

1. Christian faith – a relationship with a God you cannot see.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Have you ever had a spiritual experience? What happened?
2. How spiritual do you see yourself to be as a person? What do you mean by that?

A look at the Bible

God spoke to the shepherds in the field through an angel, saying:

*Today in the town of David (*Bethlehem) a Saviour has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you (*to help you recognise the baby I'm speaking of): You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger (*which is an animal feeding trough).*

*Luke 2:1–12 in the Bible (*explanation)*

3. If you were an all powerful, good God, and you wanted humans to have a trusting relationship with you, how would you reveal yourself to them? (Remember, you don't want to scare them, but also you can do anything because you are God).
4. If you, as God, decided to come to earth as a human, where would you be born, what kind of people would you choose as your parents, and why? Compare this to what God chose to do in Jesus.

More about Jesus' birth.¹

An interesting point.²

Our Response

5. How does the belief that God loves you and wants to have an authentic friendship with you make you feel?
6. Do you find having faith in God's love easy or hard? Why?

[Video of interest] What do you think about the distinction this video is making?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God, thank you not only for life, and this amazing planet - but also for loving us, and giving us the chance to know you. Thank you for all the special things you've done in history, that you led people to write about, so that we could read about it many hundreds of years later in the Bible to learn about you.

Some of us struggle with the idea of faith. We struggle to see you as a God who is near. Please help me to believe, and through faith to find your reality in a way that is real for me. Please speak to our hearts.

Thanks again

Amen.

¹ About Jesus' birth: Born to parents of no social standing, without wealth, in an unimportant location - Jesus' beginning on earth was completely unexpected. The humility of the whole thing is one of the reasons the religious establishment simply could not accept that he could be who he claimed to be (God on earth in human form). God did this to reveal who he is to us - as compared to the kind of God we sometimes make him out to be. He is more gracious, loving and humble than we would imagine!

² An interesting point: Isaiah, who wrote 700 years before Jesus, predicted that a child would be born, of the tribe of Judah (there were 12 distinct tribes in Israel), who's identity was in fact that of God. Amazing or what? Isaiah 9:6-7 reads "For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace..." Isaiah 9:6-7 in the Bible. Is this verifiable? The Qumran Scrolls discovery included a complete copy of the book of Isaiah, dated hundreds of years before Christ. No question surrounds the authenticity of this and scores of other such predictions.

2. The Bible – learning about a God you cannot see.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. First impressions count. Have you ever met someone where your first impression was completely wrong?
2. Have you ever given someone a bad first impression? How did you fix that?

A look at the Bible

“Yes, woe upon you, Pharisees, and you other religious leaders—hypocrites! For you tithe down to the last mint leaf in your garden, but ignore the important things—justice and mercy and faith. Yes, you should tithe, but you shouldn’t leave the more important things undone.”

Jesus speaking in Matthew 23:23-24 in the Bible

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”

Jesus speaking in Matthew 5:44

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man...”

Jesus speaking in Matthew 7:24

3. Why do you think God decided to give us a book?
4. In the first verse above Jesus condemned some of the religious leaders. From looking at the verses, what do you think they were doing wrong?
5. In the second verse above we have one of Jesus' most radical teachings. How easy do you think this is? How important do you think this is?

Our Response

6. How do you think God wants us to respond to what he says in the Bible? What God might want from us.³
7. What is your response to the Bible at this point?

[Video of interest] How can you tell a true follower of God? What Jesus said.⁴

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for giving us the Bible so we can know what you are like. Please help me to read this book, and to understand the different parts of it, so I can know what you are really like. Help me also to live out your teachings.

It is easy to overlook the pain and needs of others. Help me to see the needs that people around me have. Show me how I can help them.

In Jesus' name I ask

Amen.

³ What God might want from us: How about for us to love and trust him enough to obey his teachings? Jesus' brother wrote about how we respond to the Bible saying:

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”

James, Jesus' brother, writing in James 1:22-24 in the Bible.

⁴ What Jesus said: Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not... ..perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Jesus in Matthew 7:21-24

3. Prayer – Talking to a God you cannot see.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. How much do you pray? Have you ever had an answered prayer?
2. Have you ever had an unanswered prayer? What did you make of that?

A look at the Bible

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself. 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her complaining!'"

Luke 18:1-5 in the Bible

3. Do you think God is unwilling to help us, like the Judge was? What then is Jesus trying to say? What Jesus is saying.⁵
4. Some people struggle to pray because they don't think God cares enough to answer. What causes us to think this way?
5. What would restore your confidence to pray, if you've lost it?

Our Response

Think of some real needs in your life, and pray briefly for them together. One sentence prayers are fine. (Why not try, and see what God does?)

[Video of interest]

- What encouraged you from that story?
- At what point did Aaron begin to feel that things changed for him?
- Do you believe God could do the same for you? Why? / Why not?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God

Thanks that you hear all my prayers, and answer them in the best way possible, with everything considered. Please help prayer to become a natural part of my life.

Today, I'd like to ask you to help... (pray briefly for someone you know with a real need).

Please help me also to... (pray for yourself for one thing you'd like God's help with).

Thank you for hearing my prayers!

In Jesus' name I pray

Amen.

⁵ What Jesus is saying: Jesus is, firstly, saying that we should persevere in prayer like the widow did. Secondly, he is also saying we should do so with confidence, because God is NOT like that judge. God is happy to answer - if we are willing to pray with a bold and persevering attitude.

4. Church – Having friends on the same journey.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Share about a team you were a part of where there was a real sense of teamwork and you loved it.
2. Have you ever faced something very difficult alone? What happened?
3. Have you ever been to a church? What was your experience?

A look at the Bible

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings...and to prayer. ...All the believers were together... ..Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes(*intentionally remembering what Jesus did for them ...) and ate together with glad and sincere hearts...*

*Acts 2:42-47 in the Bible (*explanation)*

4. Looking at the Bible verses, in what ways did their meeting together benefit them?
5. What benefits can you see in meeting in both small and large groups - as compared to just one of these?
6. In what other ways are you aware of church people helping each other?

Our Response

7. If you wanted to last the distance in following Jesus, how important would being part of a Christian team be?
8. Would you be willing to start visiting a church, to find somewhere you could call your 'spiritual home'? Which one and when?

[Video of interest] Make a list of 5 benefits of teamwork.

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God, thanks so much for making us relational. We really enjoy this ability to have and make friends. Please help us to find a Christian community that we can be part of, so we can learn more about you. Help us find Christian friends so we can encourage each other to make the best possible choices in our lives – both in the good times and the challenging times.

We want to know you and serve you well. Help us to do this!

In Jesus' name we pray

Amen.

5. Faith that triumphs life's storms.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Have you ever had a challenge in which you asked God to help, and things changed as a result?
2. Have you ever had a challenge in which you asked God to help, and things didn't immediately change as a result?

A look at the Bible

Let us give thanks to... ..the God from whom all help comes! He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3. Have you ever gone through something really hard – but could see afterwards that you actually became a better person as a result? What happened? How did you change for the better?
4. Can you think of a time when you were able to 'pay it forward'?
5. What do you think is the best way to respond when God doesn't step in to change your difficult circumstances as an immediate answer to your prayer?

Our Response

6. What is happening in your life right now that you can pray about, and learn to trust God with?

[Video of interest] Why do you think it is that some people like Jamie find their faith strengthened as a result of a difficult circumstance, while for others the experience all-but destroys their faith?⁶

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God, thank you that you understand the challenges I face in life, and know me better than I even know myself. I invite you to come into the current challenges I'm facing, and ask you to help them be resolved.

In the process of this, please help me to learn to live with peace in my heart despite these circumstances. Help my faith to grow so that I will become like Jesus when asleep in that boat in the storm, not made fearful, anxious or depressed by the circumstances that were around him.

In Jesus' name I ask this

Amen.

⁶ There are two 'Faith Q&A' videos found at 10daychallenge.co.nz related to the topic of suffering that may be useful.

6. Holiness – The call to live differently.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Think of a time when you got frustrated doing what someone told you to do, when you couldn't see why that thing was needed.
2. Is there a particular person who you'd be willing to do things for, even when you didn't understand why? What is different about them?

A look at the Bible

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
Matthew 20:36-40 in the Bible

3. What does Jesus summarise as the motive behind all of God's instructions?
4. How does our trust and love for a person affect our choice to respect their request? Do you feel God is worthy of your trust and love? Why?
5. Jesus commands us to love everyone. Why should we choose to do that when it could cost us and make our lives more complicated?

1 John 4:19⁷

Galatians 6:9⁸

Matthew 16:26-27⁹

Colossians 3:23¹⁰

Our Response

6. Is there an area of your life where you think what you do might be out of sync with how God wants you to live?
7. If so, are you willing to do something about that, trusting that God has your best interests in mind?

[Video of interest] Kerensa and Matt see the changes in their lifestyle as God's blessing, because they were made just prior to when they became pregnant, and this protected the health of their child. Have you ever had an experience like this in your life?

Can you see God at work in the picture of your life? How?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God, help me to love and trust you enough to obey your commands, knowing that they are for my best. Help me also to change in those areas of my life where I know my attitudes and behaviour are not pleasing to you. Changing is not easy. I'm going to try to improve - but I ask for your help also. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for being a good God. Thank you that you will one day completely fix this world. Thank you for the small part I can play in making this world a better place through the way I choose to live my life right now. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

⁷ 1 John 4:19 'We love because he first loved us.'

⁸ Galatians 6:9 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.'

⁹ Matthew 16:26-27 'What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man (Jesus) is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.'

¹⁰ Colossians 3:23 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.'

7. Love – the call to live for others.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Think about a time when you found it really hard to love a person (please don't mention their name).
2. What do you think is the greatest evidence or test of true love?

A look at the Bible

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven... If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?..."

Jesus speaking, as recorded in Matthew 5:43-46 in the Bible.

3. What is surprising about Jesus' teaching on love? How is it different to the standard of love that most of us would measure ourselves against?
4. How difficult, in your experience, is it to selflessly love someone you don't like - or who has intentionally hurt you?
5. What sort of thing would need to happen in our hearts for us to be able to love others in the way Jesus taught – and to do so consistently?

Our Response

6. Who can you think of that you might need to forgive?
7. Who could you show unmerited love to, just as God has shown unmerited love to us?

[Video of interest] Does forgiving others make sense to you? What are the benefits of choosing to forgive?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me, even though I have done and thought many selfish and wrong things in my life.

I don't deserve your love and forgiveness– but you gave it to me anyway through Jesus, when I asked. Thank you for helping me to understand your love, and for teaching me to love others selflessly just as you love me. Help me to see where to start. Help me to see who I can love and help each day. Help me to make a difference in this world - starting with the lives of those I see every day.

In Jesus name I ask it.

Amen.

8. Mission – A real purpose for life.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Think of a time when you received good news and were really excited as a result.
2. Think of a time when you received such great news that you had to tell everyone about it.

A look at the Bible

A large crowd was traveling with Jesus. A blind man called Bartimaeus heard the crowd while he... "...was sitting by the road begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped and..." had Bartimaeus brought over to him. "What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Teacher, I want to see.' 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road."

Mark 10:46-52 in the Bible

3. Bartimaeus was excited even before he was healed. Why?
4. Why didn't the shouts of the crowd stop him? Have you ever been criticised for something you believe?
5. What do you believe followers of Jesus have to be excited about?

Our Response

6. What good reasons do you see so far in your journey for considering the good news about Jesus to be true? (Check out the 'Faith Q&A' page to hear short answers to common questions if this helps).
7. If you are a follower of Jesus, who would you like to have a conversation with, to encourage them to consider this news?

[Video of interest] What do you think about what this video says, and would you agree that the search for spiritual truth is one of the greatest of all human privileges and quests?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God

Thank you for loving me, even before I knew about you. Thank you for the purpose and hope you bring to my life. Thank you that no task is now pointless, because you see my heart and will reward me according to my motives. Please help me to comprehend all these blessings, so that I will be glad to tell others about what you have done.

In Jesus' name I ask it

Amen.

9. Keeping it real.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Who are some of the people you feel you can most be yourself around? Why?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you had to pretend to be something you are not? How did it make you feel?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you pretended to be something you are not, and enjoyed the benefits?

A look at the Bible

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Luke 21:1-4 in the Bible

4. In what ways did the widow give more?
5. What does this tell us about God, and about what he wants from us?
6. What do you think makes a person great?
7. How do you think our normal view of human greatness might compare to God's? Why do you think God sees humble and serving people as great?

What Jesus said about being great.¹¹

Our Response

8. Jesus calls us to serve others: How do you see yourself doing this?
9. The widow gave everything she had. Could you trust God with everything you have?

[Video of interest] Christianity's distinctive is that our acceptance is based in what God has done for us because he loves us, rather than in what we need to do. How common is unconditional love? How does knowing someone loves you no matter what make you feel?

[Summary video]

Prayer

Dear God

Thank you for your unconditional love.

Help me to trust that you have my best interests at heart. I want to be secure in you so I don't have to pretend. I want to be secure in who you made me to be so I can love others the way you do. I want to be secure in your promises so I can give generously, without fear for myself - like the widow who gave everything to help others. Help me to be the kind of person you want me to be.

In Jesus' name we pray

Amen.

¹¹ What Jesus said about being great: Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man [referring to himself] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20: 25-28 in the Bible

10. Success – It's in completing the race.

[Introduction tutorial video]

Getting started

1. Tell of a time when you were tempted to give up on something really important. What happened?

A look at the Bible

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

Jesus' teaching, as found in Matthew 7:13-14.

2. In the above Bible verse, Jesus describes two paths. What are the basic differences between these two paths?
3. What might motivate a person to take the narrow path, when the broad path was easier to walk on, and everyone else seemed to be quite happy on it?
4. In general, what causes a person to choose a harder path – and likewise, what causes a person to give up on a harder path that they had happily chosen earlier on?

A thought.¹²

Our Response

5. What reasons can you see that make following Jesus worthwhile?
6. What hard choices might you have to make, if you were to follow Jesus?
7. Now that you have nearly completed this 10 Day Challenge, what might the next steps be in your faith journey?

[Video of interest] What are the main points of the Christian message? What is your response to them?¹³

[Summary video]

Prayer

Please pray this prayer only if you feel ready for it. It is the same prayer as is found in 'the message' video.

Dear God,

Thank you for loving me. I admit that I have done wrong things and ask for your forgiveness and help to change.

Thank you that Jesus died on the cross for me. I invite you into my life right now, and commit to follow your path for the rest of my life with your help.

Help me to live a life that pleases you, and to learn to follow what you have said to do in the Bible.

Thank you for all you have done for me. I choose to trust you. From this day onwards I am yours.

Amen.

¹² A thought: Maybe they lost sight of the reasons and rewards that originally led them to choose the harder path.

¹³ The prayer from the video is below.