

4

SESSION Four

Do I trust it?



Aim

- To explore whether the Bible is reliable and trustworthy

This session focuses on the Bible as something to be trusted. There are activities to explore the meanings of trust and truth, and to reflect upon what people put their trust in today. There are opportunities to look at why there might appear to be discrepancies and contradictions throughout Scripture, particularly looking at the four Gospels.

Recommended activities*

Four Gospels: one story and **Same difference** begin to explore some of the reasons for textual differences between the Gospels.

The **Why do you trust?** activity opens a discussion as to the reasons why anything is trusted, including the Bible.

Leaders' notes

| Activity | Preparation and resources |
|----------------------------------|---|
| General research | Background research on the four Gospel writers if appropriate. |
| DVD clip | Chapter 4 of the DVD and the means to play it. |
| Trust games | Blindfold Things for an obstacle course |
| Why/why not? | Flipchart paper and pens |
| Four Gospels: one story* | Photocopy two copies of the script. Props for the script: distinctive clothing for the two parts, mobile phone Have read the Information point. |
| Same difference?* | Ensure you are familiar with the Bible stories and have copies available. Have read the Information point. |
| Why do you trust?* | Photocopy and cut up the question and answer sheets – enough for one between two people. Ensure you understand the Information point. |
| Faith, belief & truth | Ensure you are prepared to lead a discussion on the difference between the three concepts. |

Activities

DVD clip

Watch chapter 4 on the DVD.

Trust games

There are many trust games that can be played with a group. Here are a few suggestions. Explore with the group at the end of the game what it feels like to trust someone and the difficulties of that.

■ Fall back

Split the group into pairs. Pairs must take it in turns to fall back on each other. The test is whether the person falling back trusts the person behind to catch them!

■ Two truths, one lie

Sit in a circle, and ask each member of the group to come up with two truths and one lie about themselves. As each person shares their three statements, the rest of the group have to try and work out which is the lie.

■ Obstacle course

Ask for a volunteer, and ask them to leave the room. While the volunteer is out of the room, set up an obstacle course. Before the person comes back into the room, blindfold them so they can't see the course.

Ask two members of the group to shout directions at the person blindfolded; one giving the right directions, one giving the wrong directions.

Why?/Why not?

Use two pieces of flip chart paper. Draw an outline of a body in the middle of both pieces of paper. Label one 'Why?' and the other 'Why not?' Ask the young people to write reasons why people trust the Bible around the body on the sheet labelled 'Why?' and on the other sheet write down reasons why people do not trust the Bible.

If appropriate, ask the group whether they personally agree with any of the reasons written.

This exercise may spark discussion which you may like to continue at this point or return to at different parts of the session.

Four Gospels: one story?*

Have prepared a couple of members/leaders of the group to act out a mugging scene, use a variety of props/costumes. Make sure that the young people are seated in a circle with the action happening in the middle.

If possible try to wear something distinctive for each character, that way, when the young people are asked to feed back what happened they can pick up on details. For example, "the mugger was wearing a red cap" etc.

Please make sure you follow the stage directions as this also adds details for the young people to pick up on. The script can be done as seriously or as theatrically as you feel is appropriate to your own youth group. A suitable script is included (page 28).

At the end of the scene the 'actors' leave the room and remove any props before returning. The group are asked to write down what they have witnessed (don't tell them this is what they are doing until after the drama has finished). Allow a few minutes for this.

As people feed back draw out that people may have remembered different aspects of the event they witnessed, some may have remembered specific props, some may have remembered what was said, and some may have talked about emotions and feelings of the people involved. Was there anything that everyone agreed on?

Information point

One of the reasons that people may give as to why they don't trust the Bible is that there appears to be discrepancies in the stories, particularly the four Gospels. However, it is not as simple as saying the story is not true because there are differences; the four Gospel writers were telling the story from their own perspectives which may account for the variations or omissions. In the same way that all witnesses to an event (eg a mugging as in the above activity) will want to put emphasis on certain aspects more than others, or will remember something specific, or may be influenced by their background, beliefs or culture, so it was for the Gospel writers too.

Information point

Each of the four Gospel authors lived in different places, had different occupations and come with different perspectives on life.

Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9) and came from a Jewish tradition. This meant that his Gospel was written for a Jewish audience and more in keeping with the society of the time. For example, men were more prominent in that society than women; therefore it would have been more appropriate to depict the angel appearing to Joseph than Mary because the story would carry more credibility within the Jewish society.

In contrast, Luke was thought to be a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and his Gospel is written for a non-Jewish audience and puts emphasis on people who were seen as less important in society, including women, the poor and the sick. This could explain why it is Mary to whom the angel appears rather than Joseph, and the shepherds were the first to see Jesus, as less value was placed on shepherds as members of society at that time.

You might want to encourage your group to read more about this in a commentary, or other appropriate resource.

Same difference?*

The Nativity story is one of the most famous Bible stories, but there are also a huge number of differences in the way it is portrayed by the different authors of the Gospels.

As a group, make a list of the key events in the story in the right order; who was there and what happened.

Then, split your group in half and ask one half to read Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38, and the other to read Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:8-20.

Ask the two groups to point out the similarities and differences in the two accounts, and how the two Gospels deviate from the way the group have just outlined the story.

Once they have done this, bring the two groups back together and feedback.

As a whole group, discuss why you think these differences might be there.

Script for mugging drama

PERSON A – Victim PERSON B – Mugger

PERSON A stands/leans/sits as if at a bus stop.

Occasionally, they check their watch and then look to the left as if waiting for a bus.

PERSON A is playing on their phone.

PERSON B enters the from the right.

As **PERSON B** enters, **PERSON A** steps forward to check if the bus is coming again,

As **PERSON A** does this, **PERSON B** taps **PERSON A** on the right shoulder so that **PERSON A** spins round.

PERSON A: YES?!

PERSON B: Give us ya phone!

PERSON A: *(confused)* What? No! What?

PERSON B: I said GIVE ME YOUR PHONE! *(gives PERSON A a small shove using left hand)*

PERSON A: *(Stuttering)* I can't ... I mean ... it's not mine ... it's my brothers ... he'll kill me if I lose it!

PERSON B: Do I look like I care? *(gives PERSON A a small shove using right hand)*
GIVE ME YOUR PHONE! *(holds his right hand, with attitude(!) out ready to receive the phone)*

PERSON A: BUT PLEASE! *(begging, as PERSON A does this they hold out their hands palms up with their phone on their hands)*

PERSON B grabs the phone and laughs! Shoves **PERSON A** to the floor and runs off

PERSON A: *(looks dazed and confused, turns to the audience)* Can anyone lend me a phone to call the police?!

Why do you trust?*

Photocopy the sheet “Why do you trust?” and cut up the cards, making sure that there are enough for one set of cards between two people. Ask the young people to match the card asking why do you trust (set 1) with an answer from the set of cards (set 2). There is a blank card for them to add an answer that is not already mentioned if they

wish to. It is important to mention to the group that there is no right or wrong answer with this exercise and there may be several answers for each question. Feed back and discuss responses from the group, in particular the reasons why people trust the Bible.

Information point

In the DVD clip, Bob’s auntie talked about how her trust in the Bible is more than being able to prove it to be true.

Christians believe in the Bible for a number of different reasons; some because they can prove it with hard evidence, some trust it because it has authority as it is the word of God, some trust it because they have a relationship with God, some because it has helped them during difficult times.

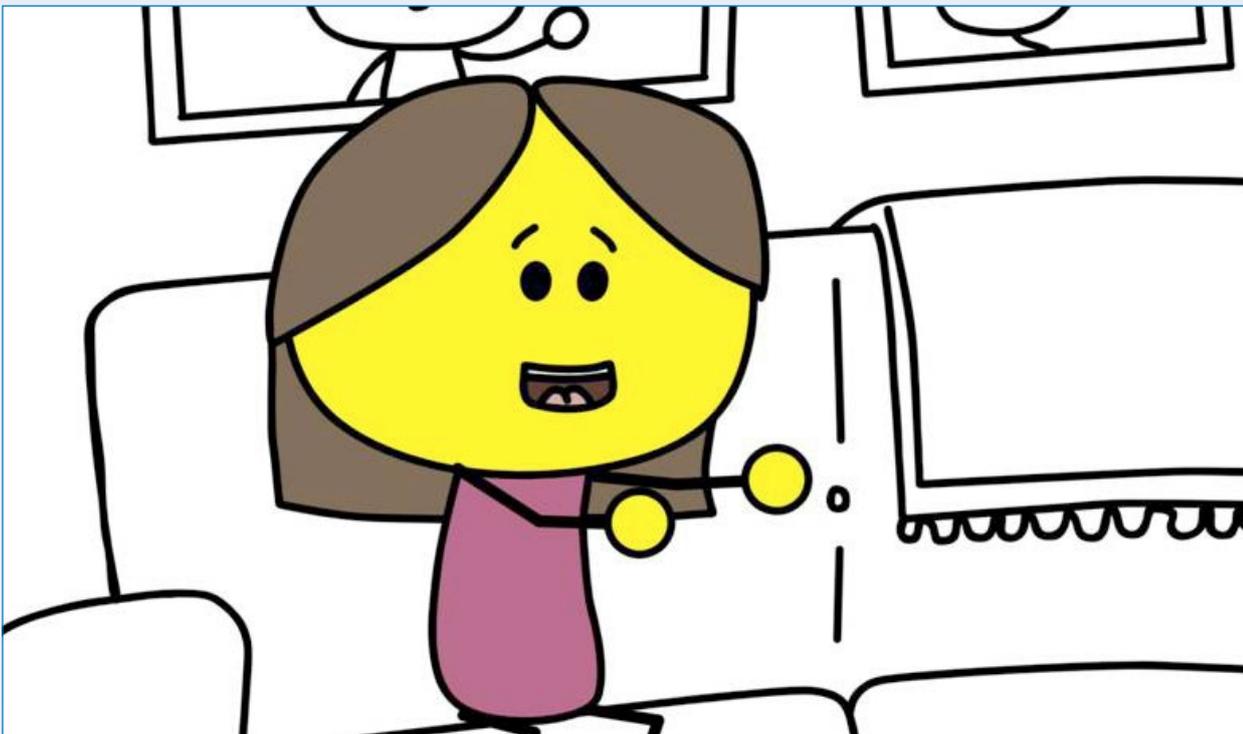
At different times in a Christian’s life some of these reasons to trust it become more important than others; being a Christian

doesn’t mean that you will have all the answers, and doubting and questioning is a part of faith.

The Bible says that it is the Holy Spirit that brings truth – ‘the spirit is truth’ (1 John 5:6).

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 says that the good news from God doesn’t just come with words but with the power of the Spirit and with sure knowledge that it is true.

Not all Christians will believe every single word of the Bible and there may be passages with which they struggle, but it is the Holy Spirit that enables them to trust in the truth of the Bible.



Why do you trust?

Set 1 - Questions

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> that the chair won't break when I sit on it?</p> | <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> the aeroplane you travel on to fly through the air?</p> | |
| <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> that the world is round?</p> | <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> your friends?</p> | <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> the Bible?</p> |
| <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> your parents?</p> | <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> a text book?</p> | <p><i>Why do you trust...</i> your sense of smell?</p> |

Why do you trust?

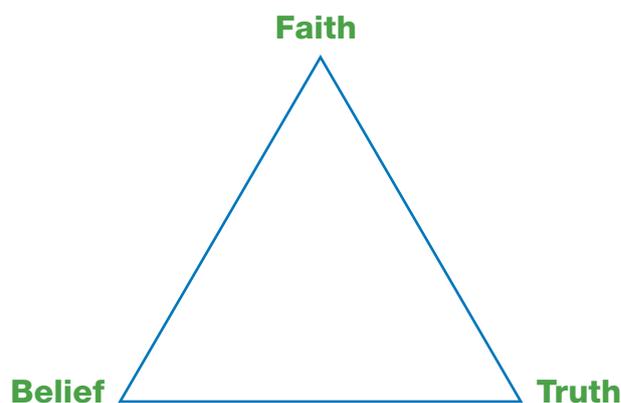
Set 2 - answers

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Relationship | Evidence | Has helped me before |
| Previous positive experience | Facts can be checked | Has authority |
| Statistics | Investigation | Faith |

Faith, belief & truth

Using the list below, your group will attempt to work out whether the statements are seen as correct, based on faith, belief or truth.

To do this, use a value continuum. Mark out three corners of a triangle in the room; this could be done with chairs or something similar, or alternatively just use three corners of the room.



To answer the questions ask the members of your group to move to the part of the triangle corresponding to their opinion. This might mean standing on one of the three corners, or maybe half way between two, or right in the middle if they think it's connected to all three!

Ask a few members of the group to explain at least one of their choices, making sure a wide range of people have the opportunity to speak.

Is the correctness of the following statements based on truth, belief or faith?

Stand in the triangle where you think most appropriate.

- Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade.
- There is life on other planets.

- The Loch Ness Monster is real.
- Henry VIII had six wives.
- Robin Hood gave money to the poor.
- Guy Fawkes tried to blow up parliament.
- King Arthur existed.
- Man landed on the moon in 1969.
- Elvis is dead.
- Life has a purpose.
- When you die you come back as someone else.
- God exists.
- There is a beginning to everything.
- Eating meat is wrong.
- The day after Tuesday is Wednesday.
- Time exists.
- Rain is wet.
- The sea is blue.
- Grass is green.
- There is a reason for everything.
- There is a place called hell.
- Jesus existed.
- Ghosts are real.

Once the group has done this and had some discussion about the answers, split them into pairs and ask them to come up with a definition for faith, belief and truth.

Discuss as a group...

- What are the differences between the three words?
- What is it that makes something 'true'?
- What would their response be to the question 'Is the Bible true'?

If you are working with an older group then you might want to encourage a more philosophical debate about the three concepts at this point.