



Session 1: Balancing our words and deeds

1-13 SEP

ICEBREAKER

Briefly review the life of a great social reformer such as Shaftesbury, Fry, Wilberforce or Muller.

KEY THOUGHT

Jesus is the Word become flesh. God's message was incarnated in a Messenger whose combined words and deeds exactly represented God. We, too, must be people of words and action.

KEY VERSE

'... let us stop just saying we love people; let us really love them, and show it by our actions.'
1 John 3:18 (TLB)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How may your strongest qualities be a source of weakness?
2. Review Graham Kendrick's poetic song, 'Meekness and Majesty'. What are your thoughts?
3. Why was King Midas unbalanced? (Search the internet for more information.)
4. Why may change be painful but necessary?
5. Contrast what hangs on a Christmas tree and an apple tree. How does each increase?
6. Are your words and actions in balance?
7. Is faith alone enough for salvation?

8. Why did God send the Word, His Son, when He had already sent His written Word?
9. How can actions either invalidate or validate our words?
10. Why are words of love alone inadequate to convince someone of our affection?
11. What do you need to do to prepare your net for some of God's fish?
12. How can you overcome any barriers to sharing your faith?
13. Why is it not possible to become spiritually balanced through self-effort?
14. What could your group do practically to represent Christ? For example, visit any new or sick neighbours with a small gift, collect or fund raise for a special project at home or overseas etc.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... Jesus of Nazareth ... was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.'
Luke 24:19

PRAYER POINTERS

- Ask God to reveal your areas of weakness and for His help to overcome them.
- Pray for boldness and opportunities to share the gospel.
- Ask God to show you how to express your love and faith in practical ways.

Session 2: Balancing our hearts and minds

14-20 SEP

ICEBREAKER

Do you make decisions based on logical conclusions or gut instincts? Give examples.

KEY THOUGHT

We need to develop in all areas of life or else we will become unbalanced. This is especially true in the realm of the emotions and the intellect, where we need both to feel and think deeply in order to be mature and respond to situations appropriately.

KEY VERSE

'... your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'
Philippians 4:7

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. How can Scripture develop both the intellect and the emotions?
2. How can we love God with our minds?
3. How can thinking glorify God? (See Psalm 8.)
4. Why may our emotional problems be a result of problems in the way we think?
5. Do any emotions scare you?
6. Which of the four ways do you normally handle emotions?
7. Is it wrong to deny negative emotions?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.' 1 Peter 2:23

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray that you may be able to fully express your emotions in appropriate ways.
- Pray that you may be able to love God with all your mind and so think as He has designed you to think.
- Meditate on Psalm 23 and then share your thoughts and emotions.

**Session 3:** Assertiveness and yieldedness

21-27 SEP

ICEBREAKER

Give examples of things which are strong or flexible. What combines both characteristics to maximum effect? For example, a tree bending in the wind.

KEY THOUGHT

As Christians we should be both assertive about our faith and exhibit a yielded attitude to God and man.

KEY VERSES

'Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.' 1 Corinthians 16:13

'Let your yieldingness be known to all men ...' Philippians 4:5 (Moule)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Why may assertiveness appear as aggressiveness?
2. Do you find it hard to voice complaints, and what does that reveal about you?
3. What is the difference between being hurtful and feeling hurt?
4. Do you tend to be non-assertive or do you not want to say?
5. Why may our perspective of life be wrong?
6. Why may religious people tend to be like the Pharisees?
7. Are submission and meekness really servility and weakness?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' Luke 22:42

PRAYER POINTERS

- Ask God for wisdom to know when to be assertive and when to be yielded.
- Pray for there to be a balance in your life between the two.

Session 4: Concern for self and others

28 SEP - 4 OCT

ICEBREAKER

Would you stop to help someone in trouble, especially if you were in a hurry and it was raining? For example, a breakdown on a motorway.

KEY THOUGHT

Spiritual maturity involves a concern for the growth of others as well as our own growth.

KEY VERSE

'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.' Philippians 2:3-4

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Do you need an appointment with the Divine Optician to take an 'I' test?
2. What is the remedy for self-deception?
3. Why do we avoid facing up to what is going on inside us?
4. Why are motives more important than actions?
5. Is concern for the maturity of others an accurate indicator of our own maturity?
6. How can Christ's energy flow through us?
7. Is Christianity an individual faith or a collective faith?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.' John 17:19

PRAYER POINTERS

- Allow the Holy Spirit to search you and reveal any self-centredness.
- Ask God to give you burdens for the maturity of others.
- Choose someone you know and pray regularly for their spiritual growth.

**Session 5: Balancing the old and the new**

5–11 OCT

ICEBREAKER

Do you prefer classical or rap, steak or stir-fry, Bournemouth or Barbados, abacus or calculator, letters or txt, morris dancing or break dancing, gramophone or mp3 player, church organ or church guitar and drums?

KEY THOUGHT

The Christian faith requires us to both maintain tradition and be innovative in order that we can fully represent our ageless God in our modern culture.

KEY VERSE

'He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.'" Matthew 13:52

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What should we be conservative about and what should we be radical about?
2. How would you overcome objections to the accuracy of the Bible?
3. How can the Bible still be relevant thousands of years after it was written?
4. Should the Lord's Prayer be recited in schools?
5. How can your church be more attractive to a modern youth culture?

6. How can the old embrace change and the young embrace tradition?
7. What old traditions and new innovations do you enjoy in your Christian life?
8. Should we continually introduce new songs into church services? (See Exodus 15:1; Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Rev. 5:9.)

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.' Matthew 5:17

'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' John 13:34

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for there to be a balance in your own attitudes towards old and new.
- Pray for a unity of purpose and heart between different people and groups in your church.
- Ask God to give church leaders wisdom in their decisions.

Session 6: Balancing trusting and trying

12–18 OCT

ICEBREAKER

How does a farmer sowing seed both try and trust? Do you tend to be a trier or a truster?

KEY THOUGHT

To truly follow Christ requires both trust and action; it is not a choice between the two.

KEY VERSE

'... I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.' 1 Corinthians 15:10

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Are trusting and trying opposites or complementary?
2. Why may impatience be dangerous?
3. Do your prayers reflect trust or negotiation?
4. Why does an unanswered prayer not mean a lack of God's interest or activity?
5. Why may action be a form of trust?
6. Why may patience be dangerous?
7. What have these studies revealed about your own approach to Christianity?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'" John 5:19

PRAYER POINTERS

- Commit yourself to God and to doing His will.
- Ask God to show you how you could be more balanced in the area of trusting and trying.

**Session 7: Balancing experience and expression 19–23 OCT****ICEBREAKERS**

- See how long people can hold their breath.
- Use a visual aid that holds something but which remains contained – for example, show the blank screen of a laptop when talking about the photos of a holiday, or try to pour drinks from an unopened bottle or carton etc. Then offer chocolates from an empty box. The first is an example of fullness without expression; the second is giving out where there is nothing to give!

KEY THOUGHT

Like breathing when we inhale and exhale, experience and expression are meant to be different aspects of the same action in our spiritual life. One without the other leads to death.

KEY VERSES

'Freely you have received, freely give.'

Matthew 10:8

'... what I have I give you.' Acts 3:6

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What is the difference between a balanced Christian and a barmy Christian?
2. What do we need to receive if we are to flourish spiritually?
3. How may your personality affect your spiritual life both positively and negatively?
4. How can we let out the Holy Spirit?
5. Do laws still apply under a gospel of grace?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'... I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.' John 8:28

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for a balance between experience and expression in your life.
- If you spend so much time with others that you do not have enough time with God and His Word, set aside periods to read, pray and meditate.
- If you spend too little time in expression, pray for boldness and determination to be more expressive about your faith.

Session 8: Balancing truth and love**24–31 OCT****ICEBREAKER**

Should thieves, murderers and other criminals be punished, let off with a warning or simply ignored? How would your response correlate to your own child's misdemeanours and discipline in the home? Read Hebrews 12:7–11.

KEY THOUGHT

Love must never ignore truth and vice versa.

KEY VERSE

'... speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.' Ephesians 4:15

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Rewrite into your own words the phrase, 'speaking the truth in love'.
2. Would you report your own child's criminal activities?
3. Describe how a loving Christian would talk to another believer about a serious problem in their life.
4. Is lack of love a sin?
5. Is our ability to forgive an indicator of our ability to love?
6. Do you have a tendency to overlook error in the interests of love?

7. What is a Christian? How do we differentiate between an immature believer and an unbeliever?
8. How do we surrender ourselves to God?
9. What has most impacted you from these studies and how do you intend to change as a result?

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

'I tell you ... unless you repent, you too will all perish.' Luke 13:3

'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.' 1 John 3:16

PRAYER POINTERS

- Pray for discernment so that you truly speak the truth in love.
- Pray the Holy Spirit would instruct you and empower you to be a well-balanced person.