

PLENTY TO GIVE

On holistic mission

Bible study Mark 8:1-9

IFES-Netherlands

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Version for group leaders



PREFACE FOR GROUP LEADERS

PREPARATION

It is very important that you prepare properly.

- **Reading.** Read through the entire bible study carefully: the intro, the questions, the annotations to the text, the appendix.
- **Exercises.** Prepare the exercises. Visualize how they are going to go, practice them at home. Make sure you know what your role is as group leader. If you do the exercises in the group, they shouldn't be new for you.
- **Materials.** Make sure you have the necessary materials with you (see below)
- **Prayer.** Take enough time to pray for the group and for yourself.
 - o Think about the members of the group, and pray for everyone personally. What do you know about them? What do you think this theme means to them? What message do you wish to communicate with them? Pray that God will bless them through the bible study and conversations.
 - o Pray for yourself. Where does the theme connect with your life? What do you wish to receive yourself? Also pray that God will help you lead the group.

MATERIALS

If you are going to go over all parts you are going to need the following materials:

- Bible and bible study.
- Candle.
- Calm music (for example the albums Solipsism by Joep Beving or Lamentations by Robert White, on Spotify).

NOT FOR OPEN GROUPS

This bible study is not very fit to do together with non-Christians.

TIME MANAGMENT

This bible study is quite long. If you want to do all parts, you will need about two hours. The table below gives an indication of how much time you need for every part.

Part	Duration
1. Division of tasks	15 min
2. The border dilemma	10 min
3. Coming closer and listening	40 min
4. Giving what you have	15 min
5. Handing out and receiving back more	20 min
6. Prayer	20-30 min
Totaal	120-130 min

Be careful: with this bible study in particular, which is about prayer, it is important to leave enough time to pray together at the end. **Make sure that you still have 20-30 minutes left to go over the prayer exercise calmly.**

GOOD LUCK!

Finally we wish you good luck with the preparation and the group itself. The 'success' of the bible study is not up to you and not your responsibility. You do what you are capable of. You give your 'bread and fish' to Jesus (Mark 8.). He will break, multiply and share it. And he does that through you. Isn't that beautiful? With this in the back of your mind we wish you a lot of relaxation and fun!

'The devil offers a lot, gives little, and takes all'. – Origin unknown

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." - 2 Corinthians 8:12-13, 9:7-9

'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"' – Isaiah 6:8

'The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening.'" – 1 Samuel 3:10

HOLISTIC MISSION

IFES-Netherlands year-theme 2017-2018

‘Christians are always in sending-mode, looking for ways to send a message’, said a student to a Christian student pastor. It annoyed him, that Christians always seemed to be out to spread their message.

He probably has a point. A lot of Christians feel a mission urge deep inside them, if only for that statement of Jesus: ‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations’

Of course Christians aren’t the only people who think like that. Many Vegans, politicians and television journalists have the same thing: they want their good message to be spread; whether it is their dream of a world without bio-industry, a united Europe or a broadcasting platform without fake news.

But everyone is a bit fed up with that. We prefer seeing everyone ‘doing their thing’ and being held in their value. Everyone is free to have their own opinion, but don’t push your opinion on others. Absolute truths are taboo. Believe what you want, I’ll believe what I want is the general attitude.

What does it mean to go into a society like that and ‘make disciples’? Is there a way to do that, where people will really see it as good news? And can that ‘mission’ have a place in our everyday life of study, relationships and friendships instead of an extra activity for an enthusiast?

These are the kinds of questions which IFES is putting on the map, under the theme of *Holistic Mission*.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus sent his disciples out on a mission. A mission of hope and love. Be like 'light in the world' he said and like 'salt of the earth'.

That sounds wonderful, but also overwhelming. If you look around you the distress of the world can overwhelm you. Refugees, famines, suppression. But also closer, depression, loneliness, burn-out. The list is endless. If Jesus calls you to be 'light', where do you start? I never have enough to give, so does it even matter? How far can I go for charity without trespassing my personal borders?

The mission of Jesus can challenge, but also exhaust. Is there another way?

In this bible study we let us become inspired by the story in Mark 8. In the story we come across a mysterious collaboration between Jesus and his disciples. The disciples give everything for Jesus' mission and don't become empty, but full.

BIBLE: MARK 8:1-9

New international version (NIV)

¹During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ²“I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.” ⁴His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?” ⁵“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. ⁶He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away,

1. DIVISION OF TASKS

Jesus travels around while preaching the good news. His twelve disciples follow him everywhere. And then a 'large crowd' gathers around them (verse 1).

When you read a little bit further, you will see that the people in the crowd all have very different images of Jesus. Some think that Jesus is John the Baptist, others see him as a sort of Elijah, others again say Jesus is 'one of the prophets' (verse 28). There are people who listen to Jesus out of interest. Others might be ill and come to Jesus to be healed. Others again are critical and come mostly because Jesus was a phenomenon in that time. People join and people drop out again. While the disciples are holding up with Jesus, they meet a lot of other people with very different ideas of who Jesus is.

This is a little bit like our current situation. There is only a small group of Christians in Europe, and on our path with Jesus we meet all kinds of people who have all kinds of ideas about Jesus. People see Jesus as an inspiring guru, a prophet of the Islam, a strange or fascinating historical figure and some people don't really think about Jesus at all. We are a small group of disciples among all kinds of people who are not disciples of Jesus.

- In what surrounding/ situation are you indeed one of the few Christians?
- Do you feel a calling to be a 'missionary' in that surrounding? What do you feel like you should be doing in a surrounding like that?
- How does this affect you? How do you feel in that kind of setting?

The story shows something about the 'division of tasks' between Jesus and His disciples. Read the story again, and write down what Jesus does, and what the disciples do.

Jesus	Disciples

Filled in:

Jesus	Disciples
Signals the need (hunger)	
Points out the need	
Has compassion	
Calls the disciples with Him, and shares his worries	
	Feel the calling of Jesus to do something about the need
	Share their impotence
Asks what the disciples do have	Tell Jesus what they do have (seven breads)
	Give Jesus what they do have (seven breads)
Orders the people to sit down	
Takes the seven breads	
Gives thanks	
Breaks the breads	
Gives the broken bread back to hand out	Hand out the bread
Same goes	for the fish
	Collect what is left: seven baskets full
Sends the people home	

We are going to look at a couple of these tasks up close, namely:

1. Coming close and listening
2. Giving what you have
3. Hand out and receiving back more

But we are going to start with what the disciples should *not* do.

2. THE DILEMMA OF LIMITS

There is a need. The disciples have bread. But what they should *not* do, is hand out what they have themselves. If they would have done that, seven breads would have been divided over 4000 people. Everyone gets a few crumbs, everyone is hungry.

Without the miracle the disciples have a great dilemma on their hands. Either they socially share what they have – but then everyone has too little. Or they ‘mind their own limits’, take what they need for themselves first, but then there is nothing left to share and everyone else will still be hungry.

This dilemma is timeless. If you look around you, the need of the world can overwhelm you. Refugees who need language lessons, famines in Africa that need money, fellow students who need help with a certain subject, a friend who is dealing with depression who needs you to be there for them etc. etc. The list is endless. Time and time again the same dilemma: should I respect my own limits (but then the other isn’t helped) or should I cross my own limits (but then we both have nothing). Call it: ‘the dilemma of limits’.

- Do you recognize this? Can you think of a concrete example where you had this feeling?

The result is usually that we either (a) cross our limits and end up (half) burn-out or (b) walk around with a latent feeling of guilt. (Or maybe there is a third option: shut ourselves off from the need of the other and /or deny that we have a responsibility in it.)

- Which one of three are you the most susceptible to? Do you have an example?

In the story it goes differently. The disciples give more than they can miss, but in the end have more than what they started off with.

3. COMING CLOSER AND LISTENING

The 'limits dilemma' arises as soon as we think we are on our own, without God. Sometimes it feels like we have to remind God of the pain our own life, or the life of others. We see all of the troubles, and it feels like we have to solve it by ourselves – God keeps himself absent.

In the story however it is Jesus who takes the initiative. *He* takes responsibility for the suffering in the world. He sees it even before the disciples noticed it.

- Suppose this is true: that Jesus sees the need of people before you do. That He has more compassion than you have. And that He takes the initiative. Take a couple of minutes of silence to let that sink in. Imagine yourself in your classroom, or wherever you are regularly surrounded by people. Now imagine how Jesus is also there. He sits next to you, a couple of tables behind you, or in that one empty spot. (Because he promised to be there, Mat.28:20) He knows how you feel. He also sees all the people around you and sees exactly what they need. And he takes responsibility for that. How do you feel about that?

Do people in the group find it hard to 'see' or believe that Jesus is near? Maybe you should just continue, and the stories further on will help. If people find it hard because of 'rational' objections it might be a good idea to read the **appendix 'Jesus close?'**.

God involves people in his plan, but takes the responsibility himself. "I am making everything new!" (...) To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. (Rev. 21: 5-6). Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: God even cares for the birds, so He will surely care for you (Mat. 6:26) and further on: 'What do two sparrows cost? Near nothing. But not one dies if your Father doesn't want it to. He even counted all of the hairs on your head. So don't be afraid, you are worth more than a swarm of sparrows. (Mat. 10:29-31)

In other parts of the bible we get to know Jesus as someone who is full of compassion (Mark. 1:14, 6:34, 9:22). As someone who is moved by other people's troubles. In that he is just like his father (Isa. 58)

When Jesus feels compassion with 'the crowd' he calls his disciples. Only then the disciples get into the picture, and into action. The first thing that is expected from the disciples is simply to come to Jesus and listen to what He has to say.

The **first thing** Jesus asks us to do for the people around us is not to go to them to tell them about Jesus, or even to help them, but to come *to Him* and listen to what he has to say.

That sounds easy enough: more praying and more reading the bible to get to know Jesus, you know the drill. But it is not that easy in the chaos of everyday life. The disciples of Jesus also didn't find it easy to pray. That's why they asked 'Jesus, teach us how to pray' (Luk. 11:1)

- How satisfied are you – on a scale of 1 to 10 – with the place prayer has in your life? Why this figure?
- What should your prayer life look like to score 1 or 2 points higher?
- What keeps you from getting there?

Inventory obstacles. There can be all kinds of things that keep us from having a blooming prayer life. Lack of time, peace or silence. Lack of motivation. Questions about the utility of prayer. Or simply not knowing how to pray.

Discuss the obstacles, one by one.

1. What can you do to get past this obstacle?
2. Who can add solutions or possibilities from their own experience?
3. Which one of these possibilities would you want to tackle specifically?
4. (Audit question: how likely is it that you are actually going to do this, how can we improve this likeliness?)

TIPS ON LEARNING HOW TO PRAY

- Course: Prayer Course, a free prayer course by Alpha, via online videos: alphanederland.org/prayercourse
- Books: Tim Keller, *Prayer*. Alex Aronis, *Developing intimacy with God*. Henry Nouwen, *The Inner voice of love*.
- Websites: 24-7prayer.nl (international network which supports prayer and mission, provides inspiration and materials), ignatianspirituality.com (the lessons about prayer by Ignatius. Mostly focus on 'the Daily Examen', a way of prayer where you get more aware of God in everyday life).

4. GIVING WHAT YOU HAVE

Now comes the hardest part for the disciples. They came to Jesus and listened to what he told them. Now they feel (Jesus doesn't explicitly say it): it is our turn to act.

They immediately become defensive (v4):

His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

This is the limits dilemma. 'Jesus, that isn't possible right?! We can't disregard our own limits to help others, can we? Then we will die of hunger ourselves! What will they do with only a couple of crumbs?

But Jesus sees it differently (v5-6):

"How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves...

Jesus invited them into an adventure they could not yet comprehend. But they step into it. They give Jesus what they have, all of their bread. At this point in the story they stand empty-handed. Everything they have, they put in Jesus' hands.

JAN'S STORY

Jan "When I started my masters I had the ambition to make a career in the academic world. I had just married and my wife was about to graduate, so we started to make plans together about a future after our student time. My wife had always had the desire to do missionary work, but that was less true for me. Of course I wanted to serve God, but then preferably in a job as a scientist. We went to a European conference of IFES where we thought about evangelizing for 5 days. We realized that our plans were so far apart that it even resulted in our first real marriage quarrel!

On that moment we put down all of our problems before God in prayer. I realized (I am convinced it was the Spirit's doing) that I found peace, and that I could put all my plans and ambitions down in front of God. This is how we came to the decision to go into missionary work abroad after our study, which turned out very good. It was a good time in which I experienced a lot of God.

Back in the Netherlands I wanted to look for a job. I found it quite scary. Our choice for missionary work left a 'hole' of three years in my CV. Would it hinder me in my job applications? But God blessed again. I found a nice workplace where I could really use my talents. This way I realized that His plans are incomprehensible, but above all that you can trust God with everything."

- Imagine how the disciples must have felt... What would have been going through their heads?

- Have you ever experienced this yourself? Have you ever let go of something you really wanted by giving it to Jesus (time, money, hobbies, comfort, ...)? How did that feel?

5. HANDING OUT AND RECEIVING BACK MORE

And then this miracle happens:

⁶ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷ They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸ The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹ About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away,

What happened here is of course impossible. Can you imagine? Jesus keeps on breaking the bread, but it doesn't run out. Does it grow back on? If you stood there, what would you have seen?

Here, two world visions collide. The world as we see is a world of scarcity. There is a limited amount of everything, and we have to see how we share it. Jesus however, sees and lives in a world where there is abundance. There is more than enough.

At the end of the story the disciples had more than what they started with.

- Read the experience stories in the blue blocks (on the previous page, this page and the next page). What do you feel reading these stories?
- Have you ever had similar experiences? What is your story?

Jesus is capable of turning the little bit the disciples had into more than enough to feed everyone.

STORY OF ANNERIET

Anneriet: "Here we are: a couple with a kid, an empty bank account and no house. What we do have is this: the wish to share our life with students and people from our city. But to do that we have to look for a house in a city where we don't yet have anything.

We came back from Bosnia and I took a job in Tilburg. The city needs Christians and we felt a calling. Not a romantic one though: the city isn't very attractive to us. To be honest I can think of nicer places to live. I would also rather live closer to friends and family. But one thing is certain: mission area Tilburg is where we have to be.

But how do we find a home? We have a good registration time in Utrecht (those of you who study there will know how important that is), but not in Tilburg. We pray, network, stress and eventually just call housing with our story. After a couple of days we get a call back. They had three houses for us! All three of them had a small garden and two of the were right next to the campus of Tilburg University where I am going to work. I can't believe we actually got a real house where we can be comfortable and be hospitable. I feel known and loved. God knows what we

- What situation did you think about during the earlier question on page 6 (Can you think of a concrete example where you felt like you were asked to do more than you could)? What would it mean concretely if you wanted to, just like the disciples, give everything to Jesus, instead of handing it out yourself?
- Do you dare to believe that God will feed an entire crowd through you and the few other Christians at your university?

BAS' STORY

Bas look back at his student time: 'My wife and I had been married a couple of years and didn't have too much money with our student incomes. One night our car – a nice blue Citroën – was burned down by a couple of guys. We didn't have an insurance which covered that, so what could we do? Right at that time we had to pay our church contribution. We couldn't afford the amount we originally wanted to give anymore, so we were very tempted to send them a letter saying we couldn't give anything this year. But while we were thinking about that, we ran into the words of Jesus in Matthew 6. Do not be afraid, Jesus said to us. For us that was a very real question, will we be able to manage solely based on this promise? And could we very concretely "Seek the kingdom" by giving what we had planned, in the hope that God would provide us with the rest? Never before did we stand in front of a faith decision like this, but we decided to risk it. In the following weeks wonderful things happened: friends of ours spontaneously donated us money as a contribution to our new car. Vague relatives suddenly swung by with a bag of baby clothes (we just received our first child). (...) In the end everything worked out, with our car and with our finances. (From: Bas van der Graaf, *Leren leven in overvloed*, 85)

6. PRAYER

You can finish off with a moment of prayer. You can do this on the basis of the guide down below, based on The Lord's Prayer. Take about 20-30 minutes for this.

The guide below can be used for personal prayer and for group prayer. Now end the bible study with a group prayer. Being the group leader, you have the leading role in the group prayer. You lead the group through the prayer

- Explain what the idea is in advance. Explain that people are invited to pray out loud during several points in the prayer (usually in keywords). Encourage people to be very open, and not to wait for each other for too long. At the same time give them space: praying out loud is allowed, but you don't have to.
- Take about two minutes for each step. Let the group know this in advance, so they have an idea of how long the moments of silence, and the moments of praying out loud will last.
- Introduce every step; 'Let us become quiet', 'Let's light the candle', 'Let's take a moment of rest, in the knowledge that God is present here'. Every step of The Lord's prayer can be introduced by praying the regarding sentence from the prayer and reading the explanation with it out loud. Make sure to leave a bit of silence after every sentence. End the prayer according to the instructions.

A GUIDE TO PRAYER

Become quiet and make sure you are in a quiet space. (If you can't find a quiet space, put on calm meditative music.)

Light a candle. The group leader says the following words: 'You promised: I am with you always to the very end of the age.'

Rest in silence for a couple of moments. You will notice your thoughts going in all different directions. Calmly observe your thoughts, but then let them go. Keep coming back to the silence before God. Look at the candle and remember God's presence. If things come to your mind which you shouldn't forget, write them down, so you can let those thoughts go. Remain in this silence until you find your thoughts coming to a rest.

After a couple of minutes (in a group), or if you notice your thoughts coming to a rest, start praying:

1. 'Our father, who art in heaven'

God wants to be your Father. This means that you can come to him as a child, just the way you are (and not like how you think you should be.). *Express how you feel with keywords ("tired", "thankful", "stressed", etc.) or what's on your mind ("deadline paper", "fight with your parents", "doubts about God", etc.).*

2. 'Hallowed be thy name'

God's name is 'hallowed' when we praise him for who He is. Thank God for all his goodness, truthfulness, beauty and love in your own life, or that of others, where you experienced a part of God. *Name keywords out loud, of things you are grateful of in your own life or the life of others ("spring blossom", "passed exams", "good conversation", etc.).*

3. 'Thy kingdom come'

Think about the people who you have met and will meet today. What would it mean for them if God's kingdom would become reality? What would that look like? Ask God to lead your thoughts. *Name the people around you who you are thinking about out loud.*

4. 'Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'

Think about what you've got to do today and tomorrow, and who you are going to meet.

- Offer your 'bread and fish' to God: here is my life, my time and my energy
- Ask God: how and to who should I give it to? How can I do what I have to do (study, work, association, etc.) according to your will? And is there something You want me to do for the people I am going to meet?

Take a moment of silence for the above. The group leader ends the moment by praying out loud: 'Lord here we are, with all that we have. Let your will be done through it'

5. 'Give us this day our daily bread'

What do you need today or tomorrow? Tell God about it. Be open. Like a child who doesn't doubt, but just asks his parents what he/she needs. Power? Energy? Hope? Happiness? Money? Love? Wisdom?
Name keywords of what you need today or tomorrow out loud.

6. 'And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us'

- Where did you stray from God's path? Did you hurt someone? Have you been focused on yourself instead of God and others?
- Are there people who you need to forgive? Do you nurse a grievance? Lay it before God. Forgive them. If you can't: ask God for the power needed to forgive.

Take a moment of silence and ask God to show you if there is something in your life that is wrong. Name things out loud in keywords. The group leader ends by saying this promise out loud: ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 Joh. 1:9)

7. 'And lead us not into temptation'

What can get you to stray from God's path? Do you foresee any temptations? Ask God to give you power not to do wrong.

The group leader says out loud: 'Lord, keep us from...'. Now name in keywords the temptations for which you need protection ('cynicism', 'pride', 'uncleanliness', etc.).

Rest for another moment, knowing that God looks down at you in grace and in love. Rest in God's presence, without using words.

The group leader ends by praying: 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.'

APPENDIX: JESUS CLOSE?



In one of the question above it say: 'Imagine yourself in those lecture tables. Now imagine how Jesus is also there. He sits next to you, a couple of tables behind you, or in that one empty spot.' It is quite difficult to believe that isn't it?

According to the bible Jesus is in heaven now, from where he is very close.

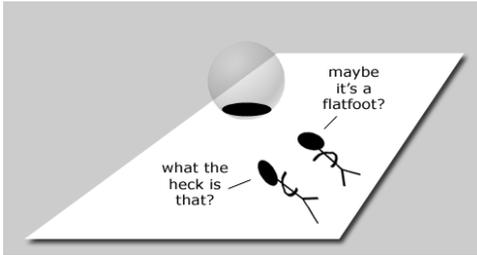
The bible tells us that after his resurrection Jesus 'was taken up to heaven' (Luk. 24:51). When we think about heaven, we often think of 'the place where we go when we die'. A place somewhere far away. But in the bible 'heaven' means something differently. Sometimes the world 'heaven' just means the 'air', but quite often it is the name of *the place where God is*.

In the time of the bible, people see heaven like a placeless somewhere above us. Quite literally: physically in the clouds. The world view back then was based on three layers: here the earth, below us the underworld and above us the heaven. For a long time that was the 'scientific' world view. The heaven was seen like a physical place in the clouds. When the disciples describe how Jesus went up to the heavens, they use the word 'up', and when they are talking about his return you see the opposite movement, 'coming down' (1 Thes. 4:16).

But that is all written in a world view from back then. But behind that lies a deep experience: that Jesus isn't walking around visibly and physically, but is in a different place, but still very close. For them heaven was not far away, but right up there, very close. Because Jesus is in heaven, he is no longer confined to one place, but He can be close to everyone at once.

We would probably express this experience very differently, or at least imagine it differently. Because we know now that there is no heaven in the clouds. We have been to the moon and to mars, but we didn't meet Jesus there.

Maybe we can think of the heaven differently, more like another dimension. What can help is the example of the so called 'flatlanders'. Imagine this: there are flatlanders. They live in a two-dimensional world. They only have length and width,



say x and y . They can move in any direction on a flat plane. There is no height for them, like they are living between two sheets of glass. We as 3-dimensional people are gods to the flatlanders. We can observe them while they don't notice it

themselves. We can look under them and above them without them seeing it. We can come very close – and maybe they can feel that, but without being visible in their world. Once we appear in their world, they see some strange two-dimensional person, which some people believe is actually more, and others think it's not. (Imagine sticking five fingers of your hand 'in' their world! What would they think? "Wow! Five circles! They all appeared at the same time, on different locations. Are they five beings? Do they share a connection, or is it just a coincidence?")

Something comparable is depicted beautifully in the movie *Interstellar* (2014) by Christopher Nolan. Cooper, one of the main characters, goes on a space trip in a quest to find more possible



location for human life. He encounters all kinds of strange feats of nature like wormholes and black holes. Near the end of the movie – and here the scientific part becomes quite speculative – he ends up in a different perception of time and space. Because of that he can communicate with his daughter from a different dimension.

Heaven is something like that. Like an extra dimension of our world which we cannot see. That is where Jesus is according to the bible. And even though he is invisible, he is very close at the same time.



A bit like Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia* who walks with the children in the forest but is invisible. Only Lucy can see Aslan. The other children don't see him. He is there, but he is only visible for who want to 'see' him in faith.

In that light we can also see Jesus' promise for his ascension: 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'.