



# God with Us

 illuminate

*Episode three*

***Episode three***  
***Coming Home***



## *How to use these studies*

The study in front of you now is adapted from the 2014 Illuminate material. It is designed to be used by youth & young adult groups, small groups, or families to journey together through the Gospel story over the course of a year.

Illuminate Camp is based on a practice of 'storying', recapturing the stories behind the Bible texts we have heard so many times. It is an inherently community-based practice, involving reading the narratives together and participating in discussion as a group. The aim is to hear the stories as if it was the first time; to try and put aside the years of knowledge you have accumulated and hear them fresh.

### **To get the most out of these studies, we recommend the following process:**

- Get a group of friends to journey through these stories together. These studies are also ideal for family groups. (While it is possible to do these studies solo, we cannot oversell how much better they will be if you do them as a group)
- As a group, read aloud the original Bible texts, based on the references below.
- As a group, read aloud the Illuminate re-write.
  - ◊ As you hear the story, make notes of things that stand out to you and questions that you have.
- If possible, read the original texts again, perhaps in a different translation.
- Discuss the stories as a group. Use the supplied questions as a guide, but don't be afraid to follow the discussion. Explore the stories wildly, asking every question that comes to mind.
- Pray together. Included in each study is a small Experience station that can be used as a guide for prayer and reflection, either as a group or individually.

We hope that you find this material as encouraging and stimulating as we did on camp. If you were on camp to hear these stories, we hope you find something new this time through. The Gospel stories are rich and complex, and no two times reading them are ever the same.





## Episode 3: Coming Home

### Intro

You want a gut-wrenching, nerve-wracking experience? Teach something, particularly theology, to your parents.

Your parents could be amazing. My parents are amazing. But even then, any time I open my mouth to try and tell them something new I've learned about the Bible, history, or theology that perhaps runs counter to their own understanding, I am struck by the intense and irrefutable knowledge that these people used to change my nappy. That knowledge makes it very difficult to then presume to know more than them about something.

Every young person will eventually hit a point in their life where they begin to form opinions or gather knowledge that their parents, mentors, or general authority figures won't share. And that moment can be really uncomfortable. It's a moment of transition, where the young person has the opportunity to step up into maturity in the particular area—provided the elder doesn't do anything to shoot them down.

Most elders I know are brilliant at making this transition. They're good at recognising that the little person they once held in their arms isn't going to stay that way forever. But every so often I've encountered elders who find it so easy to dismiss young people out of hand. These are the kinds of people Jesus encounters when he returns to his hometown for the first time since beginning his ministry. While they are initially impressed by the grown up Jesus, eventually that perception of Jesus as that kid from down the street who used to climb trees with our Ron wins through. Jesus tries to explain some difficult and uncomfortable scriptural truths. Rather than his elders, most of whom would have known him for decades, graciously accepting that this young person had become an adult, mature in faith and knowledge, they proceed to shut him down in the most efficiently irreversible way possible: throw him off a cliff.

A word to parents and elders: don't throw your young people off a cliff when they start getting clever. Don't treat them as kids. Engage and discuss like you would with someone your own age.

And young people: don't assume that just because your idea is new, it's right or better. If you engage with your elders out of a place of humility and respect, you're much more likely to get humility and respect in return.

**Access a video version of this introduction at [vic.youthvision.org.au/GodWithUs](http://vic.youthvision.org.au/GodWithUs)**



### Bible References

Luke 4:14-30

See also:  
Isaiah 61:1,2 and 58:6 for the original texts Jesus quotes.

Leviticus 25 for details of the Year of Jubilee (Year of the Lord's Favour).



## Story

Three Jewish refugees lived in the land of Egypt. A young mother, father, and their infant son. After escaping the murderous plots of Herod, they waited until the Judean king died. Only then did they return to the northern part of Judea, around the sea of Galilee, and settle back in the town of Nazareth. There, the child Jesus grew from an infant into a man under the care and instruction of his mother Mary, and father Joseph.

When he was around thirty years old, word began to reach the backwaters around Galilee of a wild man who was baptising people in the Jordan river and calling the people back to God. Whispers circulated through the towns. A man of God has appeared. Could this be the One?

In Jerusalem, the rulers tightened their grips on their swords, watching the ripples in the city with careful eyes.

Jesus watched the ripples too, and one day, without a word to his family, gathered some possessions and disappeared towards the south.

Jesus found the baptiser in the Jordan river, near the southern cities. Lines of pilgrims stretched up the banks, each person waiting to be ushered into the muddy water and to be baptised by the wild man who stood, waist deep, in the river.

Jesus joined the line and waited for his turn. But when he stepped into the cold flowing water, the baptiser looked him up and down in shock. Jesus recognised the baptiser as his cousin John, and John recognised Jesus, but as more than kin.

At first the baptiser was reluctant to baptise Jesus, saying, "You should be baptising me!" But soon John consented and lowered Jesus under the water of the Jordan. After a moment spent in the silence beneath the gentle ripples of the almost opaque water, Jesus emerged into the light. The sun seemed brighter than it had been when he was lowered down. Now the rays of light burned with intensity.

Onlookers on either bank began to gasp and point. The light formed into wings, with feathers glowing white and gold, and the shape of a dove settled on Jesus' head. The crowd heard a voice, although none of them could say whether or not it was heard through ears. And Jesus, who stood half leaning on John, felt himself in the centre of the sound. "You are my son, and I am well pleased with you."

He journeyed back to Galilee and began teaching in the towns around the lake. Everywhere he went he was accompanied by miraculous signs and healings.

Finally, months after he had disappeared from Nazareth to travel to the Jordan, Jesus returned home. He arrived on the Sabbath, and went directly to the Synagogue where most of the town was assembled for the normal service. Jesus was welcomed as a visiting Rabbi, a teacher, and offered the opportunity to read the scriptures and speak to the town. Jesus stood to read from the scroll he was handed. As he cleared his throat, he saw his mother and brothers and sisters in the assembly.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me," he read, "because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

He rolled up the scroll in silence and handed it back to the attendant. "Today," he said. "This scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."



Someone began to laugh. Then another. In a moment, most of the assembly was roaring with mirth. "Joseph's boy?" someone shouted. "Get over yourself."

Jesus sighed. "A prophet is never accepted in his home town. Time and again in scripture, we see our people reject the men of God and the gentiles believe them. I tell you the truth, this will happen again here today."

At this the laughter abruptly stopped. All eyes were fixed on Jesus.

"How dare you?" a voice demanded.

Suddenly the assembly surged forward, urged onward by individuals lost in the press. They seized Jesus and dragged him to the cliff edge overlooking the town. "Throw him off!" they shouted.

Suddenly they blinked, and when they opened their eyes, Jesus was no longer there. They searched for him around the mountain and through the town, but he was nowhere to be found. Mary his mother breathed a sigh of relief when she began to hear, once again, stories of his miraculous activities around Galilee. He had left Nazareth behind. His mission through Judea had begun.





## Questions

- Which part of the story stood out to you? What made that stand out?
- Who did you relate to in the story? What was it about them you related to?
- Is there anything about this story that you hadn't considered before?
- Why did John refuse to baptise Jesus at first?
- Why did Jesus get baptised? Did he need to be? Is it still important to be baptised today?
- How do you think Jesus felt, hearing God speak to him in that way and in those words?
- What does it look like to proclaim the Good News that Jesus described?
- Why did the Nazarenes not take Jesus seriously?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that you weren't respected because of your age/the context you were in? Have you ever been in a situation where it has been difficult to respect someone else because of their age/context?



### If you were a camper on Illuminate...

- What do you remember about hearing this story on camp?
- Compare that to your response hearing it now. How is your reaction different? Did you notice the same things? New things?

## Experience

You will need:

- A tub of lukewarm water
- Towels

Take this opportunity to wash the hands (or feet) of the other people in your group. As you wash, in pairs or alone, reflect on the following phrases (either printed for participants to read or spoken by the group leader):

*"It is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15b)*

*Baptism is a symbolic washing to prepare the person for service to God. Regardless of the form of the baptism, it is about setting the person aside to do God's work. Christian baptism also carries with it themes of dying to one's self and being resurrected as Jesus was.*

*The act of washing another's hands or feet is both a practical act of service and a demonstration of love for that person.*

Pray together that God will use you all for his amazing work.



Developed by Youth Vision Victoria & Tasmania and the Illuminate team.

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Youth Vision is the youth and young adult ministry arm of the Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania.

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