



FAITH Pictures

SESSION 1: OPENING THE CONVERSATION



In this session we'll begin by thinking about how we feel about the idea of sharing our faith, and why we might feel uncomfortable or worried about doing so.

Items needed for session: pens, paper, Reasonable and Believable Bubble.



DISCOVER:

Video - Opening the Conversation

- *Question after video: Why do we feel it is important to share our faith?*

Share some ideas together about why members of the group think their faith is worth sharing. If people struggle to find reasons, encourage them that one of the hopes of this course is to open our own eyes more clearly to what God has done in our lives so that we know why we want others to share our faith.



DIVE IN:

- *Question for the group - How easy or difficult do you find the following things to talk about?*

- A favourite food/recipe
- My family
- Politics
- Recent holiday or trip
- TV show
- Job/voluntary work
- Church
- Faith

- Spend some time talking about why you have put certain ones where they are. You don't need to cover all of them, but make sure you cover a couple of trivial ones, as well as church and faith.
- Spend some time in pairs or small groups drawing spider diagrams about what it is about faith that can make it so difficult to talk about. Come back together and see what ideas you have in common. Can you sort them between the following categories?

Follow-up Questions:

- *It's too personal or private*
 - *I wouldn't really know what to say*
 - *I don't have the right to force my faith on anybody else*
 - *I wouldn't feel able to speak intelligently about my faith*
 - *I'm worried or embarrassed about how people will respond*
- Do any of these come up more commonly than others? What is the most common amongst your group?
 - Do any of these change depending on where you are and who you are with? Does being on or offline make a difference? Spend some time exploring these ideas a little and why it might be the case.
 - There are a couple of reasons behind these that mean we might find it difficult to talk about our faith with others. For example, the fact that it is something that is deeply personal to us may mean that others don't want to press too hard because they may feel they will offend us. However deeper than that, many of us have grown up in a world that tells us believing in anything more than what we can see, hear, touch or smell is childish and naive.



GOING DEEPER:

In amongst these ideas are some important ideas about what it means to hold on to a faith in today's world. The activity below is designed to help the group see their own perception as to how open our culture is of a religious worldview, and how we can connect with that to help us communicate our faith more effectively.

- Below you will see the Reasonable and Believable Bubble. The culture we live in has a way of deciding whether ideas are Reasonable and Believable. Think about how the examples below fit onto the Bubble. Some questions to think about as you do are: Are some of them towards the edge of believability? Are some firmly in the middle? What makes you distinguish between them?
- Draw a version of the image below on a large piece of paper for the group to complete together.



REASONABLE & BELIEVABLE

- Unidentified Flying Objects
- Gravity
- The existence of ghosts
- Science can explain everything
- Psychic powers are real
- The Earth is spherical
- Jesus' life and death
- Extraterrestrial life exists somewhere in the universe
- Jesus' resurrection
- Faith is a force for good in the world.
- People have rights

Leaders note: Some of the above may need some unpacking. For example, there is very good historical evidence for the life and death of Jesus, but his resurrection and post-resurrection appearances are a matter of faith. Or the idea of human rights being a very modern idea, and if you were to travel back in time only 100-200 years, people would look at you very strangely for insisting that everyone has rights simply because they exist.

- All things that are outside the Bubble are lumped together into one Unreasonable and Unbelievable category.
- As a group, spend some time thinking about whether you think the people you know would place Christianity inside or outside the Bubble? Why might they do that? How do the group feel about that?

Why does this matter? When we are trying to communicate our faith, we need to start with ideas that are inside the Reasonable and Believable Scale. Which of the ideas below do you think would be good to start with?

- It is good to help people (Christian idea: We believe all people are image bearers of God and therefore intrinsically worthy of help and care).
- It is right to care for the planet (Christian idea: We believe that God created people to be stewards of His creation, and to care for it).
- People deserve second chances (Christian idea: We believe God came to earth as Jesus to give each of us a chance at new life with Him).



DRAW NEAR:

- It is important that we take the things that we have been talking and thinking about to God in prayer. For this course, the prayers at the end of the session will be split into three parts. Feel free to use as many or as few of them as you want, but they are designed to help us see how our faith is more than just what we think.
- It may be helpful to develop a pattern for moving through the parts of the prayer, maybe lighting a candle for each part, or having people pick something to hold onto. These can be useful to give people something to focus on while they are praying, and can help develop a way of praying through this course that people will become familiar with. Spend a few minutes leading the group in prayer around each of the points below.

HEAD - THOUGHT

Are there any ideas that have been challenging, comforting, or completely new to you? Bring these thoughts to mind and spend a moment talking to God about them.

HEART - FEELINGS

What has been the strongest emotion you have felt over the course of the session? What caused it? Is it positive, negative, or are you not sure?

HANDS - ACTIONS

Is there a thing that you feel you want to do as a result of what has been chatted about during the session? Is God telling you something through that? If it feels appropriate, you could ask people to put on a communal piece of paper what they feel this is, but make sure it's clear that they don't have to. If you do this, take a picture of it or save it some other way, and if it feels appropriate, ask next week how this went.

DRAWING IT TOGETHER

If you are comfortable doing so, say the Lord's Prayer together:

*Our Father in Heaven
Hallowed be Your Name
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done
On Earth as in Heaven
Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our sins*

*As we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the Kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
Now and for ever.
Amen*