



Arena@home

Provoking conversation about Jesus

Begins Monday 24th May 2021

**Arena @ Home Hosting Pack
St Andrew the Great**

May 2021

Arena @ Home Resource Pack

Arena is for people who are curious about Jesus. It's for people who like asking big questions and thinking about big answers.

Normally we run Arena at StAG, with a meal, table-leaders, and discussion. This term Arena is coming to you!

We'll provide the talks, eye-witness accounts of Jesus' life, some questions for discussion and a chance for live Q&A with the speaker.

You provide the venue, the food and the friends.

This booklet should include everything that you need to host Arena @ Home.

Why Arena @ Home?

Arena @ Home is based on a few key convictions.

1. God speaks through His Word by His Spirit about His Son.

"Lord, where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life!" John 6.68

The best way to explore Christianity is to read the Bible and see Jesus in action, which is why our aim in the talks and discussions is to present the Jesus from the gospel of Mark.

You don't need to have had experience of leading Bible studies before, we'll suggest a passage to read together, and provide a few questions that should open up informal discussion.

2. Evangelism is relational.

"Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." 1 Thessalonians 2.8

Evangelism is best done in the context of relationships, and this means that *you* are the person in church best placed to reach your friends and colleagues, because you already know them, and they know you!

We're encouraging groups to eat together beforehand to encourage genuine friendship and honest conversation.

3. God uses ordinary people.

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” 2 Corinthians 4.7

Sometimes we think that people only become Christians at fancy events with impressive speakers, but God delights to use us in our weakness.

Arena @ Home doesn't have to be impressive: you don't need to know all the answers, or cook an extravagant meal – just be yourself, and speak about Him!

The harvest is plentiful...

In a recent survey (*Ed Stetzer, How Unbelievers View the Church, 2009*), when asked if they would be willing to read the Bible with a friend if asked, **2 in 5 people aged 30 and above said 'Yes', as did 61% of 20-somethings.**

Who will you invite to discover Jesus with you through Arena @ Home?

How will the evening work?

7PM or before We suggest you invite some friends round for food beforehand. It doesn't need to be fancy, oven pizza is fine!

7.30PM We've suggested one or two starter questions to open up discussion (see below). Feel free to ask these, or something open, like: "what are you hoping to get out of the course?" or "have you any questions from your own reading of Mark?"

7.45PM The livestream kicks off. Someone will welcome everyone, explain how the evening works, and then hand over to Alasdair Paine our vicar, who'll preach from Mark's gospel.

8.15PM Over to you for discussion. You could start with an open question like: "did anything strike you from the talk?" or you could dive straight into the suggested passage (see below).

Don't worry if you don't cover all the questions, and try to leave room for lots of discussion, disagreement and questions. Use the question "what do other people think?" liberally, and if someone asks a question you can't answer, send it in to the pigeonhole.

8:45PM The livestream is back for pigeonhole Q&A with Alasdair. We'll aim to answer as many questions as we can, but if there's a question you really want answered, encourage your group to vote it up!

9:00PM We'll thank people for coming, and officially close off the livestream. This might be a natural point for you to wrap up, but people may want to keep chatting. Don't go on for too long though – it's best to leave people wanting more.

What will I need to do beforehand?

Start by spending some time praying for your friends. You'll also need to make sure that you've got some copies of Mark's gospel (you can pick them up from church), the discussion questions below, and a device that is connected to the internet.

What can I do to follow up?

Arena @ Home is designed to introduce people to Jesus, and Alasdair's talks will only cover Mark 1.1-20. Why not suggest reading the whole of the gospel together with anyone who is interested in finding out more? You can also invite them to church on Sundays, or to your small group mid-week, or continue to meet up informally.

Where are all the links to the livestream and pigeonhole?

Everything will be on www.stag.org/arena. If you have any questions or need any help, just email church.office@stag.org.

Can I still come along to church?

Yes, you can sign up yourself, or with a group at www.stag.org/arena.

There will be food provided at StAG from 7PM.

Outline: Discovering Jesus

Monday 24th May: Jesus: Son of God? (Mark 1:1)

Starter Questions (optional):

What are you hoping to get out of the course?

Have you thought much about Jesus before?

Talk:

We'll look at just the first verse of Mark: The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. We'll see that Christianity is about Jesus; that Mark claims and shows evidence that Jesus is the Son of God; and that this is good news for each of us.

Passage for Discussion:

Mark 4:35-41, the calming of the storm.

Suggested Questions:

- What happens in this episode?
- What details might suggest this hasn't just been made up?
- How does the ending differ from a fairy story?
- What is the big question we're being asked?

Monday 31st May: Jesus: the back story (Mark 1:2-8)

Starter Question (optional):

Many of us are motivated by the hope of a better future. Why do you think people feel that the world is not as it should be?

Talk:

Mark next takes us back to words written centuries in advance. There is a back-story to Jesus in what we call the Old Testament. It's that God created the world and us, we rebelled against Him and became separated; this is our biggest problem! But God promised a King to sort out the mess, and prepared a people for his coming. Jesus matches those expectations.

Passage for discussion:

Mark 12:1-12, the parable of the tenants - a story Jesus tells to show what God reasonably expects from his people, what they want instead, and what this leads them to. The parallel with Jesus is striking. It helps us see the nature of our rebellion against God, and its consequences for him and for us.

Suggested Questions:

- What did the owner of the vineyard expect?
- What did the tenants want?
- What warning does the story end with?
- What d'you think the main point of the story is?

Monday 7 June: Jesus: the Saviour (1:9-13)

Starter Question (optional):

Positive thinking and a do-it-yourself attitude are central beliefs in the self-help movement. How reasonable do you think it is to 'believe in yourself' no matter what?

Talk:

We will see how Jesus came to fix our biggest problem: separation from God because of our sin. How did He do this? Right from the beginning of the gospel, we find him taking the place of sinners - e.g. in his baptism and temptations. But supremely he did this by dying on the cross, where he took the punishment we deserve. Christianity is not about what we do for God, but the wonderful work of the Son of God for us; he restores us to fellowship with God.

Passage for discussion:

Mark 2:13-17, the call of Levi (you may need to explain that tax collectors worked for Roman occupiers, and were hated by the Jewish population at the time because of their corruption and greed, and that Pharisees were highly respected religious leaders).

Suggested Questions:

- What was it that outraged the Pharisees ?
- How does Jesus answer that?
- What sort of people can become Jesus' followers?

Monday 14 June: Jesus: His followers (1:14-20)

Starter Question (optional):

Our world is full of followers: sports fans, social media followers, fashion trends. Why do you think people are so obsessed with following?

Talk:

Right from the start, Jesus has had followers. His first followers weren't the religious elite but fishermen. He is now followed by people all over the world, across many cultures. Churches are local gatherings of those who know and follow Him. How do we start as his followers? Repent and believe the good news. Will that be you? Simple prayer...

Passage for discussion:

Mark 8:34-38: the cost of discipleship.

Suggested Questions:

- What does Jesus tell us here about becoming one of his followers?
- Why do you think he says this?
- What is the cost of not becoming one of his followers?
- Having spent some time seeing more of Jesus, who do you think he is?