

essentials

the heart of the Christian faith

Leader's notes

for 6 studies based on
the **essentials** material

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Evangelism is tough, and it is easy to feel ill-prepared and disheartened. These studies use the new Essentials material to clarify our understanding of the gospel, increase our ability to share it with the people of our time, and give us fresh encouragement for the task.

Essentials is a collection of outreach resources. It includes short films that answer big questions, a book, a gospel diagram and a stunning animation.

Each study has **four** main parts:

- **Discuss** – an opening question designed to introduce the main theme of the study.
- **Watch** or **Read** – the group either watches one of the Essentials films or reads a section of the Bible.
- **Explore** – a set of questions written to clarify the gospel and reveal some of the underlying viewpoints of unbelievers that we need to be aware of. This section also includes an opportunity to work together in pairs.
- **Pray** – an opportunity to respond to God in thanksgiving and petition.

To use these studies you will need a copy of the Essentials DVD. This is on sale from www.10ofthose.com

As a result of these studies, your group will know how to communicate the gospel more effectively. They will also have more joy and delight in the gospel, and so will have more desire to see it spread. And the final study encourages Christians to share the Essentials resources with 5 unbelievers.

Discuss

7. How would you try and persuade someone that God exists?

This question is raising the issue of the **basis** of what we believe. We are engaging a culture that increasingly thinks all claims about God are speculative - that, rather than being true, they are simply human opinions, whether recent assertions or long standing community tradition. Therefore, when we explain the gospel today we must not simply state *what* Christians believe but also *why* we believe what we say.

In terms of God's existence, a popular approach is to point people to God's creation. What we can see and touch shows evidence of being designed. Some also refer to creation in order to establish what God is like. Most who follow this path conclude that what we can see around us declares that the Creator is very powerful and wise. There is, of course, biblical warrant for this, see Psalm 19 and Romans 1. However, there are dangers of following this approach. First, our discussions may quickly become focused on the age of the earth and the relationship between science and faith. Second, people could argue that our conclusions are simply our interpretation of the evidence. Why not focus instead on the suffering, pain and brokenness in the world? Third, this approach usually doesn't get us talking about Jesus very quickly.

A different approach is to focus on the identity of Jesus as the Son of God. Of course, this means we talk about Jesus very quickly! Moreover, it also means we get to explain the basis of our beliefs. We engage with people's wrong presuppositions about our God statements. We can show them that Jesus' identity means he has revealed the truth. This means we are not arrogantly making things up but humbly responding to what has been said by the one who speaks from the vantage point of knowledge.

Watch

8. Watch the *Reveal* film.

Explore

9. According to the film, what's the best way of getting to know someone?

We engage them or they engage us in conversation. This means we are not guessing, we are hearing the truth from their lips. The same is true with God. If we want to avoid speculation, we need God to reveal himself. Many unbelievers assume that any 'God' statements are based on opinions rather than fact. So it's vital that we communicate that our conviction is that God has turned up and engaged us in conversation. Christians are not adding our

opinions to a global discussion on the divine identity. No, we want people to know that what we say about God is based on what God has said to us.

10. Why do you think the film introduces Jesus so early?

First, because Jesus is the Son of God, it allows us to make the claim that God has engaged us in conversation. If true, this changes everything. Jesus reveals the truth. Everything said about God must be compared to the words of Jesus.

Second, it helps Christians have a conversation focused on Jesus. It is easy to veer off the main highway of gospel proclamation and focus on other topics. Jesus is the one we want to promote.

Third, it allows us to make a historical truth claim. We are asserting that a real person called Jesus made a real impression at a real time and place in human history. Of course, we are claiming much more than this. We are announcing that Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh. But we are not claiming anything less.

11. The film unashamedly introduces the Trinity. How often do you mention the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when you speak about God?

Explore your group's reasons for any reluctance they have to speak to non-Christians about God as Trinity.

Here are three popular reasons why Christians leave the Trinity out of their conversations with unbelievers.

- They have never been taught a simple explanation of the Trinity.
- They don't speak about the Trinity with other Christians.
- This truth about God is not personally delightful to them.

12. What will motivate us to talk more about the Trinity?

Here are a few points to mention:

We should not lazily talk about a general God. Let's be particular about referring to the persons of the Godhead in our conversation.

We will be keener to speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit when we trust the language God has preserved in the Bible. This is God's book, and he deliberately chose the words we find in its pages. We mustn't assume people won't 'get it.' The Holy Spirit is very able to bring understanding to any mind.

We will talk about God as Trinity when this truth is personally joyful to us. We will speak out of the overflow of our heart.

We will talk more about the Trinity when we have thought through a little summary paragraph of what we believe. We should get prepared ahead of the time we need to speak.

We will speak more about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit when we see the explanatory power of the Trinity. That is, it is a truth that explains so much in our everyday experience. For example, why relationships are so important to us and why we love music in the way we do.

It's important to stay clear of unhelpful illustrations. For example, God as a triangle or God as water in three states (steam, ice and liquid water). What's the biggest truth that we want our Trinitarian illustration to convey? Not how 3 can be 1 and 1 can be 3. But loving relationship. That's why speaking about God as more like a family or a divine community is helpful. Not only is it more biblical but it conveys the key truth about persons in loving relationship.

13. In pairs, take turns to explain what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God.

Encourage people to state some simple truths about God as Trinity rather than worrying about explaining the nuances of how the divine persons relate.

Using contrast is a really good way of ensuring clarity. We can say what God is not like and then say what God is like.

We want to convey the impression that we don't believe the Trinity is a complicated riddle that doesn't make sense and that embarrasses us. We are to be delightfully Trinitarian. It's a good idea to have a short paragraph ready to communicate.

Here is an example of what to say...

The Bible teaches that God is much more like a united family than a lonely individual or a life-giving force. This loving community is made up of three divine persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And the Bible teaches that these three have always existed and together they make the one God. It's what Christians call the Trinity. It's the delightful conviction that at the heart of the universe is a relationship of perfect love. The Bible's claim is that 2000 years ago, one of these divine three, the Son of God, was born. And he was given the name Jesus.

14. What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel?

Pray

As a result of this study, what would you like to thank God for?

Which unbelievers would you like to pray for? Pray that the Father would give them a desire to find out more about Jesus.

Discuss

1. **How many of your non-Christian friends and family would consider themselves good people? Why is this such a problem when sharing the gospel?**

Many of those around us are not openly hostile to the gospel, they are simply apathetic to what we say and do as Christians. Many of our neighbours still believe in some sort of higher power, although they would be pretty clueless to define the 'God' they hope might exist.

Moreover, most people tend to think of themselves as fairly good. As a result, they have no interest in someone claiming to be a Saviour. Why would they? In their eyes, they are not in any danger.

In response we need to be intentional about persuading people that they are not good people on the road to heaven but rebels on the road to hell.

Watch

2. **Watch the *Reject* film.**

Explore

3. **Why do you think the doctor illustration is used in the film?**

Here are a few points to highlight:

People can relate to this really easily.

It explains why many are not interested in Jesus; they don't believe they are in trouble and so in need of rescue.

The illustration exposes why so many people think they are spiritually okay. We diagnose ourselves rather than have a professional do it.

It is easy to move from the illustration to talk about Jesus as the spiritual physician who knows what he is talking about.

4. **Why is the illustration about living in a country ruled by a generous king such a helpful way to convince 'good' people they are sinners?**

'Good' people never refer to their treatment of God when they try and justify their status. It's all about what they have and haven't done towards other human beings.

The key aspect of the generous ruler illustration is to get people thinking about how they

have treated God. It also allows us to speak about God having the right to rule us, just as the king has the right to rule his subjects. It's God's world, so he can tell us what to do. And because God is our Creator, he has ownership rights over us. Moreover, this illustration allows us to get across the truth that God is not stingy but abundantly generous.

5. Why do you think Jesus spoke about hell? How can this help us speak about this aspect of the gospel?

Jesus speaks about hell because it is a real place where real people will suffer real punishment, forever. But ultimately he warns us about this terrifying destination because he loves us. He loves us enough to tell us the uncomfortable truth in order that we will believe him, and then run to him to enjoy a very different eternity.

Many of us fear speaking about hell because we know people won't like it. Our problem is that we often confuse niceness with kindness. Niceness is all about getting someone to like us and smile at us. Loving kindness is about telling someone what is ultimately for their best, even if it hurts to hear.

All Christians want to be more loving. Let's join the dots and realise that speaking about hell is all about love.

6. Why do you think the film includes the illustration about killing things in the park?

Even when people see a link between crime and punishment, we mustn't assume they will automatically believe hell is the right punishment for our rejection of God's rule. We must seek to establish why this sentence really does match our crime.

The illustration of killing things in the park is designed to communicate that as we go higher up the moral categories, the sentence for an action increases in severity. Because God is infinitely grand and glorious, a rejection of his rule deserves infinite punishment.

Some may really dislike this example because of its gruesome imagery. However, it is somewhat appropriate to use such a shocking picture when we are talking about the horrific nature of sin.

7. What's the point of the *Strictly Come Dancing* example?

It highlights that we live in a culture that finds hard truth very difficult to hear. That is, we hate being on the receiving end of facts that make us feel bad. This illustration helps unbelievers to realise this, and so helps them understand one of the reasons they will struggle with the concept of hell. It is also helpful for Christians, as it informs us of one reason why we are reluctant to talk about this terrifying future.

8. In pairs, take turns to explain why we deserve to be punished in hell.

Encourage your group to use what they have learned from this video as they talk to each other. They should be aiming to make the following points:

1. We have all rejected God, and because of this we deserve to be punished.
2. We see a link between rejecting authority and punishment being worked out in our daily lives. Think of what happens in classrooms, companies and countries.
3. What we have done is so serious that we deserve to suffer the full force of God's anger in hell forever.
4. Explain why our punishment is deserved by using the park illustration.

9. What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel? Are you more likely to speak about hell because of this study?

Pray

As a result of this study, what would you like to thank God for?

Which unbelievers would you like to pray for? Pray that the Father would give them an understanding of the punishment they deserve.

Discuss

1. **Why won't it be immediately obvious to our friends, family, course mates and work colleagues that Jesus' death is good news for them?**

Two reasons spring to mind. First, why should someone's death be good news? It is not obvious that Jesus' death was for a purpose. This is something we must explain. Secondly, a rescue is only good news *for us* when we are in danger, and when we know we are in danger. If we remain ignorant about our true condition, then a Saviour will seem irrelevant.

Watch

2. **Watch the *Rescue* film.**

Explore

3. **Why does the film start by reminding us of the punishment we deserve?**

This is to ensure that everyone is crystal clear about what we deserve from God. The great news of Jesus' sacrificial death only makes sense against the backdrop of our sin and punishment.

4. **What's the point of the Elsa Delplace story?**

We want to communicate that Jesus' sacrifice was purposeful and was motivated by love. Elsa's sacrifice was not random and without meaning. She deliberately laid down her life for her son. She stood in his place to protect him from the approaching danger. Likewise, we want people to realise that Jesus' death was deliberate and purposeful. He stood in our place to endure the punishment we deserve. He suffered to protect us from danger.

Moreover, the actions of Elsa Delplace move us emotionally. We connect with a story of selfless and sacrificial love. We want people to realise at a deep level that Jesus' sacrifice was even greater than Elsa's. His suffering was far greater and the stakes were far higher, not just life but eternal life was hanging in the balance.

Luke's Gospel makes it clear that in order to save us, Jesus could not save himself. Punishment would either have to be experienced by him or us.

5. **In pairs, take turns to discuss why God can't simply forget about our rebellion.**

Encourage your group to use what they've learnt from the video. The film speaks of punishment as the price of our wrongdoing. Therefore, the particular illustration to use

when answering this question is the one with the broken smartphone. There is a cost that cannot simply disappear. Someone must bear it.

A different path entirely would be to consider punishment in legal terms and then explore this from a justice viewpoint. However, this might confuse your group, as it isn't the route chosen in the video.

6. How does the resurrection of Jesus show that he has fully paid the price of sin?

At a very simple level, it is a dramatic demonstration that Jesus was right when he said his death would pay the price of sin. Or, to quote his words in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

We can also dig deeper and recognise that one aspect of sin's penalty is physical death. Therefore, one clear way of God the Father showing that Jesus has fully paid the price for sin was to raise him physically from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus does demonstrate multiple things. However, we can be sure that one purpose is to give us a divine receipt, a guarantee that Jesus has fully paid the price of sin.

7. Why does the film end with the illustration of people paying for their own meals?

It helps to show people why they might be struggling with what they are hearing. In life, we prefer to pay for things ourselves, and so being told that our salvation depends on someone else paying is counter to how we normally function. Moreover, this illustration is trying to make sure we are crystal clear about what Jesus is offering. It is too easy to think being a Christian is all about trying to live a good life in order to please God, or to win a place in heaven. But it's not! Motivated by love, Jesus has fully paid for all our sins, and wants us to enjoy a personal relationship with the divine three.

8. What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel?

Pray

As a result of this study, what would you like to thank God for?

Which unbelievers would you like to pray for? Pray that the Father would help them to grasp the sacrificial love of Jesus. Pray they would understand what Jesus achieved when he died on the cross.

Discuss

1. **What are some of the great gifts that God gives to us? What do you think is the greatest gift?**

We want to communicate in our discussion that God is amazingly generous. Encourage your group to be specific about the many great gifts that God gives to us. But make it clear that the greatest gift is God himself.

Watch

2. **Watch the *Relationship* film.**

Explore

3. **How much should we focus on forgiveness when we share the gospel?**

We should definitely speak about forgiveness and how amazing it is that those who deserve hell are offered forgiveness by a God who willingly paid the price for our wrongdoing. However, the ultimate end of the gospel isn't forgiveness. It is fellowship with the living God.

When talking about the rescue of Jesus, there are three helpful questions to ask. What do we need rescuing from? How are we rescued? What do we need rescuing for? And here's a short summary of the answers. **We are rescued from God, by God, and for God.**

It is easy to talk vaguely about a relationship with God, but because the God who exists is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it's vital that we speak of the relationship we are offered with each of the divine persons.

Notice that one of the implications of speaking about God as Trinity in the first video is that we can now end by being specific about relating to *each* member of this joyful community.

4. **Why do we need to persuade people that surrendering to the rule of King Jesus is good news? How can we do this?**

Instinctively, we hate being told what to do. Therefore, without explanation, the rule of Jesus will be seen as something that needs to be done rather than something we are privileged to experience. Anticipating this cultural mood allows us to be proactive in our presentation of the goodness of Jesus' rule.

One of the ways of doing this is to speak of living under the rule of Jesus like a house restoration project. People can easily understand this idea, and they connect with it emotionally. This illustration allows us to speak of the following points:

- The end result is beautiful.
- The process of transformation takes time.
- It all happens under new ownership. We should expect change to happen when someone else is in charge.

5. In pairs, take turns to explain why following Jesus is worth it even though it is tough.

Encourage your group to use the things they have learned from the film. One specific suggestion is for people to speak about the benefits of knowing Jesus now and the benefits of being a Christian for eternity.

Here is what is said in the video, “...being a Christian is worth it. With Jesus in charge, this life will be much more colourful, and the next life will be infinitely more pleasurable.”

6. What do we discover in the film about being a child of God?

The video highlights three reasons which you can explore in more detail with your group.

- It provides us with great security.
- It provides us with many new brothers and sisters to love, and to love in return.
- It provides us with a powerful motivation to change.

7. Why is it so important to speak about the Holy Spirit when we share the gospel?

Knowing Jesus as Lord and Saviour results in the powerful Holy Spirit dwelling within us. This is vital to know when speaking to people about changing behaviour. Transformation is possible because internal power is available.

8. What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel?

Pray

As a result of this study, what would you like to thank God for?

Which unbelievers would you like to pray for? Pray that the Father would help them grasp how good it is to embrace the rule of King Jesus. Pray that they would ask you about why you are different.

For this part you may like to bring pens and paper for your group to practice drawing the diagram.

Discuss

1. **Have you ever used a diagram to share the gospel? What are the benefits of using a gospel diagram? What are the dangers?**

Advantages	Disadvantages
The pictures help you to remember what to say	We can forget we are communicating with a person as we draw
It gives a structure that enables the gospel to be explained in a clear way	After drawing it all, we may feel we have exhausted our knowledge and have nothing left to add
The images can make the truth more comprehensible for the listener	
The diagram can be taken home by the unbeliever	

Watch

2. **Watch the Essentials diagram.**

Explore

3. **Discuss what you found helpful about the way this diagram communicates the gospel.**

Here are a few things to point out:

- It starts with Jesus. This ensures that straight away we get talking about the person at the heart of Christianity.
- From here, we introduce God as Trinity in a very understandable and attractive way.
- The bottom half of the diagram is made easier to remember because it is based on the word **rescue**.

- It clearly shows the punishment we deserve being placed on Jesus.
 - It shows the greatest gift of God is God.
 - It spells out how we relate to each divine person.
 - It shows that a personal commitment to Jesus is required to benefit from his death on the cross.
 - We see that when we commit to Jesus, our punishment is *behind* us and we *now* experience a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We don't live with Jesus as King to deal with our punishment. No, because of our King's great sacrifice, we *now* live with the joy of knowing that Jesus has fully paid for our sin.
4. **In pairs, take turns to use the Essentials diagram to explain the gospel. The pictures should remind you of the words. You don't have to be word perfect 😊 Feel free to use your own words based on this gospel framework.**

[The full script can be found in appendix 1 and the diagram can be found in appendix 2]

5. **In what situations could it be helpful to draw this diagram?**
1. It could be drawn at the end of an evangelistic course to summarise what has been taught. Or it could be drawn gradually as the course continues, so that it builds up each week.
 2. It could be used helpfully in a 121 setting, either in your home or out in a coffee shop or pub, drawn on a napkin or a scrap of paper. You may be meeting a friend and they are interested in discovering what Christianity is really all about. The Essentials diagram would be great for them to see visually and the pictures would help you remember what to say. Or you could meet up with a friend over a few weeks and draw the diagram in stages.
6. **What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel?**

Pray

As a result of this study, what would you like to thank God for?

Which unbelievers would you like to pray for? Pray that you would have an opportunity to practice this diagram with them. Pray for your courage and clarity.

Discuss

1. **How can Christians let people hear the word of God? Share examples of how we can spread the gospel.**

Encourage a wide variety of examples. They can include the various 'come and hear' initiatives being run by your church and also any 'go and share' methods they are using. We want people to realise that there are many ways to get people to hear the good news about Jesus.

Read

2. **Read Luke 5:1-11**

Explore

3. **What was Jesus doing in the boat? (Vs 1-3)**

The obvious thing to say is that Jesus was teaching the word of God. People are so interested in what he is communicating that they are crowding around him. But notice what kind of boat he teaches from. It's a fishing boat. So, in other words, Luke wants us to understand that Jesus is fishing for people. And he does this by teaching the word of God.

[Hint: what kind of boat was it?]

4. **What is strange about Jesus' command to Peter in verse 4?**

We're supposed to ask what Jesus knows about fishing. He can certainly teach the truth about God but what can he possibly teach the fishing experts about their daily profession?

5. **What can we learn about obeying Jesus from Peter's response in verse 5?**

The first part of verse 5 reveals that Peter thinks Jesus' advice is foolish. The professional fishermen have returned from a night's fishing with nothing. All they want to do is clean their nets and get some sleep. But, thankfully, verse 5 continues with a statement of obedience, "...because you say so, I will let down the nets."

What an example for us to follow! Will we pray for a similar attitude? No matter if God's commandments seem strange or silly, we should obey. And we should do this simply because *he* says so.

6. Why does it make sense for Peter to listen to Jesus' fishing advice? (Vs 6-10a)

Jesus shows that he is the divine Creator. He is the one who controls where the fish of the sea will be. Peter responds with fear. But, thankfully, Jesus is the gracious God who will make it possible for a sinner like Peter to be in his presence.

7. What does Jesus expect his followers to do? What does this mean? (Vs 10b-11)

[Hint: remember what Jesus was doing in the boat 😊]

Those who follow Jesus are called to work in the spiritual fishing business. Like our Master before us, we are to fish for people (see verse 10). This is one of the joyful privileges of being a Christian.

What does it mean to fish for people? Jesus has already shown us. We fish like he fished, by holding out the word of God. In our case, we make sure people encounter the good news about the identity and mission of Jesus.

What gives us confidence that this method will work? It is the Sovereign Jesus who gives us this command, the one who has already demonstrated his ability to gather physical fish to the right place at the right time so they can be caught in the lowered nets. We can trust the same Jesus to be as equally good at arranging people to be in the right place at the right time. Our job is to trust him and share the gospel.

8. What have you discovered in this study that has made you keener to share the gospel?

Pray

Our desire as Christians is to help unbelievers hear about Jesus. We want them to encounter the word of God.

If we want to engage in lots of evangelism then we need three crucial things.

- **Confidence.** We need to have confidence that the gospel is the power of God to save people.
- **Creativity.** Since the power is in the message we will want people to encounter the message as often as they can. Our challenge is to think of creative ways of getting people to hear the message.
- **Courage.** We need courage to actually get on and use the ways available to us to get the gospel out. We need God to empower us for mission. Let's make sure we are praying for this.

The Essentials material exists in multiple formats so that it can be used in many different evangelistic settings. The films are available on DVD, and can be purchased very cheaply from www.10ofthose.com. They also sell the short Essentials book at giveaway prices. The videos can also be watched or downloaded on the Essentials website www.lifeessentials.org.uk

We want to share this gospel in a way that is appropriate for us and that is appropriate for our non-Christian contacts.

Here are some ideas of what you could do.

- ❑ Give away the DVD to a friend or family member or course mate or work colleague or neighbour. You can tell them it's a brand new resource that helps explain what you believe as a Christian, and you'd love them to watch it. Why not ask them what they thought about it a few weeks later? You could do a similar thing with the Essentials book.
- ❑ Post the DVD or book to someone, either geographically close or far away. This may be a better way to engage with someone than a face-to-face conversation. Perhaps you could write a letter to an old friend whom you have never really had a chance to explain the gospel to.
- ❑ Perhaps you know people who aren't really into books or DVDs but are keen internet users. Could you write/email/text/Facebook messenger/WhatsApp them the Essentials website address and ask them to watch the films or even the animation?
- ❑ What about including a book or DVD with a birthday or Christmas present?
- ❑ Or what about having several books and DVDs at home, ready to give out to delivery drivers who come to your home? You don't have to be friends with someone to share a gospel resource. You can purchase quantities of books and DVDs from www.10ofthose.com at very cheap prices. Better in their hands than in our house. Let's scatter widely.
- ❑ The Essentials book can be used in an evangelistic 121 setting. The chapters are short, easy to read, and full of engaging illustrations. There are also four discussion questions for each chapter that can be used to help get a conversation started and keep it on track.
- ❑ The DVD is also ideal to use in a 121 scenario. Either give it away and your friend can watch it first, or watch one of the films together when you meet. It would also be sensible to give someone a copy of the Essentials book if you intend to watch the videos with them. The questions in the book were also written to be used with the films.
- ❑ What about sharing the website link for the films with a friend? This is a great way to engage with the gospel for those who are more likely to watch things on their phone or tablet. Again, your friend can watch it before you meet them, or with you, or even both.
- ❑ Share on social media. The films are all under 10 minutes, and so are ideal to be shared on social media. Likewise, the animation and the diagram are perfect for this environment. You could post links on Facebook or Twitter or whatever other means is most used by you and your friends.
- ❑ And...the list can go on!

9. Write down the names of the five unbelievers and how you will try and share the Essentials material with them.

Some in the group may struggle to think of five non-Christians. But a little thought will reveal that God has connected us with all sorts of people who don't follow Jesus. Encourage your group to think of the following categories:

- Close or distant family – they don't have to live nearby.
- Close or distant friends.
- Neighbours.
- Work colleagues.
- Team mates.
- Shop assistants.
- Delivery drivers

Name	How will you try and share Essentials with them?

10. Pray that God will give you the courage to do this and open up the opportunities for it to happen.

If we want to know if there is a God and what he is like then the best place to start is with Jesus.

And when I say Jesus, I mean the real Jesus. The captivating, beautiful and relevant person who made footprints on this earth, and who we hear about in the Bible. The person who said he was the Son of God.

The God who has always existed is a united family of three divine persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It's what Christians call the Trinity. It's the delightful conviction that for all eternity, at the very heart of the universe, is a relationship of perfect **love**.

And the amazing news is that 2000 years ago, the Son of God, was born.

This happened so that Jesus could rescue us from the greatest danger we face.

What do we need rescuing from?

We have been created by God. This means he has the right to tell us how to live. Now this isn't a bad thing. God doesn't want to spoil our fun. No, he wants to maximize our joy.

The way he does this is by giving us **loving** boundaries.

Like a **loving** father who adores his children and wants them to thrive, God tells us what to do and what to avoid. However, instead of listening to God, we all reject him. We all decide to live our lives our way. Now we usually call this personal freedom or self-expression but its true name is sin or cosmic treason.

We deserve to be punished for this. And the punishment that fits the crime is for us to experience the full force of God's anger forever in a place called Hell.

But the great news is that Jesus came to rescue us from this terrifying future. Jesus came to save us from eternal punishment.

How did he do it?

When his hands and feet were nailed to a wooden cross, and he was lifted up to suffer in our place.

Motivated by **love**, Jesus sacrificed himself to pay for our sin. The punishment we deserve to experience in hell was suffered by Jesus on the cross.

But Jesus' death was not the end of the story. He was raised to enjoy new physical life. And this was God the Father's way of demonstrating that Jesus' suffering had fully paid the price of our sins.

But what are we rescued for?

The answer is breathtaking. An eternal relationship with each member of the Trinity. We are saved for **love**.

Jesus wants us to surrender to him as our King, which is a great way to live. With Jesus in charge, every part of us will gradually be made more beautiful.

When anyone decides to live like this, they are united to Jesus. And so, Jesus' Father becomes their Father. This means a Christian instantly becomes a child in the Father's family, which results in lots of new brothers and sisters.

Now you may fear that you could never change to be the way Jesus expects. But if you choose to follow Jesus as your King, the Holy Spirit will live within you and he will help you to do what Jesus commands.

A Christian is someone who has decided to stop committing cosmic treason. Instead of rejecting God's loving boundaries, they have embraced Jesus as their King. And, as a result, they have benefitted from his death on the cross. They have been rescued from the punishment they deserve and now enjoy a **loving** relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. A relationship that will last forever.

