



LIFE|**EXPLORED**

WHAT'S THE BEST GIFT
GOD COULD GIVE YOU?

LEADER'S HANDBOOK

Life Explored Leader's Handbook

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WELCOME TO LIFE|EXPLORED

What's the best gift God could give you?

What we desire most in life determines our dispositions, our decisions, and ultimately, our destinies. Over seven sessions, *Life Explored* helps people uncover what they're really living for, and shows how, in Christ, God meets our deepest desire for happiness.

Our hope and prayer is not just that people will have a wonderful experience of *Life Explored*, and not just that they will come to know the Bible better. One of life's greatest tragedies is that many who know their Bibles back to front do not know its Author. Our hope and prayer is that people will begin to experience God, because no happiness in life is higher, no pleasure is deeper, and no gift could be more wonderful.

"The Bible is not an end in itself," wrote the evangelist A. W. Tozer, "but a means to bring people to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into him, that they may delight in his presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God himself in the core and centre of their hearts."

What's the best gift God could give you? Himself.

The Life Explored Team

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SECTION 1

HOW TO RUN LIFE EXPLORED

life.explo.red

is the official website for *Life Explored*, featuring content for both guests and leaders.

Register your course and you'll receive an exclusive web address where you and your guests can watch any of the films, at any time.



GETTING STARTED

What's the big theme of *Life Explored*?

We all want to be happy. Why is lasting happiness so hard to find?

Life Explored is an exposé of the little gods that promise us so much happiness, yet deliver so little. As it explores the Bible story (creation, fall, redemption, new creation), *Life Explored* shows how our deepest desires for happiness can only be satisfied in one person. The best gift God can give us is himself.

Who's it intended for?

Life Explored has been designed to speak powerfully to those who don't consider themselves to be religious and have never read the Bible. But it will also stimulate good discussions among followers of Christ, too.

What's the structure of *Life Explored*?

Life Explored is made up of seven sessions. Each session works like this:

- **Film 1** | 10 minutes
- **Discussion 1** | 5 minutes
- **Bible Reading** | 2 minutes
- **Film 2** | 15 minutes
- **Bible Reading** | 3 minutes
- **Discussion 2** | 25 minutes

If you have longer than an hour, give yourself more time to complete Discussion 2. Although you should be able to complete Discussion 2 in 25 minutes, you'll benefit from having an extra 15-20 minutes, especially if your group is larger than a few people.

What's the aim of Film 1?

The first films are not intended to be retellings of biblical stories. They are their own stories, and help to create a "Nathan moment".

In 2 Samuel 12, Nathan was the prophet who confronted David about his murder and adultery.

But remember how Nathan does it. Rather than immediately saying, "You've sinned grievously against the Lord! Repent!", Nathan takes a very different, and very effective, approach. He tells David a story. The story provokes powerful emotions in David: sympathy towards the innocent character in the story, and anger towards the guilty character.

After the story is told, Nathan says to David, *That character you're so angry about? That's you. You are the man!* (2 Samuel 12:7). Immediately, David is struck to the core and driven to repent – because the story has allowed him to see his actions from a different perspective.

That's the combined aim of the two films. The first tells a story which hopefully enables the viewer to see things from a different perspective. The second film uses that story to bring biblical truth home to the viewer's heart.

What's the aim of Discussion 1?

The first discussion is prompted by a single diagnostic question.

For example: "Sometimes we feel our lives would be happier 'if only' we had someone or something. What's your 'if only'?"





Or: "What, if you lost it, would make you feel that life wasn't worth living?"





Listen carefully to the answers given, and you should be able to get a handle on the “god(s)” people are living for. That can be a helpful pointer for your one-to-one conversations with each person, as you seek to show how Christ is infinitely better than the gods we love and serve instead.

What’s the connection between Film 1 and Discussion 1?

In each session, Film 1 helps to create a “Nathan moment” (see above) that leads into the opening discussion question.

1. **Overture** | A preview of the six stories we’ll be experiencing together on *Life Explored*, and an introduction to the opening question: **What’s the best gift God could give you?**
2. **Hotel** | Colonial India. A girl’s view of her best friend is changed unexpectedly, and forever. **What’s your current view of God, and how did you reach that viewpoint?**
3. **Gold** | The Californian gold rush. A prospector risks his life in the quest for gold. **What keeps you going in difficult situations?**
4. **Lawn** | Suburbia. A man is hooked by a late night infomercial and feels his life would be complete if only he could have the perfect garden. **What’s your “if only”?**
5. **Geisha** | Edo-Period Japan. A woman is drawn away from her husband and family in pursuit of what she hopes will be a more exciting life. **What are you hoping will bring you fulfilment in life?**
6. **Celebrity** | Los Angeles. A Hollywood actress has everything, but something isn’t right. **What, if you lost it, would make you feel that life wasn’t worth living?**
7. **Space** | In orbit above the earth. As his space station disintegrates around him, an astronaut reflects on his life. **What’s the best gift God could give you?**

 Film 1		 Discussion 1		 Film 2		 Discussion 2	
Session 1 The Good God	Overture Part 1	What's the best gift God could give you?	Overture Part 2 Genesis 1	Psalms 19			
Session 2 The Trustworthy God	Hotel Part 1	What's your current view of God, and how did you reach that viewpoint?	Hotel Part 2 Genesis 2-3	Romans 1			
Session 3 The Generous God	Gold Part 1	What keeps you going in difficult situations?	Gold Part 2 Genesis 12	Luke 19			
Session 4 The Liberating God	Lawn Part 1	Often we feel our lives would be happier "if only" we had someone or something. What's your "if only"?	Lawn Part 2 Exodus 12	Matthew 11			

	 Film 1	 Discussion 1	 Film 2	 Discussion 2
Session 5 The Fulfilling God	Geisha Part 1	What are you hoping will bring you fulfillment in life?	Geisha Part 2 John 4	Luke 15
Session 6 The Life-Giving God	Celebrity Part 1	What, if you lost it, would make you feel that life wasn't worth living?	Celebrity Part 2 1 Corinthians 15	Acts 17
Session 7 The Joyful God	Space Part 1	What's the best gift God could give you?	Space Part 2 Revelation 21-22	Matthew 22

What's the aim of Film 2?

The second film presents teaching which aims to contrast the God of the Bible with the "gods" we give our lives to instead. We explore our yearning desire for happiness, and show how that desire is finally met in Jesus Christ.

What's the aim of Discussion 2?

Discussion 2 is an opportunity to explore a Bible passage together. Each passage has been chosen to complement the main theme for that session.

How should I start each session?

It's a good idea to invite people to arrive about 30 minutes before the session officially starts. That gives you time to share food or coffee first so people can get to know each other. It also helps you start your session on time.

How should I end each session?

At the end of each session, thank your guest(s) for coming, but make it clear that they're very welcome to stay around if they'd like to. Some of the best conversations will happen over a cup of coffee once the session has ended.

A guest's answer to the last question ("What has been most striking for you during this session?") gives you a great launchpad for further conversation, once the session is officially over.

What's the best way to prepare for *Life Explored*?

1. Pray! And keep praying throughout the course.
2. Prepare for the "big seven" tough questions (see pages 25-26).
3. See the note on page 23 on "How can I encourage people to come?"
4. Register your course (at www.life.explo.red). That will give you access to training modules designed especially for *Life Explored* leaders.



SECTION 2
LIFE EXPLORED SESSIONS




INTRODUCTION



This section contains each of the seven sessions you'll be exploring with your guest(s). It includes all the material in their Handbook, plus additional notes and answers intended for leaders.

- If anyone misses a session, bring them up to speed before you start. The talk summaries will help you do this. (If you've registered your course at www.life.explo.red, you and your guests will also have online access to the films – ideal for catching up on missed sessions.)
- Some guests may feel that the Bible isn't reliable as a source of history. That's a great question to raise, but can take a while to answer well. Either discuss it one to one at the end of the session, or recommend a book such as *Can I Really Trust The Bible?* by Barry Cooper.

Key

-  Show a film
-  Discuss a question
-  Read a Bible passage


SESSION 1

THE GOOD GOD

 **Overture Part 1** (3 min 50 sec)

 **What's the best gift God could give you?**
(5 minutes, page 7 of Handbook.)

Note: You may want to write down people's answers, either now or later, as you'll be returning to this question in Session 7.

 **We're going to watch the next film now. By way of introduction, let me read you a little bit of Genesis chapter 1.** (Page 8 of Handbook.)

*²⁷ God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

*²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number;
fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the
sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

*²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the
whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours
for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky
and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the
breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food." And it was so.*

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Genesis 1:27-31


Blessed | Looked on them with love
and promised good things.

Subdue | Bring order to.

 **Overture Part 2** (11 min 02 sec)

Note: The following talk summary is on page 9 of the Handbook.

- Human beings have been described as “the glory and the garbage” of the universe.
- We’re “glorious” because we’re made by a glorious God, who has made us “in his own image” (Genesis 1:27).
- Being made “in God’s image” means that we can know and enjoy this God. God wants us to enjoy him!
- We flourish most, and enjoy him best, when we reflect him best.
- But there’s the “garbage” too. Rather than enjoying and reflecting our Creator, we enjoy and reflect “created things” more. We have other “gods”.
- A person’s “god” is anything they cling to and rely upon for their ultimate security and contentment.

 **Everyone seeks happiness. But are we searching in the right place? We’re going to look at a part of the Bible that explores that question – Psalm 19.** (Page 10 of Handbook.)

¹ *The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

² *Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.*

- ³ *They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.*
- ⁴ *Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.*
- ⁵ *It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.*
- ⁶ *It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.*
- ⁷ *The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.*
- ⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*
- ⁹ *The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the LORD are firm,
and all of them are righteous.*
- ¹⁰ *They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.*


Psalm 19:1-10

Glory | God's perfect and limitless goodness.

The LORD | Literally *Yahweh*, the name of God.

Statutes, precepts, decrees | Rules/laws.

Righteous | Right in God's eyes; perfectly good.

 **1. According to verse 1, the heavens and the skies are telling us something. What is it?**

They tell us about the “glory” of God, which is shown through the work of his hands. Because the heavens and the skies are so beautiful, they point us towards the endless goodness (the glory) of the one who made them.

2. When and where can that message be heard, according to verses 2-4?

It can be heard every day and every night (verse 2), throughout the earth (verse 4).

3. Let’s take a look at verse 4. It says, “God has pitched a tent for the sun”. What do you think we’re being told here about what God is like?

God is spectacularly, unimaginably immense and powerful. He rules over the sun.

But the tent is also a symbol of protection. God not only creates the world and everything in it. He also sustains and nurtures it.

4. From verse 7 onwards, the writer begins talking about “the law of the LORD”, the Bible. What do verses 7 and 8 say about God’s words, and the effect they will have on us if we listen to them?

- God’s words are perfect and trustworthy (verse 7).
- They are right and radiant (verse 8).
- God’s words refresh the soul and make us wise (verse 7).
- They give us joy and light – they enable us to see clearly (verse 8).

5. Think of the popular views many people have about God. How does the God we’ve seen in Genesis 1 and Psalm 19 differ from some of these?

Genesis 1 and Psalm 19 show that God is overwhelmingly creative, kind, generous, and powerful. In other words, the God revealed here is good!

He's a personal, relational God, and not a blind or impersonal "force".

God is a Trinity. This means three divine Persons united in one divine nature. Each of these Persons relate to each other in selfless, joyful love.

He created us out of that overflowing love – not because he needed someone to love, or because he needed us to love him, but so that we could share in his joy.

Because the greatest joy a human being can experience is to know God, the greatest gift God could give us is himself.

(If guests mention the fact that God also acts in judgment, acknowledge the comment and say that we'll be exploring that theme in the next session.)

6. If you knew Psalm 19 was true, how would it affect the way you feel about God?

The kinds of answers you get might include:

- God is kinder and more loving than we thought
- God's rules are good rather than designed to spoil our fun
- We would take God's laws / the Bible more seriously
- We would read the Bible to find out more about God
- We would begin to trust that God is good, etc.

7. (If time) What has been most striking for you during this session?

This question helps you move naturally into one-to-one conversations at the end of the session.