QUESTION

Introduction for Group Leaders

Be welcoming

One of the most important features of a course like **Question** is the quality of relationships formed over the six weeks; if guests feel that you genuinely like them, are personally interested and concerned for them and that they can trust you, then you will develop a friendship that will hopefully mean they want to come back! Don't be tempted to fake or rush this - pray before, during and after each session for a glimpse of how much the Father loves them, and align your heart to this passion! Keep asking God to enlarge your heart for the lost!

Be natural

Scripture commends us to: 'always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect...' This resource cannot just be material you use; we are called to share our hope, ie our own words, our own understanding, our own story as transformed by the impact of the gospel. Our prayer is that **Question** will provide the opportunity for you to do just that. Be yourself, and be open with what you know of the Lord's great love – don't feel like you have to have all the answers, never be afraid to say something like: 'That's a great question, one that needs to be wrestled with, I'm going come back to that next week after I've done a bit of reading up on that subject...' People tend to have a highly-tuned radar for when people aren't being genuine, or towing a party line, or when others don't really know what they are talking about! Open your heart, life and story to the guests and you'll be amazed at what God will do with it...

Be prepared

The various materials supplied will help you prepare for each session, but you will need to prepare yourself before God. Watch and re-watch the DVD, ask yourself the questions provided, search the scriptures and seek the Spirit for answers. Give yourself a few days for the theme to sink down deep into your heart – take notes if you need to and don't be afraid to bring them along to each session. God will speak into a heart that's open to Him and to others, but God also honours prayerful preparation!

Be patient

Give people time. Our faith is a rich inheritance which we know, understand, engage with, and use the language of easily and naturally. But for someone who is not yet following Jesus, it can feel so foreign, strange or even bewildering. Be ready to go right back to the beginning again and again, and try to pace the discussion so that everyone can follow its various stages. Recap what's been said, review what's been talked about, and don't be afraid to ask if people understand what is being explained. God is eternally patient with us, waiting for us to listen, understand and obey; without His gracious and tender love, none of us would be here. Let people journey towards Him at their own pace; that way the answers will become their own and the seed of faith can take deep root in their lives.

In all the sessions, the first question is designed to be a one that everyone in the group should be able to answer – and there is wisdom in allowing time for everyone to have the chance to speak as early as this. Studies show that if people aren't engaged in the group discussion during the first few minutes, it becomes increasingly difficult to enter into the discussion later. Without addressing the question directly to an individual, lean back, make eye contact, smile at people and wait; give space for most (ideally everyone) to think it through and have a chance to share something.

Be confident

The Church has suffered a huge identity crisis over the years and left us with a heart to be sensitive, but also a hesitancy, nervousness and even fear about sharing the good news.

Remember He has not given us a spirit of timidity, and we need to hear again Paul's rallying cry to the Church in Rome (which faced a much more hostile culture than we do, where martyrdom was a very real possibility!): "**I am not ashamed** of the gospel..." This is not a case of whether you come over as a bit nervous as you lead the course (people will understand that if you are honest about it), but about your identity in Christ and His love for people, His offer of eternal life, and ultimately His power to seek and save the lost. Do all you can to speak the truth in love, without allowing the discussion to descend into debate or argument – this can often happen if course leaders come over as overly defensive, personally offended or quick to jump in. A strong sense of conviction and passion is compelling; however, expressed aggressively or negatively can turn people away. Let guests come away inspired by what we do believe rather than obsessed by what we don't.

Be prayerful

Finally, nothing will prepare, direct and equip you more than time in the presence of God, seeking more of His heart, His word and His Spirit. Jesus expected His sheep to recognise the voice of the shepherd – Himself! This isn't a one-off download, but a daily desire to stream what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. We listen, explore what we hear, and learn to discern from experience what is of Him and what is more of us. Pray your way through this introduction and let Him guide your ideas and imagination to the details of how you will best run the course locally, and stay in that flow as you lead guests through the course.

It is a very exciting time to be a Christian, with many experienced leaders commenting on a fresh sense of spiritual awakening in their communities all over Wales and the British Isles. It is time for us as a body to wake up to the call of Jesus, and become who we were created in Him to be! Jesus says: "The fields are ripe unto harvest!"; don't accept any other analysis of our situation! Be encouraged and blessed as you go in the wonderful name of Jesus who calls us to work with Him in gathering those far from Him into His saving love!

Baptist Union of Great Britain
Encouraging Missionary Disciples
CYHOEDDIADAU'R GAIR
Undeb Bedyddwyr Cymru
The Baptist Union Of Wales
2V STUDIOS