QUESTION

Session Guide

1 Create

This first session explores what it means to be made 'in the image of God'. This may well be an entirely new concept to many people, and will take time to digest. Give space for most of your group (ideally everyone) to think it through and have a chance to share something.

Don't be afraid to answer this question first as it'll give others clues as to the kind of things you are looking for – just be sure to end in a way that invites others to get involved (eg. 'but it's not just singers who find this, I'm sure you find this too...').

Create begins with our creativity as human beings, and then looks back to ask where that comes from. This may or may not be a question that guests on the course are already asking, but the aim of this session is to stir up that question and point people towards our true origin in God.

As the discussion moves from experiences to opinions, it's worth relating it back to them wherever possible. For example, when rephrasing question 4, say things like: "Dave's love of architecture, and Sue's passion for art – we just don't see the same desire anywhere in the animal kingdom do we?" That way, the discussion is more a journey that feels personal rather than academic.

Pray before, during and after that God will reveal Himself in the course of the conversation!

Discussion Questions

1 What inspires you? When do you feel this desire to create?

2 Why are we driven to create?

3 Why are we moved by beauty?

4 What is the main difference between human beings and the rest of the species on planet earth?

5 If we are 'made in the image of God' what does that say about God? What does that say about us?

6 In what way are we a 'spoilt masterpiece'? How might God feel about that?

7 If we fully grasped this and saw ourselves, and others, as God's craftsmanship, how would you live differently?

QUESTION

Session Guide

2 Organic

Organic picks up a theme from Create, but broadens the subject beyond ourselves to the bigger picture of where we fit in the finely-tuned universe we see around us. The aim of this session is to raise the possibility of God being our Maker and therefore our Master too. It explores our fascination with nature and aims to point people to discover the designer in God Himself.

As with session 1, the first question in particular is one that everyone should be able to answer – remember to allow time and permission for this! Remember to keep relating these experiences to the following questions. This is a big subject and one that people will already have formed opinions about, but don't be afraid to explore these with them in a confident way and state what you believe and why. Just remember to end by inviting further discussion rather than ending it.

If you need to, gently challenge the purpose and limitation of science – it asks the questions of what and how, but is not equipped to ask questions for which is there isn't a test. Science cannot disprove the existence of God; even the most hardened scientists would struggle to deny emphatically the possibility of God's existence. If the conversation reaches a point where there is a harsh disagreement, bring the discussion back to the possibility of God and the 'what if?' and 'could it be?' questions.

Pray before, during and after, that the God of all wonder would give people the gift of awe and open their eyes to His creative power and loving craftsmanship.

Discussion Questions

1 When was the last time you escaped to the 'great outdoors'? How do those places revive and refresh you?

2 How do you describe that unique quality that nature seems to have?

3 Why do we search for something 'that is bigger than ourselves; something ancient, permanent, enduring...'?

4 If it were possible for life to come into existence in its complexity and beauty by the blind forces of chance, survival and selection, where do we find meaning and purpose?

5 Can we live without meaning or purpose? Why do human beings search for it?

6 If God is our Maker, do you think it would matter to God how you live your life?

7 If 'God is actually intimately connected, passionately concerned about our world, about us' how does that change my view of life? What would I need to adjust?

QUESTION

Session Guide

3 Trophy

Trophy deals with the question of where we find purpose in life, why we seek it and where it might ultimately lead. Many people, particularly early on in adult life, will find themselves asking the big questions of who they are and what they are here for. Others will come back to this question after years working in the same job, being in the same place, living the same life for a long time.

Ultimately, the point is that God values us more than our successes and loves us despite of our failures! The aim of this session is to draw out the fact that we couldn't win God's approval with good works anyhow – we need a righteousness that we ourselves cannot achieve on our own, and that righteousness is offered to us in the work of Christ on the cross.

Allow people chance to grapple with how their own pursuits have been an attempt to say: "I am here!" As with all the sessions, if people can see themselves in the problems of sin, then the answers we have to give will seem the more relevant, important and urgent.

Be prepared to share your own experience of how you no longer need constantly to seek approval, because of the inherent value God sees in you.

Pray before, during and after that people would realise we are not here for ourselves, that their lives have eternal significance and consequence, and that your guests might realise what Jesus offers is for them!

Discussion Questions

1 When do you feel most purposeful? What can you just 'lose yourself' in?

2 Why are we driven to discover purpose, value or meaning? Where does that desire come from?

3 In what types of ways do people try to seek approval? Why do we do this?

4 How might the belief that God Himself knows and loves you personally change this?

5 'How good is good enough?' What kind of life would really win God's approval?

6 How does this understanding of the cross change this view? Is it good news?

7 If we are really offered an exchange of our previous record for Jesus' perfect one, what would that mean for you?

QUESTION

Session Guide

4 Hurt

Hurt introduces the subject of suffering, and is therefore a sensitive issue which will need to be handled carefully. It is not an objective exercise, particularly for any guests for whom this has been a big issue. You will need not just a good grasp of the material but, where possible, an awareness of possible situations (either past or present) that people have faced, or are facing.

Seeking to understand their pain will equip you with ways to answer specific questions. It's often stated that: 'people won't care what you know, until they know that you care...', and that is particularly true of this issue. Don't gloss over somebody's story, or presume to know how they feel; allow the compassion of Christ to shine through your eyes, voice, and general approach before sharing His hope too.

Before playing the Blessing section of the DVD – you might like to introduce a time of prayer where you ask for prayer requests or, if it's ok with the guests, pray for anything that has been shared.

Sometimes the issue of suffering can be second-hand, or it might be a smoke screen for other issues. Working through the topic with people can be complicated, and it may be worth somebody from the church offering to meet with them to talk and pray further.

Discussion Questions

1 Have you ever heard anyone ask the questions: "Why did this have to happen?" or "Where is God is all of this?" Share your experiences.

2 Where does that strong desire for fairness and justice come from?

3 Why do some people seem to instinctively turn to God at times of difficulty, crisis or tragedy?

4 Why do you think we yearn for our pain to be understood? Why does this help?

5 How does this understanding of the cross offer hope when you are hurting? How might it change people's views of God?

6 Why does the idea of an afterlife appeal to so many people?

7 If heaven is an eternal paradise, what on earth would ordinary people have to do in order to qualify to enter it?

QUESTION

Session Guide

5 Coincidence

Regardless of nationality, age or faith there is a strong human instinct to pray – particularly in times of great crisis or uncertainty. Following the terrorist attack on the twin towers, for example, churches were flooded with people seeking help in expressing their grief, and crying out to the God they desperately wanted to believe in for hope, courage and peace at that time. Individuals too, who wouldn't describe themselves as Christian, confess to praying from time to time; and some even to answers to those prayers – peace, comfort, direction and more. What seems strange is that, people with no faith will pray with no real understanding of whom they are praying to, or what might happen in response to their requests.

In Coincidence we look briefly at the rich inheritance of prayer in the nation – and explore what is going on as we pray. This session aims to introduce people to the possibility of a real, personal relationship with God in prayer.

You may need to be sensitive towards those for whom unanswered prayer has been a roadblock in their journey of faith, who cannot understand why God would not wish to answer their specific prayer in the way they wanted Him to. A lion does not need help defending itself; it just needs letting out of its cage! In the same way, beware of the temptation to speak on God's behalf or of trying to offer quick answers to why God may or may not have done something in response to someone's prayers. Rather, try to allow time for healing encounters with God; He doesn't need us to defend His ways, but to represent His character and introduce Him to the world!

This session ends with the possibility of praying for people – the size of the group will have a big effect on how this is done - if there is more than one group leader/helper, it might be valuable to split into as small a group as possible so that people can share openly. This is a great opportunity to model a healthy relationship with God through prayer, and for God to reveal His power and love – so pray with confidence, out of a heart of compassion and a hunger to see God move.

Discussion Questions

1 Have you ever felt like praying? What was the situation? How did it feel?

2 Why are human beings driven to discover the 'mysterious adventure of encountering the presence, peace and power of God in prayer'?

3 What kind of God would be interested in your desires and dreams?

4 Why do so many people attend churches of all different shapes, sizes and styles every Sunday? Why, in the busyness of life, do people allocate this time to pray?

5 Can prayer really change things? Does it change God, change the world or does it change the person praying?

6 How might Jesus' approach to prayer – to spend time with God, as a child would with a loving parent – change our view on what happens when people pray?

7 Is there anything you would like to pray about?

QUESTION

Session Guide

6 Messiah

Messiah is the final session of the course – and focuses on the identity of Jesus, and the purpose of His life, death and resurrection. People who are not generally interested in religion, or even Christianity, often find Jesus a fascinating and compelling person and are keen to know more about Him. With that, however, comes many misunderstandings and even distortions of His true identity, character and mission – this is something that we can speak about with great authority, not just knowing about Him in the Bible, but knowing Him personally!

Jesus' identity, character and mission can never be fully understood without a clear explanation of why He died on the cross. This has been hinted at in several sessions, but is hopefully made clear in this final session. People will have questions about how the gospel works, and you will need to take your time to ensure this is clear for everyone – but people will also want to know that the gospel works, so keep illustrating the message with your own story, and relating it to them as you do.

After six sessions together, this is a great opportunity to speak with experience, passion and conviction about how you found out about Jesus, how you met Him and how He has touched and transformed your life! If guests have come to the whole course, this may be your last time to see and talk to them, so don't hold back! Pray before, during and after that guests might realise their need for a Saviour, recognise Jesus as the only way, and respond in repentance, trust and love.

Discussion Questions

1 What do you know about Jesus? Where did you get these ideas from?

2 Why has appeal of this one person never gone away?

3 C S Lewis writes: 'let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.' What do you think he means by that?

4 Who do you think Jesus is? Can He be 'really mad, really bad, really good or really God'?

5 Why is the symbol of the cross so common in our culture today? Why does it speak of hope to people, particularly at times of crisis?

6 How might the cross, this instrument of punishment, torture and execution be seen as a demonstration of love, even the love of God for His world?

7 Why might people believe they need a Saviour? What would we need saving from?

8 If Jesus is 'God in the flesh', who willingly gave His life as a demonstration of love to absorb the punishment for the sin of the world, that surely demands some response from us. How might it affect you? What do we need to do?