

Christianity EXPLORED



explore 1 **CY it's worth exploring**

If you could ask God one question, and you knew it would be answered, what would it be?

download

- Christianity is not about rules or ceremonies. It's all about Jesus Christ.
- If we're here by chance, we don't matter or have any value. But God created us – so we matter enormously.
- We all face death sooner or later. Since we all have to die, what's the point of living?
- The Bible says we don't really start living until we know the one who made us, and live as he made us to live.
- But how can we get to know God? We need him to show himself to us. Mark says he's done that for us by sending

talkback

If you asked a group of people in the street: "What's the point of life?", what kind of answers would you get?

What do most people think about God and Christianity?
 your answers
 Why do you think that is?

boring	full of rules	interesting
pointless	important	same as other religions
out of date	only for Sundays	your own suggestion here

What about Jesus?
 Do people think he matters?
 What do you think?

CY Jesus lives *CY God accepts us* *Jesus loves* *CY We should believe* 7

Note: In the notes that follow, the **bold text** shown in the light grey boxes (like this one) is the material that appears in the *CY Handbook* used by group members.

CY it's worth exploring

▶ *Welcome the group and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself if necessary, letting them know that you are there to help and answer any questions they might have.*

▶ *Explain how the session will work and what time it will finish. Let the group know what kinds of things they will be doing, eg: We'll be doing some warm-up activities to get to know each other a little, having a brief discussion, listening to a talk, and then looking together at a bit of the Bible. There will be plenty of time and opportunity for you to ask any question you want to.*

▶ *Explain that no one will be asked to read out loud, pray, or answer any question they don't want to.*

OPTIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY

▶ *If you have time, start the session with one of the following icebreaker activities.*

SIGNATURE BINGO

Aim: To get everyone to know each other and to “break the ice”.

Equipment: Bingo sheet for each member of the group (either download this sheet from www.ceministries.org/cy or make your own from sheets of paper divided into nine squares); pens; small bag; small strips of paper; two small prizes for winners; a CD/MP3 player (optional).

- Give everyone a strip of paper and a pen. Ask them to write their own name on the paper and put it in the bag.
- Next, give each group member a piece of paper divided into nine squares.

Leader's checklist

Have you...

- Made it clear to people the time and place where you will meet?
- Collected any items needed for the activities?
- Enough Bibles or Mark's Gospels for the group?
- CY Handbooks and a pen or pencil for each group member?
- Prepared the optional talk and added any personal illustrations? (Or set up the optional Soul DVD if using it.)
- Thought through your answers to each of the questions?
- Prayed for each group member and yourself as the leader?

- Ask them to fill their grid with signatures from other people, putting one signature in each of the nine squares. If appropriate, play music in the background – you could fit this part of the activity to the length of one particular song track – make sure it's only about 3 minutes long to add some urgency to the task.
- Tell the group that you are going to play bingo with their names, and that a prize will be awarded for the first completed line and the first completed card.
- Take one name out of the bag at a time. As you call out someone's name, ask them to say "hello" (and maybe tell the group one piece of information about him/herself). If someone has this name on their card, they can cross it out. Once someone has a completed line, they can call "bingo".
- Have a prize ready for the first completed line and first completed card.

Note: If the group is too large, play this game in smaller groups, rather than with everyone together – and tell your leaders beforehand so that they are ready to lead a group each.

HOT POTATO

Aim: To get everyone to know each other and to "break the ice".

Equipment: One or more potatoes, depending on the size of your group; a CD/MP3 player; a list of actions (eg: cluck like a chicken, whistle the first line of "Happy Birthday", pat your head while rubbing your tummy, spell your name backwards...)

- Divide into groups of five or more – then ask each group to sit in a circle.
- Give each group a potato.
- When the music starts, each group passes the potato round the circle.
- Whoever is holding the potato when the music stops has to stand up, say their name, and then perform the action you give them (eg: turn around three times). They then sit down again and, when the music starts, pass the potato on.
- From then on, every time that person gets the potato they have to stand up, say their name and perform their action before passing the potato on.
- Keep playing, with a new person being given an action each time, until the whole group are doing actions while passing the potato along.

EXPLORE

➤ Hand a CY Handbook to each group member. Ask them to turn to page 4 and to write down their answer to this question:

If you could ask God one question, and you knew it would be answered, what would it be?

▶ Ask the group to share their answers. Note down what they are so that you can deal with them at some point during the course. Don't attempt to answer all the questions at this time, but do acknowledge every question and assure the group that they will be covered during CY. (Some questions will be answered by the talks and some – like questions about suffering – are best dealt with after the talks on the cross / grace.) However, you may want to answer one or two short questions at this point, if they are simple to deal with and not contentious. You might also want to write your own question and share it with the group. **Note:** If your group members would be embarrassed to say their questions, ask them to write them on a piece of paper and put them in a “question box”. You can then collect all the questions from the box and read them to the group.

▶ Either here, or after the talk, the group may ask questions on science/evolution/creation. Make sure you plan a time to talk about this – probably during a later session, using the notes on page 187. It may be enough at this point to say that the course is not making any particular point about evolution or creation. We're simply showing that we are either the result of an accident or we have been made by someone – and that this makes a difference to how we see “the meaning of life”.

GROUP ACTIVITY: POSTER

- ▶ Give the group one large piece of paper and some pens. Ask them to draw a poster of things that come into their minds when they think of Christianity. For example, they might draw a large cathedral or church building. If some of the group prefer not to draw, they can write single words on the poster instead.

Note: Leaders need to allow the group to draw what they want. If they want to draw something that is theologically problematic, allow them to do it because there will be an opportunity later to correct misunderstandings.

▶ Give each person a Bible. Show them where they can find Mark's Gospel. Explain how chapters and verses work.

▶ Ask everyone to turn to **Mark 1:1**.

▶ One of the leaders should read **Mark 1:1** aloud; then the group should work through the questions below. The answers are given here for your reference.

Note: The questions and quotes in CY are based on the 1984 edition of the New International Version (NIV). If you are using the 2011 revised NIV, you will find that “Jesus Christ” in Mark 1:1 has been changed to “Jesus the Messiah”. The change from “Christ” to “Messiah” does not change the meaning of the verse, since the terms mean the same. They speak of the King who God promised to send into the world. “Christ” is from the Greek word; “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew.

What does Mark say Christianity is all about in the first sentence of his book?

- He says that it is “good news”. (Explain that the word “gospel” means “good news”.)
- He says it’s about Jesus.
- He says it’s about Jesus being the Son of God. (*see note on this below)

***Note:** Some eagle-eyed group members may notice a footnote in the NIV that says: “Some ancient manuscripts do not have the words ‘the Son of God’”, and ask you about it. This may, in turn, raise all kinds of issues about the reliability of the Bible, and the trustworthiness of Mark. If this is an issue for your group, or for an individual, plan to include some input on the reliability of the Bible. See notes on page 183.

How is that different from some of the pictures we’ve drawn?

This question is designed to tackle some of the common misconceptions about the Christian faith that may have come up in the poster-drawing exercise.

- He says that it is “good news”. In other words it’s not bad news; it’s great, brilliant and exciting news – far from boring! If you think Christianity is boring, then you’ve not really understood what it’s all about.
- He says it’s about Jesus. It’s not about buildings, or services, or “religion” – it’s about a man who lived and walked and breathed in history, called Jesus.
- He says it’s about Jesus being the Son of God. It’s about God making himself known to us through Jesus.

TALK 1

➤ *Deliver Talk 1 using the notes on page 119. The notes for this talk can also be downloaded from www.ceministries.org/cy to enable you to adapt them for your group and add your own illustrations. Alternatively, you could show Episode 1 from the Soul DVD if this would be appropriate for your group.*

➤ *There is a recap (called DOWNLOAD) in the group member’s CY Handbook for their reference. Encourage people to write notes on the Download page as they listen to the talk. The recap is also printed below.*

DOWNLOAD

The recap below (called DOWNLOAD) appears in the group member’s CY Handbook for their reference.

- Christianity is not about rules or ceremonies. It’s all about Jesus Christ.
- If we’re here by chance, we don’t matter or have any value. But God created us – so we matter enormously.

- We all face death sooner or later. Since we all have to die, what's the point of living?
- The Bible says we don't really start living until we know the one who made us, and live as he made us to live.
- But how can we get to know God? We need him to show himself to us. Mark says he's done that for us by sending Jesus Christ. If we want to know what God's like, we must look at Jesus.
- That's why "the gospel about Jesus Christ" is good news.

TALKBACK

➤ *Use the questions below to encourage discussion (they are also printed in the group member's CY Handbook).*

➤ *Remember that this is the first session, and the aim here is not to explain the whole gospel, to challenge them to become Christians, or start an argument about what they currently believe. It is simply to open up the themes that will be covered in subsequent weeks.*

➤ *Be careful that TALKBACK does not run over time. It is much better to stop a good discussion, leaving them hungry for more, than to talk everything out in detail with the risk of boring some of the group, or putting them off coming back next time.*

If you asked a group of people in the street: "What's the point of life?", what kind of answers would you get?

- Answers might include: making lots of money; having a good time; having good friends; finding love.
- You might ask your group why they think different people would give different answers to this question.
- The aim here is not to criticize these views, but to get the group thinking about the meaning of life. There is no pressing need to comment on them now, unless the discussion naturally heads that way.

What do most people think about God and Christianity? (✓ your answers)

boring

full of rules

interesting

pointless

important

same as other religions

out of date

only for Sundays

add your own suggestion here

Why do you think that is?

- This is to recap the EXPLORE questions, without getting too personal. Answers may include: boring, irrelevant, outdated, full of rules etc.
- Explain that churches can very easily forget that Christianity is all about Jesus – and the resulting religion can become any or all of those things. But this is not real Christianity.
- If necessary, sympathize with anyone in the group who may have had a bad experience of religion – an unhelpful minister, boring services etc.

What about Jesus? Do people think he matters? What do *you* think?

- At this stage don't press anyone to give an answer for what they think, but if they do, it may be appropriate to ask them why.
- Remind them that, according to Mark 1:1, Jesus is "good news".

CONCLUSION

Finish by encouraging your group members to come back next time. Tell them:

"We've seen that Mark says that Christianity is all about one man, Jesus. Next week we'll find out about some of the things Jesus did and said, and why Mark says that Jesus is 'good news'."

AFTERWARDS

- Write down the questions the young people have come up with, so that you can be sure to address them in the coming weeks. It may be helpful at this point to prepare a plan of which question you deal with each session.
- Think about the people who came. Make a list so that you can pray for them.
- Think about what contact you may want to make during the week to encourage them to come the next time.