

HIGHER

SESSIONS





WELCOME

INTRODUCTION

SESSION ONE: THE GOSPEL

SESSION TWO: PRAYER

SESSION THREE: THE BIBLE

SESSION FOUR: CHOSEN

SESSION FIVE: RELATIONSHIP

SESSION SIX: ADVENTURE

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW

APPENDIX B: GOING DEEPER

APPENDIX C: GAMES

APPENDIX D: RESOURCES WE LOVE

IT'S ALL ABOUT DISCIPLES, NOT JUST DECISIONS

HIGHER SESSIONS

Welcome to Higher Sessions! They are six, discipleship-focused sessions designed to be run in schools and in youth groups in the follow-up to the Higher Tour.

Timings

We've included suggested timings for each section. These are probably a minimum guide rather than something to aim for – so feel free to be flexible with these depending on your context. School sessions are designed to squeeze into a 30-minute lunchtime session. Youth group sessions will last between 60 and 90 minutes.

Hosting

It's up to you how you want to use the Higher Sessions. Aside from suggesting that it might be a good idea to include some refreshments, we'll leave the details up to you!

Running Higher Sessions in school

Liaise with the school to arrange a room that's available at lunchtimes. Arrange for lunch passes if needed. Be mindful to follow any procedures required by the school and remember your context. Higher Sessions in school are a great opportunity to invite young people to your evening sessions, so they're more of an introduction to the Higher Session content than full-on discipleship.

Sample school outline

5 mins – Welcome
10 mins – Game
7 mins – Teaching
10 mins – Discussion
5 mins – Challenge

Running Higher Sessions at a youth group

The youth group sessions include the material covered in school and then go a bit deeper. There may be some young people who overlap, but treat it as an opportunity for them to lead in discussion times or engage afresh in teaching they've already heard.

Sample youth group outline

5 mins – Welcome
10 mins – Game
7 mins – Teaching
10 mins – Discussion
5 mins – Game
7 mins – Teaching
10 mins – Discussion
5 mins – Challenge

Higher App

The Higher Sessions dovetail with the Higher App. Make sure your details are up to date and that you've customised any push notifications through the Higher Portal. The App will remind your group of the next session, but don't just rely on the App to do this! The sooner you can build a relationship and rapport with your group, the better. Discipleship looks like real relationships, not screen time.

Appendices

We've included four appendices. A includes a cheatsheet of everything you might need to prepare for the entire Higher Sessions. B includes some suggestions for going deeper. C includes some game ideas. D includes other youth discipleship resources we would recommend.



SESSION ONE: THE GOSPEL

KEY LEARNING

Becoming a Christian is the best decision we'll ever make. Following Jesus is an adventure – it's not always easy, but totally worth it. It's important we understand the gospel so we can apply it to our lives and follow Jesus wherever we go.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you love us. We're sorry for rejecting you and your plan for our lives. Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross and taking the punishment for our sin. Please come into our lives and help us, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to live our lives for you, for the rest of our days.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

John 3:16

WELCOME - 5 MINUTES

Welcome your group. Get to know their names and find out how they found out about your session. You may have met some already, so make sure any newcomers are made to feel really welcome.

Talk about the Higher gigs they might have been to and about the decision they made there to follow Jesus.

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Ping Pong Straws*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session One.

OR

Teach

Recap the gospel presentation from the Higher events.

There is an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, loving creator God who designed and created the universe. You are his creation. You are not a random accident. You are the result of intentional design, you are supposed to be here, and you have a God-given purpose.

God's creation was perfect, but we wanted more. We (humanity) have rejected God and his perfect plan for us. The Bible calls this sin. Sin ultimately leads to destruction and death – we see this in the world through things like greed, materialism, war, self-harm, suicide, abuse and more. The world is broken and, deep down, so are we.

But there is good news! God set in motion the greatest rescue plan ever to bring us back into relationship with him. He sent his son Jesus Christ to live a perfect human life and to die for us, taking our brokenness with him. He died our death, so we could have life.

Jesus died, and if he had stayed dead he wouldn't have changed anything. But he defeated death itself by rising again

on the third day. Now, he has made a way for us to receive God's forgiveness and to share in the new and eternal life that he made possible.

What we need to do is to trust him and choose to follow him for the rest of our lives.

He doesn't ask us to do it alone. The first thing Jesus told his first disciples to do was to go and tell others about him ('make disciples'). Jesus' followers are called the Church – not a building, but a family of people across the world who grow in their faith together through praying, reading the Bible, worshipping God and telling others about his love.

One day, Jesus will return and make everything new. Until then, the Church lives to grow in faith and bring as many people as we can into relationship with God.

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Did you understand the good news about Jesus when you heard it at Higher? What does choosing to follow him mean to you?
- Do you think the world needs good news? Which parts of your life could benefit from good news?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION - JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

Becoming a Christian is the best decision we'll ever make. Following Jesus is an adventure – it's not always easy, but totally worth it. It's important we understand the gospel so we can apply it to our lives and follow Jesus wherever we go.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you love us. We're sorry for rejecting you and your plan for our lives. Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross and taking the punishment for our sin. Please come into our lives and help us, by the power of your Holy Spirit, to live our lives for you, for the rest of our days.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

John 3:16

GAME - 5 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Truth, Truth, Fib*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session One.

OR

Teach

The good news about Jesus is always true. But it's not always an easy journey. One of the things that often gets in the way on our journey as Christians is doubt. We're changing all the time, and so is the world around us – so what happens when we're just not as sure about how much God loves us?

One of Jesus' first followers was called Thomas. He had been with Jesus for his whole ministry and seen amazing things, like people healed from diseases, demons cast out and five thousand people fed from just five loaves of bread and two fishes. But when Jesus died he lost his way and went back on what he'd started to believe about him. He's sometimes now known as 'Doubting Thomas' because he doubted Jesus was alive again.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

John 20:24–29

In the story, Jesus met Thomas and helped him to believe again and get past his doubt. But notice what Jesus says to Thomas: 'Blessed are those who believe without seeing me.'

Jesus as a physical person isn't on Earth any more – he returned to God. But he did send his Holy Spirit to live in us. When we invite Jesus into our lives he makes himself real to us – like he did with Thomas – through his Holy Spirit. Even though we can't see him, he's with us!

Throughout the Higher Sessions we're going to explore lots of different ways that God will continue to be part of our lives. One of the ways he's constantly making himself real to us is through the Bible. Another way is through answering our prayers. And he also puts us in friendships with other Christians who can help us when we're struggling.

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- What might make you doubt the good news about Jesus? Even since the Higher gig, have you had moments where you've been unsure about how much he loves you?
- What stands out to you about the story of Thomas? Do you feel like Thomas or like one of the other disciples?
- When you're unsure about something, where do you go to find answers? (Parents, teachers, the internet, friends.) Who might you go to with questions about your faith? (Encourage your group to build connections with each other and with other Christians – especially if they have family members who follow Jesus too.)

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Recommit to Jesus

Choosing to follow Jesus isn't something we do once – it's usually a choice we make daily. Whether Higher was the first time you've said yes to him or the hundredth, say yes to him today. Pray together with your group and choose to follow Jesus for today, tomorrow and forever.

Higher App

Check whether your group has downloaded the Higher App. Help them to do so if they need it, and show them where they can find details of the next session, Bible reading help and other exciting content from the Higher Tour.

Remind the group of the next session date/time and say a simple prayer to close.



SESSION TWO: PRAYER

KEY LEARNING

Prayer is simply talking to God. God hears our prayers and loves it when we talk to him. Prayer is powerful and changes things. Sometimes it changes situations, and sometimes it changes our own hearts to be more aware of what God wants for us.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you hear us when we pray and that you always answer. Thank you that you love it when we talk to you. Help us to remember to make you part of every day of our lives by getting into a rhythm of praying regularly.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Matthew 6:5-13

WELCOME - 5 MINUTES

Welcome your group. Ask them if they have been using the Higher App and encourage them to continue enjoying the content and reading the Bible.

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Chinese Whispers*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session Two.

OR

Teach

I wonder what you think about praying. Is it something you've studied in RE/RS lessons at school? For some faiths, it's a regular discipline - Muslims are expected to pray five times a day with set phrases and actions. It's a key way they practise and live out their faith.

Or, you might have seen people asking for prayers after a tragedy. Do you remember hashtags like #PrayforParis, after the terrible attacks there a few years ago? What does that mean? And what do we think praying does?

One of the things that marks us out as Christians is that we believe God listens to us when we pray to him. It's simply talking to God. Sometimes we use words that other people have written (you might have done this at church) and sometimes we can talk to him using our own words.

The main reason we pray is because it's good to talk to God. He knows us and loves us and wants to be in a relationship with us. So as part of that he loves it when we talk to him.

But we also pray because we know it works. Throughout the Bible we find places where people pray to God and things happen. Sometimes, God answers our prayers in a very real way - even healing people from sickness or making impossible things happen. No-one other than God fully understands but we know it's a good thing to do.

Often, praying about something can help change us. Talking something through with God helps us to see things from his heavenly perspective. It might mean we feel differently about someone or something, and God might help us to be kind, forgiving or let go of anger or hurt. Prayer sometimes spurs us into action when we line up with what God cares about - by giving our money away, doing something kind for someone else or giving up doing something that gets in the way of our relationship with God.

Share a personal story about when prayer made a difference to your life.

In the Bible, Jesus' first followers asked him how they should pray. Here's what he said:

Read (out loud - you could ask for a volunteer)

Matthew 6:5-13

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Have you ever prayed before? What made you talk to God? Did you think he was listening?
- What do you think about prayer making a difference to real situations? Does it seem far-fetched or does it seem possible?
- Is there anything you would like to pray about today?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION - JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

Prayer is simply talking to God. God hears our prayers and loves it when we talk to him. Prayer is powerful and changes things. Sometimes it changes situations, and sometimes it changes our own hearts to be more aware of what God wants for us.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you hear us when we pray and that you always answer. Thank you that you love it when we talk to you. Help us to remember to make you part of every day of our lives by getting into a rhythm of praying regularly.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Matthew 6:5-13

GAME - 5 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Cup Phones*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session Two.

OR

Teach

Praying together is a really important part of following Jesus. At church we always spend some time praying as a group of God's people.

Spend some time talking about the corporate prayer life of your church. Be ready to explain why e.g. prayer ministry happens at the end of services, or what 'intercession' is. Be careful to tailor it to the real prayer practise of your church family and be ready to answer any questions your group has about how they can get involved.

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Have you ever prayed together with another person or group of Christians?
- What do you think is different about praying together compared to praying by yourself?

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Pray Together

Be bold and spend some time praying together as a group. It may feel awkward to begin, but be deliberate - it's possibly the first opportunity for your group to experience prayer together.

As part of your prayer time, ask the group if they have anything they'd like to pray about or something they'd like you to pray for.

Start by praying yourself and, if appropriate, making space for your group to pray in smaller groups together or as one group. Don't let anyone feel uncomfortable!

Prayer Reminders

Get your group to set a daily reminder on their phones to chat to God. It might be in the morning while they're getting ready for school or in the evening as they're getting ready for bed. Why not challenge them to set two reminders a day? (Psalm 1:2.)

Remind the group of the next session date/time and pray to close.



SESSION THREE: THE BIBLE

KEY LEARNING

The Bible is an amazing book – but what’s more exciting is that God speaks to us through it. Getting into the habit of reading it every day means we’re always giving God an opportunity to talk to us.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for giving us the Bible. Thank you that you can speak to us through it by your Holy Spirit. Help us to get into the habit of reading it every day and asking you what it means.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.’

– 2 Timothy 3:16

WELCOME – 5 MINUTES

Welcome your group. Ask them if they have brought their Higher Bibles with them – anyone who has forgotten can share or use another Bible you have available.

Welcome your group. Pray together. You could use the prayer on the left. Talk about last week’s challenge and celebrate with the young people.

GAME – 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Lego Builders*.

TEACHING – 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session Three.

OR

Teach

The Bible was written by lots of different authors over many years. It’s not just one book – it contains 66 different books! Some of them are history – with family, battles and kingdoms. Some are songs and poetry – with love, wisdom and emotion. Some are prophecy – with a picture of what the future holds. Some are about Jesus – with his life, his death and his resurrection. And some are letters to the church – with advice, instructions and encouragements for today.

The stories are way better than Game of Thrones because they actually happened. The prophecies are better than football odds because they’re all true (check out Psalm 22, or Isaiah 9). And the stories about Jesus are some of the best bits.

Each book of the Bible is split into chapters, and each chapter is split into smaller sections – often just a sentence – called verses. They’re there to help you find your place. So, Mark 1:16 means Mark chapter one, verse 16.

If you’re already reading your Higher Bible, you might have started reading Mark. Let’s read the first chapter together.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

Mark 1:1-20

DISCUSSION – 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Before Higher, had you ever looked in a Bible before? What did you think?
- What did you think of Mark 1? (Was it fast-paced, exciting, confusing?)
- Which parts of the Bible are you most interested in? History, poetry, prophecy, Jesus or letters?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION – JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

The Bible is an amazing book – but what’s more exciting is that God speaks to us through it. Getting into the habit of reading it every day means we’re always giving God an opportunity to talk to us.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for giving us the Bible. Thank you that you can speak to us through it by your Holy Spirit. Help us to get into the habit of reading it every day and asking you what it means.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

‘All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.’

– 2 Timothy 3:16

GAME - 5 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Draw Swords*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session Three.

OR

Teach

Getting into the habit of reading the Bible every day will change your life.

The DBS method – read a short section, write it in your own words, ask what it means for you today – is a great way of helping the Bible to impact your life. Sometimes, what you’re reading might seem a bit weird and not relevant. But God loves to speak to you through his word, so ask him to help you understand. He always will.

Share a personal story of when a Bible passage or verse impacted your life in a significant way. It might be a verse that gave you hope in a difficult situation or a time when God really spoke to you through a particular passage.

It’s great to read the Bible by yourself. But it’s also really important to read it with other people. At church services we always read the Bible together and ask God what it means for us. Sometimes God speaks to us directly, and sometimes he speaks to us through other people.

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- What do you do every single day? (Clean your teeth, get ready for school, go to sleep, eat dinner...
- When do you think you could find ten minutes each day to read the Bible? In the morning? Straight after school? Before you go to sleep?
- Is there anything you could give up for a month to challenge you to read the Bible? What about chocolate or even Snapchat?
- Who could you read the Bible with? Your friends, your family? Have you been to a church service yet? Which part of the Bible was used?

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Encourage the group to develop a habit to read the Bible every day. They can use the Higher App to help remind them, or something like YouVersion. They could also sign up for daily emails on higherbible.com. The Gospel of Mark is a great place to start if they haven’t already.

Remind the group of the next session date/time and pray to close.



SESSION FOUR: CHOSEN

KEY LEARNING

Being a Christian and choosing to follow Jesus is more than just going to church, spending time reading the Bible or living a different lifestyle. Those things are all really important but are rooted in what's really going on – discovering our true identity as God's sons and daughters.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you made us and know us completely. Thank you that because of what Jesus did we can have a relationship with you as your sons and daughters. Help us to go into the world knowing our true identity and knowing that we are fully loved by you.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Psalm 139:13-14
2 Corinthians 5:17

WELCOME - 5 MINUTES

At this stage of the Higher Sessions, you may have started to see a rapport building between members of the group. Be sensitive to this throughout the session – while the content is designed to be accessible without deep emotional engagement, if you are facilitating a safe space you may find some individuals are able to open up about themselves.

Welcome your group. Pray together. You could use the prayer on the left. Talk about last week's challenge and celebrate with the young people.

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Pedometer Portraits*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session Four.

OR

Teach

John the Baptist was a man who was chosen by God for a specific purpose. He was so sure of his identity that he didn't care what people thought of him. He even moved into the desert and lived wearing camel hair, eating locusts (yuck) and wild honey!

But God had chosen him to prepare the way for Jesus. What a special job. After he met Jesus and baptised him in the River Jordan, John ended up in prison and Herod even beheaded him. His life wasn't particularly fun – but the John the Baptist we read about in scripture knew his purpose and was secure knowing that God had chosen him.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

Mark 1:1-8

There are some other wacky characters we find in the Bible who led similar lives. Have you ever heard of Samson? He was given super-human strength by God but wasn't allowed to cut his hair. Sadly, Samson lost sight of God's purpose for his life

and ended up losing what God had given him, only to get his strength back once he realised how much he'd messed up.

I wonder what your life might look like if you didn't care what anyone thought about you other than God? How many times a day do you think about what someone else might think about you? The Bible tells us that God has loved us since before we were even born. If all we cared about was that, what difference would it make?

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

Psalm 139:13-14

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- What do you think most people thought of John the Baptist?
- Do you think people thought differently about John after they had met Jesus?
- What special purpose do you think God might have made you for?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION - JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

Being a Christian and choosing to follow Jesus is more than just going to church, spending time reading the Bible or living a different lifestyle. Those things are all really important but are rooted in what's really going on – discovering our true identity as God's sons and daughters.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you made us and know us completely. Thank you that because of what Jesus did we can have a relationship with you as your sons and daughters. Help us to go into the world knowing our true identity and knowing that we are fully loved by you.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Psalms 139:13-14
2 Corinthians 5:17

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session Four.

OR

Teach

Throughout our lives we're told things about who we are. Some of us might have parents who tell us they love us regularly – others might not. At school our teachers speak all kinds of things over us – whether it's encouraging about a piece of work or being told off about something.

We all know that words have power. In fact, in the book of James in the Bible, we read about how our tongue is really powerful. James compares it to a small rudder on a huge ship, or a tiny bit in the mouth of a giant shire horse! He says, 'It can set your whole life on fire...no one can tame the tongue' (James 3:6c, 8a, NLT).

We also all know how easy it can be to say the wrong thing. Can you bring to mind a moment when you said something you wished you hadn't?

We've all had things said to us or said about us that hurt. But God is longing to tell us the truth about who we are. The Bible tells us that Jesus is 'the truth' (John 14:6), so we can trust what he says.

If you feel comfortable and if it feels appropriate for the group, share an example of negative words being spoken over you in your life, and how you processed this against the truth of scripture. Refer to a specific Bible passage if you can.

When we choose to follow Jesus it's not just a case of giving up our Sunday mornings to go to church, or spending more time reading the Bible. Those things are great – but he wants us to enter into a brand-new identity.

That identity isn't defined by how good we are at sport, maths or singing. It's not even to do with what our teachers

or parents say about us. Even though they might speak God's truth over us, they're people too! It's an identity that is based entirely on the truth that God loves us.

After we've chosen to follow Jesus there are still times when we'll mess up. But because God has changed our identity he remains faithful and forgives us. It doesn't mean it doesn't matter whether or not we choose to go his way, but it means we're always able to come back to the truth about who we are, no matter what we've done.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

2 Corinthians 5:17

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- If you were introducing yourself to someone for the first time, how would you describe yourself?
- Where do you look for truth?
- (For an open group) Is there anything you believe about yourself that doesn't match with your identity as a son or daughter of God?

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Social Media Challenge

Social media is one of the ways we can be distracted from God's truth. Ask the group about their social media habits and whether they connect this to what they believe about themselves. Ask them to set a challenge to limit their time on social media each day, or spend it positively by encouraging their friends or following new profiles with encouraging posts.

Truth Reminders

Ask the group to set a daily reminder on their phones of God's truth about their identity. It could be for the morning when they're getting ready for school, or in the evening before they go to bed. It could be a Bible verse or a worship song that talks about how much God loves them as his son or daughter.

Remind the group of the next session date/time and pray to close.



SESSION FIVE: RELATIONSHIP

KEY LEARNING

Following Jesus impacts every aspect of our lives. Last week we looked at the way it changes the way we see ourselves. It also changes the way we see other people. God is asking us to build healthy relationships with our families, friends, teachers and other people we meet. Sometimes it's hard work – but it's part of what makes being a Christian so exciting!

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you created and love us. Help us to remember that you created and love other people too. Help us to treat them like they're your precious children, even if sometimes it's hard. Please surround us with good Christian relationships that will help us to grow in our faith in you.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Luke 10:25–37

WELCOME - 5 MINUTES

Welcome your group. Pray together. You could use the prayer on the left. Talk about last week's challenge and celebrate with the young people.

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Elastic Band Cups*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session Five.

OR

Teach

Living alongside other people is one of the best things in life. It can also be one of the hardest!

If you've got siblings, you know best what this is like(!) – but our relationships with our friends can also be difficult too. Part of the brokenness in the world that Jesus came to fix is our broken relationships with one another.

Jesus spent a lot of his time teaching people about how to relate to one another God's way. He talked about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God – characterised by a set of values. One of the stories he used to talk about the kingdom of God is really famous, and you've probably heard it before. It's the story of The Good Samaritan. Let's read it together.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

Luke 10:25–37

Even if this is the fiftieth time you've heard this story, it's pretty strange that someone would go to such lengths to look after someone they don't even know. The Samaritan, though, knew that the man who had been attacked was as valuable and important to God as anyone else, so he helped him.

When our relationships get messy and we're feeling hurt, let down or angry, it always helps to remember that God loves us and the people we know the same. And even when we get

things wrong and hurt each other, treating each other as his precious sons and daughters is our first priority as Christians, even though it can be really hard.

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Have you heard the story of The Good Samaritan before? What stands out?
- Can you think of someone now who has hurt you or done something to upset you? How does it feel to think of them as God's child rather than someone horrible?
- Is there anyone who you need to ask God to help you forgive?
- Is there anyone who, with God's help, you might need to ask to forgive you?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION - JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

Following Jesus impacts every aspect of our lives. Last week we looked at the way it changes the way we see ourselves. It also changes the way we see other people. God is asking us to build healthy relationships with our families, friends, teachers and other people we meet. Sometimes it's hard work – but it's part of what makes being a Christian so exciting!

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you that you created and love us. Help us to remember that you created and love other people too. Help us to treat them like they're your precious children, even if sometimes it's hard. Please surround us with good Christian relationships that will help us to grow in our faith in you.

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Luke 10:25–37

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. We recommend *Blindfold Drawing*.

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session Five.

OR

Teach

Following Jesus should make a difference to every single one of our relationships – with our friends, our family, our teachers, even the people we meet in the shop or on the street.

But God also gives us special relationships with other Christians – and these are exciting because on both sides we understand God's love and want to encourage one another to follow him.

Being part of a church doesn't just mean turning up on a Sunday. The reason we turn up on a Sunday is for us to go deeper in our relationship with one another and to go deeper in our relationship with God.

Look out for relationships you can build at church. One key relationship will be with your youth leader (that's me!) – and others will be with your friends. But what about other people in church?

(Be mindful of your church's safeguarding policies.)

There might be people – perhaps a bit older than you – who you could get to know who could help you in your faith. Look out for people whom you could ask questions.

Or, are there people at church or elsewhere in your life who God might want you to encourage? Who could you help in their faith?

It might be helpful to think of your relationships on a compass. Who is your North – someone who you can ask questions and who can help you go in the right direction? Who is your South – someone who asks you questions and who you help out?

And who is your East/West – people on the journey at the same time as you that you can help together?

The very early church had amazing relationships with one another. We can read about them in Acts 2.

Read (out loud – you could ask for a volunteer)

Acts 2:42–46

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Who in your life is North, South and East/West?
- Can you think of a time another Christian helped you in your faith? Was it one of your friends/family, someone speaking from the front on Sunday or someone else?
- Who could you make friends with who you might not have met anywhere other than at church?

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Five Friends

Ask your group to make a list of five friends who they want to work on their relationships with. It might be people who have hurt them or people they have hurt – or people they get on really well with! Get them to come up with something simple they can commit to doing that week that will help with their relationships.

Remind the group of the next session date/time and pray to close.



SESSION SIX: ADVENTURE

KEY LEARNING

Over the Higher Sessions we've spent lots of time looking at what our faith means and how we can grow together with other people. But a really important part of following Jesus is telling people about him who don't know him yet. This session will help us share our faith with the world.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for how much you love us. What you did on the cross is amazing and we're so thankful you made a way for us to step into a relationship with God. Help us to share your amazing news with other people so that they can be rescued too. Thank you for the adventure you are taking us on!

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Matthew 28:18-20

WELCOME - 5 MINUTES

Welcome your group. Pray together. You could use the prayer on the left. Talk about last week's challenge and celebrate with the young people.

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. Why not revisit a favourite game from a previous session?

TEACHING - 7 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 1 from Higher Session Six.

OR

Teach

The Higher Tour is a great example of what it looks like to go on an adventure with God. Each of the bands who were involved in the tour are made up of Christians who love Jesus and want to share their faith with others.

If they visited your school, and at the evening gigs, they were following what God asked them to do and bravely sharing his good news with people who might not have heard it before. You are one of those people - isn't it amazing that God sent them to share him with you!

Not all Christians are in bands or talk about God from a stage. You might have an opportunity to do this, but lots of us don't. It doesn't mean you're any less important to God's mission to rescue the world.

Social scientists sometimes talk about something called 'six degrees of separation'. The theory goes that it's possible for you to be connected to anyone else in the world through just six other people. For example, you're connected to your friend's friends, even if you don't know them at all - you're one degree of separation away.

What would happen if we could share our faith with our networks of friends? And if they met Jesus and chose to follow him too, how many people could they share their faith

with? Before long we'd see hundreds, thousands and millions of people introduced to him for the first time.

That's how it's always worked, too. Jesus walked on the Earth 2,000 years ago and left behind 12 people who told everyone they knew about him. Today, that looks like more than two billion people whose lives have been changed by Jesus. And the church keeps growing - even in places like China, where Christianity is really limited by the government, the church is ballooning!

God didn't choose to enter the world with a massive fanfare and take over a government (although there were a load of angels singing about Jesus being born!). He chose to share his love with the world through ordinary people like you and me - shepherds, fishermen, even slaves. We're all just as valuable to his plan to see the whole world brought into a relationship with him.

Read (out loud - you could ask for a volunteer)

Matthew 28:18-20

DISCUSSION - 10 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- Have you ever seen something go 'viral'? Perhaps it was a post, photo or video on social media.
- When you've tasted something really good, been somewhere really cool or seen something amazing, do you tell other people about it? What makes you want to share it with them?
- Who might God be asking you to share his good news with?

END OF SCHOOL SESSION - JUMP TO CHALLENGE SECTION

Turn over to continue the youth group session.

KEY LEARNING

Over the Higher Sessions we've spent lots of time looking at what our faith means and how we can grow together with other people. But a really important part of following Jesus is telling people about him who don't know him yet. This session will help us share our faith with the world.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for how much you love us. What you did on the cross is amazing and we're so thankful you made a way for us to step into a relationship with God. Help us to share your amazing news with other people so that they can be rescued too. Thank you for the adventure you are taking us on!

KEY BIBLE VERSE

Matthew 28:18-20

GAME - 10 MINUTES

Choose a game from Appendix C, or use one of your own. Why not revisit a favourite game from a previous session?

TEACHING - 4 MINUTES

Video

Show Video 2 from Higher Session Six.

OR

Teach

Jesus asks us to join his adventure, and he makes his call personal to us. He usually doesn't suddenly expect us to be able to do something that wouldn't be a good match for our skillset - like becoming a film actor if we hate speaking out loud or a professional football player if you've got two left feet - but asks us what we can bring and turns it into something amazing. That's not to say he won't challenge us! But he always takes what we bring.

Read (out loud - you could ask for a volunteer)

Matthew 4:18-20

Jesus called two fishermen - Peter and Andrew - and said he'd make them fishers of men.

Do you remember the story of when Jesus fed five thousand people with a little boy's lunch? Even though he didn't bring much (five loaves and two fishes) Jesus took what he had and used it to do something amazing.

DISCUSSION - 15 MINUTES

Some questions to get you started...

- What might Jesus ask you to use your specific skills for? Is there something you really enjoy or that you're really good at that God might ask to use to help share him with other people?
- Who could you share Jesus with?

CHALLENGE - 5 MINUTES

Five Friends

Ask your group to make a list of five friends who they want to share their faith with. Help them to be accountable to one another and set up opportunities for them to check in with each other about how they are getting on.

Pray with your group about anything they're feeling nervous about. It might be a difficult family situation - be sensitive!

Thank the group for being part of the Higher Sessions and make sure you give them plenty of opportunities to continue to engage with you and your church community. If they're not yet coming to services, encourage them to. Connect them your youth group. Why not consider running Youth Alpha next?



APPENDIX A: HIGHER SESSIONS CHEATSHEET

HERE'S SOMETHING WE MADE EARLIER...

Most sessions need very little preparation. There are just a couple of things you might want to look at in advance. You're welcome to tailor the Higher Sessions as much as you like, but we've deliberately left gaps where we think a personal story or sharing about something specific to your church makes the best sense for helping your group on their journey of discipleship.

Session Two: Prayer

Session two includes the following pre-prepared sections:

Share a personal story about when prayer made a difference to your life.

Spend some time talking about the corporate prayer life of your church. Be ready to explain why e.g. prayer ministry happens at the end of services, or what 'intercession' is. Be careful to tailor it to the real prayer practise of your church family and be ready to answer any questions your group has about how they can get involved.

Session Three: The Bible

Session three includes the following pre-prepared section:

Share a personal story of when a Bible passage or verse impacted your life in a significant way. It might be a verse that gave you hope in a difficult situation or a time when God really spoke to you through a particular passage.

Session Four: Chosen

Session four includes the following optional pre-prepared section:

If you feel comfortable and if it feels appropriate for the group, share an example of negative words being spoken over you in your life, and how you processed this against the truth of scripture. Refer to a specific Bible passage if you can.

Games

Our best advice is to be prepared! Consult Appendix C for the specifics, but spend a few minutes planning your games so you can maximise the fun and minimise any wasted time. Each game lists its ingredients (if needed) so you can prepare well.



APPENDIX B: GOING DEEPER

FOR GROUPS THAT WANT TO TAKE THINGS FURTHER

We've tried to pitch the Higher Sessions to young people who are brand-new to faith. You may find that your group is ready for more - so here are a few ways you could take them deeper.

Session One: The Gospel

Coming soon

Session Two: Prayer

Coming soon

Session Three: The Bible

Coming soon

Session Four: Chosen

Coming soon

Session Five: Relationship

Coming soon

Session Six: Adventure

Coming soon

HIGHER SESSIONS

APPENDIX C: GAMES

PING PONG STRAWS

Ingredients: table tennis ball(s); straws; a table

Take a table tennis ball or balls and place it/them on a flat surface (ideally a table). Choose two individuals or two volunteers and place them at either end.

The aim of the game is to use straws to blow the ball(s) off the other end of the table, while the other team tries to do the same in the opposite direction. The first individual/team to blow all the ball(s) off the table wins.

TRUTH, TRUTH, FIB

Ask the group to share three statements about themselves. Two should be the truth, and one should be a fib (don't encourage them to lie!). The other members of the group then have to guess which statement is the fib.

(It's probably best that you start this game to set the tone.)

CHINESE WHISPERS

Sit the group in a circle. Whisper a secret message to the person on your left and ask them to pass it on. When the message gets back to you, share the original message and what it's morphed into. Then, ask members of your group to start it off themselves.

(It's probably best that you start this game to set the tone.)

CUP PHONES

Ingredients: plastic cups; string; scissors

Tie string to the bottom of plastic cups to turn them into phones. Run a competition for the longest working cup phone and the clearest reception(!).

LEGO BUILDERS

Ingredients: small Lego sets

This game is a race. Separate your group into teams and give them a Lego set – but only show them the picture of what they have to build, not the instructions. The team with the best-built Lego model wins.

DRAW SWORDS

Ingredients: Higher Bibles; chairs

Each member of the group holds a Higher Bible in their

writing hand. They hold it by their waist as if they were drawing a sword from a holster. Call, 'Draw swords!' and have everyone 'draw' their Bible and hold it at arms length, as if they are about to charge at an enemy.

Then, call out a Bible verse and the first person to find it, stand on their chair and read it out wins.

(You could have fun by calling out a fake verse – e.g. Mark 17:8.)

PEDOMETER PORTRAITS

Ingredients: head bands; pedometers; pens; paper; music (optional)

Choose a couple of volunteers and give them a pedometer attached to a headband, a pen and some paper. Explain that when you say 'Go!' (or when the music starts) they will have 30 seconds to gain as many 'steps' as possible by shaking their head. At the same time they must also try and draw themselves!

The winner is the person with the most steps – and if there's a tie, the best self-portrait.

ELASTIC BAND CUPS

Ingredients: plastic cups; elastic bands; string

Prepare this before the session: tie four or five pieces of string to each elastic band.

Place five cups per team at one end of the room. Divide your group into teams of four or five and give each team an elastic band with strings attached. Their task is to transport their cups from end of the room to the other, but without touching them. They can only use the strings and elastic bands to move the cups – so they'll need to work together.

BLINDFOLD DRAWING

Ingredients: paper; pens; blindfolds

Split your group into teams of four or five. Blindfold a volunteer and give them the pen and paper. Whisper an object they need to draw while blindfolded. The winning team is the one to identify their object – the blindfolded volunteer is only allowed to draw and can't say a word.



APPENDIX D: RESOURCES WE LOVE

ALPHA YOUTH SERIES

Youth Alpha is a great follow-up to Higher Sessions. It will help your young people go a bit deeper in their faith and help them ask any questions they might have.

Find out more at alpha.org/youth

THE BIBLE PROJECT

Brilliantly-made video resources that open up the Bible and help make it exciting.

Find out more at thebibleproject.com