

Jesus vs. Evil

In the first talk of our *Jesus vs.* series, we looked at what 'evil' looks like in our world and how Jesus came to oppose it. It might be helpful to think of this in three sections: 1) what is evil/who is the Devil, 2) How does Jesus oppose evil, 3) what do we do about it?

Evil

A big question we have to wrestle with is 'Why, if God is all powerful, is there so much pain and suffering in the world?'

- Is this a question you have particularly wrestled with in the past?
- Do your friends ask this question?

We believe that part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that there are a forces of evil at work in the world. 1 John 5:19 explains that we know that 1) "we are children of *God*," but also that 2) "the whole world is under the control of the *evil one*."

For some of us, the idea of the Devil or Satan is something that we have thought about or are aware of. Conversely, for some of us it might not be something we've ever really given much thought to or even believed might exist. Spend some time thinking about this idea; it could be that people from your Hub are coming from very different starting points:

- Have you considered the idea that the 'evil one' is the god of this age, with control over the world and its kingdoms?
- What do you think when you hear 'The Devil' or 'Satan'?
- Where do you personally see evil most clearly in the world, or more specifically in Bristol?

Jesus' Mission

When we understand that there is a spiritual battle going on, it reframes how we see Jesus' mission on Earth. Philip explained that often people were expecting Jesus to overthrow the secular powers, but actually he primarily opposed the occupying spiritual powers of evil. 1 John 3:8 says Jesus came to destroy the devil's work. Over and over, Jesus talks about how he came to establish God's Kingdom on Earth.

- Can you think of stories where you've seen 'Jesus vs evil' in your life or in the world?
- How does understanding Jesus' mission of fighting evil reshape how we think about him?

Our Role in that Mission

Philip said that "when you become a Christian you enter into a fight against powers of evil." It's like being on the beach in Normandy during D-Day - you can't treat it like any other beach when there is a war going on. Similarly, we can't just live life as Christians ignoring the fact that there is war all around us.

Spend some time reading Ephesians 6:10-13 and Matthew 16:18-19. Reflect together on the passage asking:

- Have you ever considered your role in fighting against evil?
- What difference should it make to our day-to-day lives?
- What are some of the challenges around living life in this war?
- What does it look like for us to 'storm the gates of Hell' in Bristol?

For many of us, the issue isn't that we don't want to fight against evil, it's that we don't feel equipped or qualified to do so. However, Jesus makes it clear that all of us have a part to play. So, you might want to focus a time of pray on 'commissioning' one another to be soldiers.

You may also want to share where you feel you are on the 'frontline' of the battle. Are there places where people in your Hub already feel that they are fighting for the Kingdom of God against evil? If so take some time to encourage each other in that in prayer.