

# The Ark

## Group Study Notes



# Introduction



These group studies are designed to provoke discussion about biblical characters and their stories, using the Ark website – here’s the address: <http://shipoffools.com/thark/>



They are intended to get discussion started and to help it along, rather than being a list of questions for you to work slavishly through in order. We hope you will be able to use them as a starting point, adapting them as best suits your group.



Leading a group discussion is a delicate balancing act – keeping it on the rails when minds wander, but letting them explore in their own way. We hope this material will spark off something lively and thoughtful.



The **Intro Question** which starts each character study is one you can dive into before looking at the Bible passage or the Ark. It raises one of the main issues in that character’s story, but in a way people can discuss without knowing anything much about the character yet.

The **Talk About It...** questions explore how the character comes across in a particular Bible passage, and how they are played on the Ark. We’ve integrated the questions so that you can make the connections between the two.

Three resources on the Ark website can help provide material which will fuel your discussion...

**Diaries** – click on the character of your choice at the top of any page on the site and you’ll be taken to their homepage. Now click the ‘Diary’ link in the left-hand menu. Each character on the Ark is keeping a diary and there is plenty to think about in what they are writing.

**Biographies** – for a 2-minute summary of the life of each character, plus interesting trivia about them, click the ‘Biography’ link on each character’s homepage.

**News stories** – for daily updating news stories, check the Ark homepage, or follow the ‘News & Clips’ link. This has the top current storylines and can be useful in following interactions between the characters onboard the Ark. If you want all the stories for just one particular character, you’ll find them on their own homepage.



# Esther



## INTRO QUESTION

When in your life did you most feel out of your depth? How did you cope? Did it work out OK in the end, or was it a big horrible disaster?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

The Jews are in exile in Persia, and the royal official Haman has got a law passed to kill them all. Their only hope is Esther, the beautiful Jewish girl who married the Persian King. Mordecai her father is a less powerful royal official.

Read Esther 4:6 – 5:8, plus 7:1-10

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Esther seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Esther's Diary and the way she has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Esther? How might you have played her differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Esther have with the king in the Bible passage?
6. Do you think you have acted the same way as her if you were in the same position? How do you think she feels at the end of the passage?
7. Whom does Esther get on with best on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with her?
8. What contribution does Esther make to life on the Ark? Do you think she should win / should have won?



# Eve



## INTRO QUESTION

Which people can persuade you to do things that you don't want to or know you shouldn't do? How do they manage it? How do you feel about them?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Genesis 2:21 – 3:21

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Eve seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Eve's Diary and the way she has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Eve? How might you have played her differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Eve have with Adam and God in the Bible passage? Do you think she is treated fairly? How do you think she feels at the end?
6. Whom does Eve get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with her?
7. Do you think Eve was a real person? Does it matter whether she was or not?
8. What contribution does Eve make to life on the Ark? Do you think she should win / should have won?



# Jezebel



## INTRO QUESTION

When an evil person comes to a bad end, is that something to be glad about?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read 1 Kings 22:1-24

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Jezebel seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Jezebel's Diary and the way she has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Jezebel? How might you have played her differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Jezebel have with Ahab? What do you think the papers would say about such a royal family today?
6. Do you think the end that Elijah prophesies for them is fair and just, or over the top? How would she feel about the prophecy?
7. Whom does Jezebel get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with her?
8. What contribution does Jezebel make to life on the Ark? Do you think she should win / should have won?



# Job



## INTRO QUESTION

When Christians go through suffering they don't deserve, do you think they should keep thanking and praising God, or is it OK to complain to him?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Job 1

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Job seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Job's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Job? How might you have played him differently?
5. Do you think you would have the same attitude as Job shows in this passage if you were in his position? Or do you think his wife has the right idea?
6. Have a look at what Job says in Job 9:21-24. How does that compare to the picture we get of Job here?
7. Whom does Job get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with him?
8. What contribution does Job make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# John the Baptist



## INTRO QUESTION

You're out shopping and some strangely dressed preacher in the street starts shouting out, telling passers-by to repent of their sins. How would you react? What would you think of him or her? Do you think you would have reacted the same way if you had seen John the Baptist?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Luke 3:1-22

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you sum up John's message in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person John seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at John's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real John? How might you have played him differently?
5. What kind of relationship does John have with Jesus in the Bible passage? How do you think you would get on with John?
6. Whom does John get on best with on the Ark? And worst?
7. What contribution does John make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# Joseph



## INTRO QUESTION

In your family, what is the one thing that causes most aggravation and argument? And what is the one thing that most brings you together?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Genesis 37

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Joseph seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Joseph's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Joseph? How might you have played him differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Joseph have with his family in this passage?
6. Is Joseph the innocent victim of a terrible crime, or a pain in the neck who brings it on himself? Is it his fault, his brothers', or even his father's?
7. How do you think he feels at the end of this passage?
8. Whom does Joseph get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How do you think you would get on with Joseph?
9. What contribution does Joseph make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?





# Maggie



## INTRO QUESTION

Like Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus, many people claim to have had supernatural encounters – ghosts, angels, spirits – while many other people say it's impossible. Why do you think there is such disagreement, and where do you stand?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read John 20:1-18

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Mary seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Maggie's Diary and the way she has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Mary? How might you have played her differently?
5. What kind of relationship do you think Mary had with Jesus from what we read here?
6. What difference do you think an experience like this would make to somebody's life?
7. Whom does Maggie get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with her?
8. What contribution does Maggie make to life on the Ark? Do you think she should win / should have won?



# Martha



## INTRO QUESTION

Which is more important, your spiritual life or doing the jobs that you are given?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Luke 10:38-42, John 11:17-27, plus 38-44

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the stories told in these two passages?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Martha seems to be in these verses. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Martha's Diary and the way she has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Martha? How might you have played her differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Martha have with Jesus in these Bible passages?
6. Is Martha wrong in her attitude to Mary and the housework, or does she have a point?
7. Whom does Martha get on best with on the Ark? And worst?
8. What contribution does Martha make to life on the Ark? Do you think she should win / should have won?



# Moses



## INTRO QUESTION

Can you remember the first time you met someone whom you now know very well? What impression did they make on you? Did you see them differently to the way you see them now?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Exodus 3:1-14, 4:1-5

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you sum up the conversation between Moses and the Lord in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Moses seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Moses' Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Moses? How might you have played him differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Moses have with the Lord in the Bible passage? How do you think he feels at the end of their conversation?
6. After this incident, Moses became the greatest leader of the Hebrews in their history. Do you think that you can see a great potential leader in this passage? What could account for such a change?
7. Whom does Moses get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How do you think you would get on with Moses?
8. What contribution does Moses make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# Neb



## INTRO QUESTION

Have you ever had to stand up to someone who you were sure was wrong? Someone who was willing to make you pay for your principles? Who was it, and what did/do you think of that person?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Daniel 3:1-30

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Nebuchadnezzar seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Neb's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Nebuchadnezzar? How might you have played him differently?
5. What kind of king do you think Nebuchadnezzar makes? How do you think you would get on in his Babylon? What would the papers say about him today?
6. How does the Nebuchadnezzar we see at the end of this passage compare to the one at the start? How do you think he feels at the end?
7. Whom does Neb get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with him?
8. What contribution does Neb make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# Paul



## INTRO QUESTION

Can you think of one event which has changed your life more than any other? What happened and what difference has it made? Has it changed you as a person?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Note: 'Saul' was Paul's Hebrew name.

Read Acts 8:3 and 9:1-19

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Paul seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Paul's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Paul? How might you have played him differently?
5. Paul went on to become one of the greatest missionaries, theologians, and church leaders in the story of Christianity, as well as writing a whole chunk of the Bible. Do you think that you can see such a potentially great figure in this passage?
6. What difference do you think an experience like Paul has here would make in a person's life? How do you think he feels at the end of this story?
7. Whom does Paul get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with him?
8. What contribution does Paul make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# Samson



## INTRO QUESTION

Have you ever made a definite resolution not to do or say something and then ended up doing it anyway? What was your resolution, and what (or who) made you break it? How did you feel about it?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Judges 16:1-22

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you summarise the story told in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Samson seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Samson's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Samson? How might you have played him differently?
5. Samson is a hero of the Jewish and Christian faiths. From what you see here, does he deserve to be?
6. How would you describe Samson's relationship with Delilah?
7. How do you think Samson feels at the end of this story?
8. Whom does Samson get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with him?
9. What contribution does Samson make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?



# Simon Peter



## INTRO QUESTION

Were you ever given an important job that you messed up? Ever completely embarrassed yourself in public? What happened and how did it turn out? Well, you're not alone...

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Read Matthew 16:13-25

## TALK ABOUT IT...

1. How would you sum up the conversation in these verses?
2. Each pick three words to describe what kind of person Simon Peter seems to be in this passage. Compare your choices. Do you agree? What kind of picture emerges?
3. Look at Simon Peter's Diary and the way he has been played on the Ark. Again, each pick three words to describe this character. How do the results compare with question 2?
4. Do you think our contestant has captured the real Simon Peter? How might you have played him differently?
5. What kind of relationship does Simon Peter have with Jesus in the Bible passage? How do you think you would get on with Simon Peter? And with Jesus?
6. Jesus says some great things to Simon Peter here, and some pretty rough ones. How do you think he comes out on balance? How do you think he feels at the end?
7. Whom does Peter get on best with on the Ark? And worst? How would you get on with him?
8. What contribution does Simon Peter make to life on the Ark? Do you think he should win / should have won?





The Ark is the world's first internet reality gameshow and is a project of shipoffools.com, the online magazine of Christian unrest. For 40 days and 40 nights in April and May 2003, 12 contestants from around the globe are spending time every day playing a Bible celeb of their choice on a 3D cyberark – while the world looks on. These group study notes are available to help groups engage with the original Bible characters and their stories, and how they are being played onboard the 21st century Ark.



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