

The Life of Jesus

How many of you watched this on Channel 7 on **Friday? If so, you assisted in achieving high ratings for this well-produced program! It is a thoughtful, intelligent, beautifully filmed/crafted presentation of the life of Jesus.

John Dickson and Greg Clarke are the people on the screen and behind the scene. They invite us to travel with them to Israel to explore the life of Jesus: his birth, teaching, deeds, death and resurrection. “Judge and Friend” (Episode 4), for example, looks at the way Jesus preached judgement and didn’t always behave in the ‘right’ way. Jesus judged with brutal honesty yet also showed great mercy. We’re asked to consider this “paradox in the life of Jesus”

As well as containing the six succinct episodes of the life of Jesus, the DVD has a section after each episode called “Behind the life of Jesus”. This is where John and Greg engage in a relaxed conversation with each other and/or the viewer to explore ‘mind-stretching issues’ such as “Why would a loving God judge us? The unpredictability of death, and can you be good without God?” Their conversations are refreshingly honest (their short answer to the last question is ‘Yes’).

Now I haven’t yet watched Episode 4 so how do I know the content? Well, John and Greg have also written a Guidebook: a six-part course on the man and why he matters. The course (described as a book club with a difference) comes in the form of a well laid out text. This text contains the scripts for each episode, as well as the scripts for the Behind the Life of Jesus segments. It also contains episode outlines with small sections for note taking as you watch/read. It gives you questions for discussion, an episode challenge (!), a passage from the Book of Luke to read before the next discussion, and some optional extra activities in which you might like to engage. Importantly, the Guidebook ends with a contemporary translation of the Book of Luke so you don’t need to juggle notebook, study guide and Bible on your knees. They’re all together in one very well presented and incredibly inexpensive text (\$10).

The good news is that the six-part historical documentary, *The Life of Christ* DVD, is now available for purchase too(\$30) so you can watch it again – or for the first time – without all those annoying ad breaks. But – if you don’t have a DVD player – or computer or television, you can just read the Guidebook! Wonderful!

But – if you have computer/website access, check this material out for yourself. Visit HYPERLINK "http://www.lifeofjesus.tv" www.lifeofjesus.tv. If you’d like to know more about the authors, co-directors of the Centre for Public Christianity, an independent organisation promoting the public understanding of the Christian faith, check out HYPERLINK "http://www.publicchristianity.org" www.publicchristianity.org.

How/where can you purchase this material? Ph: 02 9955 0077 or write to The centre for Public Christianity Suite 702, 121 Walker Street, North Sydney 2060 or email HYPERLINK "mailto:info@publicchristianity.org" info@publicchristianity.org.

Do I recommend this material? Definitely! Both the DVD and the book are very accessible. They present information and ideas thoughtfully and, where appropriate, with authority. It treats other religious faiths with great respect. It is relevant for people with a deep understanding of the Christian faith or with none.