

The Gospels also show, in a natural way, how new Christians grappled with the implications of what their new-found faith meant for them. There is no attempt to present the growing number of Christians as perfect, and their inability to agree on some important issues highlighted the challenging reality

It shows life & realities

New Testament writings show how Christianity grew out of the conviction that the crucified Jesus had risen from the dead. They provide details of how Jesus' followers were so convinced of this that they were transformed from fearful, dejected losers into bold, world-changing ambassadors.

The New Testament gives details

The four Gospels – of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – have a convincing integrity of their own. They have a common theme about the nature of Jesus and events in his life, and they also have differences that broaden the picture, providing varied data that Christian historians such as Josephus and Tacitus, and Pliny, a Roman governor, make significant references to Jesus Christ. He lived.

History tells us about Jesus

In an age filled with ready information, it is strange to note that there are still some otherwise well-educated people who don't seem to realise that Jesus Christ is an historical fact – that he actually lived. Even though the Common Era calendar begins from his birth (ad Anno Domini) and the centuries before are listed as bc (Before Christ), the fact of his life – and its impact since – hasn't been fully grasped by a surprising number of people.



By the age of 30 Jesus had decided it was time to begin his ministry. He made a public identification with God in a ceremony at the River Jordan – away from religious officialdom – and received God the Father's blessing.

When did he first become noticed?

The Bible makes it plain that Jesus was also God. His coming to earth was prophesied centuries before his birth and he is seen as the fulfilment of divine promise. Christians readily use the term God for Jesus, as well as for the Father, and for God's Spirit. It isn't surprising that the divine essence was evident in Jesus' life.

He was God

Although not much is known of Jesus' early life, Luke's Gospel shows he was keenly aware of God the Father's place in his life by the age of 12. It also tells us he grew as naturally as any other child – in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. He was genuinely human.

He was human

Known as the son of Mary and Joseph, Jesus eventually became recognised by many as the Son of God. Mary and Joseph were made aware of who he was before his birth. Their individual amazement at such unexpected responsibility is recorded in Matthew and Luke – as is their obedience.

Who was he?

Jesus never became an old man. He died around 33 years of age, crucified by the Romans, primarily because the Jewish religious authorities saw him as a threat.

Jesus died a young man

of people from different backgrounds and cultures trying to work together. They were part of the real world. The same applies today.

"Love is the foundation..."

An essential guiding principle is that the greatest command is not for us to serve, worship or obey God – it is to love him. Serving, worshipping and obeying God may flow from this, but the prime emphasis on loving God helps us see him in a more personal, caring way. This relationship gives eternal perspective to life.

Relationship is the key

Jesus affirmed that the two greatest commandments were to love God with heart, mind, strength and soul, and to love others as much as we love ourselves. By doing so he made our relationship with God the most important aspect of life. Every other priority or rule in life should be seen in the context of loving relationship.

Love is the priority

When people first heard his teaching they described it as 'new' and were said to be amazed. The Gospels show why. They record Jesus rejecting and replacing old, harsh teaching by emphasising the values and teaching of a God of love. There is an integrity to all Jesus said. His words were both profound and simple, highlighting love as the foundation for everything that is good and lasting.

What did he teach?

Following this, he spent some quiet time in the desert, praying and contemplating over how men who would become his closest followers – the disciples. They were with him for the next three years.

He took time out

Prayer is normal...

KEEP READING

KEEP READING TO FIND OUT THE FACTS

love is priority ...

relationship is key ...

we have free will ...

we are not forced ...

it's our choice ...

info...

TO LEARN ABOUT OR DISCOVER MORE ...

ALL YOUR LOCAL CHURCH INFORMATION IS BELOW

THE SALVATION ARMY

oneArmy

for International Headquarters, The Salvation Army, in conjunction with the Whole World Mobilising.

Who is ...

AVOID HIM? IGNORE HIM? PRETEND HE NEVER EXISTED?

Who is this Jesus anyway?

FIND ALL YOUR LOCAL INFORMATION ON THE BACK

THE SALVATION ARMY



more facts...

Prayer is normal

Some people become nervous or suspicious at the thought of talking with God. They haven't managed to see it in its natural context and may have been put off by some ill-informed comments. It isn't weird or strange. It is as natural as breathing and is best seen as a normal part of life. A developing relationship with God can bring added wisdom and insight too.

It brings depth of security

Relationship with God – having faith in his constant care – brings a depth of security and purpose to life, with all its twists and turns, that can't be found to the same extent anywhere else. It doesn't excuse us from unwelcome challenges or even tragedies – Jesus never promised us a trouble-free life – but the strength of this relationship can be our mainstay, and help us get other relationships right and in better perspective.

Love your enemies

Jesus' teaching that we should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us isn't easy to put into practice. He summed things up by saying, 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you'. Pure and simple.

He was a servant

Jesus – Son of God – said he had come to serve. He frequently reminded his disciples that to put serving others before their own needs and importance was the way to true greatness.

How not to miss the best

Jesus said that if we want to find life's best we can do so by centring on the joy of giving. He also said that the surest way to miss out on life's best is to look after your own interests only.

Look in the right place

The way to life is not found in human power bases, force, manipulation or even supreme skill or intelligence. It is found in and through love – but we need to have our eyes open to its possibilities and look in the right place. Whereas science helps us understand how things work, Jesus takes us to the heart of life's meaning and purpose.

He lived what he taught

Jesus lived by what he taught. What he preached, he lived out with a consistency that no other teacher has come anywhere near to emulating. When all aspects of his life are examined or scrutinised, they hold together.

He proved its value

When things turned ugly and Jesus was misrepresented, defamed, abused, arrested and condemned to death, everything he had taught about selflessness, surrender, giving and forgiving was confirmed in his responses. He especially prayed for the forgiveness of those who killed him.

He chose to suffer

Questions about suffering – why does it exist and why doesn't God prevent it? – have always tested the human spirit. Jesus chose to suffer. In making the deliberate choice to identify fully with us, God's Son embraced suffering, and did so to a degree we can hardly imagine.

He suffered for us

If ever we are tempted to blame God for everything that is or goes wrong, Jesus' suffering and death show that he freely took all we humans could throw at him. The depths and horrors of the pain he experienced left him feeling alienated from God the Father. He actually said so. Jesus understands suffering and its effects.

God gives us free will

Having given us free will, God accepts the consequences. Without our free will we would be no more than robots or puppets. With free will we can create havoc. We can also grow, learn, develop and discover things that cannot be understood by any other means. We are also free to ask for his guidance.

He still suffers

Whenever we choose to hurt others, bring pain upon ourselves, or ignore what he has planned for us, God still suffers. It matters to him. He doesn't take back our free will or restrain us from using it. He does, however, wait to guide and support us if we will give him the time.

What was the purpose of his death?

Libraries of books have been written on this subject. Put simply, its purpose was to bring man and God together – to help us see both our need of him and his overwhelming love for us. He said he had come to 'seek and save' the lost – and he did.



love is priority ...

we have free will ...

it's our choice ...



"He gives us the dignity of choice ..."

What difference does it make?

On a personal note, it will make as much difference as each of us wants it to make. To accept our need of him and his goodness, and to commit ourselves to his will and way, involves a measure of humility – not always our best feature – yet it opens the door for what Jesus called 'fullness of life'. Relationship with Almighty God can be viewed as the privilege of all privileges.

His death wasn't the end

When Jesus died on the cross it looked as if evil had defeated goodness. The man who preached love was dead. The people who had lied about him, used their power to condemn him and then arranged his torture and killing, seemed to have won. But Jesus was aware that love's power was stronger than evil, stronger than death. Jesus – love personified – couldn't be contained. He rose from the dead. His resurrection stands supreme in human history.

It was the beginning

It didn't take long for those who had followed Jesus to realise that the divine power at work in his resurrection could give new life to us too. Evil had been defeated, bringing release from our failures, with freedom to start again – and with God's help. God has always had our best interests at heart. Jesus' life, teaching, suffering, death and (now) resurrection give compelling evidence to this.

It brings transformation

The transformation in the first disciples was remarkable. They were their own best evidence for what the power of God does. The Church grew from their witness. For more than 2,000 years, countless people have discovered for themselves ways in which God transforms lives at every level.

Jesus doesn't force us

If relationship means anything it has to be genuine. Even though Jesus' demonstration of love was supremely costly, there is no question of God forcing anyone to accept the love he offers. As the Gospel records show, Jesus – the founder of Christianity – rejected utterly the use of force or violence to promote his purposes. He still does. Such force would be contrary to all he is and stands for. It would be counterproductive – and meaningless too.

It's our choice

Jesus was never recorded trying to persuade or cajole people into following him. When a rich young man rejected his terms and walked away from him, Jesus didn't plead with him. He let him go. It is still the same. He gave him the dignity of choice. He gives it to us too.



A FULLER VERSION OF 'WHO IS THIS JESUS ANYWAY?' IS BEING PRODUCED AS A SMALL BOOK. CONTACT ONEARMY@SALVATIONARMY.ORG FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.