

**Church Army UK**  
**Evangelism Training**



# FAITH QUESTIONS

ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAITH, BE CONFIDENT IN SHARING YOUR FAITH WITH OTHERS.

## Session One: Why do we ask questions of our faith?

### Introducing the Topic:

What place do questions have in our faith?

What is the opposite of doubt?

How comfortable are you when people ask questions about faith?

Can you define doubt?

How does it make you feel when you learn about something that seems to be opposed to faith?

## Exploring the Topic:

Watch Video

Note anything that stands out to you:

## Expanding the topic:

‘An area that can throw us with this is that we can feel like we don’t often see doubt in the Bible. We see people who lived their lives faithfully for God, who followed Him as best they could, but this is often because of the way that the bible tells us about character. We are used to modern ways of storytelling, where the feelings, motivations, and thoughts of characters are often spelled out in detail. The bible doesn’t tell us about character in this way, and we are often left to imagine the thought processes going on under the surface.’

Read one or all of the following passages:

- 1 Kings 19:1-14, Elijah and the still small voice.
- Exodus 33:12-23, Moses asking to see the Glory of God.
- Luke 7:18-23, John the Baptist asks if Jesus is really the Messiah.

What is going on in these stories?

What is the common feeling, motivation and thought?

Was the result broadly positive, negative, or neutral for the person who expressed doubt in the reading?

When we express doubt in our own faith, do we think the result will be positive, negative, or neutral?

### **Going Deeper: What happens when we close down conversations?**

Explore the following scenarios:

#### *Option 1:*

A person hears the message that through faith in God they will live a life free from doubt and uncertainty. They start to follow Jesus but a while down the road they discover some of the conversations around interpreting the Bible, and the question of how reliable the historical narratives in the Bible are. Because they been taught the Bible is inerrant, and have no way to explore doubt as part of their faith, they feel they have to make a choice between faithfully following Jesus or rejecting their faith.

#### *Option 2:*

A person grows up in a Christian home, where the presence of God in everyday life is an accepted part of the world. As they grow they attend church pretty regularly, and are part of children's and youth groups. When they start at secondary school they come across some alternative ways of viewing the world, and are part of conversations where agnostic and atheist worldviews are explored. These conversations lead them to ask questions of their faith, and the things they had thought of as certain. Their youth worker has some fairly open conversations with them about the ways that these different worldviews collide, and let's them explore the ideas for themselves.

*Questions to consider:*

What might happen if a different approach was taken to exploring questions around faith in the scenarios above?

Are there some questions that it isn't ok for Christians to explore and think about?

Would you have any advice for the people in the scenarios above?

**Final thought:**

Do you think doubting is something we can avoid? If not, then what is our best response to it?

**Tea light prayer:**



## Session Two: Why is Jesus so important?

### Introducing the Topic:

*Activity:* Sort the pictures on the Jesus Facts Sheet into the following categories by placing the applicable letter next to the fact (Individually, in pairs or as a group):

- A. things widely believed about Jesus,
- B. things Christians believe about Jesus, and
- C. things handed down to us by tradition.

### *Discuss:*

- How you went about dividing the different things
- Were there any of the 'facts' cards that seemed strange, out of place, or that stood out to them for another reason?
- Are there any common themes that stand out to you in the way you or your group thought about these ideas?

## Exploring the Topic:

Watch Video

Note anything that stands out to you.

## Expanding the topic:

Often in our talk about apologetics we can lean on the 'facts' that we have, but in the case of Jesus the facts we have are very few. At the same time, we can dismiss our experience of faith and our personal reasons for following him. This means that when we try and share our faith with others, we can run into obstacles as we rely on something we have little of and ignore what we have a wealth of.

Write down your three personal reasons why you think Jesus is important.

1.

2.

3.

*Discuss outcomes as a group.*

If we know so little about Jesus, and if so much of what we 'know' is actually belief, why is he so important to Christians? How has someone who left so little 'factual' information had such a dramatic impact on world history? There are several answers to that question, which follow on from one another.

1. Because of the impression he made on his early followers, and the way this made them rethink how they lived in the world.

2. Because of the way his early followers lived and drew others to him

3. Because of the way his early followers developed into a life-changing community which outlasted them.

How do you react to this way of explaining Jesus' lasting impact?

Is there anything missing in this explanation?

Are there answers you would add instead of the ones listed?

### Going Deeper:

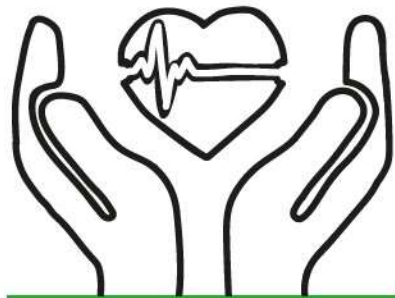
Emphasising Jesus's life and teachings can be a really important part of the way we share faith in a contemporary culture.

Look at the following scriptures in the light of these questions:

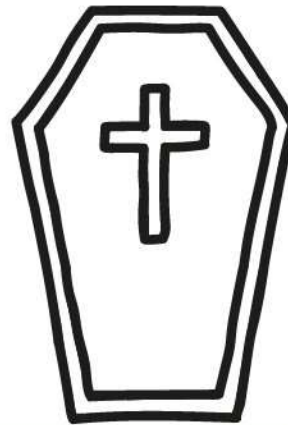
1. How might these connect to people today,
  2. How might they lead us to talk about Jesus's eternal impact on us.
- John 8:1-11, Jesus and the woman caught in adultery
  - Matthew 14:13-21, the feeding of the 5000
  - Matthew 5:3-12, the Beatitudes
  - Matthew 21:12-17, the Turning of the Tables in the Temple

### Final thought:

Ponder which of these words is most important to you in your relationship with Jesus and place the object on it.



LIFE



DEATH



RESURRECTION

### Prayer:

Pray together as a group for the week ahead in relation to what you have discovered in this session.

## Session Three: What is the purpose of the church?

### Introducing the Topic:

Activity: Write around the picture below all the words that come to mind when you think about church.



### Exploring the Topic: what is the purpose of the church?

Watch Video – note any new ideas. Was there anything that particularly stood out as important or significant?

The video speaks about the world that God wants. Can your group describe what such a world might look like?

### Expanding the topic:

The video points towards an idea of church that is idealised, and attractive, but which might not chime with our experience of being part of church. It doesn't chime with the way that those outside the church see it either.

How do your group think the wider world see the church?

*Activity:* Organise Church Media Cards in the order of recurrence or frequency of the type of story they come across and discuss.

Overall, what impression do you or your group think the church makes in the media? Is this impression linked to the Church's place as a place where God's way is experienced and lived?

### Going Deeper:

The thing that makes the church unique is that it is made up of people who:

- Love Jesus
- Want to share His love with the world.

These things should be at the core of all that we do as a community.

*Read Acts 1:13-14 and Acts 2:42-47.*

Identify the characteristics of the church before and after the Holy Spirit came.

Reflect on whether the church you are part of fits one or the other description better. Discuss

### **Final thought:**

Around the church write down words or a prayer that reflects your:

- Positive experiences of Church
- Negative experiences of Church
- Frustration with Church



**Pray together for your church family.**

## Session Four: Suffering

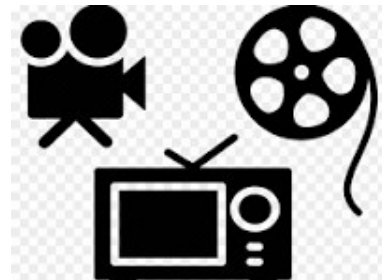
### Introducing the Topic:

How can we tell what is good from bad in the world?

Where do we get our definition of these things from? In your discussion consider the following background noise in our lives:



Peers



Film and TV



Social Media



Classroom



## Exploring the Topic:

Watch Video

Note anything that stands out to you:

### Expanding the topic:

Alongside this view of suffering in the Bible, it's worth reminding ourselves that our world can seem far more full of pain and suffering than the world experienced by previous generations.

Consider the following 2 reasons and the negative feedback loop they create giving the illusion that the world is spiralling out of control.

- Ours news apps, timelines, newsfeeds, etc are filled with bad news stories from all over the world, interspersed with catastrophic events which are updated for us as they unfold.
- These bad news stories are never resolved; we never hear about the end of them.

On top of this, in the same way growing a tree takes years while chopping it down takes minutes, stories of progress are long term and gradual. The drop in infant mortality worldwide over the last 70 years is a good news story. Death by violence is far less likely in the world today than it was 50 years ago. Until a century ago, cities only grew because people moved to them from the countryside; the mortality rate was so high. These are all signs of significant, sustained, and meaningful progress, but most of us are unaware of them.

Are there any good news stories that you know about that you would like to share with the group?

### Going Deeper:

At the same time as trying to take a balanced view of the good and bad in the world, Christians are called to work with God to bring goodness into the world. As described in the video, we need to remember who God is and walk alongside him like Abraham, rather than forget like Jonah. But how do we find out what God wants us to do?

There are two parts to answering this question:

1.How do we see what God wants us to see?

2.How do we do what God wants us to do?

Have a look at the following Bible passages and decide if they are helping think about question 1 or question 2 above, and how challenging or reassuring they are about our role in the world.

Romans 2:14

Romans 6:13

Romans 8:18-21

Romans 12:1-2

Romans 12:21

Seeing

- What is it about the world that God wants us to see clearly?

Doing

- What is it that God wants us to DO in the world?

### Final thought:

Identify areas of the world that are particularly in the news at the moment because of the pain and suffering of the people there. **Spend time praying for these places.**



## **Five: Troubling Church History**

### **Introducing the Topic:**

Do you think there are elements of church history to be troubled by or do you think that the history of the church is generally positive?

*Activity to help consider this question – Positive and Negative cards.*

### **Exploring the Topic:**

Watch Video – note anything that stands out to you

### **Expanding the topic:**

*Activity:* Characteristic Cards

### **Going Deeper:**

Where has this come from?

Consider the Origin Stories from three ancient cultures: Hebrew, Greek, and Babylonian. (see attached sheet)

How did the stories make you feel?

What is the place that humans have in the story? Are they significant?

How might this affect the way people who grow up with these stories see each other?

### **Final thought:**

Discuss what difference your church could make to your area now, how as a community you can live out the values that Jesus taught and bring goodness, joy, and hope to the streets where you live.

### **Prayer**

Give thanks to God for the work of the church in the world today.

Talk to God about the things that the church needs to make amends for and ask for His help in this.

Seek the Holy Spirit regarding your church family.

## Session Six: What do we do with the bible?

### Introducing the Topic:

Complete the table below by noting down the view you had of the bible at each stage in your life, or the way you used the bible in your pattern of worship and prayer at that stage.

Pre-Christian	Christian
After 5 years of being a Christian	Now

### Exploring the Topic:

Watch Video - pick out any ideas you feel yourself reacting to, either positively or negatively.

### Expanding the topic:

Define what you would want to see coming out of a conversation about the Bible with someone. Share with the group.

#### Activity: Potential Conversations

Consider each conversation regarding these two questions:

1. What do you think the intentions of the person we are imagining engaging with are?

2. What is their emotional reaction to the comment? How might that affect the rest of the conversation?

Look more closely at one of the conversations and consider what a Defensive, Offensive, and Open reaction would look like.

Conversation:

Defensive:

Offensive:

Open:

**Final thought:**

Past Conversations

Future Conversations

Pray for each other