

## How to work with “The Story of Jesus the Nazarene”

1. The whole set we are using has three parts, each one covering different topics and building to the next booklet. Together they serve the basic needs of evangelism and church planting. Although they can be used as an individual evangelism strategy they may be considerably more effective when being used together with the Jesus Film (= JF).

Note: When used without the Jesus Film the first booklet is the introductory step. In this case see the guide, *What you ought to know about “The Story of Jesus the Nazarene”*.

2. The three booklets concentrate on three different purposes. Be careful to use one after the other if you want to be effective. Here is a short description:

Booklet 1: *The History of Jesus the Nazarene*

This contains the text of the Gospel of John plus some texts from the other Gospels in biographical order. It closes with a few lines that explain how a person can make a decision for Christ and offers further help through booklet 2.

Booklet 2: *The Way of Jesus the Nazarene*

This explains basic principles of the Christian life including prayer, bible study, fellowship, witnessing, and others. It also contains several very practical chapters on Christian family life, work life, etc.

Booklet 3: *Life With Jesus the Nazarene*

This is what makes the whole series unique. It explains how you can start a church in your home - without a building and without a pastor. It talks about the basic principles of a local church and offers further help for ongoing bible study.

3. You may want to develop other ways for using the series in conjunction with the Jesus Film that are better for your situation. The following is just a suggestion, but we are very interested to hear from you how you are using the material, what the results are, and how we can improve it.

3.1. Due to the large number of people attending the JF you will probably print a large number of these booklets. Nevertheless don't distribute them indiscriminately everywhere. You may either offer them (free of charge!) to the people who have attended the film, or give it only to those who attend the first follow-up meeting. In both cases ask them to read the booklet until you meet the next time. If you have your first or next follow-up meeting within less than a week you need to set another date as you cannot necessarily expect people to read everything right away. Ask them to write down any questions they might have so that you can discuss them when you meet again.

3.2. You can either send the second and third booklet to people by mail or give it to them personally. Probably it makes more sense to give the booklets to the people during one of your follow-up visits. You should hand out the third booklet only after people have worked through the second. Don't just distribute those booklets, but find out who is really interested.

3.3. The second booklet has ten chapters, the third has seven chapters. Ask people to study (and re-study) one chapter each week and answer the questions preferably in written form. If you find out that it takes people more time to work through these concepts (which are probably new to most of your people) they can also use one chapter for two weeks.

3.4. After the first 2-3 meetings (= 1-2 weeks after showing the film) suggest to organize the people into smaller subgroups who can meet in the home of one of the members (or under a tree or wherever makes sense for them). These groups shouldn't be bigger than 10-20 people and would concentrate on discussing the questions outlined in the booklets. If they want to sing and pray together, fine (though this is part of the learning process in booklet 3).

3.5. Be kind in what you suggest and do, but help the people to take the next step. It makes no sense to leave everything “open for the guidance of God's Spirit”. In most cases this is just an excuse for not leading people the way God's Spirit wants us to move. Remember, you

are an ambassador of Christ and responsible to share the Good News with people in such a way that they can make a sensible decision to follow Christ and grow in fellowship with him.

4. The individual JF worker will not be responsible for visiting every meeting as there are too many people who need help. But the groups should be visited every 4-8 weeks by your “itinerant church planters”. At these meetings one or several small groups (depending on location) may come together, and you should try to answer the questions people may have from their studies, their personal lives, and/or their small groups. It may be good for you to prepare a short presentation which conveys some of the basic truths these people should have learned over the last 4-8 weeks. While you work with the groups you will probably have questions from some of the people that are so important that you decide to talk about them with other groups as well.

Note: An “*itinerant church planter*” is a person who is responsible to help several local groups to work as a church. He or she will not concentrate on just one or two like a local pastor, but rather travel from place to place and visit the groups only every 4-8 weeks. This means that progress will depend to a large extent on the local people rather than a trained minister. Depending on how you organize the JF team members, the teams can also serve as “itinerant church planters”

4.1. All your workers who are using the material should have read and studied it themselves. You may want to organize a few sessions with your pastors and church planters and discuss the booklets and their use chapter by chapter.

4.2. Those that work with the new groups should try to recognize future leaders in each group. These leaders (hopefully more than one per group) should then be invited to attend your regular pastoral training (PTE). This can happen within the first few weeks. Do not wait for months or even years to get them involved!

4.3. The idea is to build churches that are self-sufficient from the beginning - both financially and pastorally. Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower his people for service rather than only trusting people that have a full theological training. Don't forget to train female leaders and empower them in the same way as you do with men!

4.4. Be prepared in your regular work to not only help people spiritually. The booklets have several chapters that talk about the responsibility of Christians in everyday life. Offer training, get ready for projects that show these new groups the love of Christ in a practical way, and encourage the people to serve their neighbors right when they start meeting the first few times.

4.5. Do not “force” these groups to become Nazarenes. Most of them will develop a close relationship to you anyway, because you serve them regularly. But each group should be free to decide for themselves whether they want to stay “independent” or join with others. Naturally the booklets are written in such a way that you are developing “holiness people” if they follow the various suggestions. But remember, it is not really you but the Lord Jesus Christ who is building His church!

5. The material should help your new people and groups for 5-9 months depending on how much time they spend with each chapter. In booklet 3 we are offering further help and a bible. Make sure you can supply what you offer!

5.1. We are working on additional material to help you with the next step. This material, however, is not intended for distribution in the same way as the first three booklets. It will be a help for the leaders that you should have started training by now. Of course you can give it to others as well (it isn't “secret”), but it will be more in the form of discussion starters than personal bible study (though one can probably use it for personal study).

5.2. This material will be accompanied by a letter and be good for 4-12 weeks each. You can also use it for Sunday School classes in your existing churches. It will start with discussion guides for several books of the New Testament (Acts - Mark - Romans - Galatians - He-

brews), and may later add special topics. If we do all those books (decision is pending) you would have material for at least 3-4 years.

5.3. But we do not want you to depend on material from abroad (see also the *Notice for Translators*). By the time you work with your groups for a year or two we should be able to offer you a course that trains your leaders to develop material on their own. But for them to be able to design and write study material with an emphasis on a holy and compassionate lifestyle it is of utmost importance that you first lay a strong foundation. We pray that together we will see rapid and strong church and personal growth that will bring fruit that remains (John 15:16).

6. In some places where you work the Christians and/or churches may be under outside pressure. This could be social, religious, political, or racial pressure or any other pressure that is detrimental to meeting as Christians in public. Public meetings and buildings are nice, but not necessary for individual Christians and churches. Here are a few guidelines how one can act in such a situation.

6.1. Don't insist on public meetings. Although it would be nice to serve Christ without outward hindrances it is a proven fact that Christian churches and lifestyle have grown faster under oppression or even persecution.

6.2. Don't create martyrs on purpose. Although God's grace is sufficient for every situation our call is to share his love whatever the circumstances and to do that with wisdom. Sometimes Christians have problems, because they are naive, stupid, or not ready for compromise on non-essentials. God calls us to live in peace and share the truth in love.

6.3. Use compassion as a way to reach the hearts of people. Your lifestyle is as important as your words. Concentrate on other people and their (felt) needs and then try to serve them with Christ's love. Remember that Jesus has touched the lives of people in a practical way. In the same way will a life of integrity and compassion open doors and hearts.

6.4. Build strong bonds with the people and community where you live. People are not so much interested in somebody who wants to "sell" them the gospel or teach them about a better and Christian way of life. But they are looking for friends. A friend is a person who sticks with you even if he disagrees with you. If you are friends with non-Christians in your neighborhood you will not necessarily support their ideas and lifestyle, but love them and serve them anyway!

6.5. Encourage other Christians regularly. In adverse circumstances it would be wise to organize a "ministry of encouragement". Make sure that every Christian has one or more friends that encourage him or her regularly. Be creative in how you can show other Christians in practical ways that God loves them and is with them every moment of the day. In such a situation it is of utmost importance that each Christians understands, feels, and experiences that he or she is not alone, but part of a worldwide fellowship, the body of Christ.

6.6. Jesus Christ hasn't called us to politics, but to love one another. That doesn't mean we shouldn't use the political privileges we have been granted, but Christians should be known by their love (John 13:34.35), not their politics. Christians have all sorts of opinions how this field should be approached, but Jesus told us that our first responsibility is to God, his reign, and his people. We are to be guests and aliens in this world as our citizenship and home is in heaven. This should be reflected in all we do and no matter what the outward circumstances.