

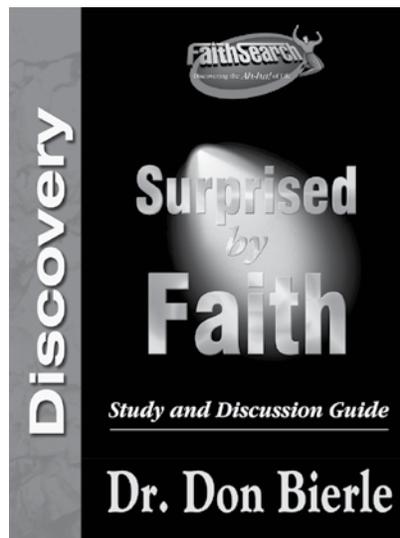
Surprised by Faith Study and Discussion Guide

LEADER'S MANUAL

CHAPTER 6

Revealing the Truth About Jesus

Discovering that Jesus' Miracles and Resurrection
Substantiate His Claim to be God



- **Answer Key for the *Surprised by Faith Study and Discussion Guide***
- **Teaching Helps for the Teacher/Facilitator of the *FaithSearch Discovery Presentation***



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- 12701 Whitewater Dr., STE 150, Minnetonka, MN 55343 • Phone: +1.952.401.4501 • FAX: +1.952.401.4504
- E-mail: info@faithsearch.org • Web: www.faithsearch.org

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL WITH EVIDENCE TO ALL PEOPLES EVERYWHERE

CHAPTER 6

Revealing the Truth About Jesus

Discovering that Jesus' Miracles and Resurrection Substantiate His Claim to be God

Getting Focused

Materials

- *Surprised by Faith Study and Discussion Guide*, chapter 6
- *Surprised by Faith* text, chapter 3, pages 65-79
- PowerPoint® slides: through Discovery #6 (slides 96-115)
Chapter review: slides 116-117

Key Points

1. The evidence of Jesus' miraculous feats backed His claim to be God.

Jesus claimed to have all authority in heaven and earth—and demonstrated it in His ministry. According to eyewitnesses, He demonstrated authority over the moral realm by forgiving sin and removing its consequences; over death by resuscitating those who had died; over the spirit world by casting out demons; and over natural laws by subduing storms and walking on water. Only God can do these things. Jesus claimed this miraculous power as His own, thereby refuting the allegation that He was only a God-empowered prophet.

2. The evidence reveals that Jesus was not a liar or a lunatic.

Jesus either is God or He isn't. If He lied about being God, He was the greatest liar who ever lived because He has deceived more people than any other person. Also if He isn't God, He could not be merely a great moral teacher (as some allege) because claiming to be God if He were not is highly immoral. Yet Jesus died for His claim, and liars do not make martyrs. Besides, His character throughout the historical accounts supports His being a person of the highest virtue and integrity. It's inconceivable that Jesus could sustain a committed following on such flimsy fabrication if He was lying. On the other hand, if Jesus really thought He was God, but wasn't, He'd have to be severely mentally deluded. Yet He manifests no symptoms of psychiatric disorders. Rather, He exhibited wonderful mental health.

3. The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is compelling.

The physical resurrection of Jesus is supported by three historical observations. First, the tomb of Jesus was empty three days after His death, and all known evidence validates this. Second, hundreds of eyewitnesses testified that they saw Him alive after His death—some of these being unbelievers and even an enemy. Finally, the

Answers to the numbered, objective questions are available at the end of each chapter.

* Page numbers are from the third edition of *Surprised by Faith*. In the second edition, see pp. 57-69.

transformation of the lives of Jesus' disciples is best explained by the resurrection of Jesus. Immediately following Jesus' death, they were afraid and went into hiding. After seeing Jesus alive, they boldly and publicly proclaimed their belief that Jesus is God—even being willing to die as martyrs for their conviction.

Glossary of Terms Used

Lord: "Kurios" in the Greek language, meaning "supreme one," equivalent to God

Legend: exaggerated or fictional accounts of an individual or event; not historical

Miracle: a divine intervention into, or interruption of, the regular course of the world which produces a purposeful but unusual event that would not have occurred otherwise

Verdict: a conclusion based on legal evidence; beyond a reasonable doubt

Here's where we're headed



The purpose of this section is to guide the participant to make their own *Ah-ha!* Discovery number one.

Subjective questions on page 51 of the *Study Guide*

Making the DISCOVERY

Ah-ha! The DISCOVERY

#6 The compelling evidence of Jesus' miracles and resurrection from the dead confirmed His claim to be God!

The evidence of Jesus' actions that backed up His claim to be God is recorded in the biblical Gospels. Read the following passages in your Bible and record how people responded when they met and observed Jesus during His ministry 2,000 years ago.

John 4:7-29

The Samaritan woman at the well was so impressed that Jesus was able to tell "me all the things that I have done" (v. 29). But even more, when other Samaritans spent time with Jesus because of her testimony, they said, "We have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world" (v. 42).

John 4:46-53

A royal official believed Jesus' word for His son's healing. When he discovered that the healing began at the same time of Jesus' promise, "he himself believed, and his whole household" (v. 53).

John 6:1-14

Jesus fed 5,000 families with five barley loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets of bread fragments left over afterward. The people's response was to identify Jesus with "the Prophet who is to come into the world" and take Him by force to make Him their king (vv. 14-15).

John 9:1-38

A man blind from birth was healed by Jesus. When asked who he thought Jesus was, he said "a prophet" (v. 17) and that He was from God (v. 33). Subsequently

upon meeting Jesus again, he confessed faith in Jesus and worshiped Him (v. 38).

John 11:14-27 Mary and Martha were in despair over the death of their brother Lazarus. When Jesus arrived at their home, both Mary and Martha acknowledged Jesus' power over death by saying that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there. This confidence came from their previous experience with Jesus as indicated by Martha's confession, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world" (v.27).

John 20:4-29 When John and Peter witnessed the empty tomb they believed (v. 8). Mary testified that she had seen the resurrected Lord (v. 18). When doubting Thomas saw the resurrected Lord he declared, "My Lord and my God" (v. 28)!

For Additional Discussion

Did the people of Jesus' day ever connect His ability to do miracles with the idea that He must be God?

When Jesus raised from the dead the young man at Nain (Luke 7:11-16) the text says that "fear gripped them all" and they immediately attributed this to God. It seems obvious that this was a unique experience for them. In Luke 8:25 we find the disciples wondering who Jesus could possibly be since He had power to control nature itself. Those people who witnessed Jesus exorcise demonic spirits from a man to make him well (Luke 8:26-39) became frightened (v. 35). When Jesus fed 5,000 families with five barley loaves and two fish (John 6:5-14), they immediately identified Him as the "Prophet who is to come into the world" (v. 14). The fact that Jesus healed a man born blind (John 9:1-12) was seen as evidence that He was from God (v. 33). Finally, Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-45) convinced many of the Jewish religious leaders to turn to follow Him in faith (v. 45).

In all these cases, those witnessing the miracles responded to them as evidence that Jesus was from God or is God. They were so unique in their experience that there was no mistaking their significance of authenticating Jesus. Ultimately it was the miracle of His own resurrection and subsequent appearances for forty days that provided overwhelming evidence for His deity.

Read John 20:30-31 and 21:25 in a Bible, or in the margin of this page. Did John include every miracle of Jesus in his record?

No, he said there were many other miracles which he did not record.

Why did he include the ones that he did?

So the reader would believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God with the result of attaining life eternal.

Subjective questions on page 52
of the *Study Guide*

Subjective questions on page 52
of the *Study Guide*

Subjective question on page 52
of the *Study Guide*

Do they help you to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be?

This is personal, but if the recorded miracles of Jesus are historically true, how could they *not* help us know that Jesus is who He claimed to be?

Historical Evidence that Jesus is God

Explain briefly why these historical acts of Jesus are important for determining His identity as God. (See John 10:37-38 in a Bible or in the margin of this page and SBF, pp. 68-69.)

Jesus' claims to be God are hollow without the actions which back them up (SBF, pp. 51-52, 57, and 61-62). Repeatedly, Jesus referred to His miracles as evidence for who He is (John 5:36; 10:25, 37-38; 14:11; Matthew 11:1-6, 20-24). Even the apostle John includes miracles ("signs") in his Gospel account as evidence for the reader to believe in Jesus (John 20:30-31). Bernard Ramm (*Protestant Christian Evidences*, [Chicago: Moody Press, 1953], p. 142) states a relevant point here: "Miracles are believed in non-Christian religions because the religion is already believed, but in biblical religion miracles are part of the means of establishing the true religion." If Jesus is truly one (equal) with the Father, there could be nothing over which He does not have authority, including the demons (spirit realm) death (eternal realm) sin (moral realm) and nature (physical realm). That is, in fact, what He demonstrated in His ministry.

Subjective question on page 53
of the *Study Guide*

Suppose you were told of a spectacular account of someone who was healed of terminal cancer, but you had not witnessed it yourself. On what basis or for what reason might you accept that it really happened?

Please read the essay below this question in the *Study Guide*. Since this claim is a historical event which is not repeatable, we would have to use the legal method of persuasion. This consists of examining all forms of evidence to see if it will convince us beyond a reasonable doubt that the healing actually took place. The evidence will consist of weighing the credibility of the witnesses. You would also gather X-rays, lab tests and other evidence to determine whether there was any cancer there before. You would cross-examine the attending physicians and ask for their medical judgment that the patient is now cancer free. You may even look for precedents of such healing and interview others who claim a supernatural healing as well. Whatever else you may pursue, eventually you will have to come up with a verdict that represents the most reasonable conclusion to the claimed account. This same process is also involved in determining a verdict about who Jesus is.

Three Objections to the Historical Evidence

According to the Old Testament, some of the prophets performed miracles, too (e.g., Elijah in 1 Kings 17-18). Why don't we think this demonstrates that Elijah is God? How is this any different from Jesus?

The essay on this subject below the question in the *Study Guide* provides my answer to these questions. This objection gives the prepared Christian an opportunity to address an important issue:

Subjective question on page 54
of the *Study Guide*

why Jesus cannot be merely a prophet of God. This distinction means that the many philosophies and religions (e.g., the Muslims) which identify Jesus as just a prophet are mistaken and inconsistent with the evidence of history and Scripture.

How do we know that Jesus wasn't just a magician, fooling people into thinking He did miracles?

Professional, world-class magicians will never be heard to say such a thing. I know several, and they are keenly aware that Jesus could not have done what He did using their art form. The essay which follows this question in the *Study Guide* summarizes a good response to this objection to the miracles of Jesus.

If the devil and spirit mediums all claim to do supernatural feats, why would the fact that Jesus did miracles prove that He is God?

A good response to this objection is found in the essay which follows this question in the *Study Guide*. The point is that even Christians erroneously give credit to Satan (and the demons) as miracle workers—an attribute of God alone. Spirit mediums utilize demonic supernatural activity and deception to mimic God's miraculous power, but it is not the same. Only God is capable of miracles, thus the miracles of Jesus are solid evidence for His deity.

Objections to Jesus' Resurrection

There are some people who question whether Jesus really rose physically from the dead. Why do you suppose this is?

Resurrection is foreign to every person's experience. Only one person has ever been resurrected from the dead—Jesus Christ. In the flesh, it is difficult to comprehend life after death. Therefore, some people question whether the idea of Jesus' resurrection might be fantasy. They propose many inconsistent views to negate its validity (read the many ideas in the essay which follows this question in the *Study Guide*). In order to change their minds, those who question the resurrection must accept the authority of revealed Scripture and the historical evidence it contains. Since many people today are ignorant of the eyewitness evidence for Jesus' resurrection recorded in the Bible, it is natural for them to question its validity.

Do they base their view on the evidence?

It is quite unlikely that someone will continue to doubt the validity of Jesus' resurrection once they have become acquainted with all the evidence for it. Of course, the acceptance of Jesus as the

Subjective question on page 54
of the *Study Guide*

Subjective question on page 55
of the *Study Guide*

Subjective question on page 56
of the *Study Guide*

resurrected Savior is the result of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in each person's life. Therefore, in addition to presenting the evidence to people, we must pray for spiritual conviction and new life to come.

Application and Reflection

Subjective question on page 58
of the *Study Guide*

Sometimes people ask, "Why are there four different Gospels about Jesus in the New Testament? Isn't that confusing?" How would you answer?

My answer to these questions is found in the essay which follows this question in the *Study Guide*. It is important to realize that some people in your class will have heard of other gospels which have made the news in recent years, especially the Gnostic ones. But it should be pointed out that no other gospels have ever been identified from the first century except Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All others originated in the second century or later and do not have the eyewitness quality of the four included in the New Testament.

Subjective questions on page 59
of the *Study Guide*

Suppose you had been with Jesus in the region of Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-15), heard Him teach and saw the miracles He did. Then He turned to you and asked, "But who do you say that I am?" What do you think you would have said then?

The purpose for this question, and for the follow-up question below it, is to give an opportunity for your attendees to share where they stand regarding Jesus. Of course, it is difficult to know exactly how we would have responded if we had been with Jesus 2,000 years ago. Encourage your class to speculate or imagine based on their own earlier spiritual journey. Have they always believed? Has there been a time of questioning in their life? Let people take turns sharing how they might have responded.

How would you answer Him now?

You have broken the "ice" by getting them to talk speculatively about their spiritual life. Now have your attendees share their current answer to Jesus' question. It is important not to stand in judgment on their comments. Simply let them take turns sharing their convictions and/or questions.

For Additional Discussion

Many of Jesus' contemporaries were skeptical about His claims to be God, but eventually moved from unbelief to faith. Based on what you have learned in this chapter, discuss the role of evidence and reason as a basis for faith in Jesus.

One of the best ways to illustrate the role of evidence as a basis for faith in Jesus is to look at some biblical characters. Thomas (John 20:24-28) changed from skepticism to faith when he saw the evidence of visible nail marks in Jesus' hands, and the wound in His side. Saul, who became the apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-20) changed from skepticism to faith when he saw the evidence of Jesus' physical appearance to Him on the Damascus Road. Many of Jesus' contemporaries changed their minds when confronted with the evidence (see John 11: 45-48). That evidence was in the form of Jesus' claims and his actions (miracles). However, His resurrection

was the critical and unique evidence affirming that Jesus is who He claimed Himself to be. The title "Lord" (translates the Hebrew for "God" in the Old Testament) became the most common title of Jesus only after the resurrection.

What does this suggest about the nature of faith?

This question anticipates the discussion of faith in the next chapter. The definition of faith given there will contend that faith requires an object in which to place one's trust. To trust that object requires knowledge of the credibility of that object. The nature of faith referred to in this question is that it is based on evidence or knowledge concerning Jesus. The evidence we have covered in this chapter gives people a reasonable basis on which to trust Jesus as the object of their faith.

Confirming the Discovery

Read the references below in a Bible, or as provided here in the margin. Write below how the main teaching of each relates to or confirms the discovery made in this chapter.

The summary which follows the verse listing in the *Study Guide* is the author's view of the main teaching of these passages. Refer to that for the answers to this section.

Looking Ahead

Related Reading

- Jon Buell and O. Quentin Hyder, *Jesus: God, Ghost or Guru?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Probe, 1978), Chapters 5-6. (This book is out of print, but is available in some libraries.)
- Douglas Groothuis, *Jesus in an Age of Controversy* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), Chapter 14.
- Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1980), Chapters 2 and 8.
- Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), Chapters 9-14.
- Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2000), pp. 57-86.

Bible confirmation on pages 59-60 of the *Study Guide*

Authors Comment

We have completed the primary apologetic material in **FaithSearch** Discovery. It was our goal to establish the evidence for the incarnation of God to earth. We did that by showing that the New Testament records about the incarnation are records of integrity and historical reliability (chapters 3 and 4). We then used those eyewitness records to discover the claims and actions of Jesus when He lived here for over thirty years (chapters 5 and 6). These first six Discoveries must now be applied to our lives: What is our response? First we must understand what a faith response even means since there is widespread misunderstanding about the subject of faith. How can we be certain that the faith we have is valid? The next chapter will clarify these matters.

