

Christianity
EXPLORED
PRISON EDITION

One life.
What's it all about?

A flexible resource for prison ministry

Christianity Explored Prison Edition – Leader’s Guide
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CHRISTIANITY
EXPLORED
MINISTRIES



Published by
The Good Book Company Ltd
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thegoodbook
COMPANY

Websites:

UK: www.thegoodbook.co.uk
North America: www.thegoodbook.com
Australia: www.thegoodbook.com.au
New Zealand: www.thegoodbook.co.nz

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ISBN: 9781908762191

Design by Steve Devane and André Parker

Printed in the UK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Prison Edition of *Christianity Explored*.

The *Christianity Explored* course was first run sixteen years ago at All Souls, Langham Place in London. The aim was to “let the gospel tell the gospel” by introducing people to Jesus through the Gospel of Mark. *Christianity Explored* looks at three simple questions: Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What does it mean to follow him?

Since those early days, the course has grown and is now used in many countries around the world. *Christianity Explored* has also been translated into over 20 languages and continues to grow.

You might be wondering why there is a version of the *Christianity Explored* course that is specifically for use in the prison setting. People who had run *Christianity Explored* in prisons approached Christianity Explored Ministries asking for a version that was tailored for that context. We have been working to address this since April 2008, and have now run multiple pilot courses across the UK.

The aim of *Christianity Explored Prison Edition* is to keep things simple, yet varied, letting the gospel tell the gospel, while providing space to dive deeper into Mark’s Gospel for those who are able.

There are many factors that affect learning and understanding in the prison context, and we have tried to take these into account as we have adapted *Christianity Explored*. They include the average reading age and attention span of the prison population, social background, mental/psychological vulnerability and present incarceration.

If you are running a *Christianity Explored Prison Edition* course, please consider registering it on our website: www.ceministries.org/prisons We’d love to pray for you and support you – and you may find there is already a kindred spirit running the course near you.

Many thanks to the chaplaincy team at HMP Cardiff, particularly Rev. Mark John, and to Daylight Christian Prison Trust for all their support as this material has been developed. And also to all the prisoners who have taken part in piloting the courses!

May God richly bless you in all you do for the honour and glory of Christ.

Stephen Gillian

Stephen James, Gillian Pegler

and the Christianity Explored Team, October 2012

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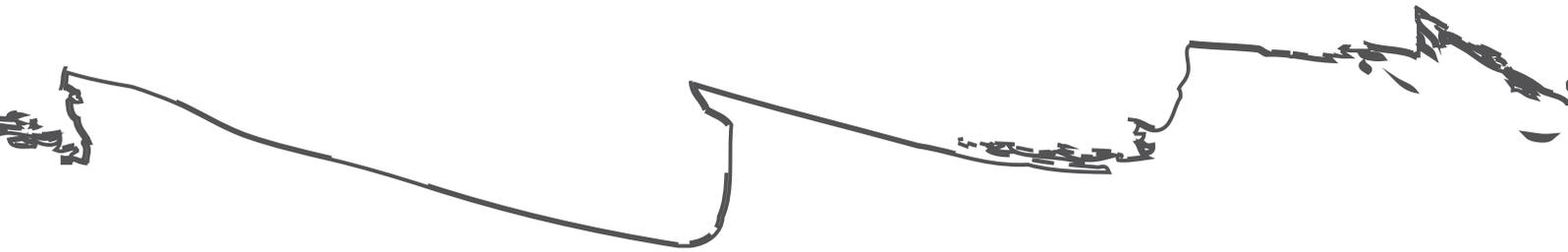
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How to run the course



Getting started

■ *Note: This version of Christianity Explored has been developed specifically for use in UK Prisons, and much of the introductory material assumes this. If you are using it in another country, you will have to adapt it to your own setting. Do make sure you understand properly the way the prison system works in your own country, and respect the rules completely.*

The first three chapters of this section are primarily intended for the main course leader, to help them organise the course. If you're not the main course leader, then read the training modules (pages 17 to 38), before your leaders' training session for *Christianity Explored Prison Edition*. Your team leader will be organizing this training session for your team.

In order to train your team, the training modules (page 17) will give you the information you need. We would recommend that you, as team leader, attend an existing course at another prison before training your own team.

GETTING STARTED

Telling prisoners about Jesus Christ is a stunning privilege and a huge responsibility.

It's a stunning privilege because Almighty God is pleased to call us his "fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9) as he seeks and saves the lost. And it's a huge responsibility because it can be tempting to present a watered-down gospel that has no power to save and is "no gospel at all" (Galatians 1:7). Our evangelism must always be careful, prayerful and faithful.

Christianity Explored has been developed to let the gospel tell the gospel: it takes your group members on a journey through Mark's Gospel to discover who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow him.

To help your journey run smoothly, you will need to consider the following before the course begins.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Christianity Explored Prison Edition has been developed to cover most of the material in Mark's Gospel in eight sessions. You can run the course once a week for eight weeks ("once-a-week course"), or over four or five days ("five-day course") with one or two sessions each day. Each individual session can be tailored to last from 1 to 2.5 hours, depending on your time constraints.

If you have fewer than eight weeks available to run the course, we suggest running the material in the order in which it is written, as far as you are able to go.

STRUCTURE OF A SESSION

Each session is based on a consistent "backbone", so that you and the group have a rough idea of what each session will contain before you start. There is a table showing this "backbone" on page 11.

In some of the sessions there are minor diversions from the backbone to accommodate specific learning needs.

APPROACHING THE PRISON CHAPLAIN ABOUT RUNNING CHRISTIANITY EXPLORED PRISON EDITION

If you're not a prison chaplain, you'll need to approach the Co-ordinating Chaplain before you plan anything else, and ask whether you can run *Christianity Explored Prison Edition* in your local prison. (You may also have to speak to the Governor about this.)

When you approach the chaplain:

- Explain that *Christianity Explored* has been in use for over sixteen years and the prison edition has been developed over four years. The prison edition has been run as a pilot in many prisons, including HMP Cardiff in Wales. All the pilots have been successful and produced excellent feedback.

- Outline the overview of the whole course (page 27) and the structure of a session (page 11).
- Explain that your leaders will be trained and that, if your leaders are paid prison staff, they will need to be allowed time to attend training.
- Make it clear that, if the prison requires a chaplain or officer to sit in with you, even if they are not part of the team (ie: because of local prison policy), then that person must commit to attending every session of the course or covering every session with a rota.
- Explain that the course can run once a week for eight weeks, or for a whole week using eight sessions.
- Discuss the need to advertise the course. One of the key ways of doing this is by attending a chapel service in the week before the course starts, so that you can speak about the course.
- Explain that you need to be able to play a DVD on the course and would also be grateful if they could provide a flip-chart easel and paper, and also marker pens, ballpoint pens and sticky labels or post-it notes. (If use of a DVD is against local prison policy, this does not prevent you running the course – just don't use a DVD!)
- Discuss any material you would need to bring in for the start of the course (eg: Mark's Gospels, printouts of Bible studies and follow-up studies, the *Christianity Explored* DVD, etc) and ask what the procedures are for bringing these in and storing them at the prison. (Note: the flip-chart and paper will stay at the prison. You cannot prepare the sheets at home and then bring them in, so you will need to allow time to write up the next set of sheets before each session.)

All your team need to know the security policies. This may involve attending a local security course (the chaplains will advise you of the procedure for your local prison). There is a generic security document in this manual (see page 187) which we

have composed, but please don't think that this is exactly right for every establishment in the UK. Every prison is different.

WHERE SHOULD YOU MEET?

You may not have much choice! Explain that the room you use needs to be quiet, not a thoroughfare for other prisoners, and it must be able to accommodate your group, allowing for activities that involve the group splitting up and moving around. You also need to have access to a DVD player and tea/coffee facilities.

The course can be run on the wing of a prison; however we would not advise this until you are familiar with the material and have run it a few times. There are so many distractions on the wing that, if you don't know the material inside out, you will lose your train of thought easily. It may prove a distracting venue for the prisoners too.

SETTING UP YOUR VENUE

You will need a semi-circle of chairs, with a flip-chart at the front, and the DVD screen visible to all, with good audio. It helps to have a small table in the middle, for putting pens, stickers and papers on. You need enough space for people to be able to move around and work on the floor in small groups.

We suggest that you do not let prisoners use comfy chairs, unless the whole group can do so, or sit on the floor (except when they are working on the floor in small groups), as the atmosphere can easily become unhelpfully complacent. (We've learned that one the hard way!)

Make sure that your leaders know where all the exits are, where the alarm bells are situated, and that you know where the nearest telephone and member of staff are. Don't push yourselves into a corner: if someone has to sit in the corner of a room, make sure it's the prisoners and not the leaders. Don't put yourselves into situations that you can't quickly get out of. For this reason, don't make a complete circle of chairs – keep the front open for the flip-chart and for access.

Section title	What happens in this section
Check in	The group sits in a semi-circle and each person says briefly how they are feeling / how they are finding the course.
Recap	The group works together to fill in the recap sheet on the flip-chart.
Brainstorm on stickers	A question on the session's theme is given, and each member of the group writes their answer on a sticker, which they then stick on the flip-chart. There's no right or wrong answer at this point – it's just a way of discovering what each person thinks about a particular subject.
Poster	In groups of two or three, people write/draw posters which answer a question. This helps them reflect on the session theme more deeply. Groups then feedback to the whole group.
Brainstorm on flip-chart	A further brainstorm, this time with answers written directly onto the flip-chart. The question posed is not definitively answered at this point – it's simply intended to introduce a biblical theological theme.
Key verse	A verse from Mark that sums up the theme of the session.
Self-directed learning	Completed in groups of two or three. Questions on flip-chart paper are given out, and groups write their answers on their paper. The groups then return to the semi-circle and share their answers. Definitive answers are given by the leader.
Break	
Bible study	The group splits into small groups for a 15-minute Bible study from Mark.
DVD	The <i>Christianity Explored</i> DVD is shown.
DVD questions	The group are asked questions relating to the DVD.
Recap	The session is recapped. Definitive answers that have not yet been addressed are now given by the leader.
Give out follow-up studies	Follow-up studies are given out (if you're running a once-a-week course). These studies in Mark's Gospel cover the topic of the current session from a different angle and encourage participants to read Mark in their own time.
Check out	The group articulates how they're feeling and how they found the session.
Debrief leaders	The main leader debriefs the other leaders. How are they feeling? Are there any concerns about individuals? Were there any security breaches? Any action points? Anything you would do differently next time?

Acknowledgements...

Christianity Explored Prison Edition was written by Stephen James and Gillian Pegler, and edited by Alison Mitchell, building on the original *Christianity Explored* material developed by Rico Tice, Barry Cooper and Sam Shammass.

Many thanks to the prisoners who have taken part in the course and helped us to adapt the material.

Special thanks to:

- The chaplaincy team at HMP Cardiff, particularly Rev. Mark John
- Daylight Christian Prison Trust
- Highfields Church, Cardiff
- Chris and Chloe Alexander

Thanks to *Time For Change Ministries* (www.tfcministries.org.uk) for the use of the chapters "What's different about a prison setting?" (p183) and "Prison security procedures and policies" (p187).

Dashing designs by Steve Devane and André Parker.

Christianity Explored Ministries (CEM) aims to provide Christian churches and organisations worldwide with resources which explain the Christian faith clearly and relevantly from the Bible. CEM receives royalties from the sale of these resources, but is reliant on donations for the majority of its income. CEM is registered for charitable purposes in both the United Kingdom and the USA.

www.ceministries.org

Supporting downloads available from www.ceministries.org/prisons

- **Bible studies** – for group use during each session. *Note:* these are only used if a session is more than an hour long.
- **Optional follow-up studies** – to help prisoners read through Mark's Gospel on their own between sessions.
- **Prisoner's feedback form** – to find out what the group members made of the course.
- **Leader's feedback form** – to discover how leaders felt the course went, and any suggestions they have for improvement in the future.
- **Visual aids** – a set of cards can be downloaded to use during Session 6.
- **Course certificate** – an editable version of this certificate can be downloaded and personalised before presenting copies to each course member.
- **Logos for your own invitations** – if you are going to promote the course using posters or invitations, you can download copies of the *Christianity Explored Prison Edition* logo, which is available in a variety of formats.
- **Evangelistic website** – you may find it helpful to also look at *Christianity Explored's* other website, which is designed for non-Christians. This includes testimonies, video clips of answers to common questions, and an outline of the gospel message. There may be material here that you will find helpful in your own preparation. The web address is **www.christianityexplored.org**

Note: it's not appropriate to give out website addresses when working in a prison. However, if someone is about to be released, you can suggest that they look for a church-based *Christianity Explored* course by doing a web search (eg: using Google) for "Christianity Explored". This will lead them to the evangelistic website, which also has a "find a course" section.