

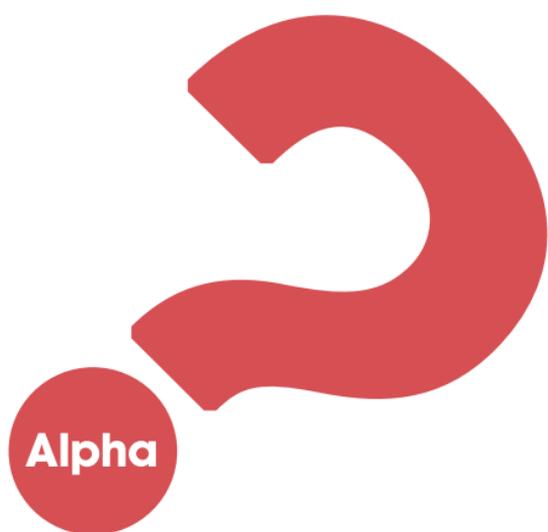


Is
there
more
to life
than
this

Alpha

Is
this
it

Why
am
I here



The *Alpha Guide* is based on *Questions of Life* by Nicky Gumbel

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Session 1

Is there
more to
life
than

this

What, if any, has been your experience of Christianity?

- **Boring?**
- **Untrue?**
- **Irrelevant?**

At the heart of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus Christ.

1. DIRECTION FOR A LOST WORLD

- Questions to ask about life:
 - is there more to life than this?
 - what am I doing on earth?
 - what is the point of life?
 - what is the purpose of my life?
 - where am I heading?

Jesus said, 'I AM THE WAY.'

2. REALITY IN A CONFUSED WORLD

Does it matter what we believe?

- Truth – understood intellectually
- Truth – experienced as a relationship

Jesus said, 'I AM THE TRUTH.'

3. LIFE IN A DARK WORLD

- Created in God's image
- Fallen into sin
- Forgiven in Christ

Jesus said, 'I AM THE LIFE.'

**Jesus said,
'I am the way,
the truth and the life'**

(JOHN 14:6)

- **Boring?** Jesus brings life to the full
- **Untrue?** Jesus claims to be 'the truth'
- **Irrelevant?** Jesus can transform the whole of our lives

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RECOMMENDED READING

What's So Amazing About Grace?

Philip Yancey

The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming

Henri J. M. Nouwen

Does Religion Do More Harm Than Good?

Nicky Gumbel

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Session 2

Who is
Jesus

Did Jesus exist?

- Evidence outside the New Testament about Jesus includes:
 - Tacitus and Suetonius, Roman historians
 - Josephus, Jewish historian
- Evidence within the New Testament

How do we know that what was written down in the New Testament has not been changed over the years?

ANCIENT WRITINGS

Key

Time lapse  = 200 years



Number of copies found

Original work first written



30–310 years

NEW TESTAMENT

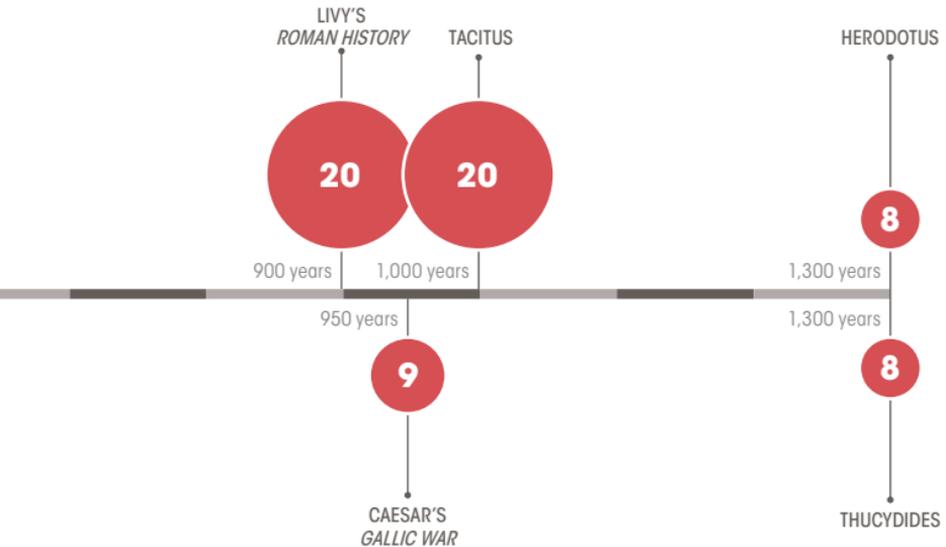
Copies found:

5,000+ Greek

10,000 Latin

9,300 Other languages

WORK	WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPY	TIME LAPSE	COPIES
HERODOTUS	488–428 BC	AD 900	1,300 years	8
THUCYDIDES	c. 460–400 BC	C. AD 900	1,300 years	8
LIVY'S <i>ROMAN HISTORY</i>	59 BC–AD 17	AD 900	900 years	20
CAESAR'S <i>GALLIC WAR</i>	58–50 BC	AD 900	950 years	9–10
TACITUS	AD 100	AD 1100	1,000 years	20
NEW TESTAMENT	AD 40–100	AD 130 (full manuscripts AD 350)	30–310 years	5,000 + Greek 10,000 Latin 9,300 others



Was Jesus fully human?

- He had a human body
 - tired (John 4:6)
 - hungry (Matthew 4:2)
- He had human emotions
 - anger (Mark 11:15–17)
 - love (Mark 10:21)
 - sadness (John 11:32–36)
- He had human experiences
 - temptation (Mark 1:13)
 - learning (Luke 2:46–52)
 - work (Mark 6:3)
 - obedience (Luke 2:51)

**Was he more
than a man,
a great human,
a religious teacher?**

(MATTHEW 16:13-16)

Author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Oxford historian C. S. Lewis wrote:

'A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.' He would either be insane or else he would be 'the Devil of Hell'. 'You must make your choice,' he writes. Either Jesus was, and is, the Son of God, or else he was insane or evil but, C. S. Lewis goes on, 'Let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. We are faced then with a frightening alternative.' Either Jesus was (and is) exactly what he said or else he was insane or something worse. To C. S. Lewis it seemed clear that he could neither have been insane or evil and thus he concludes, 'However strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that he was and is God.'¹

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2. WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE TO SUPPORT WHAT HE SAID?

- His teaching
- His works (John 10:37–38)
- His character
- His fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy
- His conquest of death

3. WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

- **His absence from the tomb**
- Theories:
 - Jesus did not die (John 19:33–34)
 - disciples stole the body
 - authorities stole the body
 - robbers stole the body (John 20:1–9)
- **His presence with the disciples**
- Did they hallucinate?
- Number of appearances
 - 11+ appearances
 - 500+ people
 - six-week period
- Nature of appearances (Luke 24:36–43)
- **Immediate effect**
 - birth and growth of Christian church
- **Effect down the ages**
 - experience of Christians down the ages

RECOMMENDED READING

Mere Christianity

C. S. Lewis

The Case for Christ

Lee Strobel

Orthodoxy

G. K. Chesterton

Jesus is

Judah Smith

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Session 3

Why did Jesus die

Why is the cross the symbol of Christianity?

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'

(JOHN 3:16)

1. THE PROBLEM

'All have sinned ...' (Romans 3:23).

- Results of sin:
 - pollution of sin (Mark 7:20–23)
 - power of sin (John 8:34)
 - penalty for sin (Romans 6:23)
 - partition of sin (Isaiah 59:2)

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2. THE SOLUTION

- 'The self-substitution of God' (1 Peter 2:24)
- Agony of the cross (Isaiah 53:6)

3. THE RESULT

- **Cleansing ...**
 - from the pollution of sin
 - 'God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood' (Romans 3:25)
 - (1 John 1:7)
- **Freedom ...**
 - from the power of sin
 - 'The redemption that came by Christ Jesus' (Romans 3:24)
- **Liberty ...**
 - from the penalty of sin
 - 'justified freely by his grace' (Romans 3:24)
- **Restoration ...**
 - from the partition of sin
 - 'God was ... in Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:19)

He died for you and me (Galatians 2:20).

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RECOMMENDED READING

The Cross of Christ

John Stott

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

Nicky Gumbel

Unreachable

Darrell Tunningley

Mud, Sweat and Tears

Bear Grylls

Why Jesus?

Nicky Gumbel

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Session 4

**How
can
we
have**

faith

'... those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old is gone. A new life has begun!' (2 Corinthians 5:17, New Living Translation)

But experiences vary. Some immediately know the difference, but for others it is more gradual.

- When we receive Christ, we become a child of God
- God wants us to be sure

**'I write these things
to you who believe in
the name of the Son
of God so that you
may know that you
have eternal life'**

(1 JOHN 5:13)

Faith is not a blind leap, but a step forward, based on evidence.

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1. THE WORD OF GOD

We must not only trust our feelings, which can be changeable and may even be deceptive at times, but instead rely on God's promises.

- 'I will come in' (Revelation 3:20)
- 'I am with you always' (Matthew 28:20)
- 'I give them eternal life' (John 10:28)

Faith = taking God's promises and daring to believe them.

2. THE WORK OF JESUS

We cannot earn God's forgiveness, but Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we might be reconciled to God.

- Gift of God (Romans 6:23)
- God loves us and died to prove it (John 3:16)
- He took our sins upon himself (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

3. THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

When someone becomes a Christian, God comes to live inside them by his Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

- **He transforms us from within**
 - our characters (Galatians 5:22–23)
 - our relationships
 - our security
- **He brings a deep personal conviction that we are God's children**
 - (Romans 8:15–16)

Here is a very simple prayer that you can pray and which will be the start of a relationship with God through Jesus:

Lord Jesus Christ,
I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience).
Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong.
Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.
Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift.
Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.
Thank you, Lord Jesus.
Amen.

Session 5

pray

**Why and
how do I**

1. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PRAYER?

- The most important activity of our lives
 - (Ephesians 2:18)
- **To the Father (Matthew 6)**
 - 'to your father' (v.6)
 - 'in heaven' (v.9)
- **Through the Son**
- **By the Spirit**

2. WHY PRAY?

- **Follows the model of Jesus (Mark 1:35)**
 - 'when you pray' (Luke 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1)
- **Develops a relationship with God**
- **Rewards of prayer**
 - peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
 - perspective
 - power
- **Results of prayer (Matthew 7:7-11)**

**'When I pray,
coincidences happen,
and when I don't,
they don't'**

WILLIAM TEMPLE,

THE FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

3. DOES GOD ALWAYS ANSWER PRAYER?

- Yes – an immediate answer
- No – an obvious reason why not
- Wait – for the right timing

4. HOW DO WE PRAY?

A: adoration

C: confession

T: thanksgiving

S: supplication (requests)

• **Model of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13)**

- 'our Father in heaven' (v.9)
- 'hallowed be your name' (v.9)
- 'your kingdom come' (v.10)
- 'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (v.10)
- 'give us today our daily bread' (v.11)
- 'forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors' (v.12)
- 'lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one' (v.13)

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5. WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

- **Always**
 - (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
 - (Ephesians 6:18)
- **Alone (Matthew 6:6)**
 - regular pattern
 - best part of the day (Mark 1:35)
- **With others**
 - (Matthew 18:19)

RECOMMENDED READING

God on Mute

Pete Greig

Too Busy Not to Pray

Bill Hybels

What About Other Religions?

Nicky Gumbel

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Session 6

**Why
how
I
the**

**and
should
read
Bible**

- Uniquely popular
- Uniquely precious
- Uniquely powerful

‘People do not live on bread alone, but on every **word** that comes from the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4).

1. BRINGING REVELATION – GOD HAS SPOKEN

- Bible means ‘book’ – collection of 66 books by 40+ authors over 1500 years
- Inspired: God-breathed

But what about difficulties in the Bible?

- (2 Timothy 3:16–17)
- Useful: a manual for life
 - guidelines for healthy living
 - guidance for good decisions

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2. BUILDING RELATIONSHIP - GOD IS SPEAKING

**'The Bible does
nothing but speak of
God's love for us'**

ST AUGUSTINE

- **To those exploring faith (Romans 10:17, John 20:31)**
- **To those who are Christians**
 - become like Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18)
 - joy and peace in the midst of a storm (Psalm 23:5)
 - guidance (Psalm 119:105)
 - health/healing (Proverbs 4:20–22)
 - defence against spiritual attack (Matthew 4:1–11)
 - power (Hebrews 4:12)
 - cleansing (John 15:3)

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3. HOW CAN WE HEAR GOD SPEAK THROUGH THE BIBLE?

- **Find a Time**
 - plan ahead
 - develop a regular pattern
- **Find a Place**
 - 'a solitary place' (Mark 1:35)
- **Find a Method**
 - ask God to speak
 - read a short passage
 - Bible reading notes
 - Bible in One Year
- Ask yourself:
 - what does it say to me?
 - what does it mean to me?
 - how does it apply to me?
- Respond in prayer
- Put it into practice

'Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice ...' (Matthew 7:24).

RECOMMENDED READING

Why Trust the Bible?

Amy Orr-Ewing

30 Days

Nicky Gumbel

The Bible (The Message is an accessible paraphrase)

NIV Alpha Bible in One Year

Read the daily Bible in One Year commentary by Nicky Gumbel at alpha.org/bioy or download the app from the App Store.

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Session 7

How does God

guide us

Why involve God in the decisions we make?

- **God promises to guide us**
 - (Psalm 32:8)
 - (John 10:3, 4, 27)
- **God has a good plan for our lives**
 - (Jeremiah 29:11)
 - (Romans 12:2)
 - (John 10:10, 15)
- **Jesus sought guidance**
 - (Isaiah 30:1–2)
- **Our attitude needs to be one of humility**
 - ‘I am the Lord’s servant and I am willing to do whatever he wants’ (Luke 1:38, Living Bible)

How does God guide us?

1. COMMANDING SCRIPTURE

- **General will**
 - general instruction for marriage, work, money, children, elderly relatives (2 Timothy 3:16)
- **Particular will**
 - may bring to light a particular verse (Psalm 119:105, 130–133)

2. COMPELLING SPIRIT

'They know his voice' (John 10:3, 4; Acts 16:7)

- **God speaks as you pray (Acts 13:1–3)**
 - the good thought
 - strong impressions
 - feelings

- **Strong desire to do something**
 - 'to will and to act according to his good purpose' (Philippians 2:13)

- **Sometimes he guides in more unusual ways**
 - prophecy, eg Agabus (Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10, 11)
 - dreams (Matthew 1:20)
 - visions/pictures (Acts 16:10)
 - angels (Genesis 18; Matthew 2:19; Acts 12:7)
 - audible voice (1 Samuel 3:4–14)

- **Need for testing (1 John 4:1)**
 - is it loving? (1 John 4:16)
 - is it in line with the Bible?
 - is it strengthening, encouraging and comforting? (1 Corinthians 14:3)
 - does it bring the peace of God? (Colossians 3:15)

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3. COMMON SENSE

'Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle' (Psalm 32:8–9).

- 'Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this' (2 Timothy 2:7)
- 'God's promises of guidance were not given to save us the problem of thinking' (John Stott)

4. COUNSEL OF THE SAINTS

- '... the wise listen to advice' (Proverbs 12:15)
- 'Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed' (Proverbs 15:22)
- 'Make plans by seeking advice' (Proverbs 20:18)

But:

- Who is responsible?
- Whom should we consult?

5. CIRCUMSTANTIAL SIGNS

- 'In your heart you plan your course, but the Lord determines your steps' (Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 37:5)
- Sometimes God closes doors (Acts 16:7)
- Sometimes God opens doors (1 Corinthians 16:9)
- Watch the circumstances but don't put too much weight on them
- Sometimes we need to persevere despite the circumstances

**‘And so after waiting
patiently, Abraham
received what was
promised’**

(HEBREWS 6:15)

- Be patient
- We all make mistakes – God forgives (Joel 2:25)
- God is always working for our good (Romans 8:28)

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Session 8

Who
is the Holy Spirit

For a long time in the church the person and work of the Holy Spirit has been:

- Ignored
 - sometimes a greater concentration on the Father and the Son, but the Holy Spirit is biblical and third person of trinity
- Misunderstood
 - 'Holy Ghost' sounds like an impersonal force. But the Holy Spirit is a person, not an 'it'
- Resisted
 - fear of what he does, but the Holy Spirit is gentle

1. HE WAS INVOLVED IN CREATION

- Bringing order out of chaos (Genesis 1:1–2)
- Giving life to man (Genesis 2:7)

2. HE CAME UPON PARTICULAR PEOPLE AT PARTICULAR TIMES FOR PARTICULAR TASKS

- Bezalel – for artistic work (Exodus 31:1–5)
- Gideon – for leadership (Judges 6:14–16)
- Samson – for strength (Judges 15:14–15)
- Isaiah – for prophecy (Isaiah 61:1–3)

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3. HE WAS PROMISED BY THE FATHER

- The promise of a 'new thing'
 - '... they will all know me' (Jeremiah 31:31–34)
 - 'I will put my Spirit in you' (Ezekiel 36:26–27)
 - 'a river flowing from the Temple' (Ezekiel 47)
 - 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people' (Joel 2:28–29)

However, the prophecies remained unfulfilled for at least 300 years.

With the coming of Jesus there is a great activity of the Spirit.

- But still on a few particular people:
 - John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
 - Mary (Luke 1:35)
 - Elizabeth (Luke 1:41)
 - Zechariah (Luke 1:67)
 - Simeon (Luke 2:25–27)

4. JOHN THE BAPTIST LINKS HIM WITH JESUS

(Luke 3:16)

In Greek 'baptidzo' = to overwhelm, immerse, plunge, drench.

- Jesus, the Spirit-filled man
 - Jesus received power through the anointing of the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Luke 3:22; Luke 4:1, 14, 18)

5. JESUS PREDICTS HIS PRESENCE

(John 7:37–38)

However, he tells them to wait in the city until they are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5, 8; Acts 2:2–4).

- At Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Spirit and received:
 - new languages (Acts 2:4–12)
 - new boldness (Acts 2:14)
 - new power (Acts 2:37–41)

‘When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ... and about three thousand were added to their number that day’

(ACTS 2:37, 41)

We live in the age of the Spirit. God has promised to give his Spirit to every Christian (Acts 2:37–39).

Session 9

What
does the
Holy Spirit do

- New birth (John 3:3–8)
- Born into a family

1. SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

- **Forgiveness (Romans 8:1, 2)**
- **Adoption (Romans 8:14–17)**
 - greatest privilege (v.14)
 - closest intimacy (v.15)
 - deepest experience (v.16)
 - greatest security (v.17)

2. DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

(Ephesians 2:18)

- He helps us to pray (Romans 8:26)
- He enables us to understand God's word (Ephesians 1:17–18)

3. THE FAMILY LIKENESS

- (2 Corinthians 3:18)
- (Galatians 5:22–23)

4. UNITY IN THE FAMILY

- (Ephesians 4:3–6)

5. GIFTS FOR ALL THE CHILDREN

Each member of the family is different (1 Corinthians 12:4–11)

- Free gifts
- To each one
- For the common good

6. THE GROWING FAMILY

- He empowers us to be witnesses for Christ
- Power for service (Acts 1:8)

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Session 10

How
can I be filled
with the
Holy Spirit

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9) but not every Christian is filled with the Spirit.

Five categories of people:

1. **Longing** (Pentecost – Acts 2:2–4)
2. **Receptive** (Samaria – Acts 8:14–23)
3. **Hostile** (Paul – Acts 8:1, 3; 9:1–2)
4. **Uninformed** (Ephesus – Acts 19:1–6)
5. **Unlikely** (Gentiles – Acts 10:44–47)

What happened to Cornelius and his household when the Spirit came upon them? (Acts 10:44–46)

1. THEY EXPERIENCED THE LOVE OF GOD

‘... the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Then Peter said ... “they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have”’ (Acts 10:44–47).

- Experience is different for everyone
 - (Romans 5:5)
 - (Ephesians 3:14–19)

2. THEY EXPRESSED THEIR LOVE FOR GOD

‘For they heard them ... praising God’ (Acts 10:46).

- Fear of emotion
- All relationships should involve emotions
- Private versus public
- Emotion versus emotionalism

3. THEY RECEIVED A NEW LOVE LANGUAGE

‘For they heard them speaking in tongues’ (Acts 10:46).

- **Not all Christians speak in tongues**
 - not necessarily a sign of being filled with the Spirit
 - there are no first- or second-class Christians
 - it is not the most important gift
- **What is the gift of tongues?**
 - human or angelic language (1 Corinthians 13:1)
 - a form of prayer (1 Corinthians 14:2)
 - builds up the individual
 - transcends the language barrier (1 Corinthians 14:14)
 - the speaker is in full control
- **Why is it helpful?**
 - praise/worship
 - praying for oneself
 - praying for others
- **Does the New Testament approve? (1 Corinthians 14)**
 - context: excessive public use
 - nevertheless ... (vv.5, 18, 39)
 - private versus public
- **How do we receive this gift?**
 - ‘eagerly desire’ (1 Corinthians 14:1)
 - ask God
 - cooperate with the Spirit
 - believe
 - persevere

Three common hindrances (Luke 11:9–13):

1. **Doubt** – ‘receive’ (vv.9–10)
2. **Fear** (vv.11–13)
3. **Inadequacy** (v.13)

Jesus’ assurance:

**‘How much more will
your Father in heaven
give the Holy Spirit to
those who ask him!’**

(LUKE 11:9-13)

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Session 11

How can
I make
the **most**
of the rest
of my

life

1. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- **Break with the past**
 - 'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world' (Romans 12:2)
 - 'Do not let the world around you squeeze you into its mould' (Romans 12:2 J. B. Phillips)²
- **Make a new start**
 - 'Let God transform you inwardly by a complete change' (NEB)

2. HOW DO WE DO IT?

- 'Present your bodies ...'
- Act of will
 - ears
 - eyes
 - mouths
 - hands
 - sexuality
 - time
 - ambitions (Matthew 6:33)
 - money
- '... as living sacrifices'
 - it will involve sacrifice
 - it may involve suffering

Session 12

How can I resist

evil

1. WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEVIL EXISTS?

(Romans 12:21)

- **Scripture: The Bible presents a personal, spiritual being in active rebellion against God**
 - Old Testament (Isaiah 14; Job 1; 1 Chronicles 21:1)
 - Jesus (Luke 10:17–20)
 - Peter (1 Peter 5:8–11)
 - Paul (Ephesians 6:11–12)
- **Tradition: Christians down through the ages have believed**
 - church fathers
 - reformers
 - ordinary Christians
- **Reason: It makes sense of the world we see around us**
 - why do bad things happen?

Avoid two extremes

- Disbelief vs unhealthy interest (Deuteronomy 18:10)

2. WHAT ARE THE DEVIL'S TACTICS?

(Genesis 3)

- **Aims to destroy (John 10:10)**
- **Creates doubt**
 - (Genesis 3:1)
 - (Matthew 4:3, 6)
- **Causes temptation (Genesis 2:16–17)**
- **Brings accusation**
 - accuses God before us
 - accuses us before God (Revelation 12:10)

3. WHAT IS OUR POSITION?

(Colossians 1:13)

- Satan defeated on the cross (Colossians 2:15)
- Jesus' disciples given authority over demons (Luke 10:17–20)

4. HOW DO WE DEFEND OURSELVES?

(Ephesians 6)

'Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes' (Ephesians 6:11).

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Six practical tips:

1

FOCUS ON JESUS

Belt of truth (vv.13–14)

- A grounding in Christian doctrine/truth to counter Satan's lies (John 8:32)

KEEP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS RIGHT

Breastplate of righteousness (v.14)

2

- The righteousness of Christ given to us (Philippians 3:9)
- To protect the heart against guilt and condemnation

3

GET INVOLVED IN SERVICE

Boots of the gospel of peace (v.15)

- The readiness to speak of Christ (Isaiah 52:7–10)

**KEEP TRUSTING GOD
IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

Shield of faith (v.16)

4

- The opposite of cynicism and scepticism

5

WIN THE BATTLE OF THE MIND

Helmet of salvation (v.17)

- Past, present, future
- To protect the mind against doubt and accusation

KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Sword of the Spirit (v.17)

6

- The word of God
- The only offensive piece of armour (Hebrews 4:12)

Session 13

**How
and
why
should I
tell**



others

Why tell others?

- Jesus told us to (Matthew 28:18–20)
- Good news travels fast
- Gospel = good news
- For the needs of others
- Two opposite dangers
 - insensitivity
 - fear

How do we tell others?

1. PRESENCE

(Matthew 5:13–16)

- We are called to be salt and light (vv.13–14)
- When people know we are Christians, they watch our lives (v.16), eg, spouses

‘... if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives’ (1 Peter 3:1–2).

2. PERSUASION

‘Since ... we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade people’ (2 Corinthians 5:11).

- Work out the answers to common questions (1 Peter 3:15)
 - eg: ‘What about other religions?’ and ‘How can a God of love allow suffering?’

3. PROCLAMATION

- We are not all called to be 'evangelists' but we are all called to be 'witnesses' (v.41)

4. POWER

(1 Thessalonians 1:5)

- A miracle arouses great interest! (Acts 3)

5. PRAYER

- For them – to open blind eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- For ourselves – to have boldness (Acts 4:29–31)
- For others (Romans 10:1)

6. PERSISTENCE

- Don't give up (Mark 4:15–20)

RECOMMENDED READING

The Case Against Christ

John Young

Searching Issues

Nicky Gumbel

APPENDIX

Suggestions for preparing your story

- **Make it short:**
 - aim for three minutes – people switch off after that
- **Make it personal:**
 - don't preach - use 'I' or 'we', not 'you'
- **Keep Christ central:**
 - they need to follow him, not you
- **The format:**
 - a little of your former life
 - how you came into your relationship with Christ
 - something of what it has meant since then
- **Write it out in full:**
 - it's easier to see the waffle when it's down on paper!

Session 14

**Does
God
heal
+ today**

1. HEALING IN THE BIBLE

- **Old Testament**

- promises of God (eg: Exodus 23:25–26; Psalm 41:3)
- the character of God
- examples of God healing (2 Kings 5; Isaiah 38–39)

- **The ministry of Jesus**

- his teaching
- his healings
- his commissions

2. HEALING IN CHURCH HISTORY

Many examples of healing and miracles (Acts 3:1–10; Acts 5:12–16).

- Early church history

- eg: Irenaeus (140–203), Origen (c.185–254), Augustine (354–430)

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3. HEALING TODAY

- Simplicity
- Love (Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:41)
- Words of knowledge
 - pictures
 - sympathy pain
 - impressions
 - hear or see words
 - words formed on tongue
- Prayer
 - where does it hurt?
 - why does the person have this condition?
 - how do I pray?
 - how are they doing?
 - what next?

Session 15

**What
about
the
church**

What is the church?

- Popular misconceptions:
 - church = services
 - church = clergy
 - church = a particular denomination
 - church = the building

1. THE PEOPLE OF GOD

(1 Peter 2:9, 10)

- Greek word 'ekklesia' = an assembly or gathering of people
- Church/kingdom
- Baptism is the visible mark of being a member of the church

Baptism signifies:

- Cleansing from sin (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- Incorporation into Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:3–5; Colossians 2:12)
- Sealing of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13)

Universal church (Ephesians 3:10, 21; 5:23, 25)

- 2,200 million Christians in the world today
 - persecuted church
 - third world
 - free world

Local churches

'Galatian churches' (1 Corinthians 16:1).

'The churches in the province of Asia' (1 Corinthians 16:19).

'All the churches of Christ' (Romans 16:16).

- Cell
 - small group (4–12 people)
 - close friends
 - confidentiality
 - intimacy
 - accountability (1 John 4:19)

- Congregation
 - pastoral group: 12–50
 - small enough to know others and to be known
 - ministry to each other (Ephesians 4:12)
 - exercise of gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7–11)
 - open group

- Celebration services
 - festive occasions (Passover, Pentecost, New Year)
 - sense of God's greatness
 - weakness: difficult to make friends

2. THE FAMILY OF GOD

(1 John 5:1)

- Brothers and sisters to each other (1 John 4:19–5:1)
- God as our Father (John 1:12)
- Importance of unity
- Jesus prayed '... that they may be one' (John 17:11)
- 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit' (Ephesians 4:3)

**‘On the necessary
points, unity;
on the questionable
points, liberty;
in everything, love’**

RUPERTUS MELDENIUS

- Faithfulness (Galatians 6:10)
- Forgiveness (Matthew 18:15, 35) (Matthew 5:23–24)
- Fellowship (Acts 2:42–47)
 - fellowship with God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14)
 - and with one another (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 10:24–25)

3. THE BODY OF CHRIST

(1 Corinthians 12:1–27)

‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (Acts 9:4).

- Unity (Ephesians 4:3–6)
- Diversity (vv.7–11)
- Mutual dependence (vv.14–26)

4. A HOLY TEMPLE

(Ephesians 2:19–22)

- Built on foundation of apostles and prophets (v.20)
- New Testament
- Jesus as the cornerstone (v.20)
- Indwelt by God's Spirit (v.21) 'a holy Temple'

5. THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

(Ephesians 5:25–27, 32)

- Christ's love for his church (v.25)
- Christ's purpose for his church (v.27) (Revelation 21:2)
- Our response (1 Peter 2:9)
 - holiness
 - worship
 - witness

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ENDNOTES

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