

Firmly I Believe

Declaring the faith of the church
through the ages

- Weekly group guide -

Aim of sessions: to clarify Christian beliefs and engage with some common objections to them.

A **five session** course is outlined below taking two weeks on the creed and one week each on the sacraments, commandments and Christian prayer.

As each of session has two audio sections with two following questions a section some or all of the sessions below can be split to create a longer course, lasting up to **ten sessions**.

Suggested 90 min session programme:

Welcome, reminder of aim, possible gathering song (2 min).

Special scripture reading, silence, then a short prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer (5 min)

Play the CD tracks listed in **Part 1** (10 min). Discuss the **first** question starting in pairs (5 min) then all together (10 min), repeat this for the **second** question (15 min). (40 min total).

Play the CD tracks listed in **Part 2** (10 min). Discuss the **third** question starting in pairs (5 min) then all together (10 min), repeat this for the **fourth** question (15 min). (40 min total).

Silence and closing prayer (3 min)

SESSION 1 - CREED

Part 1: Read Hebrews 11:1-3 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 1-4

Questions

- Q 'God's action is as evident to faith as the wind is evident to our physical senses'. Does God's being unseen make him any less real?
- Q Why is Jesus so important to Christianity?

Part 2: Read Acts 3:12-21 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 5-7

Questions

- Q What do you think is the best evidence for the resurrection?
- Q Why is it important to believe in the final judgement?

SESSION 2 - CREED

Part 1: Read 2 Timothy 1:6-11 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 8-10

Questions

- Q 'People who are open to the Holy Spirit know their need of God and infect others with that sense'. Is that your experience?
- Q How do you see the relationship of the church on earth to that in heaven?

Part 2: Read John 20:19-23 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 11-14

Questions

- Q 'The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest new start ever given to humanity and the forgiveness of sins flows from this'. Do you accept the link?
- Q How do we best explain the consistency of the Bible? The doctrine of the Trinity?

SESSION 3 - SACRAMENTS

Part 1: Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-27 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 15-17

Questions

- Q 'The risen Christ though invisible has made himself present through signs - water, bread and wine, oil, touch - we call sacraments'. Is this your understanding?
- Q Do you agree that 'the most important point in the Communion service is when you go out through the church door'? How do sacraments relate to life?

Part 2: Read James 5:13-16 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD1 Tracks 18-21

Questions

- Q In sacraments 'God meets us to heal us in our embodied existence'. How important is repentance to such encounters with God?
- Q If marriage is given by God to help the human race to grow, the ordained ministry is given to help the church to grow. Is the parallel justified? Where does the Holy Spirit fit into this understanding?

SESSION 4 - COMMANDMENTS

Part 1: Read Exodus 20:1-17 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD 2 Tracks 1-5

Questions

- Q If Christianity is living life to the full how have people come to see it as a legalistic religion? Why is 'keeping Sunday special' important to Christians?
- Q Do the Ten Commandments forbid images in churches? If not, why not? What might idolatry mean in our age?

Part 2: Read Matthew 22:34-40 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD 2 Tracks 6-11

Questions

- Q 'God's commandment, you should not commit murder is the defence of the unloved.' Do you agree that the call for euthanasia reflects a weakened view of the value of human life?
- Q 'It's not a matter of you should not commit adultery; it's more a matter of you should not commit adultery'. How much do you see the Ten Commandments as a positive statement?

SESSION 5 - CHRISTIAN PRAYER

Part 1: Read Psalm 63:1-8 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD 2 Tracks 12-16

Questions

- Q This teaching on prayer suggests that after listening to God the order of priority is adoration, contrition, thanksgiving then supplication. Does this ring true to your experience?
- Q How important is self-surrender to God in building prayerfulness? By what means of grace can the vision of God in prayer be magnified?

Part 2: Read Romans 12:1-13 and listen to Firmly I Believe CD 2 Tracks 17-19

Questions

- Q Are the gifts of the Holy Spirit evident in your church? Do you agree that unemployed gifts in church are best mobilised by providing occasions for individuals to receive a fresh anointing in the Spirit?
- Q Evangelism has been defined as the natural overflow of prayer. How would you explain the good news of your Christian faith to someone who asked you to do so?