand the Bible

Peter Kreeft, Ignatius Press

7. Mere Christianity

C.S. Lewis, HarperOne

8. Exploring the Catholic Church: An Introduction to Catholic Teaching and Practice

Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Servant Publisher

9. An Invitation to the Spirit-Filled Life

Charles Whitehead, Word Among Us Press

10. Introduction to the Devout Life

St. Francis De Sales, TAN books

11. The Word Among Us

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