

THE VISA COURSE

STUDENT
NOTES



FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

An opportunity to find out
about the Christian faith



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Quotations from the Bible are taken from the Contemporary English Version, the Good News Bible and the New International Version (1984 version).



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WELCOME TO THE **VISA** COURSE!

An introduction to the Christian faith

A visa gives us entry. It allows us to go into a country, to look around, to observe the culture and the way people do things, to meet the people, to ask questions and to understand the language. It gives us an opportunity to find out for ourselves about the place we are visiting.

The Visa Course is written to help you to begin to understand the Christian faith and what Christians believe. It is an opportunity for you to listen, to discuss and to ask questions in a relaxed atmosphere. When we visit a country we don't understand everything immediately. It takes time. It can also take time to understand the Christian faith but it is a great adventure!

Enjoy the course!

THE PROGRAMME

WEEK 1

How do we know there is a God?

- An introduction week to the Visa Course.
- A look at some of the evidence for the existence of God.

WEEK 2

God is good. So, what's wrong with the world?

- The character of God. Questions about suffering.
- What has gone wrong?

WEEK 3

Who is Jesus?

- Was Jesus just a good man and a wise teacher?
- What did he say about himself?

WEEK 4

Why did Jesus die?

- Was Jesus' death on the cross a terrible mistake?
- What does it mean?

WEEK 5

Did Jesus come alive again?

- A look at some of the evidence for the resurrection.

WEEK 6

What is a Christian?

- An opportunity to revise what we have done so far.
- The story of the Lost Son.

WEEK 7

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- What does he do in the life of a Christian?

WEEK 8

Why do we read the Bible?

- What is it? Why is it so important?

WEEK 9

What does it mean to live as a Christian?

- Prayer – getting to know God.
- Church – getting to know his Family.

WEEK 10

What could it mean to follow Jesus? + Any Questions

- A look at some of the difficulties of following Jesus
+ general discussion

WEEK 1

HOW DO WE KNOW THERE IS A GOD?

Introduction

- Is God really there?
- Is he real?
- How can I know that he exists?

These are big questions. The answers to these questions will influence or affect the rest of your life:

- The things that you do
- The relationships you make
- The hopes you have for the future

Some of us have been told about God by:

- our families and friends
 - people in authority: teachers, pastors, scientists
 - television and books
- Perhaps we have always believed in one god or in many gods?
- Others of us, perhaps, have not thought much about God. Perhaps there is no ‘god’ in our religion?
- Maybe we have been taught there is no God?

How do we know what to believe?

How do we find out the truth?

We need to look in three directions:

➞ Look out – Nature

↻ Look in – Experience

↩ Look back – history

➞ Look Out – Nature



When we look at the world we see:

- beauty
- patterns
- design
- order

Just think, if the world was too big or too small or too near the sun or too far away, life would not be possible. Life is very complicated with lots of relationships between living creatures and plants. Do you believe that all this happened ‘by chance’ without a designer?

When we look at the beauty of plants and animals, or when we look at the human body, we have to ask ourselves, ‘Did this happen by chance?’

“I cannot believe with my mind that this was created by chance.”

Charles Darwin



“The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

Psalms 19:1, the Bible

How do we know there is a God? Nature tells us.

✧ Look In – Experience



Let us think a little more about people. We all have needs in our lives that have to be filled:

- Hunger and thirst
- Loneliness
- A purpose for life

How do we explain our emotions, personality, intelligence, reason?

Why is it we can go all over the world and find people who worship an object or a god or gods? Why is that if there is no God?

How do we decide what is right and wrong? Something in us (our conscience) tells us when we have done wrong, but why, if there is no God?

What about the change in people's lives (conversion)? How do we explain how some people can change so much if there is no God?



“He (God) puts questions in our minds about the past and the future.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11, the Bible

How do we know there is a God? Experience tells us.

↩ Look Back – History (The Past)



All through history people from many cultures have believed in God. Many religions try to understand God. Christians believe that God communicates through a person – Jesus, and also through a book – the Bible. The Bible is a record of historical events and people. Many of these are also written about in other historical books.

What Christians believe is based on the Bible.
(Later in the Visa Course we will have a whole talk about the Bible).

Judaism, Islam and Christianity all talk about the life of Jesus. He seems to be an important person in history. Jesus taught about God.

How do we know there is a God? History tells us.

Conclusion

If there is no God then we are simply accidents; we have no purpose in life. But if there is a God it is very important to find out about him, what he is like, what he says and how we should relate to him. God wants to communicate with us and show us what he is like.

We hope that this will make you think a little more about God. We encourage you to try and find out about what Christians believe about God.

Group Exercise

Do you think there is any reason to believe there is a God?

Look at the following statements. Which are true for you?

- ☐ I have always believed there is a God
- ☐ The beauty and order in the world tell us that there is a God
- ☐ We know 'right' from 'wrong'
- ☐ Our life is based on relationships
- ☐ Another reason...
- ☐ There is no reason to believe in God

“God’s eternal power and character cannot be seen. But from the beginning of creation, God has shown what these are like by all he has made.”

Romans 1:20, the Bible



WEEK 2

GOD IS GOOD. SO, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD?



Pre-tasks

1. Match the following key words to their definitions:

1 Suffering

2 To spoil

3 To obey

4 Heaven

5 Holy

6 Sin

A To do as someone asks or tells you to do

B Doing wrong; disobeying; doing things my way; rebellion

C To make bad something that was good

D Perfect, different from anything or anyone else

E The experience of pain, illness, sadness, loss

F A perfect place where God is; a place with no suffering

End of
Preview



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