QUESTION

Next Steps

Before coming to the end of the course, you'll want to think through the next steps - both for people who are coming to faith, and also for those who aren't. It is really important that you are ready if people want to respond or are interested in exploring further.

For those who haven't come to faith...

Jesus described the Word of God as a seed that needs to be scattered widely and generously in order to reap harvest – and seed takes time to take root beneath the surface before straining towards the light. For some of the guests, the course may be the first time they've heard the elements of the gospels they've discussed over the past six weeks, and all that's happened is that they have 'received the seed'. It will take more time for the Word of God to take root inside them. Don't be discouraged; pray that God would protect them and provide the necessary environment for them to grow.

You may want to offer additional opportunities for people to continue to ask questions, explore the scriptures and pray together.

There will, of course, be those who don't come to faith. End the course by warmly thanking everything for attending, and try to keep the door open for them to stay in touch with you. It may be that, for whatever reason, they are 'hard soil' for God's seed to break through, but God may have used the course and your team to break up and soften the soil. This could be a vulnerable and even unsettling time for them; continue to pray for them, offer to stay in touch, and meet together where possible to talk more. Some may want to repeat the course, and so it might be worth having the dates of the next course planned already by the time you finish.

God is eternally patient with us, so we owe it to people to offer them as much time as they need to find faith!

For those who want to become Christians...

There will be others for whom the seed finds good soil, takes root quickly, and begins to grow! You will need to be prepared to help them take the first steps of faith; don't leave it until then to think through how you can lead them to Christ. This is such a precious moment, both for them and for you, and God uses you like a link in a chain to connect people who are far from Himself through faith in His Son!

The message and power of the cross is explained on several sessions of the course – but most clearly presented in session six: Messiah. However, don't leave it until the end; use every opportunity! Any time the discussion touches on the cross, explain the gospel as a natural part of the conversation and offer to speak to anyone who would like to know more, after the Blessing section. If the guests get used to being offered the chance to respond, it will hopefully get them thinking and they will be prepared when it is time for them.

If you have never led somebody to faith before it may be daunting task – but it is also the greatest privilege in this life to walk with a person on their journey to faith. You might be nervous the first time, but the nerves are because it is so important – it's a moment of eternal significance!

The first thing to note is that there is no 'script' for this - there is no mechanical process guaranteed to produce disciples! Jesus described salvation in a number of different ways: following Him, being born again, drinking living water, being healed etc. He understood His Father's heart, and His life's work and mission so profoundly that He could explain it simply to whomever He was speaking in language they could grasp. What better model could there be than that?

Having said that, the following are some key elements to keep firmly in mind:

Check that they have understood
It's not like a step-by-step process, but more like a map. A map is only of any use in helping you get where you need to go, if you know where you are to start with! A lot of evangelism is about helping people to see Jesus and the love and life He has for them (where we need to go!). Without understanding where we are (lost, alone, far from God) then the 'map' we show people won't help them at all, and may even be confusing or misleading.

- Check they understand their need of a Saviour...
It's one thing to understand humanity's general need of salvation – quite another for a person to recognise that they are a sinner in need of rescue! The language of sin is an unfamiliar one in our culture, but the concept is not! The Bible is very vivid about sin - it is a 'missing the mark', a 'falling short of the glory of God' (the standard revealed by Jesus). It is what has separated us from God. It is the condition that we are born with, and all we think, say and do that offends, disgusts and displeases a holy God.

Throughout the different sessions, **Question** presents the problem of sin in a number of ways: a spoilt masterpiece, a broken relationship, selfish pursuits in life, a distance between us and God, etc. This is an attempt to communicate this lost concept of sin in a contemporary way that will connect with people. People may latch onto one or more of these images as relevant for them, or you may use another one in the course of your conversations. Use whichever picture they connect with to describe and explore what they might need forgiveness for.

- Check they understand that it's a gift of grace...
We often fear that, in explaining the problem of sin, we present God in a judgemental light – but it actually deepens our understanding of His amazing love for us! If we were not a fallen race, God's love for us could be taken for granted - why shouldn't He love what he has made? The fact is that we have rejected Him from the very beginning, and He still loves us and has taken the first steps in restoring what we have broken. Now that is amazing, and shakes our view of Him, ourselves and even of love itself, to the very core!

If people begin their journey of faith thinking they have to earn their way into God's good books, the likelihood is they will continue in that attempt for a long part of their journey. This leads to a legalistic, guilt-ridden, and highly religious approach to God that was not Jesus' vision of 'life in all its fullness'. People need to hear the bad news (their need of a Saviour), before they can hear the good news (there is a Saviour – and He's good!).

Salvation is what God does in us and for us – not what we do for Him. It's grace, a gift we couldn't earn even if we wanted to; but He is loving enough to offer us what we don't deserve! Now that's good news!

- Check they understand that it's the only way
Jesus never claimed to be one road to God among many other options. He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life, no-one comes to the Father except through me!" It is only through Jesus; and it is only through His suffering, death and resurrection that we have any hope of being saved from the influence, power and presence of sin.

What this nation desperately needs right now is a Church that is passionately committed to Jesus, living out His grace and expressing the hope of His gospel in loving and radiant ways! Knowing, believing and understanding that Jesus is the only hope for them and for this world, will help to produce fully-committed, grateful and dedicated followers.

- Check they understand it's the journey of a lifetime
Jesus never wanted to give people a cheap version of grace and often made sure they were no 'hidden extras' to His gospel. "The birds of the air have their nests, the fox have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head...", "Let the dead bury their own dead...", "No-one who puts their hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom...", "Sell all your possessions and then come follow me..." were all phrases Jesus used to help people understand that faith is not a moment of emotion but the commitment we make to follow Jesus for the rest of our lives; to "deny themselves, daily take up their cross, and to follow Him..."

To follow Jesus will require good Christ-like friends to guide and disciple them, and to connect with the Body of Christ in a healthy local church that can teach, pastor and lead them into areas of ministry and mission. Be clear that it's just the beginning of what God is wanting to do in their lives, and excite them about the future and the hope that God has planned for them!

Final thoughts from author Jonathan Vaughan-Davies
I really do hope that this material will help to inspire and guide you in God's mission. My prayer is that **Question** might be an effective tool in equipping the Church in presenting the gospel in relevant and powerful ways.

As I come to the end of writing these guidelines, it feels like I'm handing over what has been a very personal project to you as a tool I hope you can use; but I also want it to be an offering to God - an act of worship. There is a song that was written at a time of revival in Wales, and was called its love song:
"Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness as the flood.
When the Prince of Life our ransom, shed for us His precious blood.
Grace and love like mighty rivers poured incessant from above
Heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love."

I believe that that grace and love have never stopped flowing – the flood of loving kindness has not dispersed, any more than the ocean can run dry! But this land is missing its love song; this nation is in desperately need of heaven's peace, and for the gentle kiss of perfect justice.

I have lived with this conviction for a long time that the Lord is waiting to entrust this nation to a people whose hearts are fully His. I long for this; something in me burns to see more of his loving Kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven'! But I recognise that it's more than a prayer, it's a lifestyle.

What wouldn't you give to reach people who are far from God?
What will it take to unleash the flood again?
The voice of the Lord says: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for Us?"

Think about it, Ponder, Question.