

Session 3: How do Christians use the Bible?

Aim of the session: to explore how Christians today see the Bible and how they use it in their everyday lives, whether on their own or in church or small groups.

Key questions:

- How do Christians see the Bible?
- How do they use it?
- How can I understand what the Bible is teaching me?
- Does it have any relevance for me?

Introduction

Resources: Mobile phones

Question: Who has used a Sat Nav or has GPS on their phone? If any young people do, invite them to take it out and show off its features. Think further: what do/could they use it for? How do they know it can be trusted?

Reflect on some of the ideas, drawing out the following. You might use it because...

- **Teaching** – it offers all kinds of practical information about the roads around you
- **Direction** – it tells you how to get to where you need to go so you won't lose your way and shows you the way if you get lost.

You trust it because...

- **Authority** – it gets its information direct from satellites that can see the bigger picture.
- **Authentication** – The advice is approved by others, including respected driving organizations such as the AA and the RAC.

Starter: Stories from the Saints

Film: Show 'Why bother with the Bible?' found on exploRE TV (www.explore-tv.co.uk). At the end reflect: In which ways is the Bible similar to GPS?

Christians would say that in many ways, the Bible has similar features to your GPS. The apostle Paul writes that: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16) It provides:

- **Teaching** – it helps us understand God, ourselves and the world around us
- **Direction** – it shows how we should think and live in order to have life at its best

And it can be trusted because...

- **Authority** – The Bible is God's word spoken through the writings of this book. Like with Sat Navs, although the voice might sound different the same message comes through loud and clear.
- **Authentication** – People over the years have stood by the reliability of the Bible – from the synods who decided on the canon in the 4th century to heroes of the faith who based their entire lives on what the Bible taught them.

Useful for teaching...

Resources: Flip chart paper; sticky notes; Resource Sheets 1-6.

Reading the Bible and understanding its message is one of the most important parts of Christian worship. Christians read it in communities – either as part of a church service on Sunday or in small groups during the week – and also read it by themselves in private devotional times.

Activity: Break the young people into pairs or groups and give each a different passage from the Bible and some sticky notes. These come from the range of literature found in the Bible across the Old and New Testaments (explored in Session 2).

- **An Old Testament story** – Joshua 1
- **A Psalm** – Psalm 121
- **An extract from a prophecy** – Isaiah 58 (*Suitable for higher ability students*)
- **A story from Jesus' life** – Jesus heals a blind man
- **A parable** – The Prodigal Son (*Suitable for higher ability students*)
- **An extract from one of Paul's letters** – Philippians 4 (*Suitable for lower ability students*)

Invite the young people to think about the following questions in relation to their passage:

- What is God like?
- How might this passage comfort people reading it?
- Is there anything you find difficult when reading it?

Ideas should be recorded on the sticky notes and then mounted on corresponding flip chart paper around the room. (If you want to track which passage each group was studying you may want to colour-code the sticky notes!)

At the end, reflect on some of the ideas discovered and take feedback from the groups.

- How might some of these thoughts and ideas impact every day life for a Christian?
- What is your own response to some of these ideas? What questions are you left with?

Useful for training in righteousness...

Resources: Resource Sheet 7

Every day we make decisions about what we do and say. But how do we make them? Christians would say that God has a 'right way' (*righteousness*) and the Bible offers explicit guidance and guiding principles to help people go God's way in the different situations they face. These might be found through:

- Some of the **laws** and **rules** written in the Old Testament – for example, the Ten Commandments
- The **example** of some of the heroes of the Old and New Testaments
- The **life and teaching of Jesus** (WWJD – What would Jesus do?)
- The **teaching** of the apostles (e.g. Paul) in the New Testament letters.

Activity: Number the young people in the groups from the last activity 1 to 4 (or 5, etc). Then put all number 1s in a group together, 2s, etc. so that all young people are in a new group.

Invite them to discuss the scenarios found on Resource Sheet 7 in turn. Each person has a choice over what they do next – in a relationship, with how they spend their time and money. Some choices are even more critical.

Discuss together: Based on some of the passages looked at in the last section, and your own knowledge of what the Bible teaches, what would you say to these people – to comfort them or to guide them in what they should do next?

Final reflection

The session opened by comparing the Bible to a Sat Nav. Invite the young people to reflect:

- What symbol or image would you use to depict how a Christian might see the Bible? (Draw it or write about it.)
- Do *you* see the Bible this way?
- What gives you comfort and guidance in your life?