

questioning mission

5 Bible studies to help you
grapple with tough questions
about mission.

youth edition – leader's guide



AFRICA
INLAND MISSION

questioning mission

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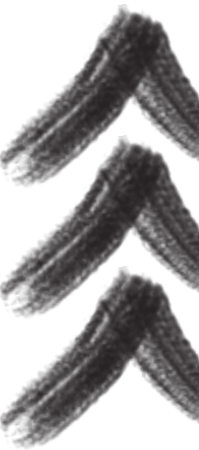
Introduction

Questioning Mission is the second set of youth sessions AIM has produced to help your young people to think about life, faith and mission. The first set of youth sessions, *Mission Essentials*, focused on some of the basic issues in mission. As our societies are changing at such a breath-taking pace, it's right for our young people - as well as all believers in Christ - to examine what they believe and how our culture's values line up against the unchanging word of God. In *Questioning Mission* we have tried to tackle some of the tricky issues that non-Christian cultures struggle with when thinking about both Christianity and Christian mission. After all, if our general culture questions these things it's almost a certainty that our young people will too. However, we are convinced that as our young people see the heart of God that is revealed as they dive into the Bible, they will come to love him more as well as growing more confident to face the challenges of living for Christ in a post-Christian society.

Throughout the studies there are 'Leader's Notes' with suggestions and extra information to help you lead your youth sessions. There are also sections on the right which will give you further information on questions that might come up in conversation. Please don't feel you must use this information if the session doesn't naturally need it.

Safeguarding and one-to-one support

Before starting these sessions, it would be wise for you to consult your church's safeguarding policy in regard to Zoom or online sessions. Many churches stipulate that young people must only participate in a video call in a communal room of the house rather than their bedrooms. While this policy is understandable in terms of protection, it can make having one-to-one conversations difficult. In these studies, we will be dealing with some potentially profound subjects (God's love, the unreached world, etc.), which might cause some emotional responses. Think through with your leadership how you will support your young people if they need more one-to-one help after the sessions.



1. The destiny of the lost

...and what the Bible teaches about those who have not heard the gospel.

Suggested session duration: 64 mins



Getting started

The subject of the eternal destiny of those that aren't trusting in Jesus is an emotional one and often can affect how we see God. Is it right for God to send people to hell when they've never had the chance to hear the gospel? We might wonder if God really is good; is he really faithful and true? In this session we will dive into God's Word to discover what it says about God's character, the nature of sin, people and hell.



Activity

Watch the 'Desert island activity' video for session 1, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

(10 minutes)

Imagine a desert island with swaying palm trees, beautiful white beaches, blue skies and turquoise seas - a pristine 'paradise' untouched by 21st century civilisation. The desert island is inhabited by a people that know nothing of the outside world; they have their own language, customs and history as well as their own gods, beliefs and religious traditions. Due to their seclusion the local people have never heard about Jesus.

- Is it right for outsiders to visit this secluded island to share with them about Jesus?
- What are some of the objections that people might have to this?
- What do you think the Bible has to say about it?



Diving in

1. Read Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12 and Romans 6:23 (10 minutes)

- What was going on in the garden between God and Adam and Eve?
- How would you define sin from Genesis 3?
- Was it just Adam and Eve that now had a problem? What affect did this have on humankind?

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who



World religions

The thing is, it's not just a few secluded people on a desert island that have not heard about Jesus. The reality is that the greatest concentration of people who have never heard the good news are to be found among people of other religions; Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. The spiritual state of these peoples is no different to everyone else on the planet - if they don't trust in Jesus they too are lost.

People following other world religions:

Muslims: 1.8 billion

Hindus: 1.1 billion

Buddhists: 0.5 billion

Folk/Traditional religions: 0.4 billion

was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:1-7)

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

(Romans 5:12)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Leader's notes

Probably one of the biggest issues raised by our culture against Christianity is that 'good people' of other faiths, or no faith, are sent to hell just because they don't know about Jesus. God must be a bad God to do that! This understanding comes about because they don't have a correct understanding of how terrible sin is – and that all humans are sinful. The way out of this is not by being 'good', we need to be saved from the consequences of our sinful lives and brought into a relationship with God. Only God can do that.

In this first question we want our young people to grapple with the fact that Adam and Eve's fall caused sin to enter all humans' hearts – we are all inherently sinful but we can't save ourselves. The unchangeable fact is that everyone's destiny is hell.

2. John 3:16 is probably the most famous verse in the Bible. Read verses 16-18. (10 mins)

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

- Was it really necessary for Jesus to die? Are there any other ways that humankind might be saved?
- Do we really believe that there are no other ways for someone to become friends with God?

Leader's notes

Some of us might be tempted to say that God will judge everyone wisely and so some people of other faiths who have been godly and good, God will save. If that's the truth, then Jesus didn't really need to die. But that's not what the Bible says. That argument has more in common with other world religions – not biblical Christianity. We either accept that Jesus is the Son of God – our saviour – or we don't. Again, Jesus was very explicit, it's through believing in Jesus, putting our hope and trust in him, that we are saved. John 3:18 makes it very clear that those that have not trusted in Jesus, are condemned already!

Is Christ the only way?

To read a further discussion about inclusivism, you can read 'Is trusting in Christ in this life the only way?' at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

3. Read John 3:18, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 and Revelation 14:10-11. (10 mins)

- How do you feel about what the Bible says about hell in these verses?
- Should these verses have an impact on you and your faith? Do they affect how you feel about sharing your faith with people who don't believe in Jesus?
- What do you feel when you think about seven thousand people groups – 3 billion people – that have never had the chance to hear the good news?

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (John 3:18)

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...

(2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

They, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name. (Revelation 14:10-11)

Leader's notes

Is 'hell' a bit of a taboo word? The Bible is very clear that everyone that does not trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation is going to eternal punishment. That might not be very palatable but Jesus spoke very clearly about the realities of hell. The truth for the whole world- both our desert islanders and our friends at school- is that unless they trust in Jesus they are going to hell. Your young people might get angry at God: "Who does he think he is for condemning people without giving them a chance to hear?" Try to help your young people to understand that God is the almighty, sovereign God. He made everything and he is completely holy. If we understand that God is totally pure and holy, it's right that he can't put up with sin. As a good judge it's right that he condemns sin. At the same time point to God's love in Jesus.

Annihilation vs. eternal suffering

If you want to look deeper at what the Bible says about hell, you can read 'The question of annihilation vs. eternal suffering' at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

Going Deeper

(6 minutes)

Time to do business with God. Invite your young people to quieten their hearts and minds. If they are able, invite them to shut their eyes and listen to you as you reread John 3:16-18 at least twice. Take your time and once you have finished reading invite your young people to talk to God quietly. If you find it helpful put on some quite music to help your young people to guard the time. Perhaps finish with a prayer.

You know your young people. If you think it's appropriate ask them what they think God was saying to them.

Leader's notes

It's helpful to always bear in mind that our culture portrays a very different world view to the truth in the Bible. The issues raised in this study might cause your young people to question if the Bible is true – it so completely goes against what culture says. At the same time, it's really important to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through his word. Make sure you give enough time for the Going Deeper section – it's really important.



Looking Around

(8 minutes)

Watch the 'Indian Ocean Islanders' video for session 1, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

The unreached Indian Ocean Island people live on numerous islands scattered across the Indian Ocean. Their culture has been influenced by Africa, Asia, and the Islamic merchants, who for almost one thousand years brought tradeable goods and Islam. Island life can be quite different to life on the mainland - living on an island means that there is little chance to move in search of economic opportunities and almost everyone knows everyone else. One result of this is that if an Islander chooses to follow Jesus, the whole community will know about it very quickly and tough opposition will inevitably rise. Pray that the few Island people who follow Jesus would know very deeply God's grace and love. Pray that they would have the courage they need to stand for Christ and pray that they would, in turn, share their hope with their families and communities.

Pray for the Indian Ocean Island people either as one group or in smaller groups.



Finishing Up

(10 minutes)

Let's return to our tropical island and its inhabitants who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus. From what we have read from God's Word...

- What have we learnt (or been reaffirmed in our understanding) about the character and person of God?
- What is your reaction to knowing about the 3 billion people around the world who have no churches, very few Christians among them and only 3% of the world missionary force?

Leader's notes

Consider making provision in case anyone has further questions or wants to speak with a youth leader one-on-one. It might be helpful to let your young people's parents know what today's session was covering so that they are able to get involved if their young person needs further support.

2. Being a Christian in a multicultural society

Suggested session duration: 69 minutes



Getting started

The UK is now a multicultural, varied place, and, despite our heritage, it is now 'post-Christian'. The number of followers of Christ seems at an all-time low. How should we relate to people in our schools from other faiths? What attitudes should we have with people who have no faith but make fun of our trust in Jesus? How do we interact with people who have just arrived from other nations?

Activity: (10 mins) Ask your group to think about your schools and communities.

- Is your local community made up of different cultures and nationalities? Are there many shops in your local area that cater to different cultures? Are there many Eastern European grocery shops? Different ethnic restaurants - Indian, Chinese, Thai? Does your community have many Jewish synagogues, Hindu temples or Muslim Mosques?
- As you walk around your local community do you feel like you stick out or fit in?
- At school do you feel like there are lots of Christians in your school or few? Are there many people of other faiths in your school? Do you feel like you are swimming against the tide in following Christ?

Leader's notes

If you have access to a whiteboard or A2 paper board (if you are doing this session online use a white board app) you might like to get your young people to draw a map of their community and note down where different restaurants/shops/religious organisations are situated. If that's too much, get them involved by writing down a list of their friends from different nationalities.



Diving in

1. Over the last eighty years the UK has seen a huge influx of non-British nationals come to the UK. Read Acts 17:26. (5 mins)

According to Acts 17:26 who is in charge of moving peoples around the world?

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. (Acts 17:26)

Leader's notes

When we see so many people coming to the UK from abroad we might be tempted to think that our culture and way of life is under threat. Acts 17:26 helps us to see that God is in charge. His plan for the world is bigger than our little islands – and bigger than our own comfort. Help your group to dwell on the fact that God is the maker of all nations who has appointed times and boundaries. It means we can rest and trust in God with our culture, and our hopes and dreams.

2. The Bible is full of commands on how we should treat the alien/stranger/foreigner among us. Read Deuteronomy 10:17-19. (10 mins)

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.

(Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

- Who is responsible for caring for the stranger?
- What does that mean for how we should treat the stranger at school or on our street?

Leader's notes

Deuteronomy is full of commands of how to treat foreigners living in Israel: Deuteronomy 10:17- 19, Deuteronomy 24:17-18, Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and Deuteronomy 24:21-22. Colossians 4:5 says be wise towards outsiders. If we think about the wider category of 'the poor', the Bible says a lot: Leviticus 25:35-36 says "Help the poor among you" and Proverbs 14:21 says to "Be kind to the needy".

3. The millions of refugees, international students and economic migrants that are now in the UK often come from countries that have few Christians. What opportunity does this represent? Read Deuteronomy 31:12. What do you think God would want us to do? (10 mins)

Assemble the people - men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns - so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. (Deuteronomy 31:12)

Leader's notes

The huge number of non-British born, 'foreigners', represent an amazing opportunity for the British church to show God's love to people that probably have never heard of Jesus. It's as we ask God to open our eyes that we start to see the opportunities God has brought to our own doorstep.

4. Britain used to be known as a Christian country but Britain has changed. Would you say the majority of your friends at school or in your neighbourhood trust and follow Jesus?

Jesus knew how things were going to be; his words are so helpful for us today. Read Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 12:8-12. (15 mins)

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(Matthew 7:13-14)

“I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” (Luke 12:8-12)

- What attitudes should we have to being one of only a few people following Jesus in our schools?
- What can we do to support each other to keep following Jesus?

Leader's notes

Many of our young people feel lonely and afraid at school. Some feel that what happens on Sunday at church is totally disconnected with the reality of life at school and with their non-Christian friends. Take the time to encourage your young people to share what it's really like with their non-Christian friends. Encourage them that they are not alone – Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, wants to empower them to live a life of courage for him. Talk through as a group how they might practically help each other to live for Jesus.



Going Deeper

(6 minutes)

Break up into smaller groups and encourage everyone to share how they are doing in school – both with people of other faiths, people new to their community (strangers/refugees) and those that make fun of their faith in Christ. Ask them to think of one thing that the Lord might be asking them to do differently.



Looking Around

(5 minutes)

Watch the ‘What is diaspora ministry?’ video for session 2, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

The African Diaspora: It is estimated that nearly 200 million Africans live away from the continent of Africa. We call these men, women, and children the African Diaspora, some of whom are probably your near neighbours! Across Britain there are communities of Africans who have settled in the UK – some of them many years ago some in the last few years. They come

from lots of different African nations, many driven here by war, poverty, religious persecution or the search for a better life. Many come from places where Christian witness is not allowed and so the fact that they are here in the UK represents an enormous opportunity for us Christians to share Jesus with them. Just think, if they come to Christ they might one day to return their nation of origin transformed by Christ and eager to share their new hope with their friends and family! Let's pray that God would move many UK Christians to make friends and share Christ with the Africans in our communities!

Pray for the African Diaspora either together or in small groups.

For more info go to: prayafrica.org/project/african-diaspora/



Finishing Up

(8 minutes)

- Ask the group if there is anything in particular that has struck them about today's session.
- Ask the group if anyone has any prayer requests (particularly in response to question 4)

Encourage a time of prayer in response to what the group says and for the African Diaspora.

Leader's notes

We've looked at some issues that might bring to the surface some hurt or concern. It might be good to offer the option of one-one-one times with youth leaders to talk through these issues.

3. Has everyone in the world heard about Jesus?

Unreached people groups and why they matter

Suggested session duration: 67 minutes



Getting started

In the last session we thought about the people in our community who are strangers and refugees. As Christians in Britain we can often feel like we are the only people in our schools or neighbourhoods who follow Jesus. What's the situation like around the world? Are there lots of Christians in other countries or few and why does it matter?



Activity

You can find a PDF of this quiz to print out at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth. (10 minutes)

- Q1.** What's the population of the UK? (66.65 million)
- Q2.** How many Bible believing Christians are there in the UK? (2 million)
- Q3.** How many churches are there in the UK? (40,000)
- Q4.** What's the population of the world? (7.9 billion)
- Q5.** How many Christians are there in the world? (2.3 billion)
- Q6.** How many people in the world have never heard the message of the gospel? (2.9 billion)
- Q7.** How many zeros are in a billion? (9)
- Q8.** Every day, how many people die who have never had the chance to hear about Jesus? (151,600)
- Q9.** In what country in the world is Christianity growing the fastest? (Iran)
- Q10.** In the Bible, how many times does God speak about 'all nations/peoples'? (87)

Feedback: Ask your young people if any of those numbers surprise them.



Diving in

1. Roughly a third of the population of the world has never had the chance to hear the good news about Jesus. It's good news because through Jesus everyone can be saved from their sin and know God. Read John 3:3 and 3:16-17. (10 mins)

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." (John 3:3)

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. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

- It's good to remind ourselves what Jesus did for us; why was it that God sent his only son to the world?
- Thinking back to session 1, what does the Bible say that the eternal fate is of those that don't trust in Jesus?
- What do you feel and think when you hear that a third of the world never has a chance to hear about Jesus?

Leader's notes

We don't want this first question make anyone feel 'on the spot' or 'got at'. Perhaps there are some people in your group who have not yet decided to follow Jesus. You need to be sensitive to them and make them feel included. At the same time, Christ's command to go to all the world (which we will look at in the next video) makes no sense unless your young people are working from the foundation of accepting Jesus as their Lord and master.

- Watch the 'Unreached people groups' video for session 3, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth. (5 mins)

2. Read Matthew 28:19-20 (10 mins)

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20)

- When did Jesus say these verses?
- What happened straight after Jesus spoke these words?
- What has Jesus commanded us to do?

Leader's notes

Refocusing the groups attention on Jesus last words on earth before he went to be with the Father is an important step. Normally a person's last words are treated with heightened respect. The fact that Jesus gave his followers the great commission at that point of his life means it was vitally important.

3. Read Matthew 9:36-38, 16:15-16 and Matthew 6:19-21 (10 mins)

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:36-38)

"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where



What is unreached?

For more information about what we mean when we use the term 'unreached', visit eu.aimint.org/unreached.

thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

As followers of Christ, what should our response be to his command?

Leader's notes

Following Christ means we need to be purposeful and obey what Christ has told us to do. Encourage your group to think through three ways that they can obey Christ. Praying is something that all Christians should be doing – and praying for unreached peoples to come to Christ has eternal value. We will put this into practice in a little bit. Thinking through giving finances to support others going to take the gospel is also something that we should all consider. How might your church enable this? Finally, we should be challenging our young people to think whether God is calling them to go to an unreached people group. We need to present this challenge wisely so that people do not feel condemned but positively challenged.

Going Deeper

(5 minutes)

Break up into small groups and encourage your young people to talk about the Bible verses they have read today. Do they feel that the Holy Spirit is putting any particular verse on their minds? What might the Lord be wanting them to take away from this?

Looking Around

(15 minutes)

Encourage the young people to choose some UPGs that they can commit to pray for. Get your young people into smaller groups. Divide everyone up into groups and ask them to access prayafrica.org on their smart phones. Suggest that once they have chosen an unreached people group they read out the info and then pray in their groups.

Leader's notes

Pray Africa is a brilliant resource to help us pray for Africa's unreached people groups. Many of our young people have smart phones and so can access prayafrica.org. Asking young people to use their phones in a youth session might normally cause distractions but helping young people to engage with praying is a very positive step. Challenge them to sign up for prayer updates, or subscribe to the the 30-day prayer journey.

Finishing Up

(2 minutes)

Wrap up today's session by rereading Matthew 29:19-20 and then close with a prayer.

Further reading

If you are interested in reading more on this topic, you can find a list of articles at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

4. Faith and love

Suggested session duration: 63 minutes



Getting started

Today we are going to look at how our faith connects with loving people practically, our culture and the importance of sharing Jesus with the whole world.



Activity

Role play (10 minutes)

You need to find four volunteers who are happy to dramatise these two role plays. Both role plays are set in the cafeteria of a school or college. Feel free to change the names to suit the gender of the people playing the roles. Encourage them to have fun with this and 'ham it up'! You can find a PDF of the script to print off at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

Role play A

Joel: Hi Mark how are you doing?

Mark: Oh, hi, Joel. Yeah, I guess I'm ok.

Joel: You don't sound so good. What's going on?

Mark: Well, you know that assignment we have to hand in by the end of today? I worked really hard on it but, I don't know how, but I can't find it in my bag. I either didn't put it in or I've managed to lose it. I feel so annoyed!

Joel: Are you doing anything now? I've handed in mine already but you can use my class notes and I'll give you a few pointers. You still have plenty of time; you can get it done. Come on let's go to the library...

At this point tell the actors to freeze. Encourage everyone else to give the two volunteers a round of applause!

- Ask everyone else what they feel about Joel offering his time to help Mark out with his problem?
- Now ask them what people in their school would think of them helping out Mark in this way?

Role play B

Jane: Hi Mark how are you doing?

Molly: Oh, hi, Joel. Yeah, I guess I'm ok.

Jane: You don't sound so good. What's going on?

Molly: Life's just a bit tough at the moment. We are working so hard on all our school/college (use as appropriate) stuff, I just can't work out what the point of it all is. Why bother with all of this? I feel so down and hopeless...

Jane: Molly, I've been wondering for a while whether I should say something to you, because I've noticed you have been a bit down. I was feeling really low last year – do you know what really helped me? (Pause...) I know you don't go

to church but I heard someone talk at church about life and how the greatest meaning in life comes from when we are right with God, who made us. The only way we can know peace is to trust in Jesus and ask him for forgiveness...

Again, ask the actors to freeze. Again, encourage everyone else to give the two volunteers a round of applause!

- Now ask everyone what they feel about Molly starting to share the gospel with her friend Jane. Say that even though it's a church youth group, they can be honest – would it make them feel embarrassed?
- Now ask what they would feel like if there were a bunch of other students sitting next to Molly, listening in. What would they feel now?
- Finally, ask everyone whether they would prefer to help out a friend practically or share the gospel?

Leader's notes

You need to choose some volunteers who are happy to act it up in front of others. Hopefully every group has some who are happy to get stuck in. When it comes to asking the questions at the end it's important to try and tease out of people what they really think. They might be tempted to give the answer they think you want them to say. Encourage people to unpack why they answered the way they did; the point of this exercise is to get people thinking about how their faith in Christ interacts with their culture.



Diving in

1. Read Mark 12:30-31 and James 1:26. (10 mins)

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

(Mark 12:30-31)

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:26)

What strikes you about these verses? How does God want us to relate to the people around us?

Leader's notes

Philippians 2:3-8 makes it very clear that as Christians we must have the same attitude as Jesus. He gave himself up for us even when we didn't deserve it. We are called to do the same for the people around us. Be careful to help your group understand that we can't do this in our own strength – we must rely totally on God's help (John 15).

2. Our society often seems quite sceptical and negative about Christianity. Is it better to stay quiet about our faith in Jesus and trust that our good works 'will shine before others'? (Matthew 5:16) (5 mins)

Leader's notes

This is a tricky question. Each of us is at a different stage in our journey of faith. However, secular culture is never going to promote Jesus' kingdom values. The devil desperately wants us to accept the lie that we should keep quiet and not share the good news with those around us. The next question leads the conversation towards considering what our responsibility to talk about Jesus is.

3. Read John 3:16-17 and Romans 10:8-10. (10 mins)

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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

(John 3:16-17)

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Romans 10:8-10)

These verses remind us the way God has given us to deal with our sin and be saved. How do we take hold of this gift? How does this fit with what James says in the James 1:22-27? Is there a conflict?

Leader's notes

Some of your young people might feel their faith is being challenged when they read James – "isn't grace through faith alone?" Help your group to think through the fact that we are all saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) but our loving actions demonstrate our changed hearts. Different people in your group will be at different stages of this understanding - ensure that the discussion is carried out in a spirit of gentleness and grace.

4. It's important to hold together our salvation - by faith alone - and living lives of love that demonstrate our changed hearts to those around us.

(10 mins)

- Think about your own schools and communities. Do you think the people around you would prefer you to be kind and loving but would rather you forget about pointing people towards Jesus? Have you ever had an experience where people have not liked you talking about Jesus? How did you feel?
- What would our communities think of the Bible when it says that all Christians should take the good news to the whole world – to unreached people groups in other countries? If we base our lives on the Bible how should we respond to what they say?

Leader's notes

The purpose of this question is to help the group to understand that sharing the good news with their friends and with the rest of the world will not be a popular thing to do. We do both because Jesus, our friend and Master, has clearly told us to do so. There is a real temptation to hide our 'light under a bushel' and hold back from sharing the good news about Jesus because of a concern that our friends will not like it. If we truly love them we will be purposeful in sharing the gospel. It's the same for those unreached people groups around the world – they desperately need to hear the good news even if our friends and community disagree with us.



Going Deeper

(10 minutes)

When we see graphic photos and pictures in the media of people in distress around the world, whether they are hit by famine, war or natural disasters it's right that we want to do something to help. However, would it surprise you to know that the amount of money UK Christians give to help people practically around the world is almost nine times more than they give so that unreached people groups can hear about Jesus? In previous years that wasn't the case – it used to be that the UK church had a much greater concern for sharing Christ with the rest of the world.

- Do you think UK Christians have that balance right? Is it right to concentrate so much on helping people physically in place of pointing them to Jesus?



Looking Around

(5 minutes)

Watch the 'Pray for the Fulani' video for session 4, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

The Fulani of the Sahel are a former nomadic people group that live throughout the Sahel, from Sudan in the east, to Senegal in the west. They number over 40 million. The Fulani are overwhelmingly Muslim, however their traditional pre-Islamic rituals and beliefs are still followed today and are only vaguely linked with Islam. They are shepherds and farmers whose diet is largely based on millet. They are an animistic people group who embraced Islam in addition to their traditional beliefs. Most people practise a moderate form of Islam but some people have studied in Qur'anic schools. Increasingly the neighbouring Hausa people and their Muslim teachers are seeking to enforce Islamic beliefs. Pray for more gospel workers to go to the Fulani, and for those who are currently working among the Fulani. Pray that they would show Christ's courage, patience and love for the Fulani. Pray that the Lord would build his church.

Pray for the Fulani either together or in smaller groups.



Finishing Up

(3 minutes)

Recap some of the key verses from this study. Can you come up with a phrase that sums up the different verses you have studied today?

5. Does God have a purpose for my life?

Suggested session duration: 66 minutes



Getting started

Over the past sessions we have thought about a lot of tough issues. For many young people one of the hardest issues is working out what they should do with their lives. Does God want them to do a particular job? Should they spend time developing their talents or gifts in serving their church or community? Through this series we have spoken a number of times about Christ's command to 'go', perhaps some of your group are thinking that might be for them? In this session we will think about what the Bible says on this important subject: how do I work out what God has for me?



Activity

(10 minutes)

Break up into groups and either print out or show on your laptop the two pictures of a desert and someone walking a tightrope (you can find them at eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth).

Ask the different groups to think about the pictures and give them these questions to consider:

- When you think of your future and working out where God is leading you, do either of these images resonate with you?
- Does it feel like everything is a bit shaky and uncertain, one misstep and you will fall 'out of God's will', a bit like you're on a tightrope?
- Does it feel that your future is a wide open space – you have so many options that you don't know which to choose? Like looking for a path in the desert?

Leader's notes

Come back together and ask the group to share any thoughts they had from their discussion time. The aim of this activity is to get your young people thinking about the issues and to help them feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.



Diving in

1. Read Daniel 4:35 and Proverbs 16:33. (10 mins)

He does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?' (Daniel 4:35)

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

(Proverbs 16:33)

Try to sum up these verses with one sentence. Who is in charge? What do these verses make you feel?

Leader's notes

It's always a good to start with the fact that God is totally in charge – he is our Lord God Almighty! God's sovereign will means that God knows everything and is governing everything (Ephesians 1:11). There are no surprises for him. For examples of how God orchestrates even small details see Matthew 10:29, Proverbs 16:33 and Proverbs 21:1.

2. In the Bible we can see how God wants us to live. Read Matthew 22:37-38, Isaiah 58:6-7 and Mark 16:15-16. (10 mins)

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-38)

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned..." (Mark 16:15-16)

From these verses it's clear that God wants us to live in a certain way. In your own words describe how God wants us to live.

Leader's notes

Some people think that God's will is like a tightrope. Actually, the term 'will of God' is not used like that in the Bible and God has made it very clear how he wants us to live. For examples that show how we should live go to 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Mark 12:29-31, Thessalonians 5:18, 1 John 5:3, and Ephesians 5:1-21.

3. Read Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:5-6 and Romans 12:2. (5 mins)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Psalm 119:105)

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

What do these verses teach us?

How does God speak to us?

Firstly, and primarily, God has revealed himself, and how we should live our lives, through his Word (John 1:14 and Psalm 119:105). When we read God's Word the Holy Spirit challenges us, encourages us and shows us how to live. His Word is the measuring stick against which we check any decision. Does that decision fit well with what we know about God and what pleases him?

Secondly, the Holy Spirit speaks to us through prayer and living our lives 'with him'. John 15 encourages us to stay 'connected into the vine'. As we attune our hearts and minds to our Saviour and learn to live a life of trust in him (John 10:27) his Spirit speaks to us and directs us as our minds are transformed and we become more like Jesus.

Thirdly, God speaks through our brothers and sisters in Christ as they encourage and give us council (Proverbs 19:20, Eph 4:11-13).

Fourthly, we hear his voice through creation (Psalm 19:1-6).

Fifthly, God can speak to us through dreams and visions (Acts 2:17).

Leader's notes

It's as we allow God's Word to fill our us that our minds will be renewed and we will be transformed. The Holy Spirit works within us to transform us – as our lives are submitted to him, he makes our paths clear before us. We don't need to worry about where we are going because our Good Shepherd is directing us.



Going Deeper

(15 minutes)

It's really encouraging to know that as we seek to follow him he is directing our footsteps (John 10:27-28). However, what should we do if we have an inkling that God is moving us on into something new? Does God point us towards something specific?

Break up into smaller groups and examine these verses to see what God's word says about this. Read Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 11:14. Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 2:21-22.

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

(Psalm 37:4)

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.

(Proverbs 11:14)

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **(Matthew 6:33)**

Those who cleanse themselves from the latter ('common use'- from verse 20) will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. **(2 Timothy 2:21-22)**

- Are there any principles we should follow as we try to discern what God has for us?
- As you think about your life and your future do any of the verses you have read today especially speak to you?

Feedback: Encourage each group to feedback to the wider group about what they have been discussing.

Leader's notes

We need to strive to keep clear of sin (2 Timothy 2:21) and seek the things that God values (Matthew 6:33). As we seek the advice of wise people around us (Proverbs 11:14) and pray, God will often put desires on our hearts (Psalm 37:4) that fit with his heart. So if we have a burning desire to help people who have never heard about Jesus before to hear – and our church leadership also agree – we can be confident that the Lord is directing our steps. Our challenge as Christians is to walk by faith and not by sight.



Looking Around

(6 minutes)

Watch the video on the Didinga people of South Sudan for session 5, which you can find at: eu.aimint.org/questioning-mission-youth.

The Didinga people live in the Didinga hills of South Sudan, in the valleys, on the plateaus and slopes, and on the adjacent plains of the region. They are primarily focused on raising cattle but they also farm, with the area having sufficient rainfall to grow two crops per year. They live in homesteads based on their clan, in round houses with cone-shaped roofs. They make a lot of music and various crafts. Although there is a Didinga chief, decisions are made by the community, and younger people have the right to question the elder. The Didinga people are animistic; worship and fear of their ancestors forms a large part of their belief and religious practice. The majority of the Didinga people can't read or write.

There is an AIM church planting team among the Didinga people which is involved in language learning, Bible storying, discovery Bible studies, and children and young people's ministries. Pray that God would grow his church among the Didinga people, so that new Didinga Christians are able to spread the gospel throughout their own people.

Pray for the Didinga people either together or in smaller groups.



Finishing Up

(10 minutes)

Write a letter to God. Explain to your young people that no one else will read their letters and no one will take them away from them when they are finished. Give out paper and pens and encourage each person to spend a moment in quiet reflection. Now, write a brief letter to God, telling him some of the things that they have really noticed from today's session. Finish the letter off by writing down anything they think the Lord has been challenging them to change in their lives. Looking towards the future, is there something they think God is asking them to do?

Once everyone has finished, tell them to fold up their letters and put them in an envelope. Ask everyone to be quiet and whilst everyone is holding their letters in their hands, say a prayer dedicating what everyone has written to God.

Leader's notes

It's really important that everyone knows that they can write whatever they wish and no one will see it. Highlight the fact that no one should try to look at other people's letters. Encourage each person to keep their letter and come back to read it sometime in the future. Say to your young people that you and the other leaders are available to talk about anything from today- especially if they feel the Lord has been stirring them to think about their future.