

# Week 1 – Discovering there's more to life

## Why do we need Faith?

It's easy to go through life on automatic pilot. It's easy to think that the life we have now is all there is, so we should just make the best of it. And we may be quite happy in this approach, provided nothing major goes wrong and we don't worry too much about people who aren't so well off as we are.

But sooner or later, we are likely to come up against some awkward questions. For example:

- If we're successful in all we set out to achieve, how is it that life can still feel rather empty?
- If we have a nice house and car and all the good things of life, why can we end up feeling there's something missing?
- If we can't get a job, or our relationships break down, where do we look for a better future?
- If we can lose everything in a sudden disaster, what's the point of it all?
- Where will lonely or rejected people ever find love?
- What hope is there for people whose lives are scarred by pain and suffering?
- Is there no alternative to the violence and injustice we see in the world?
- And how will we cope with death, knowing that for the people involved it's the end of everything?

## A Bigger Picture of Life

To make sense of the big questions we face on our human journey, we need a deeper understanding of what life is about. At the centre of that deeper understanding is God.

God is the creator and father of the universe, and the source of all life. If we but open our eyes, the extraordinary and wonderful world we live in reveals the glory and wonder of God.

The climax of God's creative process is the evolution of human life. The Bible says we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are the only species who can share God's understanding of life, and have a loving relationship with God.

God loves every one of us – not just in the sense of feeling love for us, but of caring for us totally. He wants us to know him and worship him. He wants to forgive us, and to give us a fresh start in life. He is always drawing us to himself, to share in his divine life.

The greatest evidence of God's love is Jesus Christ. Jesus was the Son of God: he was both God and human. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus showed us that there are no limits to God's love. No matter who we are or what we may have done, we can turn to God at any time and he will embrace us as his children. And God is always with us, always here. The presence of God around us and within us is called the Holy Spirit. So we have the Christian understanding of one God revealed in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the "Trinity").

How do we know this is true? From experience. Not just our own, but the experience of countless millions who have trusted their lives to Jesus, in the two thousand years from the first disciples whose stories are told in the Bible, right down to the present day. If we let him, Jesus will transform our lives for good. As we will discover if we are prepared to try.

### **What difference does it make?**

All the difference in the world. Jesus called it being "*born again from above*". Letting Jesus into our lives means more than adopting some new ideas and attitudes. It means a completely new way of living, where we put our whole trust in Jesus. Then we find ...

- Jesus loves us just as we are. We don't need to worry what other people think.
- If we are truly sorry, Jesus forgives everything we have done wrong in the past. We can begin a new life with him, and look to the future.
- This frees us to fully love and forgive other people, and to feel the warmth and sheer humanity which comes from living in community with one another.
- It transforms our relationships, and gives our lives new meaning and purpose. Love lasts, like nothing else does. Real love can never be destroyed.
- Jesus is always with us, helping us cope with what life throws at us. And when we do experience suffering, Jesus can be our greatest source of strength.
- Because with Jesus, even suffering and death lead to resurrection and everlasting life. Jesus gives us a tremendous sense of *hope* – our future is safe with him.

### **Why is the Christian Faith special?**

Religions are *not* all the same, and don't all believe the same things about God. The Christian faith is unique, and very special. The Christian faith believes that ...

- God *loves* the world, and every single person in it.
- Life should be lived to the full, as a celebration of the wonder of God.
- Because of Jesus, we are able to have a real, personal, human relationship with God. God is with us the whole time, through the Spirit.
- After death, we will continue in eternal life with God, as Christ promised.
- The Christian faith is for everyone. It is open to all people, equally, always.
- Jesus is the key. It is through Jesus that we receive God's overwhelming love. And Jesus shows us how we can *really* live, as we share that love with other people. It's the best, the happiest, the most wonderful life anyone can have.