

Jesus *the* Forgiving Victim

LISTENING *for the* UNHEARD VOICE



FACILITATOR GUIDE

Introduction to the Facilitator Guide

This guide contains the information you will need to successfully facilitate the small group meetings for *Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice*. Reading the Facilitator Guide is all the training you need to organize and lead a course in your community. Our hope is that you will find the experience of facilitating the course as rewarding as that of a participant.

COURSE MATERIALS

The course materials consist of 31 video sessions, this Facilitator Guide, and a Participant Guide. All the material in the videos is also available in the form of twelve essays. The essays can be purchased as a four book set or as an e-book. Because the content of the essays is virtually the same as the videos, and depending on your learning style, you may find them useful as part of your preparation for the discussions. However, the course is designed so that it is not necessary for you or your participants to read the essays in order to fully participate in the group sessions. Like yourself, some participants may enjoy reading the essays either before or after the sessions as a supplement to the videos, and they should feel free to do so. To purchase a copy of the essays, please visit www.jesustheforgivingvictim.com.

The Participant Guide is a subset of this guide so that the participants have some content overview, questions for personal reflection, and the handouts with the Scriptures that are focused on in each session.

THE FACILITATOR'S ROLE

As you read in the Welcome to this guide, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim* is a course of induction. Rather than a course of *instruction* which gives you information, a course of *induction* works cumulatively and allows us to find ourselves summoned into being on the inside of something new. Which is not to say that there is no information in this course! The videos and essays are full of information, but imparting information is not the goal of the course – finding ourselves relating and perceiving in new ways is.

So what does that mean for your role? First, it means that you can relax about mastering the content. You do not have to be an expert in any of this material – James Alison is there in virtual form as a teacher who is well aware of the limitations of his own expertise, and who tries to open up, rather than close down questions. Questions will arise about the content, of course, such as “I didn’t understand this...” or “What did James say about....?” When these questions of clarification about the content arise, it is not your job to have a ready answer. Instead, invite the group to take on the task of answer the questions themselves. Taking some time to master content together is a great way to create a sense of community as you learn new things.

Second, it means that your primary role is to facilitate the process of induction for your small group, which is much easier than it sounds! Simply put, your role is that of a host at a recurring dinner party. Like a good host, you will arrange for the meal, invite the “guests”, be sure they know when and where to meet, and when the guests arrive make introductions and gracefully facilitate conversation. As you meet over a meal over time, you will come to know one another in new ways and discover what it means to receive ourselves and our belonging from Jesus, the risen and forgiving victim in our midst.

Here’s a checklist for you to use as you prepare for that first meeting of your group.

- **INVITE PARTICIPANTS:** Begin with the people who will be in your group. The size can be as small as 3 or 4 or as large as 12. Invite them to join you in taking the course.
- **LOCATION:** The course is designed to take place at the home of a participant. You can meet at the same home or rotate locations among participants. Your job is to recruit volunteers and communicate the location(s) to the group.
- **THE MEAL:** A shared meal is the central element of your meeting. Participants volunteer to provide food and drink. Your job is to recruit volunteers for the meal and communicate the meal schedule to the group.
- **SCHEDULE:** Agree on a schedule for your meetings. Some suggested schedules appear below.
- **THE VIDEO:** Be sure that the video can be viewed at the meeting location. Whether you have downloaded the video or plan to stream it, test the video ahead of time at the location so that things go smoothly at your meeting.
- **PREPARE TO FACILITATE:** Before your first meeting, read the Introduction to the Facilitator Guide (which you are doing right now!). Watch the video and/ or read the accompanying section from the essays for the first session. Read the Facilitator Guide for Session One.
- **ARRIVE EARLY:** Arrive early to be sure that all logistics are handled and that there is nothing left for you to do but greet the participants as they arrive, thank those who are hosting or providing the meal, and enjoy your time together.

SCHEDULING THE COURSE

Work with your participants for a meeting schedule that works for all of you. Meeting weekly allows for the cumulative effect of the material to build appreciably over time. Meeting less frequently is an option, of course, though it is important to maintain the continuity of the course. Ideas for scheduling include:

- Meet weekly for the duration of the course.
- Meet weekly until you complete a part, then take a week or two off before continuing.
- Meet three weeks in a row, one week off.
- Begin each Part with a Friday-Saturday retreat in which you complete the first three sessions of the Part and then continue with a weekly meeting routine.

These are just a few suggestions. Other options may come to mind that would suit your group well.

A SUGGESTED SESSION SCHEDULE

As you know by now, a meal in the home of a participant is the central element for each session of *Jesus the Forgiving Victim*. Because the shape of each session will be guided by the rhythm of the meal, it's helpful to think of the program, including the video, as an extended dinner conversation. As a facilitator, your role will be to work out the link between meal and content as you discern when to introduce the topic for the evening. Here is a list of the different elements in a session and an example of how the pacing might work as you weave together the meal, the video content, and the conversation:

- Arrival, informal conversation, the meal begins
- Introduce the topic with an opening exercise – allow about 10 to 15 minutes for this
- Watch the video – the lengths vary from 30 to 50 minutes
- After watching the video is a good time for a break and perhaps serve dessert
- Discussion – allow about 60 to 75 minutes

Plan on 2 ½ to 3 hours for each session.

Varying the Pace

If you follow the pace set by the essays, you could complete the course in twelve sessions. This option will work for your group if they are willing to do “homework” before you meet for the group meal and discussions or, as in Variation Four, if you would enjoy watching two or three videos at one time.

There are a variety of ways you can prepare for and structure a twelve session variation on the course. We present four here, but another may come to mind that would suit your group well.

VARIATION ONE

Before Each Meeting

- 1 Explain that participants may either read the essay or watch the corresponding videos for the session.
- 2 Divide the content up between a few volunteers who will make notes and report back to the group. You can divide it according to the sections of the essay or by video.
- 3 As discussion facilitator, review the Discussion Questions for the video sessions that correspond to the essays. Select one or two questions from each session to guide the discussion.

During the Meeting

- 1 During the meal, invite the volunteers to present their summaries.
- 2 Use the Discussions Questions you chose ahead of time and enjoy the discussion.

VARIATION TWO

Before Each Meeting

- 1 Explain that participants may either read the essay or watch corresponding videos, *except for the final video for that essay*.
- 2 As facilitator, become familiar with the Session Summaries and select two or three of the main ideas from each video session.
- 3 Also review the Discussion Questions for the video sessions that correspond to the essays. Select one or two questions from each session to guide the discussion.

During the Meeting

- 1 During the meal you will present the Session Summary and highlight two or three of the main ideas from each of the video sessions, *except for the final video*.
- 2 Watch the final video from that essay together.
- 3 Use the Discussions Questions you chose ahead of time and enjoy the discussion.

VARIATION THREE

Before Each Meeting

- 1 Explain that participants may either read the essay or watch the corresponding videos for the session.
- 2 As discussion facilitator, review the Discussion Questions for the video sessions that correspond to the essays. Select one or two questions from each session to guide the discussion.
- 3 Make enough copies for your entire group of the Session Summaries and Main Ideas for each of the video sessions that correspond to the essay.

During the Meeting

- 1 During the meal, distribute the copies of the Session Summaries and Main Ideas to the group.
- 2 Allow 5-7 minutes for the group to read through the pages.
- 3 Use the Discussions Questions you chose ahead of time and enjoy the discussion.

VARIATION FOUR

Before Each Meeting

- 1 As discussion facilitator, review the Discussion Questions for the video sessions that correspond to the essays. Select one or two questions from each session to guide the discussion.

During the Meeting

- 1 Watch the two or three videos that correspond to the essay.
- 2 You can pause after each video for a discussion, or watch all the videos and then have the discussion.
- 3 Use the Discussions Questions you chose ahead of time and enjoy the discussion.

TIMING

Variations One, Two and Three will work according to the 2 ½ to 3 hour timeframe suggested for the meetings, but Variation Four may require an additional thirty to forty-five minutes, or more, depending on the length of the videos that accompany the essay.

ESSAYS WITH CORRESPONDING VIDEOS

The next page shows a list of the essays and corresponding videos for each of the sessions.

PART ONE		ESSAYS		VIDEOS	
1	Starting human, staying human	1 “Don’t speak until you’re spoken to”		1	An odd beginning 31:22 minutes
				2	The social other 22:15
				3	Memory and revelation 26:19
		2 Emmaus and Eucharist		4	The road to Emmaus 30:47
				5	Dead man talking 37:58
PART TWO		ESSAYS		VIDEOS	
2	God, not one of the gods	3 Who’s afraid of the big bad book? PART ONE		1	The stoning of Achan 31:01 minutes
				2	Prophecy and interpretation 19:28
				3	Interpretation in the Scriptures 22:28
		4 Who’s afraid of the big bad book? PART TWO		4	The final edition 32:23
				5	Priests and prophets 22:39
				6	God’s utter aliveness 32:28
PART THREE		ESSAYS		VIDEOS	
3	The difference Jesus makes	5 Stand up and be godless! On receiving the gift of faith		1	Emergence of the Other other 34:03 minutes
				2	The gift of faith 31:45
		6 Undergoing atonement: the reverse- flow of sacrifice		3	Undergoing Atonement: Ancient Hebrews 44:59
				4	Undergoing Atonement: Gibeonites 27:46
				5	Undergoing Atonement: Venezuelans 41:03
		7 Induction into a people		6	Induction into a people 40:31
				7	What might a new unity look like? 35:32
				8	Some results of the anthropological earthquake 27:10
		8 Inhabiting texts and being discovered		9	Inhabiting texts and being discovered 37:55
				10	Reading for mercy 35:22
PART FOUR		ESSAYS		VIDEOS	
4	Unexpected insiders	9 Prayer: Getting inside desire’s shift in us		1	The working of desire 49:55 minutes
				2	The Our Father 46:02
		10 The portal and the half-way house: Spacious imagination and aristocratic belonging		3	The restaurant and the half-way house 25:56
				4	The portal and the Embassy 25:47
				5	The Banquet 31:09
		11 A little family upheaval		6	A little family upheaval 31:09
				7	The beginning in the middle 23:23
				8	The grandeur in the everyday 24:19
		12 Neighbors and insiders: What’s it like to dwell in a non-moralistic commandment?		9	Neighbors and insiders: The Good Samaritan 39:37
				10	Neighbors and insiders: From sacrifice to mercy 42:25

Using the Facilitator Guide

This section of the Facilitator Guide provides you with two important resources: a summary of the content of the course session by session and a discussion guide to use during your meetings. The guide is divided into the four Parts of the course and each Part is divided into the individual sessions. For each session you will find optional “Getting started” questions, a list of any materials you will need, a summary of the main ideas, discussion questions to help prompt conversation, and reproducible Participant Handouts. Before you proceed, be sure to have read through the Introduction portion of the Facilitator Guide which contains the general information you will need to prepare to lead the course.

PART CONTENT SUMMARIES

Each Part begins with an overview of the content and themes. A table with the videos, their running time, and the sections of the *Jesus the Forgiving Victim* course essays that correspond to the video is provided.

SESSION SUMMARY

The session summary gives you a quick look at the content focus for the session. You will see the Session Summary reflected in the Getting Started activities, discussion questions, and Session Wrap-Up.

SUPPLIES

For every session you will need a way for your group to view the video. Information on how to view the videos online is available on the website. If there is a handout with the Scriptures for the session, that will be listed here. The handouts are found at the end of each Part of the Facilitator Guide. You can copy and distribute them to your participants to view during the video and to refer to during the discussion. If a prop or flipchart is suggested for use during the “Getting started” portion of the session, it will be listed here as well.

MAIN IDEAS

The main ideas for the individual sessions are offered to help you prepare for the session. They are quick bullet points that you can use to refresh your memory before each session begins. They are also a tool you can use to gracefully redirect the conversation. If you sense that a conversation is veering off in an unproductive way, you can use a bullet point as a way to steer the conversation back to the video.

“GETTING STARTED” QUESTIONS

As you gather around the table, you can use the “Getting started” questions to introduce the theme for the session. The questions are designed to invite participants to share their memories and experiences with one another. They are not content based and have no right or wrong answers. They are open-ended and hopefully will prompt participants to make connections between the content and their lived experiences. The idea is to encourage sharing and maybe a little laughter before diving into the video. Please use the “Getting started” questions if you find them helpful, and feel free to create your own way to introduce the theme of the session.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Each discussion begins with the same three questions: *What jumped out at you? Where do you have questions? What seemed really important to you?* These may, and often are, sufficient for a deep and rewarding conversation. Additional questions are provided if you’d like to explore a particular idea in the video more deeply or simply to encourage conversation if your participants are uncertain about where or how to dive into the discussion. Please do not feel as if you need to cover all the questions for your session to be complete. If you’d like, you can make copies of the questions and distribute them to the participants and ask them which ones they’d like to engage with. Or simply allow your group to follow their own path through the material.

SESSION WRAP - UP

This final discussion question connects back to the Session Summary as well as overall themes of the course, providing a way to end the discussion with a “big picture” question.

TIMING

The suggested times for “Getting started” and the discussion questions are based on a 2 ½ hour session during which time you are eating your meal and taking a break perhaps after the video to get dessert. The times listed provide a baseline number for you to use as you monitor the flow of the evening. For example, if you spend 30 minutes on the “Getting started” question, your discussion time after the video may have to be shortened – or you may all decide to continue talking after your agreed-upon end time. Timing is very discretionary and will vary from session to session. There is no need to interrupt a conversation because it is running over the suggested time. Nor is there any reason to extend a conversation that seems to have naturally ended in order to fill up the suggested time. The important thing is to be flexible and enjoy your time together.

PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS

Handouts for the Scriptures and activities are included at the end of the Part in which they appear. It's a good idea to make copies of the Scripture handouts for your participants, even though they are also included in their Participant Guides. Be sure to make copies of any handouts that are to be distributed to participants for use in activities.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

This is a list of all the Scriptures that are referenced in the individual sessions and appears at the end of each Part of the guide. It might be useful as a reference to have on hand during the discussion. Participants also have this resource in their guide.

GLOSSARY

This is a glossary of terms that are introduced in each Part of the course. It's a handy reference to have on hand during discussions. Participants also have this resource in their guide.

Jesus *the* Forgiving Victim

LISTENING *for the* UNHEARD VOICE



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

PART ONE: STARTING HUMAN, STAYING HUMAN

PART ONE *Content Summary*

One of the really interesting things about theology, and the thing that makes it relevant to our lives, is that it contains within it an anthropology. This means that while theology is the academic discipline of making sense of who God is and what God is about, we can't talk about God without remembering that it is human beings who are doing the talking. So while many theology courses jump right to the God talk, leaving considerations about who we are as human beings implied or unspoken, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim* begins by bringing the anthropology out into the open from the start. The questions guiding the first Part are these: What is the shape of God's communication with us? And what is the effect on us of being on the receiving end of an act of communication from God? To answer those questions we begin with an understanding of communication on a human level. We will explore how human beings receive and are shaped by acts of communication from each other. For if God is communicating with us, it will not be in some form unsuited for us. God will not reinvent the communication wheel, so to speak, but will communicate with us at a very human level – hence the title of Part One: *Starting human, staying human*. To understand how God is communicating with us through Jesus and through the Bible, we need at the same time to understand ourselves.

It is very important to go through Part One slowly and carefully. The suggestions for how to present the material allow for ample time for discussion so that participants feel comfortable with this basic anthropology section before continuing on to discover God, Jesus and Christian community.

PART ONE *Videos and Corresponding Essays*

Part One consists of five sessions. Here are the titles and the length of the video clip that accompanies each session as well as the corresponding parts of *Jesus the Forgiving Victim* essays:

SESSION	VIDEO	ESSAY
1	Video Introduction 4:09 minutes An odd beginning 31:22	Essay 1: <i>Don't speak until you're spoken to</i> Introduction, parts 1 & 2
2	The social other 22:15	Essay 1: <i>Don't speak until you're spoken to</i> parts 3 & 4
3	Memory and revelation 26:19	Essay 1: <i>Don't speak until you're spoken to</i> parts 5, 6, 7 & 8
4	The road to Emmaus 30:47	Essay 2: <i>Emmaus and Eucharist</i> Introduction, part 1 & part 2 through paragraph ending “... as we share it with others in the Church and ecclesiastical authority will confirm it later.”
5	Dead man talking 37:58	Essay 2: <i>Emmaus and Eucharist</i> rest of part 2 to end of essay

SESSION SUMMARY

The course begins by examining the usual way in which human beings learn and become proficient at something. We'll receive a working definition of Christianity as the process of finding ourselves on the receiving end of an act of communication.

SUPPLIES

- 1 Video monitor
- 2 Handout: *Hebrews 1:1-3*
- 3 If you choose *Getting started: Option 2*:
 - A flipchart or other large blank sheet to write on that all can see
 - A marker

MAIN IDEAS

- 1 Hebrews 1: 1-2 describes an odd form of communication from God. In talking to us through Jesus, God is communicating as someone who appeared in the middle of history, but who is also somehow involved in the creation of the world.
- 2 This course is about beginning to become habituated to being the sort of people who might be able to hear God speaking through the Son whom he appointed over all things.
- 3 Putting theology aside for a moment, the course begins with a basic anthropology.
- 4 Rather than grasping onto a theory, human beings learn by being inducted into a set of practices over time such that we find ourselves knowing from within how they work.
- 5 Christianity is the process of finding ourselves on the inside of an act of communication that is developing in us a new set of practices. This means that we discover from within what the ideas really mean as we discover ourselves becoming something, or someone, we scarcely knew before.
- 6 Habits are stable dispositions which you have acquired over time to be able to behave in certain ways. Habits are what make excellence possible.
- 7 There is no such thing as a human who is not shot-through with time. Therefore, time is a condition of our being able to tell the truth about ourselves.

GETTING STARTED

Step 1:

20 to 30 minutes
depending on size of the group

As this is your first meeting together as a group, the “Getting started” portion of the session will take a bit longer than the others. Please take time to introduce yourselves to one another. Even if you are already acquainted, it’s a good idea to begin your journey together by saying your name and sharing what prompted you to take a course called, “Jesus the Forgiving Victim”.

EXPLAIN: After everyone has had a chance to comment, explain that the course begins in an unusual way. Instead of jumping into a theological discussion about Jesus the Forgiving Victim, the first three sessions look at how human beings learn, grow, and discover new things about ourselves and our world. Then in video sessions four and five, we meet and get to know Jesus the Forgiving Victim.

Optional Step 2:

5 to 10 minutes

Introduce this option by explaining: It’s time to raise the topic for the first session. Today we will be talking about Christians as people who learn to find themselves on the receiving end of an act of communication from God.

ACTIVITY: Explain that in this activity we will be thinking about different ways God has communicated with human beings in the Bible. You will ask the group to name five different modes of communication from God found in the Bible. For example: God communicated with Moses via a burning bush. Name the following Biblical stories one at a time and ask the group to name the way God communicated in each one. Suggested answers are in the second column.

BIBLICAL STORY	HOW GOD COMMUNICATED
Adam and Eve, after eating from the fruit of the tree <i>Genesis 3:8</i>	speaking in person
Abraham, as Abram receiving God’s call <i>Genesis 12:1</i>	voice speaking
King David, after having Bathsheba’s husband killed <i>2 Samuel 12:7-12</i>	the prophet Nathan
Joseph, Jesus’ father, as Herod prepared to slaughter the infants <i>Matthew 2:13</i>	an angel appears in a dream

Conclude by saying that God has communicated with us in many ways, and that’s where the course begins.

DISTRIBUTE PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

WATCH VIDEO: **An odd beginning**

31:24 minutes

An odd beginning DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

60 minutes

What jumped out at you?

Where do you have questions?

What seemed really important to you?

James talks about Christianity having been thought of as grasping onto a theory about what God has done for us and then acting according to a moral code. Is that what Christianity has been like for you? How or how not?

James says that habits are what make excellence possible.

What beneficial practices have you been inducted into?

Who inducted you or how did you acquire your “stable dispositions”?

What is your relationship to the Bible? Do you think of it as an act of communication from God? If so, what do you think God is communicating to us in our particular time and place?

Recalling the exercise from Optional Step 2, go deeper into the impact on our lives that an act of communication from God might have.

SESSION WRAP - UP

Now that you've completed the first session, why do you think this course is subtitled, *Listening for the Unheard Voice*? You may find this quote from the first essay helpful as a prompt for reflection:

"What I hope we are going to be doing together is to begin to become habituated to being the sort of people who might be able to hear God speaking through the Son whom he appointed heir to all things."