



## Becoming like Christ: Session 3 – Facilitator’s ppt script.

The numbers correspond with the slides. This is an edited version of the Content booklet. ① indicates an animation click is needed.

### 1. Intro slide

### 2. How much does Christ deserve to be at the centre of my life and why?

3. In this session, we look at why, ① as well as loving and receiving Jesus as “Saviour” – the one reconciles us to God by who taking our sins upon Himself – Christians have predominantly recognised and obeyed Him as “Lord” – the one who has **broken the powers of evil and death** through His life, crucifixion and resurrection. In fact, seeing Jesus as ‘victorious’ in this way (known as “Christus Victor”) can justifiably be said to be **the main way Christians have understood God’s atonement on the cross**. Lord is the name with which the early disciples responded to Christ, and it is why we ask people at baptism, ① “Do you submit to Christ as Lord?”

### 4. What is wrong with the world?

5. The Bible teaches how God wants to do *much more than rescue individual people*. There is a **bigger** task to be done. We have seen how in the Old Testament priests would sprinkle blood over the “land” to symbolise how God needed ① to cleanse **the world** from the polluting effects of people’s sin. ① Just as we need to be realistic about ourselves, so we need to be realistic about the impact we have.

### 6. Is there an explanation for evil in the Bible?

7. The famous American psychotherapist M. Scott Peck was for many years an agnostic believing there was no such thing as evil. But as he came to Christian faith, he began to believe that sometimes people were not simply ill or confused or poorly educated. In his book ‘People of the Lie’ he argued that there is such a thing as a force or forces of evil which can appear to take over humans as individuals or, occasionally, complete societies. Importantly the Bible consistently describes how there is also a **polluting reality to evil which is bigger than, and has a wider impact than, the actions of human beings**. It is important to know that right from the beginning to the end of the Bible that the battle between good and evil exists ① not only in human beings, but also between spiritual forces. Yet at the beginning of the story we get a hint that a ‘Messiah’ will come to defeat evil. God promises the ‘snake’ that ① a human being would come who will “crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15) This is the first promise of the way in which God will deal with spiritual forces of evil decisively.

### 8. Did Jesus claim to be defeating evil?

9. We might expect that earlier “primitive” books of the Bible would describe such things. So how much did Jesus and His followers see His mission as being the one who would finally crush evil in this way? In the gospels, the final defeat of evil is at the centre of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Both Jesus and New Testament writers *continue* with the Bible’s story of the cosmic battle between good and evil. Jesus names ① satan the “prince of this world” (John 12:31) a term which meant ‘the highest official in a city or a region in the Greco-Roman world’. While God is the ultimate Lord satan has *functional* power. Luke portrays satan as possessing “all the kingdoms of the world” believing he can give authority to rule these kingdoms to anyone he pleases, even to Jesus. (Luke 4:5-6) Jesus has come to expel the “thief” who “comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10) John is even clearer: ① “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” (1 John 3:8)

### 10. How does this help us understand what the atonement means?

11. We have seen that the meaning of the cross is like a diamond which can be seen in many ways. With the background perspective of the cosmic conflict throughout the Bible and in Jesus’ ministry, we can see the cross not just as the way ① God reconciles humanity to Himself, but as a cosmic victory through which **God finally defeats His enemies**. This is known as “Christus Victor” – the victorious Messiah. By dying and rising from the dead, Jesus was enthroned as the **King who freed the whole universe from its slavery to an evil ruler and the power of death**. In this victory is **included** the salvation of people – He is Saviour **and** Lord. In John as Jesus speaks of His coming death He says, ① “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.” (John 12:31) In Luke, as the end draws near “Satan entered Judas” to prompt him to betray Jesus. (Luke 22:3) At His arrest Jesus tells the soldiers, “This is your hour – when darkness reigns.” (Luke 22: 53) It is as if all evil is being lured to the cross.

12. Yet the accounts of Jesus’ death make it quite clear that his execution is in fact the beginning of His being **lifted up** to become the **divine king**. Jesus is being lifted up as the cosmic king of the world on a wooden throne, making a ‘royal announcement’ that God’s purpose is to rescue his world by dying for it, allowing sin, evil and death to overwhelm Him. No one can fully describe exactly how this victory is achieved, but the evidence for it arrives three days later. ① The

only way anyone can rise from the dead is if evil and death have been dealt with. Jesus' resurrection is the proof that death, sin and evil are overcome and that Jesus is Lord: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15: 55-56) ① Just as the assassination of Martin Luther King seemed like a defeat, but resulted in a movement for peace, so Jesus' apparent defeat overcomes evil.

### 13. What does Jesus' victory mean for us as disciples?

14. As the early Christians experienced the risen Jesus and reflected on His victory, they were able to grasp some life-changing realities: **The power of death is broken.** The full meaning of the ransom ('price of release') paid on the cross was that in Christ God had paid to **rescue His creation (including human beings)** from slavery to the powers. "By his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death." (Hebrews 2:14) As Eastern Orthodox Christians (who emphasise Christus Victor) say repeatedly every Easter midnight service, ① "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs he has given life."
15. **Evil can no longer have the final word, and we can be who God calls us to be.** Being saved is more than individual forgiveness – ① it is about being "set free from this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4) and liberated from a time when "we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world." We have been ① "rescued...from the power of darkness and transferred...into the kingdom of his beloved Son." (Colossians 1: 12-13)
16. **This affects all of creation.** The suffering of the whole of creation, ① which is itself somehow in "slavery" due to this cosmic battle (the letter to the Romans says the "whole creation is groaning" in its "bondage to decay"), ① is dealt with through cross and resurrection. So ① salvation is the liberation of the whole world process of which I am only a small part.

### 17. How does this make Jesus Lord?

18. Thomas' response to seeing the risen Christ was to fall down and say, "My Lord and my God." Sherry Weddell writes that knowing about the ① "life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ...leads a person to be able to say Jesus is Lord." A strong image Paul uses demonstrates the **completeness** of Jesus' victory. He describes Jesus as a conquering ruler, bringing His defeated enemies in a humiliating procession behind Him: ① "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." (Colossians 2:15)

### 19. What does this mean for my life and priorities?

20. The most common statement early Christians made to describe discipleship was that "Jesus is Lord". Today these three words are the motto for the World Council of Churches. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor who was executed by the Nazis for resisting Hitler said that to celebrate Jesus as "personal Saviour" but not as Lord is "Christless Christianity". For early Christians to call Jesus Lord was to acknowledge both that He is God, and that, having overcome the powers, He has "**all authority in heaven and on earth.**" (Matthew 28: 18) Paul writes that one day ① every knee will bow "and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:11) To declare someone is Lord is to say they have power and authority over your life. Yet to say they are Lord without doing what they say is a *self-contradiction*. This is why Jesus asked, ① "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things that I say?" (Luke 6:46) For many Christians today, and for early Christians under Roman rule, to say "Jesus is Lord" a pledge of allegiance which puts their lives on the line.

### 21. Being free from the distorted desires of materialism/other gods: Why does Jesus challenge people so much about money and material goods?

22. Discipleship is essentially about what is at *the centre of our lives* – for Christians the reason we want to be with God, become like Christ and join in with Him is because He is *Lord*. Whatever or whoever we submit to is our lord. Our common idols such as money, power, reputation, ambition (or even religious ritual or status) will always fail because they cannot fill that "eternal hunger". They leave us disappointed or worse, and our response to that lack of fulfilment can lead to behaviours in which we try and numb painful emotions by trying to find our identity through distraction (overwork, too much TV, obsessive political power) or even addiction (alcohol, drugs, pornography). We end up *far from home*. ① This is why the biggest challenge to discipleship, according to Jesus, was the idolatry of making money a "lord". Christ says it explicitly: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24) In the Gospels, an amazing one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with the subject of money. ① The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions. Paul writing to Timothy describes where the idolatry of money can lead: "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." (1 Timothy 6: 9-10)
23. **Being released from having to serve these other "gods" brings freedom.** The writer of 'Fight Club' describes how consumerism, built on advertising which always makes us want more, has led to a 'depressed' society: ① "We don't

have a great war in our generation, or a great depression, but we have a great war of the spirit. The great depression is our lives. We have a spiritual depression.” The alternative, as described by Mark Powley in ‘Consumer Detox’ is to find freedom. ① “Freedom isn't when our possessions mean *nothing* to us....But the *way we use* our possessions can become something different: Less about *finding* an identity and more about *expressing* an identity we've been *given*. Less about excluding others and more about *welcoming* them. Less about *outdoing* others and more about *empowering* them. Less about having and more about *being free to give away*. Now *that* is an identity. That's what I want.”

24. **Being released from having to serve these other “gods” brings contentment.** ① “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.” (1 Timothy 6: 7-8) ① The real measure of our wealth is how much we would be worth if we lost all our money.
25. **Being released from having to serve these other “gods” gives us an eternal perspective.** Rather than focussing on material wealth in this life which does not last, Jesus advised His disciples to “store up for yourselves treasure in heaven”. (Matthew 6:20) ① “The only thing that counts at the end of life is what we can take with us at the moment of death, which is I myself as I was in the ultimate depths of my own heart - a heart that was either full of love, or full of spite and hidden selfishness.” (Karl Rahner)
26. **How do I have a heart like Christ's towards money?**
27. As we seek to let Jesus be Lord and turn away from placing our hope in money, we finish this session by looking at two transformative practices which not only give Him the place He deserves in our lives, but over time can change us to **become the kind of people who live in freedom and contentment**. These two practices are **generosity in giving** and **simple living**. They are the key to being freed from any ‘idolatrous powers’ and putting Christ at the centre. Desmond Tutu says *a generous heart is the way to life*: “The Dead Sea in the Middle East receives fresh water, but it has no outlet, so it doesn't pass the water out. It receives beautiful water from the rivers, and the water goes dank. I mean, it just goes bad. ① And that's why it is the *Dead Sea*. It *receives and does not give*. In the end generosity is the best way of becoming more, more, and more joyful.” Generosity is the way to *break the hold of money in our lives*. John Wesley said, ① “When I have money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart.”
28. Generosity can be expressed in many ways – through the giving of time, friendship, hospitality or service. But, as the area of our lives most likely to be like a “god”, the Bible has some clear teachings on how we approach giving financially to those in need. ① **Financial giving is a response to God's love, and not a rule to obey.** Paul writes to the early Christians who were collecting for those in the church who were in need, ① “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7) Financial giving comes freely, cheerfully (the Greek word is more like hilariously – in other words shockingly extravagant!) and from the heart. The question is not, “What is the minimum I can get away with?” but, “How much can I show love for God in my extravagance?”
29. **Financial ① giving which breaks the power of money will always be sacrificial in this way.** When we can give at cost to ourselves we are placing our trust in God's wealth and provision, rather than our own. The story of the widow's mite demonstrates how Jesus saw generosity not in what people gave, but in the amount they had left over. “As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ① ‘Truly I tell you,’ he said, ‘this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.’” (Luke 21:1-4)
30. **In financial giving a tenth of income (tithe) is a useful principle.** The first biblical story about tithing comes from 4600 years ago Abram gave a tenth of his goods to the priest in thanks for God's protection in a battle. (Genesis 14:20). Moses then gave the people a law of God telling them to bring all their tithes to the priests. “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting.” (Numbers 18:21) Malachi and Proverbs also give teaching on the tithe.
31. Yet the tithe was never intended to be a rule, but a **springboard for generosity**. It is a **useful guide** – for some it may be an aim, for others a minimum. For Jesus, the tithe was a useful principle, given originally to people who lived by laws. But if disciples, for whom financial giving comes from the heart, rightly understand that all they have is God's, then God could easily ask them to give **more** than ten percent. ① **Financial giving expresses love.** In a very practical way, the early church showed their love for other parts of the church through taking an offering. Similarly, today the only people who should financially support the work of the church are disciples. For this reason, the Church of England offers an aim of 5% of income as a realistic amount for giving financially to the church community. The story of Zacchaeus shows how the practice of generous, consistent and sometimes spontaneous financial giving sets us free, changing us into people who are increasingly able to make Christ Lord. Someone said, ① “We don't think we can live generously because we have never tried. But the sooner we start the better, for we are going to have to give up our lives finally, and the longer we wait the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace.” A content and generous heart, able to place Christ at the centre, is worth more than any bank account contains. The Content booklet also looks at how a simple lifestyle can help us challenge the grip of money in our lives.