



4. When it's right to confuse people

Discussion guide – Series III

HOOK:

- Have you ever got completely lost going somewhere, even though someone tried to give you clear directions?
- How important is a good understanding of the reasons for our faith (apologetics) in our conversations as Christians? Why? *

BOOK: Who Jesus did and didn't explain the parables to

- Why did Jesus speak in parables? Read Matthew 13:10-11.
- Did Jesus explain the parables to the crowds? Read Mark 4:33-34 and Matthew 13:34-35.
- What did the disciples begin to think when they first heard Jesus speaking in parables without explaining them? Read Matthew 13:10 and John 16:29-30.
- Did the use of parables leave the public with no understanding of his messages? Read Mark 4:13. (Note Jesus was surprised the disciples hadn't worked out the meaning of the parable themselves, which implies that it was possible to work them).
- Summary: Why do you think Jesus generally masked his messages when speaking in public places? **

LOOK:

- Have you ever had a lengthy conversation with a non-believer about why you believe Christianity to be a rational belief? What did you discuss, and how did it go?
- In your experience, does giving rational arguments for the Christian faith result in people taking a step closer to Jesus - or not? Did it make a difference for you?
 - o If there is a difference in responses, why might some people come closer through hearing an answer to a question, while others become more firmly entrenched in their existing view?
- What is the benefit of using a story, illustration or question – rather than a statement?
- **Activity – learning to speak in stories:** Have group members ask various random questions of the other group members. Try to reply with a short story from history or their own experience – without ever making a direct statement on the topic.



TOOK: Read Matthew 7:6

- There has been a significant Christian influence in our nation's history - resulting in the high levels of equality freedom, care and prosperity we now enjoy. What resource do you know of that could increase your knowledge of these stories?***
- How could you learn more about the rational reasons that exist for believing the Christian faith – so you can better help people who have various questions?***
- What is your next action step?

Pray:

- ...for growing wisdom in conversations – to engage the interested, while only seeking to intrigue the disinterested.
- ...for opportunities to engage with others in meaningful conversations.

* Regarding apologetics (reasons for believing), see 1 Peter 3:15. Also consider the Apostle Paul's ability to reason with all manner of people, including Jews and non-Jews (who were very different in their thinking) about why he believed their claims about Jesus to be true. (E.g. Acts 17:2-3, Acts 17:17).

** Because of the motives of those in the audiences. Also, maybe he was the crowds excitement for a while because of their belief that the coming Messiah would be a military leader, who would re-establish the nation of Israel. (Riots were not tolerated under the Roman occupation).

*** In New Zealand, the Hope Project's Easter booklets have summarised various key stories from our nation's bicultural history, and also to where our nation's values came from. See HopeProject.co.nz/ebooks, or contact them to request as many free copies of these booklets as you would like (admin@shininglights.co.nz). Note also the 'A minute in history' radio series – which can be listened to via HopeProject.co.nz/a-minute-in-history. Regarding books, consider also *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born*, by D James Kennedy, amongst others.