

**Session 1: There's no escaping reality**

1-6 NOV

ICEBREAKERS

Describe your best and worst holiday experiences.

KEY THOUGHT

There is no escaping reality, and the ultimate reality is God Himself.

KEY VERSE

'... how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?' Hebrews 2:3

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. To what extent do people use holidays as a means of escape rather than a time of relaxation?
2. Do you tend to be a realist or a 'retreatist'?
3. Can you describe your feelings when you have been caught telling a lie?
4. What is the difference between escaping and escapism?
5. Why are Christians not exempt from problems?
6. What ways of escape has this generation invented?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus said to him, "I am the real and living way ..."' John 14:6 (Moffatt)

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Pray that the Lord will help you understand the concepts unveiled in this issue of *Every Day with Jesus*.
- * Pray that you will not be a person who buries their head in the sand, but one who faces reality.

Session 2: Removing disguises

7-12 NOV

ICEBREAKERS

One person could be blindfolded and has to guess the identity of other people in the group who disguise their voices.

KEY THOUGHT

We have an amazing capacity for self-deception, escapism and wearing disguises to avoid reality.

KEY VERSE

'I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind ...' Jeremiah 17:10

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why can we not really know ourselves without really knowing God?
2. What disguises or masks do people wear?
3. Are you afraid of looking at yourself?
4. Why was Selwyn's preoccupation with God not a good thing?
5. Consider a learner driver whose instructor never corrected their mistakes or a coach who never critiqued a team.
6. Do you tend to exaggerate or 'awfulise' your weaknesses or experiences?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.'
Revelation 3:19

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Invite the Lord to search you in the depths of your heart.
- * Pray that you will learn to accept and even welcome the Lord's correction.

For the icebreakers next session: everyone bring along a photo of themselves as a baby.

**Session 3: Live in the present**

13–20 NOV

ICEBREAKERS

Everyone brings a photo of themselves as a baby for people to guess who is who! (Put all the photos together in a large envelope as people arrive so no one sees them beforehand.) Consider the story of jilted Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations*, and perhaps even play the scene from the film where she is still in her wedding dress with the wedding cake on the table.

KEY THOUGHT

Our lives can be stunted by attitudes of fear, or by trying to escape into the past or into the future. But with God's power we can even exceed our potential!

KEY VERSE

'I can do everything through him who gives me strength.' Philippians 4:13

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What is the difference between remembering the past and living there?
2. What advantage do the young have over the old?
3. What is the difference between planning for the future and dreaming about tomorrow?
4. How can we maintain the right balance between being a prophetic people and present workers?

5. Have you ever felt ill before an important event such as an exam?
6. How do you handle frustrating situations?
7. Have you given up something you need to take up again?
8. Discuss the attitude of Francis of Assisi as shown by his motto: 'More than I can.'

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS
FACING REALITY**

'Rise, let us go!' Matthew 26:46

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Confess any wrong attitudes.
- * Ask God to strengthen you.

Session 4: Criticism and withdrawal

21–28 NOV

ICEBREAKERS

How would you critique the unacceptable actions of your best friend without destroying your relationship? Or would you avoid confrontation?

KEY THOUGHT

Critical attitudes and withdrawal can be methods we use to escape reality.

KEY VERSE

'Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.'
Luke 6:37

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Should we be critical of a critical person?
2. How can negative attitudes be a way of escape?
3. What may motivate us to escape from God?
4. Why should our chief criticism be directed at ourselves?
5. How long do you like to soak in the bath?
6. Why may some people prefer to remain in a prison?
7. To what extent are you a people-pleaser?
8. Why is detachment not the way to deal with fear?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared.'
John 8:11

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Ask God to show you any wrong attitudes in your own life and help you remove them.
- * Ask God for boldness to face difficult situations and not withdraw from them.

**Session 5: Dependency**

29 NOV – 6 DEC

ICEBREAKERS

What form of comforter did you depend on as a child to make you feel good, eg 'blanky', cuddly toy etc?

KEY THOUGHT

We can substitute many things for God and depend on them, instead of on Him, to get us through life.

KEY VERSE

'But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' Matthew 6:33

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What are the 'externals of religion'?
2. Why is the way of salvation so simple and yet so difficult?
3. Discuss the quote of Dorothy Sayers.
4. What is the difference between self-interest and being interested in fulfilling the potential of your self?
5. Should Christians drink alcohol?
6. What things can people come to depend on instead of God?
7. How can we enjoy the things of life without them replacing God in our affections?
8. Why is God not a quick fix?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds ... But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' John 12:24,32

PRAYER POINTERS

- *Commit yourself firstly to God and His kingdom.
- *Ask God to show you anything in your life that you may be using as a substitute for Him.

Session 6: Denial and superiority

7-14 DEC

ICEBREAKERS

Prada or Primark? Bach or Beatles? Caviar or cod? Blackpool or Bermuda? Carlsberg or Champagne?

KEY THOUGHT

Two of the most popular escape strategies are denial and superiority, which both seek to divert attention away from personal feelings of inadequacy.

KEY VERSE

'To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable ...' Luke 18:9

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What is the difference between denial of reality and faith in the miraculous?
2. Should we seek supernatural signs or avoid them?
3. Why might people engage in denial?
4. How should we deal with unpleasant reality, combining both integrity and faith?
5. Why is it easy for Christians to have superior attitudes?
6. Why may superiority be a sign of inferiority?
7. How much of modern society is based on 'pride of race, pride of face and pride of lace'?
8. How can a Christian with a Rolls Royce relate to one with a Mini?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who ... taking the very nature of a servant ... humbled himself ...' Philippians 2:5-8

PRAYER POINTERS

- *Confess any areas of denial or pride.
- *Ask God to help you face reality with faith, truth and humility.



Session 7: Overactivity and self-pity

15–22 DEC

ICEBREAKERS

What are your favourite ways to relax? Do you relax enough?

KEY THOUGHT

Overactivity and self-pity are further examples of strategies we can use to avoid the painful realities of life.

KEY VERSES

'I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.' Job 10:1
'... when he [Jesus] suffered ... he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' 1 Peter 2:23

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Discuss the quote of William Henry Davies.
2. Discuss the modern phrase 'work-life balance'.
3. Are you spending too much time in Christian meetings and other activities?
4. Discuss Selwyn's thought that God will co-operate with us but not coerce us.
5. Outline the difference between self-pity and self-concern.
6. How could you deal with self-pity?
7. Does your self-talk tend to be negative or positive?

8. a) Why is self-love not the answer to self-pity?
b) What is the difference between acceptable mourning and indulgent self-pity? (See Num. 20:28–29, Deut. 34:5–8.)

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves ..."' Luke 23:28

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Pray that you will be free from overactivity and self-pity.
- * Ask God to direct your sensitive spirit to the needs of others rather than let it exaggerate your own difficulties.

Session 8: Facing reality

23–31 DEC

ICEBREAKERS

What has most impacted you during these studies and how will you change as a result?

KEY THOUGHT

We can face and overcome any and every reality because God is with us.

KEY VERSE

When David was literally faced with a giant reality in the form of Goliath:
'David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty ..."' 1 Samuel 17:45

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How can supernatural reality help us face natural reality?
2. Are you fearful of asking God to reveal your failings?
3. What would the phrase 'Christmas spirit' mean to a Christian and to the general public?
4. How do we 'dress up' escape routes as excuses?
5. Discuss the benefits of writing down your fears like the woman in the notes.
6. Consider David's declaration in Psalm 18:29.
7. Why is withdrawal from real issues a withdrawal from the spirit of Jesus?

8. Consider how a tree uses rotting compost to be more fruitful because it knows how to use it!
9. How will you resolve to face reality better next year?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... Jesus began to explain ... that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ... and that he must be killed ...' Matthew 16:21
'... Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.' Luke 9:51

PRAYER POINTERS

- * Pray for the courage to face reality and not flee from it.
- * Pray for a deeper closeness to Jesus and that His power may flow through you.