Introduction to Living Faiths 4
Meet the Families! 5
Christianity Faith Overview 6

1 What do Christians Believe?
  1.1 What is God like? 8
  1.2 Jesus: God or Man? 10
  1.3 Jesus: A Challenging Teacher 12
  1.4 How do Christians Understand the Holy Trinity? 14
  1.5 What does it Mean to Experience God? 16
  1.6 I Know I’m Unique But Why? 18
Chapter 1 Assessment 20

2 Where do Christian Beliefs Come From?
  2.1 God’s Word or Ours? 22
  2.2 Why is the New Testament Important to Christians? 24
  2.3 How Has Jesus Inspired Leaders? 26
  2.4 What does it Mean to Worship? 28
  2.5 Is There Life After Death? 30
  2.6 Special Feature: How do Christians get to Heaven? 32
Chapter 2 Assessment 34

3 Belonging to the Christian Faith
  3.1 Can I Show You Who I Am? 36
  3.2 Is There Strength in Numbers? 38
  3.3 Remembering and Celebrating 40
  3.4 Can it be Just Him and Me? 42
  3.5 Special Feature: What is Lifelong Commitment? 44
Chapter 3 Assessment 46

4 Raising Questions, Exploring Answers
  4.1 Science: Friend or Foe? 48
  4.2 What is the Value of a Life? 50
  4.3 Why does Evil Exist? 52
  4.4 To Forgive or Not to Forgive? 54
  4.5 Fight in God’s Name? 56
  4.6 Peace at any Price? 58
  4.7 Do Miracles Really Happen? 60
Chapter 4 Assessment 62

5 Christian Beliefs in Action
  5.1 It’s My Money, Isn’t It? 64
  5.2 Do Love and Marriage Always Go Together? 66
  5.3 Special Feature: What Makes a Family? 68
  5.4 Why is it ‘Good to be Green’? 70
  5.5 How Fair is Fair? 72
  5.6 Multifaith, Multiculture, Multi…? 74
Chapter 5 Assessment 76

Glossary 78
Index 80
Ready for more?
When you have completed this task, you can also work on your skills for Levels 6 and 7, and perhaps even higher. This is an extension task.

‘It has been argued that, even if God isn’t real, there are many benefits to believing in something greater than us – because of the moral and social standards that belief can give people.’

Respond to this claim by showing how you could both agree and disagree with what it says. In order to attain the higher levels, you will need to evaluate relevant examples from life and the media.

Guidance
What level are you aiming at? Have a look at the grid below to see what you need to do to achieve that level. What would you need to do to improve your work?

I can…

Level 3
- use religious vocabulary to describe some key features of the beliefs that Christians have about God
- ask important questions about Christianity and beliefs about God, making links between my own responses and those of others.

Level 4
- use a range of religious vocabulary to describe and show understanding of the sources and beliefs that Christians have about God
- raise, and suggest answers to questions about belonging, meaning, truth and commitment to a belief in God.

Level 5
- use a wide range of religious vocabulary to explain the impact of belief in God on individuals and communities, including Christians
- ask and suggest answers to questions about belonging, meaning, truth and commitment to a belief in God, relating these to my own life and those of others.

Level 6
- use religious and philosophical language to give detailed accounts of belief and disbelief in God, explaining reasons for the differences between them
- use arguments and examples to show the links between beliefs, teachings and experiences of a range of people, including Christians.

Task
‘You gain nothing from a belief in God. There is no point believing.’

Do you agree or disagree? Your task is to produce a short, one minute speech. (Don’t panic! Your teacher may only ask you to write it, not say it, but be ready just in case.) You need to decide whether or not you agree with the above statement. Then – using the ideas, arguments, concepts and tasks from this chapter – write a speech supporting or rejecting the statement.

A bit of guidance…
In order to convince the listener or reader that your choice (to support or reject the statement) is the correct one, you will need to include a few points from the opposing argument and show how they are weaker than your points. This will create a balanced argument.

Hints and tips
To help you tackle this task, you could refer to some of the following:
- Jesus, his example and his teachings
- God as creator and the source of all life
- The Holy Spirit as a guide and comfort
- Human beings as strong individuals

Think carefully about what points you will need to use for your speech. You could put them into speech bubbles in your book to help you get started.

Objectives
- Explore and apply some key Christian beliefs about God.
- Reflect on your own ideas about God and the responsibilities you have in your life.

Chapter 1 Assessment
What do Christians Believe?
One of the main goals in Christianity is to be closer to God, and there are a number of ways that Christians express their commitment to this. The Catholic Church encourages younger members to take their First Holy Communion. Katie Feller shares a photo of herself at her First Holy Communion.

This is me on my First Holy Communion day. I am wearing a white dress that symbolizes that I am pure and ready to take the Communion. The little prayer book is the book of prayers that I had learned.

Many parents choose for their young babies to be baptized (infant baptism), as a welcome into the Christian family. Others leave the choice up to their children, giving them the option to take part in believer’s baptism when they are older. Claire goes to a church which practises believer’s baptism: ‘I was quite young when I got baptized, but I made the decision for myself. I knew that I wanted to publicly declare that my life was committed to following Jesus. When I was brought out of the water, it symbolized the start of a new life with him.’

Mr and Mrs Arens explain how these happen in many Anglican churches, starting with babies. Mr Arens says that ‘the usual way of welcoming babies is by baptizing them. It’s not only children [...] you can get baptized and confirmed at a later age’. He adds that in most Anglican churches ‘baptism is with water and oil and it involves telling the child and the entire family that God loves that person, whatever they may do in their life’. Mrs Arens adds that ‘it’s also a symbol for the parents of the child that they have the support of the Christian congregation’.

Johannes also explains that the Anglican Church has a rite called confirmation. This is ‘when teenagers or adults can say with their own words, “yes I want to be a Christian”’.

What questions would you ask Katie and Claire about their choices and experiences?

Do you think that Christian parents should choose infant baptism for their child, or wait and let them choose when they are older?

Activities

1. Compare Claire’s experience with the practices described by the Arens family. Note down the similarities and differences and discuss with a partner.
2. Research what is involved in being confirmed. Does it involve classes or taking a test? Do they have to wear anything special? Reflect on what you find and discuss with a partner how difficult or easy you think it would be for a young Christian to do.
3. Write an exchange of text messages or emails between Katie and Claire in which they explain the attractions of their different experiences.
4. Put together a Useful Words box for the words in bold in this unit. You may use the glossary to help you, but try to write in your own words.
Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:
- explore why violence is used to solve conflict
- consider whether battles can be fought in another way
- develop an understanding about what a pacifist is
- evaluate the role of violence in Christianity and twenty-first-century living.

Starter

- Name as many wars or conflicts as you can.
- If the law said that all young people had to spend two years in the armed forces, would you be OK with that?

Is it ever right to fight? Many people believe that there are some situations where only the armed forces can make a difference — and some Christians agree with this, provided the war is a just war (see Unit 4.6). For example, if Britain hadn’t responded with force to the threat of the Nazis in the Second World War, the world would be a very different place now. However, millions of people died fighting the Nazis, and some people believe that was a very high price to pay.

Other Christians see no reason for violence in any situation, and believe that only peaceful actions should be used to resolve conflict. These people are known as pacifists.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu is a famous Christian pacifist. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. Try to find out more about why he was given the Peace Prize. Do you agree with his words and actions?

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

There are different approaches in the Bible towards violence and its necessity. The Old Testament contains many wars and battles. For example, Joshua fought to conquer the city of Jericho in the name of God (Joshua 6:20–21).

However, there is a greater emphasis on peace in the New Testament. Many modern Christians follow the example of Jesus, because he challenged many of the teachings in the Old Testament. One of Jesus’ famous sayings is ‘turn the other cheek’, which suggests that revenge and responding violently is unacceptable.

The threat of major violence and destruction, though, still convinces some Christians that violence can be necessary in certain situations provided that the principles of just war are followed.

Useful Words

Pacifist A person who believes in non-violent solutions to conflict

4.5 Fight in God’s Name?

Colonel Gaddafi (former leader of Libya) and Saddam Hussein (former president of Iraq), both now deceased, were two modern dictators who were overthrown by the use of violence. If armed force had not been used, these two leaders might still be in power and using violence against their own people. Does using violence to end violence make sense?

Resentment and anger are bad for your blood pressure and your digestion.’

‘Do your little bit of good wherever you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.’

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

All of the British armed forces have Christian chaplains who aim to give spiritual guidance to those fighting in battle. The chaplains are serving members of the armed forces. Do you think they are allowed to wound or kill the enemy? Should they be? Make your decision and then find out if you are right.

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