



Bible Confidence: Session 5 – 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. **Understanding key themes: why is Jesus the centre of God’s story?**
3. This session focuses on two things: ① How the gospels *fulfil* the Bible story: Jesus is the climax of God’s plan to rescue His fallen world through being *the divine King* who brings God’s healing kingdom to the world. ① How the gospels help us to see *who* He is and to “follow Him” by shaping us to live under His rule today, seeking His kingdom above everything else.
4. **Understanding key themes: What is the Story of the Kingdom and its King?**
5. The four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John outline a common message: ① Through Jesus God was completing the task of restoring His fallen world, including His people. ① A “gospel” means an announcement of good news – and usually news that a new King had arrived, or a victory had been won. The four “gospels” are the stories of how in Jesus the King had arrived, and that in Him the “kingdom of God” – the effective rule of God which brings wholeness and restoration is being established. (There are over a hundred uses of the term in the gospels – particularly Matthew, Mark and Luke). The world will never be the same. ① The gospel writers are constantly referring to the Hebrew Scriptures – sometimes explicitly, and sometimes in the way in which they tell the story – offering us different emphases which help a fuller picture to emerge. The gospel writers name Jesus directly as the one who fulfils God’s plan as the Messiah in many ways.
6. Matthew begins: ① “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham...” (1:1) Mark begins, ① “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God...” (1:1) In Luke the shepherds are told to find the baby who is “born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord.” (2:11) Simeon and Anna recognise Him as the “Lord’s Messiah.” (2:26) John locates Jesus before creation – He is the ① “Word of God” (1:1) and named as ① “God’s Chosen One” by John the Baptist. (1:34) In other ways Jesus is described or acts as the fulfilment of God’s story. In Mark the words spoken to Jesus by God at His baptism recall that He is both the anointed King spoken about in the Psalms ① “You are my beloved Son” (Psalm 2:7) and the servant who will suffer but will be “God’s delight” (Isaiah 42:1) in whom He is well pleased.
7. The gospels reveal Him ① as the Messiah in two other ways in Jerusalem – by entering Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling a prophecy from Zechariah which predicted the Messiah coming to Israel’s throne in victory, and by cleansing the Temple. In the gospels Jesus’ entire mission, and the purpose for which God sent Him, is to establish the Kingdom of God. ① He talks about God’s kingdom more than anything else and claims that all the Old Testament Scriptures testify about Him (John 5:39).
8. **Understanding key themes: How does Jesus show what the Kingdom of God on earth looks like?**
9. The beginning of the Bible story describes a world which has fallen. As a result: ① People are cut off from God and His image in us is distorted. ① Creation is under a ‘curse’ leading to sickness and death. ① Opposing powers blight God’s creation and oppose His goodness. ① Jesus’ ministry demonstrates God’s kingdom rule by reversing these in every way - bringing wholeness (or “salvation”) in all these areas. Through Jesus ① **The kingdom means people are restored to God and one another.** Jesus brings “salvation” to Zacchaeus (Luke 19), a Jew who has fallen away from God’s calling by cheating people and collaborating with Romans.
10. **The kingdom ① means sickness and death is reversed.** Through Jesus, God’s healing power is breaking into human history to end the grip of sickness and pain. In His ministry Jesus demonstrates the reversal of death – raising Lazarus, the widow’s son and Jairus’s daughter. ① **The kingdom means opposing evil forces are defeated.** Both Matthew and Luke show that for Jesus, confrontation with evil is *evidence* of God’s kingdom. “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28) ① **The kingdom means creation is in harmony.** Matthew, Mark and Luke show how in being the one whom the wind and waves obey, by stilling the storm and reversing the waves of chaos, Jesus demonstrates to His disciples how in Him God’s kingdom brings peace to the whole created world.
11. **Understanding key themes: In what ways is Jesus is an unexpected kind of Messiah?**
12. Despite the impact of these signs of God’s kingdom, Jesus was not the Messiah many Jews were expecting. Instead of the kingdom being about re-establishing Israel with a display of power against the Romans ① Jesus

reveals it has: ① **A different focus: Restoring the rejected, the unclean and the outsider.** Luke in particular draws us to Jesus as one who has come ① “...to seek and save what was lost”. (Luke 19:10) Whereas previously people would have avoided being contaminated by the “unclean”, Jesus reverses the situation as God’s kingdom comes. Uncleaness does not affect Him. ① Rather, in approaching, touching and healing them, God’s kingdom through Christ makes those who are unclean clean again. ① In addition, by consistently prioritising the outsider Jesus is calling His people back to the original calling to be a blessing to the nations.

13. **A different character:** ① **Being shaped by upside-down ways of living.** In every way Jesus describes those who seek God’s Kingdom first ① as being shaped by self-giving love, rather than power over others – even their enemies. In the Beatitudes, a series of teachings which show the character of those who seek God’s kingdom, (Matthew 5 and Luke 6) ① Jesus emphasises that it is those who are humble, who know their dependence on God, who are often rejected by the world and who hunger for His kingdom who are His disciples. By shockingly taking the role of a slave in washing His disciples’ feet Jesus sets out a living example of a disciple’s character. ① (John 13: 14-15) The booklet unpacks how Jesus communicates the kingdom through over forty parables - shaping us to see the world as God sees it.
14. **Understanding key themes: How does Jesus establish God’s Kingdom through His death and resurrection?**
15. Jesus demonstrates God’s healing kingdom *through His life* – bringing restoration and making things new. ① But all four gospels write extensively about Jesus’ death – seeing it as the *centre of His mission* as God’s Messiah. ① It is through His dying that Jesus decisively confronts the powers of sin and evil, absorbing them into Himself and defeating them. ① The gospels all emphasise His death as Jesus’ ultimate enthronement as King - with a crown, a robe, His “lifting up” – not on a throne, but on the cross and a sign that declares Him to be “King of the Jews” written in the main languages spoken by all people. (Luke 23:38)
16. While many found (and find) the idea of God being crucified obscene, ① Christians view the crucifixion through the resurrection. ① Jesus’ resurrection is the proof that He is God’s truly victorious Messiah whom death cannot hold. The nature of Jesus’ resurrection was unexpected – Jews were not expecting it until a “Last Day”, but ① Jesus rises from the dead into the present as a representative of God’s future. He is its “firstfruits” and confirmation of the ultimate “gospel – announcement of good news” - that God’s enemies have been defeated, and people and creation have been bought back. ① As individual Christians we are set free through the cross and resurrection. But our restoration is within the larger story of Scripture - ① God’s plan to rescue *all things*. Jesus dies for the *world*. Through the victory of the Messiah the kingdom of God has come, and a renewed creation is unfolding.
17. Jesus invites disciples to live in this new reality and anticipate its fulfilment in our daily lives. The booklet explores how Jesus calls them to be with Him, become like Him, and to join in with His mission, sending them out “...to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:2) In Matthew He tells His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” (5: 14-16) Finally, before His ascension ① Jesus explicitly commissions His disciples to carry on His work. Crucially, He gives them His own authority and promises the power of His presence with them. ① Matthew describes the priority - Jesus’ Great Commission to go and make disciples. ① John offers the reassurance – the disciples are sent and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as Jesus breathes on them. ① Luke emphasises the task – to be witnesses.
18. **Reading it well: How can different perspectives help us understand the Bible?**
19. We have seen how Christians have different understandings of some parts of the Bible because ① it is impossible for us to read anything without *interpreting* it. We have looked at the importance of reading the Bible well by doing two things: firstly, by ① getting as close to the *original meaning* as we can and using different tools to give us the background knowledge we need. The other part of interpreting well is about ① knowing that each of us has a *certain perspective* – no one is likely to have the full view of what is going on. This is true in any area of life. When looking at the same object, one person might see a triangle, and another a circle. Neither are wrong in what they see, but they are actually looking at a cone, and it is not until their perspectives come together ① that they see the clearer 3D picture. ① (Animation of cone shape).
20. Sometimes people get worried by talk of there being lots of different interpretations of the Bible. They might ask, ① “Surely there is one truth from God which we all need to find when reading it?” Acknowledging that there are different perspectives is not ① saying that they are all as valid as each other or denying that there is truth. But because it is impossible for any human being to have a complete view, we need to read with ① humility and openness to keep on learning. Rather than being threatened by this reality, our reading of the Bible can be ① enriched and challenged by those whose perspectives are very different from us, and who might open up new ways of seeing things. This requires ① a trust that the Bible has been given by God as something that is best read in relationship with *others*. Ancient writers used to say that every Scripture has seventy facets, and so one of the reasons we commonly gather to hear or study Scripture is because it was written to be understood best as we

learn together. (① The technical word to describe the way we interpret things is hermeneutics, and when talking about the Bible we talk about 'biblical hermeneutics'.)

21. There have been, and continue to be, many debates what it means to interpret well, and about which perspectives to emphasise when we interpret Scripture. Some (like Luther and Calvin) have asked, ① "How do we discover the most **literal** way of reading the Bible, according to its original meaning and intention?" Others (like Origen) have agreed with this, but asked, ① "Can we interpret the Bible in any **allegorical** ways, with a second level of meaning?" For example, they point to the way that Paul uses the story of a "rock in the wilderness" in the Old Testament as a picture of Jesus. In our own reading this might make us ask, "Can we read the account of Jesus calming the storm as only about God's control over the weather, or more allegorically as a way of seeing His activity in our own 'storms of life'?" ① Others have emphasised a **moral** perspective, asking, "What might this story show us about how to live now?"
22. But in the last few decades another important question about interpreting well has come by people asking, ① "How can we make sure we are understanding the Bible better from the perspectives of those who have previously been left out or sidelined by history?" For example, in 1949 Howard Thurman, an African-American professor, wrote a book called "Jesus and the Disinherited". He argued that for centuries the Bible had for the most part been interpreted by those who were powerful in society – and even in order to justify slavery. As a result he wrote this: ① "The significance of the religion of Jesus to people who stand with their backs against the wall...is one emphasis which has been lacking...." He said that to understand Jesus better we need to read the Bible from the perspective that Jesus was poor and a member of a minority group. His words reflect a desire to read the Bible from a perspective of **liberation** – particularly for those who suffer from injustice. ① 'Liberation theologians' look for ways in which the Bible can be understood as a resource for overturning unjust structures in the world. They offer the view that however we understand the Bible, we interpret it well when it is "good news for the poor". More recently this kind of perspective has been highlighted by people reflecting on the experience of Black Christians in the West – people who feel their experience has been missing from the way the Bible has been interpreted.
23. Others give better attention to the *perspective of women* when it comes to interpreting Scripture well. For example, ① while the Bible was not written *for* men, they notice how religion has traditionally been dominated by men and how most of the Bible has been written by men. ① They ask questions about what difference it makes that Jesus was a man. How much should these other perspectives influence our reading of the Bible? Some would say that these voices have been so ignored in the past that they need to be centre stage. (Some liberation theologians would argue that liberation is *the* main theme of the Bible.) ① At the very least, they can jolt us into thinking in fresh ways about what God might be saying through the Bible. ① Taking these perspectives seriously will help us when we are thinking about which **themes** are important throughout the Bible, but they might also help us to read **particular parts** of it with fresh eyes.
24. We might ask, ① "How would a refugee/rich person/poor person/differently abled person/male/female/black/white/child/adult see this passage and what could I learn?" Good questions to ask when interpreting the Bible well are: ① How can I read this with others? ① Are there other ways of interpreting this which are still faithful to the original meaning? ① Whose voices are missing in the way that this has been traditionally understood?
25. **Practical starting points: Why and how might I meditate on the Bible?**
26. Disciples read the gospels ① to understand the story of God through Jesus, and how that shapes the story of our lives. But (as we have already seen in 'Being with God' Session 6), ① the Bible is a "living word" through which we can also meet with God in Jesus. ① When we meditate, or read contemplatively, we open ourselves up to God speaking to us personally through the rhema (living word) of the Scriptures. ① In Psalm 119 the writer experiences God's word being like a "Lamp to my feet and light to my path". (119:105)
27. Meditation is being aware of God and ① using our imagination as we read the Bible and was seen by early Christians as the normal foundation of a spiritual life. Through our imaginations we can read the story as if we are present. C.S. Lewis says it is like the difference between looking at a beam of sunlight in a dark shed in which he "was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it. Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. ① Looking along the beam and looking at the beam are very different experiences." ① Meditating on the Bible is not looking at it, in order to study it, but looking at everything through it – and being changed by the view. There are different ways of meditating. The content booklet gives some suggestions, and we will use one of them in this session.