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CONTENTS:

USING SIMPLY JESUS	4
GROUP LEADER'S PREPARATION	5
INTRODUCTORY WEEK	8
WEEK 1: JESUS - MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH	13
WEEK 2: JESUS - KING OF THE JEWS	21
WEEK 3: JESUS - THE SERVANT KING	28
WEEK 4: JESUS - THE SABBATH BREAKER	37
WEEK 5: YESHUA - THE JEWISH RABBI	46
WEEK 6: JESUS - THE PEOPLE RESTORER	58
WEEK 7: JESUS - THE OVERCOMER	68

USING SIMPLY JESUS

Simply Jesus and the weekly group notes that follow are written especially for discipling brand new or spiritually immature believers with an emphasis on understanding the Jesus the King of the Kingdom of God from the perspective of the Hebraic roots of our faith.

The objective is that as disciples enjoy gathering and growing together regularly they will want to carry on in their journey of discipleship by completing other sections of New Beginnings Discipleship with some becoming effective disciple-makers themselves.

When you have a sufficient number to form a small group then please work through the guidelines for the introduction session followed by weeks 1-7. Please note that throughout the Group Leader's Guide, teaching guidelines are given in double spacing to allow room for you to write your own comments.

NOTES:

GROUP LEADER'S PREPARATION

THIS WILL LARGELY BE THE SAME EVERY WEEK.

1. Make sure group members have a copy of the Simply Jesus workbook. This is available from the Shop section of the web-site [www.newbeginningsdiscipleship.com].
2. It is advisable to share the group leadership with someone else ideally a person who has been a member of a previous group. This is an opportunity to apprentice a potential new group leader so ensure you delegate some responsibilities.
3. Contact each group member to confirm the venue, location, date and time of your first meeting. Subsequent meetings should also be confirmed if necessary.
4. Make sure you prepare each week's study prior to the meeting.
5. A list of specific items of preparation required for each week's study is given at the top of the relevant teaching notes.
6. Most weeks there are accompanying optional video clips. The links to download these clips are in the Resources section of the My Community pages of the web-site [www.newbeginningsdiscipleship.com]. Not everyone has access to the internet and the ability to download these clips. If you are unable

to download them or decide not to use the technology please just ignore these sections. Non-video options are provided in the teaching notes.

7. If you decide to use the video clips then you will need some means of showing these to the group e.g. a DPU, TV or DVD player. Make sure the sound is working before each session begins.
8. You will either need to prepare to lead worship yourself (with an instrument or CDs) or brief someone else to do it for you.
9. People relax, chat and build relationship over the meal table. If you decide to serve a meal of some sort prior to each meeting then think through and plan the logistics of this.
 - a. Will it be a breakfast, main meal or pudding?
 - b. Will you do it yourself; ask someone else or will it be bring & share?
 - c. Be prepared to sit around the table afterwards to share and teach or move to a more comfortable setting.
10. Do not expect brand new or immature believers to have mature concepts about God. Allow them to talk freely but make a mental note of any misconceptions you pick up and ensure you correct lovingly and gently using scripture wherever possible. Be mindful of 2 Timothy 2:23-25!
11. Always have a small supply of Bibles on hand for those who will forget theirs.
12. Take your diary to arrange the next meeting.

13. Pray for the group members and your planned time together ideally with your apprentice group leader. Consider the following points when you pray:
- a. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and sit with you as you talk and share together.
 - b. Invite Him to be Lord of all the conversation and ask for His help to cement your small group relationship with genuine loving care, compassion and lasting friendship.
 - c. Make a declaration out loud to bind the enemy, making him ineffective from interfering, causing confusion or stealing what Father God intends to be achieved through the group meeting.
 - d. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply the protection of the blood of Jesus over the travel arrangements to and from the meeting, the meeting itself and everyone involved.
 - e. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any hidden needs each disciple may have.
 - f. Ask God to give you all a deeper hunger for Him and acknowledge your own desire to grow spiritually through exercising this ministry of discipleship.
 - g. Think: are you willing to open up and share your own weaknesses, struggles and victories? Even if that means you become vulnerable.
 - h. Acknowledge your willingness to be used by God.

INTRODUCTORY WEEK

GROUP LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. If you have a copy of *Just the Beginning* make sure you are confident in using the content of *Appendix A Is God Real?* Have some copies handy for section 4.i.iii. If you do not wish to use *Just the Beginning* then consider how you can help the group reaffirm their commitments to follow Jesus in this section.
2. For section 5 you will need pens, paper and envelopes for disciples to write a personal letter to Jesus.

DURING THE SESSION:

1. If you are doing a meal then try and get everyone talking. This is an ideal opportunity for people to share and talk together about anything that God has been teaching them or doing in their lives.
2. Start timing the meeting once the meal is over and packed away. Allow a full two hours.
3. Welcome: make sure everyone is comfortable. Begin by welcoming the Holy Spirit in prayer [2 minutes].
4. Discussion time:
 - a. Encourage those who feel able to share openly within the group something of their faith journey [consider that some may not yet be believers in Jesus]. Especially encourage those who HAVE

responded to Jesus' call to share their experiences of beginning to follow Him.

- b. Ask: how did they first connect with Jesus?
- c. Try to encourage everyone to share what has brought them to today. Ask: in what ways have they heard Jesus calling them to follow Him? Or are they just interested in belonging to a Bible study group?
- d. Explain discipleship is all about learning to FOLLOW Jesus. It is not just about making a decision for Jesus once and then that is it; neither is it about acquiring lots and lots of knowledge about Jesus or the Bible; it IS about learning to continue following Jesus day by day, week by week for the rest of our lives.
- e. Ask: if we are going to follow Jesus then what do we need to do? **Read John 10:1-4.** We cannot follow Him if we are not listening for His voice or do not recognise it.
- f. Ask: do people have a daily time of connecting with Jesus where they try to hear His voice? E.g. prayer, Bible reading or worship?
- g. Discipleship is about making some kind of effort in order to grow in the discipline of...
 - i. Learning to hear and recognise His voice.
 - ii. Growing deeper in love with Him;
 - iii. Maturing in relationship with Him [it is not all 'what He can do for me' but also 'what I can do for Him'].
 - iv. Learning to implement His heart & plans to fulfil our destiny [daily and whole of life].

- h. Read 1 John 2:12-14. Emphasise there are three stages of Christian development: children, young people and reproducers.
- i. Either use your own testimony of how you came to recognise your need for spiritual growth or use mine: I was stuck at stage 1 for more than 20 years suffering from unresolved spiritual issues e.g. low self-worth, jealousies, wanting to be the centre of attention; it was all about what I DID and was SEEN to be doing. I was hurting, deeply wounded and rejected and so I damaged others too. One day I prayed a dangerous prayer: *“Lord, please do in me what you need to do to make me the person I need to be to fulfil my destiny.”* He took me at my word and I began to grow up.
 - ii. To be effective we need to GROW UP and TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for our own spiritual walk and growth: to become self-feeders (children as young as 6 months try to feed themselves and youngsters between 3 and 4 years old are capable of reliably spoon-feeding a sibling. Why, then, has the church deliberately suppressed spiritual babes and not fed them the nourishment for them to mirror the natural world?
 - iii. It is ALL about understanding the Kingdom of God and relating to Jesus as King.
- i. We have been sharing how we have all come from different backgrounds and have differing experiences of God. Just the Beginning was written to provide a broad common foundation.
- i. If group members have not yet received a copy then hand it out. *[If you are not using Just the Beginning then use whatever alternative tool you have decided to use instead.]*

- ii. Spend some time looking through the headings. If your group have already done this quite thoroughly then there is no need to repeat this. But please follow iii below.
- iii. Suggest people read it as their daily Bible reading notes between now and next week.

j. Whole section 45-60 minutes.

5. Letter to Jesus:

- a. Hand out paper and pens.
- b. Encourage group members to spend a few minutes in quiet reflection thinking about what has been shared so far today.
- c. Get everyone to write down in the form of a letter what they hope to achieve from belonging to this discipleship group.
 - i. Write a letter to God: "Dear Jesus... Love from...".
 - ii. When everyone has written their letter get them to seal it up in the envelope provided and write their own name and address on the front.
 - iii. Explain that in 6 months' time they will receive it back and they will be able to open it up and see what God has done in their lives since they wrote it.
- d. Whole section 20 minutes.

6. Worship time: use whatever you have prepared for the worship time. Ensure there is opportunity for each disciple to deliberately place their letter somewhere as if they were actually giving it over to God.

- a. Whole section 20-30 minutes.

7. Confirm the date, time and venue [if likely to change] for week 1.
8. As we will be talking about God's creation at the meeting next week ask everyone to bring something they have made themselves to show to everyone.

AFTER THE SESSION:

1. Telephone or visit anyone you have identified as needing particular encouragement.
2. Be aware that at this stage of their spiritual journey people may well have unresolved issues which result in there being a real spiritual battle for them to turn up each week; some may experience real difficulty in entering into times of worship. Pray for each one every day this week and visit individuals as necessary.
3. Prepare for next week.

NOTES:

WEEK 1: MAKER OF HEAVEN & EARTH

GROUP LEADER'S PREPARATION:

1. In view of this week's subject matter it might be wise to give some time to revising your knowledge of the Creation v Evolution debate. I highly recommend an article entitled Creation as Evidence for God, Jesus and the Bible found on the following web-site link: www.gospelway.com/god/evidences-creation.php. We do not have permission to reproduce this article, so please respect this copyright restriction and make no copies.
2. Video option:
 - a. Search online for a video version of a hymn or song that contains pictures of God's creation in nature. This will be used in the Bible study and/or worship time.
 - b. Be prepared to show the whole of Louis Giglio's teaching DVD How Great is our God DVD [ISBN 099952118197]. It will take 45 minutes. If you do not have the DVD then you can view it on You Tube. The link for this is no.1 on the Resources section of the My Community pages of the web-site.
 - c. If you decide to show only part of the Louis Giglio DVD then please ensure it is the section that includes his talk on Laminin [sections 10 & 11]. It will take 6-7 minutes. If you do not have the DVD then the You Tube link for this is no.2 on the

Resources section of the My Community pages of the website.

3. For section 6 you may need pens and paper for the worship time.
4. Look out something you have made to show to the others.

DURING THE SESSION:

1. During the meal try and get everyone talking and sharing together what God has been teaching them or doing in their lives during the past week.
2. Start timing the meeting once the meal is over and packed away. Allow a full two hours or slightly more if using the whole DVD.
3. Welcome: make sure everyone is comfortable and can see the TV or projector screen. Begin by welcoming the Holy Spirit in prayer [2 minutes].
4. Bible translations: Take a few moments in this first session to make sure that everyone has their own copy of the scriptures. Make sure you have a few spare copies of a basic Bible to loan or give as necessary. Recommend the use of a modern text. Good News is a very simple but accurate version and ideal for those who like things to be uncomplicated. All quotations in New Beginnings are taken from the New International Version [NIV] [5 minutes].
5. **Simply Jesus:** explain that throughout this Bible study series we will present the evidence for different aspects of Jesus' nature very clearly and simply. This is so the disciple becomes established in basic biblical truths about who Jesus is. The focus is to be on glorifying Jesus and nurturing a greater wonder at God's intricate workings with us through Jesus. Whilst discussion is encouraged and

necessary, this is not the place for heavy, loaded or heated debate!
Today's study is on **Jesus, Maker of Heaven & Earth.**

- a. **Look up and read Psalm 121:** Ask the group to bring out of the passage what it teaches us about God. E.g. verse 2 The Lord is our helper; verse 3 The Lord protects and watches over us 24/7 etc.
- b. Ask the group to identify the name given to God in verse 2 i.e. maker of heaven and earth.
- c. Ask: What does a maker do? He or she is a creator, manufacturer, architect or producer.
- d. We are all made in the image of God which means He has also given US the ability to create things.
- e. Everyone was asked to bring something they have made to show to the group. Do this now.
 - i. How do they feel about what they have made? Be prepared that some may feel negatively towards what they have made because of lack of self-esteem. Try to be encouraging and highlight the positive!
- f. **Look up and read through Genesis 1.** Before reading ask the group to look out for how God feels about what He has made? Verse 31 *"God saw **ALL** that He had made, and it was very good."*
- g. **Read Ephesians 2:10.** The Greek word translated 'workmanship' carries the sense of a fine work of art being put on display by the artist for everyone to see and appreciate what He has done.
- h. **Read the scripture again.** Ask: what does this say about YOU?

- i. Ask: Is it wrong to be proud of something? Absolutely not. The scripture says God has prepared good things for all of us to do. He gives us all kinds of gifts and abilities to use for His glory. Therefore, whatever we put our hand to, providing we do not hog all the limelight for ourselves, can cause people to glorify God. If we allow ourselves to become proud and boastful about our own abilities without giving glory to the creator who gave us the gifts in the first place then we are in danger of falling into idolatry! False modesty is an inverted form of pride.

- j. **Look up Psalm 96:4-6.** Ask: what is the difference between God and the gods of the nations? What is an idol? An idol is something that has been made by someone; it has been created whereas God is the creator.

Be prepared that someone may try to raise Darwin's theory of evolution at this point. *[Do not allow the discussion to go off on a tangent here.]* Put very simply, evolution is humanity's attempt to explain the origins of the world and nature leaving God out of the equation. It is what it says: a THEORY [speculation, assumption or hypothesis]. As a theory it remains unproven by science and at the end of his life Darwin himself said:

"Often a cold shudder has run through me, and I have asked myself whether I may have not devoted myself to a phantasy. If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."¹

The simple cell DNA is now known to be unbelievably complex.

¹ Darwin p. 189 On the Origin of Species [1859, Murray: London].

It requires more 'faith' to believe the earth happened by chance as the result of a random 'big bang' than it being carefully and lovingly formed by a creator who is the source of all life. Shortly we will watch a DVD that shows how modern science is actually proving that the universe was made by 'intelligent design' i.e. a creator!

- k. **Look up Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:20-21.** Ask: what has God left all around us that testify to who He is? The natural world: mountains, rivers, trees, flowers, animals; human-kind, the formation of life in the womb. God speaks LIFE and He is the Source of ALL life. Everything that flows from God to us is good and intended to bring us some form of life. In that life [whatever it is e.g. a baby, a sprouting seed, baking ingredients or the ability to paint or sew] and through the eyes of faith, we learn more about Him, His love and care for us and His power and awesome might.

- l. **a) Video option: Show the short film/song clip of the hymn or song you found online. If it is only 3-4 minutes long you might want to run it through more than once.**
 - i. Let the wonder of what has been seen hang in the air for a few minutes. Give people opportunity to reflect on what they have seen.
 - ii. Encourage some to share what they are feeling about God right now.
 - iii. Encourage people to share experiences they have had of seeing or finding God through nature e.g. a walk on the cliffs or the mountains, seeing a baby or animal born etc.

- l. **b) Non-video option:** Encourage people to share experiences they have had of seeing or finding God through nature e.g. a walk on the cliffs or the mountains, seeing a baby or animal born etc. Allow God to nurture a sense of awe amongst you as you share together.
 - m. Ask: so where does Jesus come in all of this? Wait for people to give some answers. You might want to get people to **re-read the F.Y.I. section on p.23 of Just the Beginning**. If someone has their copy to hand, ask for a volunteer to read it out loud to the group.
 - n. **Look up the scriptures Genesis 1:2; Colossians 1:15-17.**
 - i. Ask: what does this show us about the role of the Holy Spirit in creation?
 - ii. Ask: what does this tell us about Jesus' role and the purpose of everything that has been created?
 - iii. Repeat: *"In Him all things hold together."* In a few moments we are going to watch a DVD by Louis Giglio.
 - o. Whole section: 40-45 minutes.
6. **OPTION 1: Show the whole of Louis Giglio's teaching How Great is our God (45 minutes).**
- a. Give a short time to share people's view on what they have just seen [3 minutes].
 - b. Encourage everyone to join in an informal short time of thanksgiving, praise and worship. If people are not yet comfortable with praying out loud give everyone five minutes to write down a sentence they might want to pray. Give out pens and paper if necessary. Begin with your prayer and then

ask others to pray their prayers in a clockwise rotation. You pray a summing up prayer at the end [10 minutes].

c. Whole section 60 minutes.

6. **OPTION 2: Show the 'laminin' only section (parts 10 & 11) of Louis Giglio's teaching How Great is our God (6-7 minutes).**

a. Close by facilitating an extended time of thanksgiving, praise and worship as you have prepared [40-50 minutes]. Be flexible to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

b. Follow this by giving opportunity for open prayer [10 minutes].

c. Whole section 60 minutes.

6. **OPTION 3: As for Option 2 above but omitting the video clip.**

7. Prayer time:

a. Pray as you are led for one another but aim not to allow it to become a ministry session. Try to keep the focus on God, especially His loving 24/7 watchfulness and care over us because He is our maker

b. Whole section 20 minutes.

8. Confirm the date, time and venue [if likely to change] for week 2.

AFTER THE SESSION:

1. Telephone or visit anyone you have identified as needing particular encouragement.

