

SHARING FAITH



A short course for parishes in
sharing faith

Mission and Development Team

 The Diocese of
Peterborough

Sharing your Faith - Foreword



Thank you so much for being willing to lead this course.

I believe it can be a great blessing, both for the participants themselves, and also for those with whom they share their faith.

God seems to work in different ways at different times. The age of great evangelistic rallies and world-renowned evangelists seems to be over. Instead, we are now in a time when most people who come to faith in Christ do so as a result of witness, faith-sharing, by family or friends. A major task for us as church today is to equip our members to share their faith. By leading this course, you are enabling that to happen.

Bless you.

+ Donald

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Sharing your Faith – Introduction

This 3 session course is designed for parishes to use with small groups. Its aim is to build confidence in sharing our Christian faith, with friends, family, neighbours, work colleagues and new acquaintances – wherever we find ourselves.

Each session is 90 minutes, so it is easy to fit into a house-group session, a coffee morning, a Mothers' Union meeting, a team training session, a PCC meeting. It can also be used with those new to the Christian faith. There are prayer and action points between each session.

It explores :

- the importance of our individual and communal Christian experience
- the barriers we may experience in sharing faith
- a variety of ways of expressing our faith story
- examples from the Bible of sharing faith
- difficult questions we may face
- today's current affairs from a Christian perspective
- opportunities for sharing faith

From the start, participants are **invited to pray** for opportunities to share their faith, and to pray for particular people they know.

The course prepares the participants to **have a go at sharing their faith**, in a safe small group setting, in Session 2. Our experience is that this builds confidence significantly in those who take part – confidence in their Christian experience, their ability to share it, and above all, confidence in what God has done and can do through them.

All the materials needed can be received by email and printed, or a hard copy is available from the diocesan office at Bouverie Court in Northampton.

Sharing your Faith – Introduction

There are leaders' notes, a participants' booklet and a few handouts.

The course intentionally does not use any technology, for ease of use in a variety of parish settings. **Approximate timings are indicated.** They are quite tight, and you may prefer to have a two hour session, with a slightly longer midway break. Alternatively you may wish to run it as a **four session course**, for which there is a draft running order in the 'Outline of the Course' section.

The materials are designed to be used by anyone, including those who are not familiar with leading sessions of this sort. So there are lots of directions and suggested prayers. Please feel free to adapt the sessions, as works best for you.

We wish you all every blessing as you use this course in your church.

Liz Holdsworth & Linnet Smith

Mission & Development Team

Sharing your Faith – Outline of the Course

Suggested running order & timings for a 3-session course

(90 minutes per session)

Session 1.

- 5 Welcome & Overview
 - 5 Group Agreement & Prayer
 - 15 Scenarios and statements
 - 15 Why is it difficult?
 - 5 Break
 - 5 The importance of your Christian story.
 - 18 Drawing an overview of your life.
 - 15 Preparing for sharing your story
 - 5 Introduce Homework:
 - 2 Ending
-

Session 2.

- 5 Welcome / Prayer / Recap previous session / Feedback on homework
 - 5 Key facts about the Christian faith
 - 35 Time to share your faith in a small group of three.
 - 5 Break
 - 5 How was the experience of sharing?
 - 10 How did Jesus do it?
 - 10 Team Quiz: The Kingdom of Heaven is like
 - 7 What modern day images can we use?
 - 5 Introduce Homework:
 - 3 Ending
-

Session 3.

- 5 Welcome / Prayer / Recap previous session
- 8 Feedback on homework – What is Paul doing in each passage?
- 5 Reframing
- 7 Responding in different situations
- 5 What is the gospel / the Good News of Jesus?
- 15 The Bridge illustration. Having a go in pairs.
- 5 Break
- 15 Answering difficult questions
- 15 What are the big issues in the world today?
- 5 Conclusion
- 5 Ending - possible follow-up ideas & closing prayer

Sharing your Faith – Outline of the Course

Suggested running order & timings for a 4-session course
(90 minutes per session)

Session 1.

- 5 Welcome & Overview
 - 10 Group Agreement & Prayer
 - 15 Scenarios and statements
 - 15 Why is it difficult?
 - 10 Break
 - 10 The importance of your Christian story.
 - 18 Drawing an overview of your life.
 - 5 Introduce Homework:
 - Read Bible passages** - Stephen in Acts 6-7; Philip & the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 : 26-40; Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2
 - Pray** for opportunities to share your faith, and for particular people you know, with whom you would like to share your faith.
 - 2 Ending
-

Session 2.

- 5 Welcome / Prayer / Recap previous session
 - 10 Feedback on Bible reading and prayer
 - 10 What are the key facts of the Christian faith?
 - 15 How did Jesus do it?
 - 10 Break
 - 13 Team Quiz: The Kingdom of Heaven is like
 - 10 What modern day images can we use?
 - 10 Preparing for sharing your story
 - 5 Introduce Homework:
 - Prepare your story** – to share in a group of three next time.
 - Continue to Pray** for opportunities to share your faith, and for particular people you know, with whom you would like to share your faith.
 - 2 Ending
-

Sharing your Faith – Outline of the Course

Session 3.

- 5 Welcome / Prayer / Recap previous session
 - 5 Feedback on how the group got on with the homework.
 - 35 Time to share your faith in a small group of three.
 - 10 Break
 - 15 How did Paul do it?
Read these Bible passages involving St Paul. What is happening in each one? *(see Session 2 Feedback on homework notes)*
Acts 16: 29-34 The jailer
Acts 19: 1-8 Paul in Ephesus
Acts 19: 8-10 In the synagogue
Acts 17: 16, 22-31 Paul in Athens
Colossians 4: 2-6 Paul to the Colossians
 - 5 Reframing
 - 8 Responding in different situations
 - 5 Introduce Homework:
Continue to Pray for opportunities to share your faith, and for particular people you know, with whom you would like to share your faith.
Find a newspaper or magazine article that illustrates an important issue in the news or in today's society. Bring it to our next session.
 - 2 Ending
-

Session 4.

- 5 Welcome / Prayer / Recap previous session
- 5 Feedback on prayer and finding articles.
- 8 What is the gospel / the Good News of Jesus?
- 15 The Bridge illustration. Having a go in pairs.
- 10 Break
- 15 Answering difficult questions
- 20 What are the big issues in the world today?
- 5 Conclusion
- 5 Ending & possible follow-up ideas
- 2 Closing Prayer

Sharing your Faith – Outline of the Course

Key to the notes :

Black type indicates the leader's input

Directions are in *italics*

Red is for activity

Green is for feedback or reflection

Timings are indicated in brackets

What you will need :

In the pack: **Copy of the leader's notes**

A booklet for each participant

Handouts

In addition:

A4 folder for each person

(optional, but useful if people want to keep the handouts)

Bibles

Pens and paper

Some sheets of A3 paper

(to cut into three strips – one strip for each participant)

An A4 sheet of card for each person *(cut into 6 postcard size pieces)*

Some rough paper for the team Bible quiz

A photograph/picture to illustrate reframing (see notes for Session 3)

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

You will need :

Leader's notes

Copies of : HANDOUT 1 Scenarios & Statements

HANDOUT 2 Barriers to sharing faith

Participants' booklets

A3 paper (*cut into long strips, 3 from each sheet, one per person*)

This is for participants to draw their timeline horizontally, and mark on it significant life events and encounters with God. You may wish to prepare your own beforehand, to use as an illustration.)

An A4 sheet of card for each person (*cut into 6 postcard size pieces*)

The timings are suggested, please feel free to expand them as necessary for a longer session.

(5 mins) **Welcome**

Overview of the course:

- Three sessions of 90 minutes each, with some 'homework' in between.
- Opportunity to think about our own experience of God and faith
- To consider what might hold us back in sharing our faith
- To prepare how we might share our faith story
- To practise sharing our faith in a small group in a safe space
- To pray for people we know, and opportunities to share with them
- To consider Christian responses to issues in the world today

(5 mins) **Group agreement**

I hope we will all feel able to share the learning we gain from our time together as a group. As we will be sharing some deep things from our personal experience, it will be helpful to agree how we are going to handle that.

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

To make this a safe space for everyone, I invite you to agree to :

- hold confidentially anything that others share within the sessions,
- not to initiate conversations afterwards with others about their story, unless they do so about themselves,
- be open to learning from others' experiences but not seek to 'fix' others people's issues.

May I take a quick show of hands to indicate your willingness to work with that? Thank you.

Short Prayer *(whatever is appropriate for your group)*

Eg. Father God, thank you for gathering us here, and for the opportunity to talk about sharing our faith, in a safe space. Thank you for all you mean to us, as our Father in heaven, for all that Jesus has done for us and for the whole of creation, and for the presence and comfort of your Holy Spirit. Help us to learn from one another, and above all, to learn from you.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

(10 mins) **Scenarios and Statements**

There are lots of opportunities in everyday life to share our faith in different ways. However, we don't always feel prepared, when they arise. Let's look at some scenarios, and think about what we might say.

*Give out copies of **HANDOUT 1**.*

*Invite someone to read out each scenario, and invite people to **discuss possible responses**. **Invite feedback**.*

Eg. "Yes it is, isn't it? But I believe in a God who is in charge and I find that prayer helps me to cope even in this messy world."

*Move the group on to the second side of the handout, and invite them, in pairs, to have a go at **responding to the statements there**.*

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

(5 mins) *Draw the group back together, and:*

- *invite feedback on their ideas of what they might say.*
- *ask how they might feel in that situation.*
- *affirm them for having a go.*
- *assure them that they don't have to 'argue' anyone into faith – simply say what is true for themselves.*

It is difficult but it is possible!! We can do it (the Lord being our helper).

(10 mins) **Why is it difficult?**

There are lots of things that might hold us back from sharing our faith.

*In pairs, have a look at **HANDOUT 2**, which lists some barriers to sharing faith. Which ones chime with you? Are there others not listed there?*

Invite feedback from the whole group.

(5 mins) **Things that make it easier**

We are all in the same boat! But there are things that can make it easier :

1. Prayer for God's help as we step out in faith
2. Prayer for particular people
3. Asking God for opportunities.
4. Asking God for courage to take the opportunities.
5. Confidence in the story we are sharing

Pause for a short prayer, such as :

"Father God, thank you for opportunities to share our faith. Help us to trust in you, so that we might have courage and not be held back by the barriers we have discussed. – but have confidence in you and in the story we have to share. In Jesus' name, Amen."

5 minute break

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

(5 mins) The importance of your Christian story

For all human beings, our life story and our identity are closely linked.

As Christians our identity is bound up with God's story – who he is, what he has done for us, and his big plan for the whole of creation.

The story of our life will illustrate those in different ways, and will include our response to him. It will involve God as:

- Creator and Father
- Jesus, our Saviour, Brother and Friend
- the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide

So when we talk to others about our faith, there are **three stories** going on – ours, God's and the other person's.

Christians come in all shapes and sizes, and we may use different vocabulary from each other, to describe our experiences of God. That's fine. *"We all have a role without needing a personality transplant."*

We may feel that we don't have much to share, compared with others who may seem more confident. But be encouraged – although we share a huge amount in common as Christians, it is said *'it takes a whole world to know Jesus'*. In other words, no-one has walked in your shoes except you, and you have experiences with God, and glimpses of the eternal, that no-one else has. Your faith story is precious and unique, and of immense value in God's hands, in his world.

Be assured, you are exactly where you need to be to share your faith. The best place to witness to God is from within our existing contexts, rather than from outside. Most people come to faith through knowing and talking to a Christian friend. *"Hear the music of the gospel through relationships."*

We share our faith because we love God and we love others – and because he loved all of us first. We don't need to manipulate our relationships with others to do this – we are simply who we are, because God has loved, forgiven and accepted us. **Sharing our faith becomes part of a natural outward expression of our inner identity and security in God.**

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

(5 mins) **Drawing an overview of your life**

It can be helpful to have an overview of our whole life story.

It can remind us of times when we were aware of God at work in our lives.

It can also help us identify illustrations we can share with others.

We're going to do this on strips of paper – one for everyone – spares in case you need more than one go! Draw your timeline, from birth to the present day. Mark on it significant life events, and times when you were particularly aware of God's involvement in your life.

(If you wish to demonstrate, using your own timeline: Here's one I made earlier!)

(10 mins) **Your turn to have a go**

Give out A3 strips of paper. Each person works on their own.

(3 mins) **Invite some feedback on the experience of doing this.**

Eg. Was it helpful and why? (But don't push people to share the content of their timeline unless they are clearly willing to do so).

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

Preparing for sharing your faith story

(5 mins) *Invite the group to do a quick brainstorm :*

What is your favourite Bible story or Bible verses, and why?

Take brief feedback

In preparing what we would like to say, it is worth thinking about:

What aspects of the gospel are particularly significant for you?

What are the significant events?

Who are the significant people in your faith journey?

(10 mins) **There are lots of different ways to share your**

- **faith – through our lifestyle, actions and work.**

We're going focus on talking about our faith, and consider six possible ways. As we do, see which one might be most helpful for you :

- **linear story** – an account of events in the order they happened, taking an overview of your life
- **conversion experience** – focusing on the particular time in your life that you became a Christian. *(Note: some people are not able to pinpoint this, if they have been brought up as Christians, or for other reasons – conversion is often a process rather than a specific moment. It is important to explain this, and to encourage people to have confidence in whatever way they have come to Christ.)*
- **specific illustration** – choose one example from your story that illustrates something about God.
- **contrast before and after** – what difference has being a Christian made to your life?
- **something that's important to you today** – a current example, perhaps an answer to prayer, or something that God has put on your heart, that illustrates his nature.
- **a Christian perspective on a contemporary issue** – a perspective on how Jesus might respond to issues in the news today.

Buzz with a neighbour – which resonates with you?

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

(5 mins) **Introduce** HOMEWORK

1. Read these Bible passages for an overview of the Gospel message. Try to identify key facts about the Christian faith in these passages.

His face was like the face of an angel - **Stephen in Acts 6-7**

Go south to the road **Philip & the Ethiopian eunuch in
Acts 8 : 26-40**

These are not drunk as you suppose - **Peter at Pentecost in
Acts 2.**

2. Prepare your story

You can use one of the approaches we have discussed, or one of your own.

- There are different ways of recording and expressing your story to help you remember – timeline, storyboard, spider diagram, key images, passages from the Bible, prompt cards.

Give out 6 blank postcards to each person, to write on and use if they wish, as prompt cards.

- In the next session, you will have the opportunity to share your faith for up to ten minutes (including time for questions) with two other people.

Pray for opportunities to share your faith, and for particular people you know, with whom you would like to share your faith.

(2 mins) **Ending**

Thank everyone for their contributions to the session.

Sharing your Faith – Session 1

Short closing prayer

Eg. Heavenly Father, thank you for our group, and for all the rich, diverse ways we have encountered you in the course of our lives. Help us to have confidence in what we know of you, and in what Jesus has accomplished on the Cross for us. Help us to be open to the leading of your Spirit, wherever we find ourselves in the coming days.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

You will need :

Bibles

Pens & rough paper (*for participants to use in the Quiz*)

(5 mins) **Welcome & short prayer**

Eg. Father God, thank you for all the blessings you have showered upon us through the course of our lives, and those you have brought to mind as we have prepared for today. Help us to have confidence in the unique faith story you have given each one of us, and above all to know that we are always held in your saving love. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Recap of previous session: scenarios and statements, barriers to sharing faith, importance of our Christian story, drawing an overview, six ways of expressing your faith story.

Feedback on homework

- How was the experience of preparing your faith story?
-

(5 mins) **Key facts about the Christian faith**

From your reading of the passages about Stephen, Peter and Philip, what are some key facts about the Christian faith? **Invite ideas.**

These are some of the main ones to flag up from these passages :

- God is at work in human history
- God speaks to people and guides them by his Spirit
- Humans have rebelled against God
- The Old Testament speaks of Jesus
- Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead
- Many people witnessed Jesus was alive again after his death
- Christians believe in forgiveness for sins, through what Jesus has done

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

(35 mins) Time to share your faith

Divide the group into threes. Each person has up to 10 minutes to share something of their faith / Christian story, with another person in their group, with the third person silently observing. The listener can ask questions for clarification and the observer can make comments at the end of the 10 minutes before the roles change. The listener is seeking to understand the story, the observer to affirm the speaker, and offer helpful feedback for development, e.g. was there any churchy 'jargon' being used?

Stress that feedback at the end of the 30 minutes to the larger group will be around how it felt to be in each role, and not to share any critique beyond the three participants in your group.

Time to share your faith in groups of three

Indicate to the whole group the end of each ten minute slot, to keep the groups on track time-wise

5 minute break

(5 mins) How was the experience of sharing?

Take brief voluntary feedback – on the *experience* of doing it, not the content.

Eg. How did it feel? What were the challenges as the speaker?

What did you learn?

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

(10 mins) **How did Jesus do it?**

Listening and asking questions

Invite people to look up the three Bible passages below:

Matthew 9: 27-30 Jesus healing the blind

Matthew 20: 29-34 Two blind men

Luke 24:13-35 Jesus on the road to Emmaus

What did Jesus say in each case?

Jesus using appropriate responses

Invite people to look up the three Bible passages below:

Matthew 19: 16-26 **The Rich Young Ruler** - a Jew needing to get his priorities right

Mark 7:25-30 **The Syro-Phoenician woman** – Jesus didn't make it easy (this encounter also appears in [Matthew 15:21-28](#))

John 4: 1-26 **The woman at the well** – he acknowledged her history but didn't condemn her

How did Jesus handle each encounter? What were the outcomes?

Jesus engages with people in a personal way which is relevant to each one – their situation, what they already know, their motivation and hopes – answering the person as well as their question. When we talk to someone about the gospel, try to be aware of their situation, history, thoughts, feelings – what are they actually asking or saying?

The woman at the well shares her encounter with Jesus – and people come to faith. *Invite someone in the group to read John 4:28-30 and 39-42.*

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

(10 mins) Quiz – The Kingdom of Heaven is like...

Jesus used many images, similes and metaphors to help people understand what God and the Kingdom of heaven are like.

For example - **The Kingdom of heaven is like . . .** three lost things – sheep, coin, son (Matthew 18)

Team quiz – *divide the group into teams, and give each team some rough paper to jot down their answers:*

What other images, similes, metaphors does Jesus use?

Take feedback – inviting each team to give a couple of answers, going round the teams until you run out of ideas.

Suggest others that they may have missed :

Farming and horticulture – sowing & harvesting; fishing net; wheat & weeds; shepherd; workers in the vineyard; mustard seed; vine

Building – wise & foolish builders

Household – lost coin; yeast

Business – masters & slaves; tenants; shrewd manager; buying field; workers in the vineyard; treasure; pearl

Family – 2 sons; lost son

Celebrations – Ten Virgins; Wedding banquet

Religious practice – two people praying at the Temple

Food and drink – bread of life; new wine of the Kingdom

(7 mins) **Modern-day images and analogies for faith**

Can you think of some modern day images that would stimulate people's imagination and understanding?

Faith is like ... God is like Being a Christian is like

Buzz in pairs and feedback

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

Highlight :

- the importance of having a **dynamic, growing faith**, so we have something fresh to share, as well as the great things God has done for us in the past.
 - the place of **faithful improvisation** as we share our faith – finding ways of expressing what we believe and have experienced in ‘word pictures’ that connect with people’s own experience of the world.
-

(5 mins) *Introduce* **HOMEWORK**

1. Read these Bible passages involving St Paul. What is happening in each one?

Acts 16: 29-34	The jailer
Acts 19: 1-8	Paul in Ephesus
Acts 19: 8-10	In the synagogue
Acts 17: 16, 22-31	Paul in Athens
Colossians 4: 2-6	Paul to the Colossians

2. Continue to pray for opportunities to share your faith, and for particular people you know.

3. Find a newspaper or magazine article that illustrates an important issue in the news or in today’s society. Bring it to our next session.

(3 mins) **Ending**

Thank everyone for their contributions to the session, and for all they have shared.

Sharing your Faith – Session 2

Short closing prayer

Eg. Thank you, Lord, for your word, to inform and encourage us. Thank you for the example of all your saints, and their courage in not denying you, even at the cost of their lives. Thank you for the opportunity to share our faith today, and for the story we have to tell. Help us to walk so closely to you, that our faith will overflow into the whole of our lives, in thought, word and deed. For Jesus' sake we pray, Amen.

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

You will need:

Bibles

A couple of newspaper or magazine articles (*in case the group forgets to bring any!*)

HANDOUT 3 - Situations sheet

HANDOUT 4 - Bridge illustration

HANDOUT 5 - Difficult Questions

A photograph or picture to illustrate reframing – ideally a picture that reveals different parts of a story, depending on where you draw the frame. It can be any picture. A good one is Rembrandt's *Prodigal Son* (available on Google images), where you see different people in the story depending on where you draw the frame.

A few blank sheets of paper

(5 mins) **Welcome and short prayer**

Eg. Almighty God, thank you for all the situations in which you place us, and all the people with whom we have contact. Help us as we try to discern the best way to respond, to those who are seeking you, and to those who seem far from you. Help us to remember that nothing is impossible with you, and that you can do far more than we can ever imagine. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Recap of previous session: key facts about the Christian faith; experience of actually sharing our faith in small groups; how did Jesus do it.

(8 mins) **Feedback on homework:**

Invite feedback on each of the passages in turn, asking

What is Paul doing in each one?

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

- Acts 16: 29-34 **The jailer** – Greek seeking to find belief in the right faith
- Acts 19: 1-8 **Paul in Ephesus** – asking the disciples about their experience of God
- Acts 19: 8-10 **In the synagogue at Ephesus** - spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.
- Acts 17: 16, 22-31 **Paul in Athens** – observing the culture and engaging in discussions

Highlight the importance of starting where people are.

*Invite someone to read **Colossians 4:2-6**, slowly and prayerfully:*

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message,

So that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should.

Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders;

Make the most of every opportunity.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Highlight the importance Paul attaches to prayer.

Affirm people in the prayer they have already begun, for opportunities to share their faith, and for particular people – and encourage them to continue, being alert to the prompting of God.

Highlight the importance of seeing ourselves as links in the chain.

We may sow a tiny seed in someone’s life, with a single sentence.

Others may water that seed, and yet others may be there at the harvest, when someone commits their life to Jesus. Every part of that process, every pearl threaded on the necklace, every link in the chain, is important and precious to God.

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

(5 mins) Reframing

Paul was sharing his testimony in different contexts, and, like Jesus, drawing out from his treasure store the appropriate approach for each person or group of people.

Let's think about what this might look like for us.

Introduce the idea of reframing, using your picture to illustrate:

We can reveal different parts of a story by drawing the frame of the picture in different places. This helps us to bring different parts of the story into focus. We can zoom in and pan out, discerning what is appropriate to share with that particular person at that moment.

This requires us to :

- be familiar with our story and our experience of God
- be flexible and adaptable in how we express our story and faith, to meet the people and situations we encounter
- ask ourselves “What are the main points they need to know at this moment?”

We don't need to give the whole of one's faith story in one go, or the whole gospel in one hit.

(7 mins) Responding in different situations

Let's practise responding in a variety of situations. *Give out copies of HANDOUT 3.*

Invite people to pair up, choose a couple of the situations and try out their responses.

Take sample feedback. Affirm people for having a go.

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

(5 mins) **What is the gospel / the Good News of Jesus?**

There may be situations where someone is asking what the Christian faith is really about. You may wish to ask them what impression they already have of this.

Let's think first about what is important to us about God and faith.

Invite the group to brainstorm – ask a member of the group to note down key words / phrases. Summarise these briefly at the end.

(5 mins) **The Bridge illustration – give out HANDOUT 4.**

Now let's think about one simple way of illustrating what is at the heart of the Christian faith, and God's love for humankind. *Explain the Bridge illustration.*

(10 mins) **Having a go at explaining the Bridge illustration to one another**
Divide the group into As and Bs. Pair up As with Bs. Invite the As to have a go at explaining the Bridge illustration to their partner (3 mins). Then ask the As to pair with a different B. This time, the Bs have a go at explaining (3 mins).

5 minute break

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

(10 mins) Answering difficult questions

Divide the group into twos / threes.

Give each group 2 of the difficult questions below (you may wish to have these written on pieces of paper, to give out at this point)

Discuss: What answers might you have to any of them?

Do we need to have answers to them all?

1. Why does God allow suffering?
2. How do I know the Bible is true?
3. I get on well in life – why do I need God?
4. Aren't all religions the same?
5. Hasn't science disproved religion?

(5 mins) **What answers did you come up with?**

What are you going to do when you get stuck?

Give out HANDOUT 5 – some possible answers to difficult questions.

(15 mins) **What are the big issues in the world today?**

Invite people to share briefly what their newspaper / magazine article is about.

Suggest they do it in four sentences! (The amount of time you allow for each person to introduce their article will depend on how many are in the group.)

Invite the group to identify in each case:

- *the gospel value or principle involved*
- *a bible passage, verse or story that is relevant*
- *how Jesus might respond*

*(You may wish to write **VALUE**; **PASSAGE**; **JESUS** on a sheet of paper in the middle of the group, to help keep the focus).*

At the end: Is there anything from your personal faith story which connects with any of these articles?

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

(5 mins) **Conclusion**

It's not about formulas and "getting it right" - the Christian life is not an exam!

It is about:

- Nurturing and deepening our relationship with God as we respond to his love for us. "Be yourself with God for others"
- Praying and asking for opportunities to share our faith and watching for them.
- Asking ourselves: Will what I say make sense to a non-Christian? Does it help them discover the Good News of Jesus?
- Being willing to speak or act – trusting in God, not in our own strength :

Acts 1 : 8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

(5 mins) **Ending**

Thank people for their participation in the course.

If appropriate, discuss any **follow-up ideas**.

This may depend on the nature of your group – whether it is a group that already meets regularly together, or if it is a group gathered especially for this course.

Follow up might include :

- Meeting up again at an agreed point, to share how it has been going, and to pray together.
- People within the group being willing to lead a new group through the course.
- Sharing the course with other leaders in your church, who might wish to run it with their group.

Sharing your Faith – Session 3

- Writing an article for your church magazine or website, on your experience of doing the course, and of having a go at sharing your faith.
- Finding further resources for yourselves, eg. Nicky Gumbel's *Hard Questions*.
- Finding resources to give to others – booklets such as trypraying, weblinks, books or prayers you have found helpful.

Remind everyone of the group agreement on confidentiality regarding others' stories.

Encourage people to continue in prayer, for themselves and for the others in the group.

Closing prayer

Eg. Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of St Paul, sharing his testimony in different places, with different people. Help us to be watchful and prayerful for ourselves, and one another, that you may open a door for our message. May we proclaim it clearly, be wise in how we act, and make the most of every opportunity. May our conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that we may know how to answer everyone, and be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
