



Session 1: Footholds for faith

1-8 NOV

ICEBREAKERS

This issue we are considering the power of a new perspective. Look at this optical illusion. What do you see?

www.brainbashers.com/showillusion.asp?72

Why do some people look at creation and see a Creator, and others do not?

KEY THOUGHT

Christianity is a belief that looks at doubts, but from a different perspective of faith. What at first may seem to contradict God's goodness then provides a foothold for us to stand firm.

KEY VERSE

'I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge'
Psalm 73:28

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Does your faith sometimes slip in the face of world and personal events?
2. Why is it important to create opportunities to share testimonies?
3. To what extent do you identify with the quote of Ray Steadman on 3 Nov?
4. What contradictions may cause your soul to battle with God's goodness?
5. Why is true faith not about positivism or negative denial?

6. Do you agree with Dr. Lloyd-Jones on 6 Nov?
7. Is a mature Christian a person with no doubts or one who struggles with doubts?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus cried out in a loud voice... "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' Matt. 27:46

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to open our minds as we study this issue together.
- Pray that our faith will not lead us to deny truth but to resolve and be strengthened by adversity.

Session 2: The problem of comparison

8-14 NOV

ICEBREAKER

Are there ways in which you find yourself comparing yourselves to other people? Perhaps your appearance, career, or the car you drive? How does a new perspective change value?

KEY THOUGHT

Our value is not based on comparison with others but the value that Jesus puts upon us, so we have no basis for either superiority or inferiority and envy.

KEY VERSE

'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways my ways, declares the LORD' Isa. 55:8

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Do you find it difficult to express negative emotions?
2. What does our perplexity reveal about God and His ways?
3. How can perplexity produce faith instead of despair?
4. How can prosperity impact spirituality?
5. To what extent is our consumerist society based on comparison and envy?
6. Compare the value systems of a Christian and non-Christian.

7. How have the Psalms encouraged and helped you?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes'
Isa. 11:3

PRAYER POINTERS

- Confess any attitudes of comparison of superiority or envy.
- Thank God that you need not compare yourself with others because you are totally loved.



Session 3: The power of words

15-22 NOV

ICEBREAKER

How have the words of others affected you?

8. How can we please people without becoming a people pleaser?

KEY THOUGHT

God has given us the ability to express our thoughts through words, but this must be done selectively in ways that will not hurt or destroy others.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life' John 6:63

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray like David that God will keep a guard on your mouth.
- Pray that God will give you the wisdom of 'selective expression'.

KEY VERSE

'The tongue has the power of life and death' Prov. 18:21

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How comfortable are you starting where people are, instead of where you would like them to be?
2. Are you a person who speaks before thinking or thinks before speaking?
3. Does your tongue control you or do you control your tongue?
4. How do you deal with powerful emotions?
5. Do the people in your culture tend to share their feelings appropriately?
6. Are you a person who acts before thinking, thinks before acting, or just thinks without acting?
7. Do you find the advice of Dr Lloyd-Jones helpful on 21 Nov?

Session 4: Spiritual mountaineering and Christian fellowship

23 NOV - 2 DEC

ICEBREAKER

Have you been to any Christmas ice skating rinks? Did you slip?

Do any personal or world events cause your faith to slip?

7. How has meeting with other believers changed your perspective?

8. List the benefits of Christian fellowship.

KEY THOUGHT

Some issues and life experiences may cause our faith to slip, but God will help us stand firm. Christian fellowship will help us climb higher in our level of faith and trust in God.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord' Eph. 2:21

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for your own church and the Church worldwide to faithfully represent the glory of God.
- Pray for those who might be slipping in their faith.

KEY VERSE

'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another' Heb. 10:25

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How do you stop yourself from sliding into negativity and doubt?
2. How have trials of faith strengthened you?
3. Discuss Selwyn's last sentence on 25 Nov. Is it really better to stay with pain?
4. Why do we settle for incomplete answers?
5. Is your faith strong enough to live with God's mysteries?
6. How has going to church regularly helped you?



Session 5: A Scriptural perspective of life

3-12 DEC

ICEBREAKER

Watch:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEjDiMjKVRo

What is your favourite Bible passage and why?

KEY THOUGHT

A lack of Scriptural understanding will produce a lop-sided view of life and spirituality. Conversely, when we know and understand Scripture, our thinking will have a new godly perspective.

KEY VERSE

'But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD'
Micah 4:12

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How does reading the Bible impact you?
2. What may cause people to neglect Christian fellowship?
3. Do you tend to think naturally or spiritually?
4. Why can we be spiritually confused?
5. How can seeing life whole prevent inner turmoil?
6. How may some physical conditions reflect inner conflict?
7. Why is logic and the intellect helpful but may be ultimately dangerous?
8. How have the Scriptures helped you see life as a whole?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it was written'
Luke 4:16-17

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for God to open your eyes as you study the Scriptures.
- Pray for a holistic 'whole' view to transform your thinking and understanding.

Session 6: A new perspective of death

13-19 DEC

ICEBREAKER

What faith-filled songs would you like at your funeral?

KEY THOUGHT

Although some people may seem to be in control and have it all, without Jesus their end will be destruction - whereas we can be certain that a believer will enter paradise and the joy of the Lord.

KEY VERSE

'Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction' Matt. 7:13

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why might people exchange a glorious future for an ungodly present?
2. How does seeing the bigger picture cure envy?
3. How do you feel about death?
4. How does the truth of eternal judgment change your attitude towards others?
5. Do you sometimes feel God has lost control?
6. How aware are people of their fate after death?
7. What is an eternal perspective of earthly rulers?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above"'
John 19:11

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for those who have authority over us in line with 1 Tim. 2:1-2.
- Pray that we will not be blinded by power or wealth but see things from God's eternal perspective.



Session 7: A new perspective of our inner world

20-25 DEC

ICEBREAKERS

Search for 'Silent monks singing hallelujah' on YouTube and watch the video - just for fun! Which is your favourite aspect of Christmas (concerts, food, family, tree, carols etc)? Do you regularly check your Christmas spending or weight to avoid problems?

KEY THOUGHT

Just as a physical examination reveals flaws that are to be corrected (through diet, exercise, etc), the purpose of a spiritual examination is not rejection but correction.

KEY VERSE

'A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup' 1 Cor. 11:28

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Do you agree with Socrates' famous dictum, 'the unexamined life is not worth living'?
2. Would Dr Lloyd-Jones consider the modern church far too healthy spiritually?
3. Are you a 'heart person' driven by emotions, or a 'head person' who thinks more logically?
4. How do Scriptures change our thinking, which changes our behaviour?
5. Why may people be locked in to negative feelings of guilt and self-condemnation?
6. Share how God has guided you in protection,

direction, provision and restoration.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?' John 8:46
'the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me' John 14:30

PRAYER POINTERS

- Confess any flaws to God and ask Him to correct any wrong attitudes.
- Thank God for the birth of Jesus as Saviour and Emmanuel - God with us.

Session 8: A new perspective of worship and intimacy with God

26-31 DEC

ICEBREAKER

What has most impacted you during our studies of Psalm 73 and how will you change as a result?

KEY THOUGHT

As we draw near to God we will experience His strength, encouragement and intimacy that will transform us into the image of His dear Son (see Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

KEY VERSE

'Come near to God and he will come near to you' James 4:8

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Would you say that understanding is a pre-requisite of worship?
2. How do you focus on God Himself, rather than His blessings?
3. How has the Lord been like a Rock of strength and support to you?
4. How do we stay close to God?
5. How strong are your two 'heartbeats' of Christian life?
6. What are the key points of Psalm 73?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me' John 16:32

PRAYER POINTERS

- Praise God that He is your Creator, Rock, Father, Friend, Provider, Saviour and True Love.
- Pray that you will incorporate the lessons of Psalm 73 into your transformed life.