

THE JESUS CONNECTION

HOPE for all

See our nation's history through different eyes, and take a fresh look at the future.



A diverse group of churches throughout New Zealand have come together to gift this booklet to every home. It tells some remarkable stories from our nation's early bicultural past and highlights the message that is still changing hearts and lives two centuries later... it's a story of hope!

The Christian faith has a remarkable ability to help ordinary people live extraordinary lives.

In this third and final booklet we tell you some stories from our past and present, of people who have shown us what Christian living is all about through the way they live their lives.

However, the only way to understand what led them to do what they did is to look at the one who inspired them. Jesus!

So we also consider who Jesus was. Why did he stand out, and why does he still have so much influence around the world today?

We hope the stories in this booklet inspire hope!



“I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

Isaiah 46:4

STORIES OF HOPE FROM THEN AND NOW



Celebrating 200 years of the Christian message in Aotearoa

Jesus and Aotearoa New Zealand

Do you know these

Western culture is more influenced by the Christian faith than most realise. Our own nation's history includes many people who did great things that were inspired by their knowledge of Jesus and his teachings.

Octavius Hadfield (*top left*) had very bad health and was expected to die young. He became a missionary in 1838 so that he could do good while he still lived. However, he lived for 66 more years, during which he battled injustices in the New Zealand land wars. He was credited as being 'the conscience of the nation'. Greatly admired by all, he also encouraged Māori to vote, and became the third Archbishop of New Zealand in 1890.

Wiremu Kingi (*top right*), paramount chief of the Te Ātiawa tribe, became a peacemaker when he started to follow Jesus. However, he was forced to courageously defend his land at Waitara when it was sold without his permission. This led to our first land war. Having lost his land, Wiremu's great strength was revealed when he had the grace to return to and make peace with those living in Taranaki, causing them no trouble. Could a better example be found of Christian grace in the face of great personal loss?

Image of Wiremu Kingi provided by Puke Ariki. Image of Octavius Hadfield provided by the Alexander Turnbull Library. Images of Te Whiti and Tohu used with the permission of the Parihaka Pā Trust.

heroes?

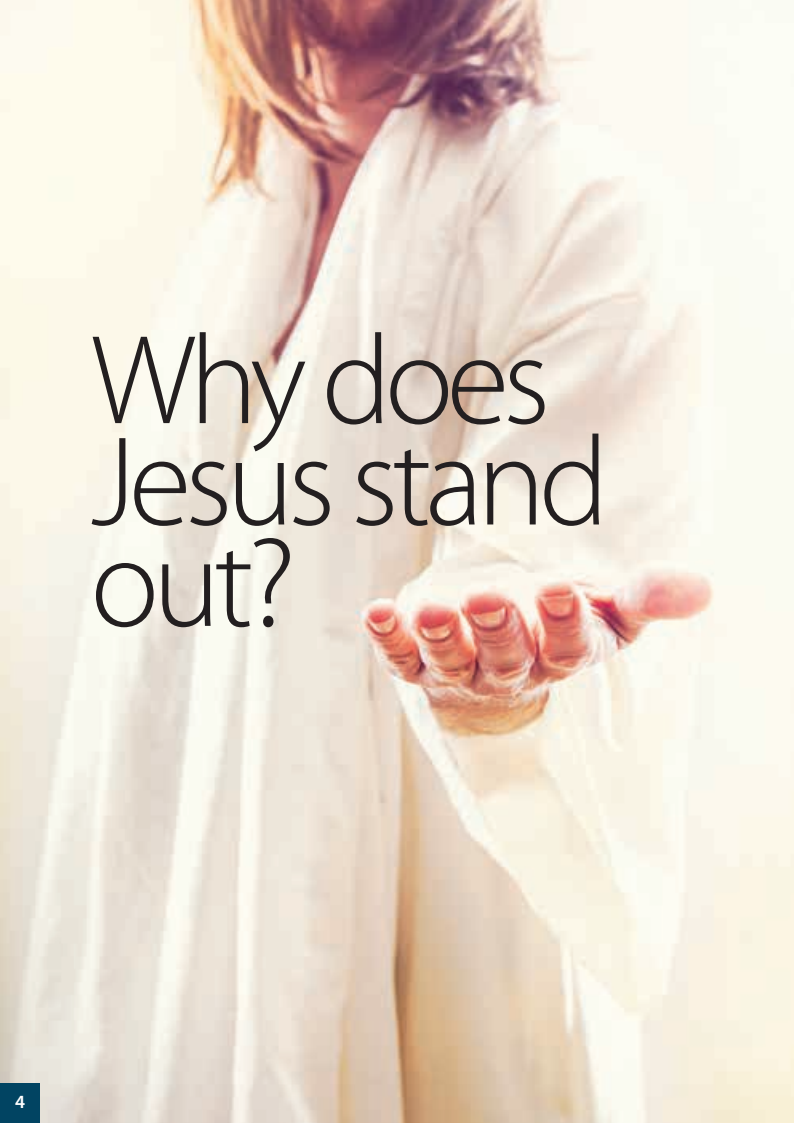
Te Whiti (*bottom left*) and Tohu (*bottom right*), the ‘Martin Luther Kings of New Zealand, led a peaceful resistance movement from a settlement at Parihaka in Taranaki. Working for justice during the land wars, they led with courage, vision and



humility. When Parihaka fell, its occupants sat silently, refusing to fight. When released from prison two years later, Te Whiti and Tohu returned to their work — and were the voice of God to many Māori who were deeply grieved by what was taking place throughout New Zealand.



***...and these
were all
inspired by
Jesus!***

A person with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white robe, is shown from the chest up. Their right hand is extended forward, palm up, with fingers slightly spread. The background is a bright, warm, out-of-focus light, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The text "Why does Jesus stand out?" is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Why does
Jesus stand
out?

Jesus and his outstanding claims

The main reason for Jesus standing out in history is his claim to be more than a man.

Buddha claimed to point the way, Mohammed that he was a prophet of God, and Darwin that he and you are accidents of chance. But Jesus Christ is the only major religious leader to have ever ***claimed to be God!*** ^[i]

It may sound crazy — but the plausibility of this claim is what really makes Jesus stand out.

The very idea of a man being God was beyond comprehension to conservative Jews. They weren't the kind of people to believe in myths. Yet many of them believed this claim, and followed Jesus' teachings as a result. What convinced many of them — and what convinces many others today?

[i] He also called himself the 'Son of God'. A son had the same status as his father in their culture. "For this reason they tried all the more to kill him... (because) ...he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God". (John 5:18)

Jesus and his outstanding miraculous power

In Jesus' day the sceptical religious leaders admitted, "...we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."^[i]

Various writings from that time, by people who did not believe in Jesus' claims, confirm that he performed miracles. They included Titus Flavius Josephus, a historian who wrote for the Romans (published in A.D.93)^[ii], and the Jewish Talmud, which confirms Jesus as a miracle-worker (although it said the power did not come from God).^[iii]

Jesus' miracles were outstanding! The blind, deaf, mute, crippled and lepers were healed. The disciples, overwhelmed by what they saw, declared, "Truly you are the Son of God."^[iv] The miracles got attention because no one else could do them.

[i] John 3:2.

[ii] We refer to the 4th century Arabic text found in the 10th century, not the 4th century copy of Josephus' writings cited by Eusebius found in Ecclesiastical History 1.11.

[iii] Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a.

[iv] Matthew 14:33.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a bronze chalice. The person is wearing a white, textured robe. The chalice is a simple, wide-mouthed cup. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the texture of the robe and the metallic sheen of the chalice.

WHY DOES JESUS STAND OUT?

Jesus and his radical teachings in a self-centred world

Jesus' teachings were, and still are, radical. Caring for the poor is normal for us today — but it's hard to find any culture that existed before Jesus' influence, feeding its poor as we do.

For example, while it is true that people who lived during the time of the Roman Empire sometimes fed some of their poor, this was to keep them alive so they could be conscripted into the army.

Who else ever suggested that we should love those who hate us, forgive all who wrong us, and give to those who steal from

us? Jesus' words were so faultless that enemies couldn't successfully accuse him. He stood fearlessly against hypocritical leaders.

However, while condemning evil actions he was somehow still so much a 'friend of sinners' that this became a nickname. He noticed the poor and sick; he touched lepers; he broke protocol by talking with foreign women — all the while owning nothing but the clothes in which he stood.

William Lecky, a noted British historian, who was also a dedicated opponent of organised Christianity, noted, "It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men to love selflessly. This faith has... been not only the highest pattern of good living, but has provided the strongest incentive to practise it..." [i]

[i] Paraphrased — W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1903), p8.

Jesus and his outstanding power to change people

The story of one of our own New Zealand heroes illustrates the radical power of faith in God, combined with these teachings.

Hēni Te Kiri Karamū was born in 1840, in Kaitiāia. After the missionaries came to her people to teach them about God, they turned away from savage and cruel practices in both life and battle. Embracing the Christian faith, Hēni went on to set an amazing example.

HENARE TARATOA'S RULES FOR A JUST WAR

Supporting the Māori King movement, she and her family were involved in the Waikato land wars. One of the battles took place at Gate Pā in Tauranga. The Crown had decided that this land was to be taken — but Māori who had lived there for centuries felt this was unjust. As Christian believers they did not want to fight, but saw no option. To honour God, another Christian Māori, Henare Taratoa, drew up rules prior to fighting, including rules not to kill unarmed or wounded soldiers, and not to steal from dead soldiers. His community also made a commitment to see their church as a place of refuge where government soldiers who entered would not be killed.

WOMAN WARRIOR BREAKS ENEMY LINES ARMED WITH WATER CANISTER

As a skilled woman warrior, Hēni was allowed to stay for the battle, while all other women and children were ordered by the chief to leave.

She was nearly killed by the first shot, surviving only because another who saw the cannon fire pulled her down into a trench.

During the battle she heard a soldier calling for help. However, he was a British soldier and there was a stretch of open land between them, across which shots were being fired. What should she do? Or more specifically — what would Jesus have done?

Grabbing her water canister she risked her life to run across to Colonel H. J. P. Booth, where she cupped her hands and gently poured water into his mouth. Hearing the cries of five or six other government soldiers, she continued to do the same for them before returning to her own trench.^[i]

It was Jesus who said we are to love our enemies, and it would be hard to find a more striking demonstration than this!

[i] www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t43/1

Image of Hēni Te Kiri Karamū provided by the Alexander Turnbull Library.



Hope in the face of suffering

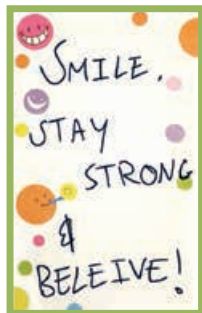
Jamie and Carrie's story

Carrie was only nine years old when she was struck by cancer. By the end of her initial treatment she was bald, pasty and skinny as a rake — but alive. It was then that her family moved to New Zealand, from her native England, where her father Jamie became the Dean of the Taranaki Cathedral.



New Zealand liked Carrie — and she liked New Zealand. In no time she grew stronger and was running around in bare feet, her English accent gone. But around 18 months later the cancer returned throughout her body, giving her about a year to live.

Carrie didn't want to die, and she fought valiantly to the very end. Her belief in God didn't exempt her from suffering, but it did give her the strength to go through it, and to even encourage others in their grief. Jamie reflects on this time: "In so many ways she carried those around her through the experience of her cancer. There was never anything other than a clear knowledge on her part that God was with her".



Carrie finally passed away in Jamie's arms after a terrible struggle. Yet despite her suffering she always stood by the message she had written to herself and others on the family whiteboard: "Smile, stay strong and believe!" It's a message that continues to speak to her family of hope for the future.

Jamie's faith was deeply tested by his daughter's suffering, but it was also renewed as he learned the same lesson as Carrie: "God has not withdrawn suffering from us. He has entered into suffering with us".

Jesus too suffered an agonising death. Who would be more perfectly suited to comfort Carrie during her suffering? And through his resurrection he offered her the same hope that he offers to all: that death does not need to be the end.

A scenic view of a river with a large stone building on a hill in the background. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark brown box.


Jesus the giver of hope beyond pain

Nancy Wu's story

When Nancy arrived home late on the day of the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, she was gently whisked away by her parents-in-law. There, at their home, she sat with tearless eyes watching the frantic rescue efforts at the site of the collapsed CTV Building — in which her husband Paul worked. Having been married for 35 years, she says, the friendship between her and Paul was really beginning to blossom again — so the pain of separation cut deep. Yet she never once asked, “Why?” Somehow, from the moment Paul did not arrive home at the usual time, she felt an inexplicable ‘peace that passes all understanding’.

Where was Jesus that day? She believes God was walking alongside her and that in the months that followed, whenever she cried, he cried with her. She found peace through trusting God, believing that he could bring good out of even the deepest pain.

While Nancy says she longs to meet her husband again in heaven, in the meantime her life has taken on new purpose and meaning. Psalm 39.4 says, “Show me,

A photograph of a man and a woman standing together by a body of water, smiling. The man is on the left, wearing a dark jacket and a cap. The woman is on the right, wearing a blue denim jacket and jeans. They are standing behind a wooden railing. In the background, there is a large body of water, a small boat, and a hillside with a castle or large building and a church spire visible in the distance. The scene is set in autumn, with fallen leaves on the ground.

Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is." She once looked forward to 'retirement' and 'slowing down', but now wants to live more adventurously in the company of a loving God. Despite the devastation of the earthquake and the loss of her husband, life still holds meaning when she views it through God's eyes. And her hope has helped to inspire hope in others too.

WHY DOES JESUS STAND OUT?

Jesus — the champion over death

The key event that caused so many to believe that Jesus was who he claimed to be (God's Son) was when he came back to life on the third day after his crucifixion (Easter Sunday). Without his resurrection, as even the Bible states (1 Corinthians 15.13-20), Christianity would not exist.

Many historians have looked into the evidence of Jesus' resurrection because of its significance to Christianity.

The account: When Jesus was arrested on the Thursday, his followers fled for their lives. When he was killed on the Friday, they hid amongst the crowd. Even on the Sunday they were found hiding behind locked doors — which is where they first saw Jesus alive again, and were completely transformed!

SCHOLARSHIP TODAY ON THE RESURRECTION

Scholar N. T. Wright surmised that the historical evidence for the resurrection was as certain as the death of Augustus Caesar in A.D. 14 and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 ^[i]

[i] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), p710.





Shortly afterwards a crowd of more than 500 saw and heard Jesus — so it wasn't a hallucination.

Men and women everywhere began talking about Jesus. Those who had seen Jesus were so convinced that within five years the first of them was already willingly dying for this claim (Acts 7 in the Bible). History has proven that people don't willingly die for things they know are not true!

So strong is the historical evidence of the early Christians' experiences that in a study of the views of scholars — including the religiously sceptical ones — nearly all agreed that there were 'post-death' appearances of Jesus.^[i]

SCHOLARSHIP TODAY ON THE RESURRECTION

Gerd Lüdemann, a leading German critic of the resurrection, said "It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."^[ii]

The question is not whether the disciples and others saw something — but what they saw.

What did they see? If it was Jesus, the implications are both serious and very exciting!

[i] G. Habermas, 'Experience of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection', *Dialog* 45 (2006): 292.

[ii] G. Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus?* trans. John Bowden (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), p80, as at www.reasonablefaith.org/the-resurrection-of-jesus

GALE

Jesus — the key to life

Christians believe that God has extended his hand of love to us through Jesus. We are called to believe in who Jesus is — but not with a 'blind' faith. Christians believe this should be a 'considered' faith — considering factual (*objective*) and experiential (*subjective*) evidence to find an explanation for life that best reflects reality.

- **Is life the result of millions of accidents of chance?**
- **Or the creation of a distant and unloving or unknowable God?**
- **Or the creation of a close and loving God who has given us free choice?**

The next page explains for you the basic Christian beliefs and message.

What is the creator God like?

The Christian understanding of the creator of the universe is of one who is personal, eternal, unimaginably powerful and morally perfect and whose character can be described as perfect love.

What is the great invitation of Christian faith actually about?

What makes the faith unique is that, in the Bible, God is not merely inviting us to follow a set of rules, as if we need to somehow earn his approval. He is wanting a person-to-person relationship with us.

What is the problem?

The problem is that something is blocking us from having a person-to-person relationship with God. It is sin. God is morally perfect. His standards for us are the same. Every one of us has failed to measure up. Our wrongs separate us from God. This is the biggest problem!

As the Bible accurately points out, “All have sinned”. We do not even live up to what we think we should be like, much less achieve perfection.

A glance at the 10 Commandments, which condemn idol worship, disobedience to parents, misuse of God's name, not taking a day of rest each week, unfaithfulness in marriage, lies, envy, theft and murder, tells the story. We have all done wrong and are cut off from God.



for

What would love do?

God wasn't caught by surprise by our choices; he had planned the rescue. He came to live among us as the God-man, Jesus. He legally took our death sentence when he was crucified. As the Bible puts it, he "died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

By coming alive again he showed that he really was who he claimed to be, while also giving us an assurance that there really is life after death, and that heaven is real (if God can design and build one universe, he can design and build another called heaven).

The ultimate insurance

In most religions we are given things we have to do to gain God's approval — it depends on our good works. But in Christianity it is different. God's forgiveness and approval are gifts that cannot be bought or earned. In fact God will not allow any contribution from us — other than to accept forgiveness with humility and faith. As the Bible puts it, "We are saved by God's undeserved kindness through trusting him. It is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The result

Christians follow Jesus' teachings out of love and gratitude to God (not fear), because God has first loved us, and has given us a hope for the future that we can be sure of!

This is why the Christian message is called the gospel, meaning good news. It brings real HOPE.

The result beyond the now

Beyond this life there is hope of a perfect world. A world with God, and without the evil and suffering with which we currently struggle. It is not your average 'cross your fingers' kind of hope. It is a confident hope, based on God's promise and power.

So, how do you receive the gift?

The way you receive any gift: reach out for it and embrace it, while thanking the giver.

Accidents of chance? A distant and unknowable God? A personal and loving God, revealed through Christ Jesus?

On the following pages there is an optional prayer and some interesting summaries of this series. If you agree with the prayer, and are sincere in the commitment it describes, God will hear you!

We hope this series has encouraged thought and hope. Thanks for reading.

What do you conclude?

"The person who has the Son of God has LIFE". (1 John 5:12)

A PERSONAL PRAYER

“

God my creator, thank you for giving your Son, Jesus, and especially for his death on the cross for me. I choose to receive your special new life. Please forgive me for the selfish and wrong things I have done. I choose to trust in Jesus, and to live as your friend and follower from this day onwards.

Help me to understand your ways from the Bible. Help me also to find a good church where I can learn more, and find friends to encourage me to live in a way that pleases you. Help me to love the people around me just as you have loved me — and to tell of your love.

Thank you, my Father in heaven, for accepting me.

”

Some options for you:

10DayChallenge.co.nz — Find out more about the Christian faith itself (stories, Q&A, the Christian message, basic Christian teachings and more).

You could also:

- **Visit a church** — Why not visit a church near you? Find a church near you at 10DayChallenge.co.nz/churches
- **View HopeProject.co.nz** — See videos of people's stories, and more
- **View Facebook.com/HopeProjectNZ** — Engage in a gentle conversation that will inspire hope in others
- **Request a hard copy of the Gospel of Luke** — Luke was a disciple of Jesus'. This is Luke's account of Jesus' life, death and resurrection (from the Bible). Email to admin@hopeproject.co.nz



Series summary — hope in our history

On Christmas Day, 1814, a hope-filled message was first preached in New Zealand: there is a God of love, and a path of hope beyond suffering for all who would choose it.

This message was preached at the invitation of Māori, and its impacts were significant. The first settlement in Aotearoa that followed also came about because Māori invited missionaries to stay.

In time, Māori embraced and spread the Christian message through the length of these islands, resulting in Māori becoming arguably more Christian than the Europeans by the 1850s.

The influence of Christian faith in our nation's formative years is more significant, and positive, than most are aware.



1815: The Māori language began to be put into writing. The first book in Māori (by Kendall) was printed in Sydney.

From 1818 to the early 1830s: The Musket Wars (between various Māori tribes) led to many thousands of deaths.

1814

1815

1818

1823

1825

1815: A school was established, teaching both Māori and Pākehā children. Later missionaries established many such schools.

1825: The first Māori (a chief called Rangī) converted to Christianity and was baptised.

1814: Ruatara, a chief from the Bay of Islands, urged his friend the Rev. Samuel Marsden to site the first permanent European settlement in New Zealand beside his own village of Rangihoua. Marsden preached the Christian message for the first time on New Zealand soil. The King, Kendall and Hall families were welcomed as the first missionary settler families, and Māori and Pākehā communities lived alongside each other for the first time. Many new animals (such as sheep, cows and horses) and crops (such as wheat) became part of Māori life.

1823: Henry and Marianne Williams established a new mission station at Paihia. Williams, a former naval officer, promoted the Christian message of peace.

1830s-1850s: Many Māori converted to Christianity. Many Māori became fascinated with reading and writing and were very eager to read the Bible (printed portions of the Bible were available from the late 1820s). Released Māori slaves and converts took Christianity back to their own tribes, and some took the message to their former tribal enemies. Christian Māori like Ngākuku (see Booklet II) chose to forgive their enemies rather than pursue revenge. By the 1850s, more than 50% of Māori had adopted Christianity.

1840: The Treaty of Waitangi. The British Government initiated the treaty in response to lobbying by evangelical humanitarians in Britain, who were worried about what had happened to indigenous people in previous colonies. The intent of the treaty was to protect Māori from unregulated European colonisation, which was already beginning through the New Zealand Company established by E.G. Wakefield. The treaty gave Māori the rights of British subjects, and assurances about land.

1830

1840

1859

1975

2014

1840s-1850s:
Considerable European settlement took place. Settlers came with the promise of land and a better life. They were very eager to acquire more land from Māori. British governors only partially honoured the treaty.

1975: The Crown established the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal to investigate historical grievances against Māori. When a claim is settled, the Crown formally apologises for past injustices, and gives some (partial) compensation.

1859-1860s: Because of settler land hunger, war broke out in Taranaki and Waikato. Māori there were seen as rebels, and their lands were invaded by the British Army. Following the defeat of Māori, millions of hectares were confiscated. Missionaries such as Octavius Hadfield spoke out against such injustice. Christian Māori such as Wiremu Tāmihana in Matamata and Henare Taratoa at Gate Pā (Tauranga) showed a very forgiving attitude. Later, at Parihaka, the Māori prophet Te Whiti adopted a Christian stance of peaceful resistance. In the decades following the wars, legislation led to the alienation of millions more hectares.

2014 onwards: Many New Zealand churches have reflected on these 200 years of our history, and have heard many stories of past courage, success, failure and grace. We can be proud of the good things and need to be humble about the wrong things. We need to work for reconciliation among all people, and to see a nation healed and transformed by the good news of Christ.

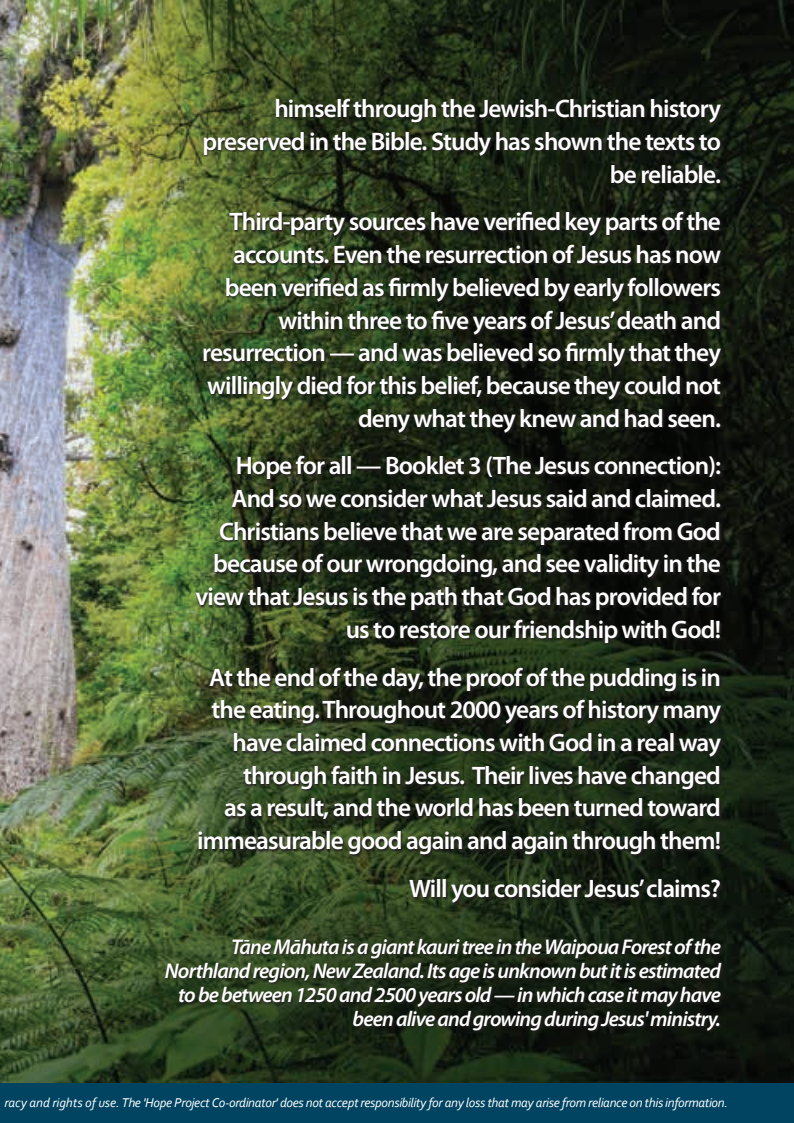
Series summary — hope through the Christian faith

The Christian faith has brought incalculable good in the past 2000 years. True Christianity is about faith in Jesus, and following his teachings, which have shaped Western civilisation and contributed significantly to the good within it. While there have been serious errors along the way, a quick look confirms that these happened because those involved were not truly following Jesus' teachings.

Christians do not believe this faith should be blindly held, because God created with intent and order. Christians believe there is logic to life in all its aspects — that the physical and the spiritual will not contradict each other. Christianity promotes a reasoned faith that considers the relevant factual (objective) and experiential (subjective) evidence — and then tries it out.

Hope for all — Booklet 1 (The invitation): The level of order and complexity discovered in the creation continues to increase. Our everyday life experiences tell us that highly complex things do not create themselves. Christians view God's existence as self-evident.

Hope for all — Booklet 2 (The hidden power): This booklet touched on a range of reasons for Christians concluding that God can be known and has revealed



himself through the Jewish-Christian history preserved in the Bible. Study has shown the texts to be reliable.

Third-party sources have verified key parts of the accounts. Even the resurrection of Jesus has now been verified as firmly believed by early followers within three to five years of Jesus' death and resurrection — and was believed so firmly that they willingly died for this belief, because they could not deny what they knew and had seen.

Hope for all — Booklet 3 (The Jesus connection):
And so we consider what Jesus said and claimed. Christians believe that we are separated from God because of our wrongdoing, and see validity in the view that Jesus is the path that God has provided for us to restore our friendship with God!

At the end of the day, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Throughout 2000 years of history many have claimed connections with God in a real way through faith in Jesus. Their lives have changed as a result, and the world has been turned toward immeasurable good again and again through them!

Will you consider Jesus' claims?

Tāne Māhuta is a giant kauri tree in the Waipoua Forest of the Northland region, New Zealand. Its age is unknown but it is estimated to be between 1250 and 2500 years old — in which case it may have been alive and growing during Jesus' ministry.

HopeProject
.co.nz

10DayChallenge.co.nz

Supported by a diverse group of Christian churches throughout New Zealand, who have come together to commemorate the 200-year anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in New Zealand and the beginning of a 'hope-filled' bicultural partnership with Māori. In this spirit, let's make New Zealand a more hope-filled place.