

Life Matters

Worksheet 3

Have you ever been given a present at Christmas or for your birthday and as you're opening it, you're thinking "oh dear"? However, the present is then transformed by the person giving you the gift as they say those magic words "the receipt is in there if you want to change it for something else". It can be quite difficult not to over-react and give the game away at that point! To exchange a gift or to get a refund it is always so much easier when you have the receipt, or the 'proof of purchase'. When you need to return something to the shops and don't have the receipt then you know that you may have to argue your case and that you may fail. The receipt is the evidence and proof that you need to make everything so much easier. It is even possible to return a pair of trousers that have been 'altered' if you have the proof of purchase. In my defence, I had completely forgotten that the trousers had been 'taken up' and that is not the reason that C&A ceased trading!

If you are ever called up to do 'jury service' then you will be told how important and vital it is to listen to the evidence. Once all the evidence has been presented by the prosecution and the defence, then the Judge will sum up. In their summing up, the Judge will tell you that to find a guilty verdict, the prosecution must have 'proved beyond reasonable doubt the guilt of the defendant'. That is the bedrock of our legal system

QUESTIONS:

- **Have you ever done Jury service?**
- **How important is proof and evidence to what you believe about life?**

In our last worksheet we saw that the eyewitness John, starts off his account of the life of Jesus by telling us who Jesus is. He tells us that Jesus is God and has lived in this world as a real man (John chapter 1 verse 14). We are now going to consider the 'proof of purchase'. We are considering the evidence that John gives us. John calls this evidence signs. They act like signposts pointing us to the identity of who Jesus really is. Signposts are designed to be as easy to see and read as possible. They are there to tell us where to go to reach our destination.

The cartoon, Wacky Races, was one of the great cartoons produced by Hanna-Barbera. In each episode the wacky contestants would try and get to the finishing line first by various means and methods. Some of the contestants like Penelope Pitstop would always try and win the race by fair means, whilst others like Dick Dastardly would do anything to win. This often meant that signposts would be moved to a different direction so that the cars would go the wrong way. A clear sign but pointing the wrong way.

John gives us many signs and gives us the direction in which all these signs are pointing. He is saying that there is only possible direction that these signs point. As we saw in worksheet 1, John writes ***"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this***

book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." These signs are what we would commonly call 'miracles' today. These are not unusual activities; they are impossible for people like us to perform. They run contrary to what we would call the laws of nature. In many ways, that is the point that John is making, Jesus is doing things which are impossible for a human to do.

QUESTIONS:

- **Do you believe that Jesus is God?**
- **If no, then how do you explain his miracles?**
- **If yes, then has this made a difference in your life?**

Let's have a look at three particular miracles that Jesus performed to see the proof that John gives us to show us exactly who Jesus is.

SIGNPOST 1 - Please read **John 6 verses 16-42**. This is the story of Jesus walking upon the water. The disciples of Jesus had left the shore without him and had set off across the lake by boat. It was dark, it was windy, and the water was choppy, but several of the disciples were experienced fishermen, so these were not unusual conditions for them. Then a very unusual condition arose! The boat was 3-4 miles into the middle of the lake when one of the disciples would have spotted someone walking towards them. Their immediate reaction is not that this was Jesus, but that this was a ghost. That would be a logical conclusion as human beings cannot walk on water. This sight also terrified them as you would expect. It is clear from what John says that the disciples were not going to allow this 'ghost' anywhere near their boat. Again, this is a natural human reaction to what they are seeing. It is when Jesus speaks that the situation changes. In verse 20, John records the words of Jesus **"It is I; don't be afraid. Then they were willing to take him into the boat."** The disciples were utterly terrified, they had seen Jesus doing some amazing things, but walking upon water, that is impossible for us to do. John is showing us with this miracle that Jesus has the power to act contrary to the normal laws of nature. Jesus is more powerful than nature itself.

QUESTIONS:

- **Why do you think that John tells us about the crowd searching for them in verses 22-24?**
- **Do you know of any other miracles that Jesus performs that involve nature?**

SIGNPOST 2 - Please read **John chapter 9**. On this occasion we have a miracle being performed that not only answers an important question but also sparks some real opposition. Jesus sees a man who had never been able to see, he was born blind. This provoked a genuine question, **'who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'** This was a common view at the time that if someone was born with an 'abnormality' then it was due to sin. We can think like this as well, especially when things go apparently wrong. The pop group Travis summed it up with their song 'why does it always rain on me, is it because I lied when I was 17!'. We naturally look for the reasons behind life's events. This is what the disciples are doing here. Jesus' answer is remarkable. In verse 3 we read, **"Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."** Jesus is saying that the man was born blind not because of anything that he would do or that his parents did, but so that Jesus could heal him! That is an outrageous thing to say if you are not God. It would also be

outrageous if Jesus didn't heal the man. Jesus then spits on the ground and makes some mud which he puts on the man's eyes. He then tells the man to go and wash in a particular pool of water. The man did this and could then see. The rest of the chapter examines the opposition that there is to what Jesus has done for this man. The important point that John is making here is that Jesus has the ability to heal someone who has never, ever seen. This was not curing a degenerative disease; this is making someone who has never had sight, be able to have real working eyesight.

QUESTIONS:

- **What is this man's simple testimony about Jesus in verse 25?**
- **Why do you think the Pharisees (religious leaders of the day) oppose what Jesus had done for this man?**

SIGNPOST 3 – Please read **John chapter 11 verses 38-44**. Jesus had many friends and in chapter 11 we have the sad news that one of them, Lazarus, had died. Jesus arrives at the tomb and we are told that at this point, Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. When someone has died then it is possible that a mistake has been made (though very unlikely) and that with some very swift medical help that the person can be revived. However, Lazarus has been declared dead and then put on his own, with no medical help, into a sealed tomb. There is no doubt about it, Lazarus is 100% dead, he has even been buried with the traditional cloth and linens wrappings. Jesus prays before performing this miracle. Please notice in his words that he does not ask for help or strength or for a miracle. In verse 41 Jesus asks for the stone to be removed from the entrance to the tomb. Then Jesus prays ***“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”*** Do you see what Jesus is saying as he prays? He is telling the crowd that what they are hearing (and what they will see) is being done for a reason. The reason is so that people will believe that Jesus is the Son of God and has been sent by God the Father. That is an outrageous thing to claim, however Jesus backs up this claim by what he says and does next. In verse 43 we read Jesus shouting ***“Lazarus, come out!”*** When Lazarus walks out of the tomb he is still covered in his grave clothes, strips of linen and a face cloth. Jesus then says, ***“take off the grave clothes and let him go.”*** Jesus has the power to speak directly to a dead corpse and the dead come back to real life. This is the ultimate miracle, the ultimate signpost. Jesus has the power to give someone back their life. Jesus can raise the dead back to life.

QUESTIONS:

- **What do you think Lazarus now thought about his friend Jesus?**
- **If Jesus can raise Lazarus from the dead, do you believe that he can give you life after death?**

You may have taken something back to a shop and the assistant has had to call their Manager over to help them. Why does the assistant do this? They don't have the necessary authority to make the decision or to act in a particular way, they need the person with the authority to act or to give them this power. The Manager has the necessary authority and power and so can show that in what they do and say.

Please see that Jesus is not asking and praying for God to give him the authority to do it. Jesus is displaying the power of God and displays this power in his own authority. John is signposting us to the destination that Jesus really is God the Son, that Jesus has all the power and authority of God.

QUESTIONS:

- **What does all of this evidence tell us about Jesus?**
- **Do you believe 'beyond reasonable doubt' that Jesus is the Son of God?**

How would you like to explore this life in Jesus Christ that John wants you to know? This is your opportunity and invitation to do that. There are currently millions of people around the world who have experienced what life in Jesus Christ is really like. Why not commit to spend some time for the next few weeks exploring this for yourself? These videos and studies will be appearing twice a week and we will attempt to answer any questions you have via our email address info@lfec.org

In the next video and study, we will consider the evidence that John presents us with to show us that Jesus is doing things that only God can do. Look out for these on YouTube, Facebook or on our website:

www.lfec.org