



# weekend

## resource guide for the week of 6 May

*“...to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God... always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” (Acts 26.18; 1Peter 3.15)*

How did Jesus reach men like Nicodemus or Zaccheus? He engaged them through natural conversation not preaching or sermonizing. A simple reading of the gospels reveals that Jesus had no method or system save that of a genuine interest in other people and a desire to bring them into His Kingdom. Each conversation is unique and reflects the distinct personalities of the men and women He is speaking with. He was never indifferent, aloof, or patronizing. His conversations did not hide behind a shroud of small talk, religious jargon, or spiritual elitism. While he purposed to convict people of their sin and the Father’s love He never made people feel insignificant, embarrassed, or humiliated. In fact Jesus esteemed their freedom and their dignity so highly that He always left the decision with them. It is awesome and liberating to realize that Jesus did not effectively persuade everyone He spoke with. Can we possibly think that we shall do better?!

I find that certain doubts and difficulties surface again and again as I share the gospel with others. These questions are neither fodder nor smokescreen. They represent the heartfelt questions and blockages that men and women who are truly seeking Christ carry with them. Here is a list of some of the questions, perceptions, and personal admissions that I have encountered among those who are genuinely seeking Jesus.

- What about all the suffering/evil in the world?
- The Church is so dead and irrelevant.
- What about other religions? Is Jesus really the only way?
- There are too many things I don’t understand...
- I’ve tried it before but it didn’t work...
- I’m afraid of losing my individuality...
- I’m afraid that I will have to give up certain things that I really enjoy...
- I don’t understand how God can guide me...
- I could never keep up with the expectations the Bible has for followers of Jesus Christ — I am not that good of a person...
- I don’t feel the need to be perfect or forgiven...
- I am not a religious person...
- I’m a homosexual... or I’m divorced...
- It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and honest...
- Do you mean that Adolf Hitler could be in heaven right now if he asked Jesus to forgive him before he died?
- Why are there so many different denominations if every church worships Jesus?
- I am ashamed of my past and everyone knows that you cannot alter the past...
- I cried out to God to heal my dad— or friend, spouse, mom, child— but he/she still died. Where was God when I needed Him?
- How can I know that the Bible is trustworthy?
- Christian faith is merely a crutch for the emotionally frail.
- What about all the horrors that have been committed in the name of Jesus?

These are all legitimate questions. They can also be artful excuses. It all depends on the heart of the inquirer. One thing is certain. We are called to engage an unbelieving world with the cogent testimony of the hope that is within us. Are you willing? Are you ready?

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark'.

## Getting to know one another better...

What is your favorite thing about Spring in San Diego?

### Acts 3:11 - 26: The Gospel...

*While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. 12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. 16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

*17 "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; 20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, 21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. 22 "Moses said, 'THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you. 23 'And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. 25 "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' 26 "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."*

### What? (does the Bible say)

What do you think it meant that "perfect health" (Acts 3:16) was given to this man?

When Peter saw the response of the crowd, he saw his opportunity and talked to them about Jesus. List the points Peter makes about Jesus.

Based on this passage, what is the "full gospel"?

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**Now what?** (how will I think based on what this passage says)

The wait for Jesus to return from heaven may seem very long. How is your perspective on this wait influenced by Acts 3:21? How do you understand “times of restoration”?

How have you seen the power of God demonstrated in your life and in the lives of others?

How have your friends, neighbors, and coworkers reacted to your Christian faith?

Do you expect for God’s power to “show up” in your life and midst? Why or why not?

**So what?** (difference will this passage make in how I live)

Do you share your faith with other Christians? If so, how? If not, why not?

Do you share your faith with non-Christians? If so, how? If not, why not? Can you recall a time when you shared your faith? How did the person or group respond to you?

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Make a list of people in your life who do not know Christ. How could your LifeGroup encourage you to be more transparent about sharing your faith?

**My prayer requests** (write in advance what you want your group to pray for...)

**Praying for my group...**