

# 7 A faith that works

The proof of the pudding is in the eating



## Discussion Guide #7

### Note to discussion facilitator:

Please note that, while the topic of 'the abuse of church power in history' was in this video, it is not included in this discussion. It was covered in Discussion #5 (part E), while in the (downloadable) booklets it is covered in Booklet #5, Pg 13-14.

### DISCUSSION OPENERS

**Purpose:** For participants to connect and engage in conversations about the wider topic.

1. Have you ever discovered or learnt something amazing that you then wished you'd discovered or learnt earlier in life?

*(Consider a life lesson learned, a new tool discovered, a new food discovered, an easier way you found to do something...)*

2. Have you ever been a sceptic of something, which you then tried - causing you to completely change your mind?

Comment: Thus far, in our series, we've looked at a wide range of logical reasons for believing this faith. Today we're going to look at something entirely different - people's experience of this faith. The idea here is that, if something is logically true, it should also be in some way real in our experiences!



**PRAYER**



**WATCH VIDEO #7**

## DISCUSSION PART 1 – WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

**Purpose:** For participants to discover something of the scope of the experiences of God's power that hundreds of millions of Christians claim to have had.

1. Why is the experience of the Christian faith such an important evidence?
2. There is a saying, 'A person with an experience is never at the mercy of a person with an argument.' Do you think that this is true or not, and why? (What point is it trying to make?)
3. What is a miracle? *(Optional: See downloadable Booklet #7, Pg 6)*
4. When a miracle happens, does that tell us anything?  
*(Optional: See Booklet #7, Pg 6 – Whenever a true miracle happens, it points toward a spiritual reality, which begs the question – what is that reality? )*
5. What are some of the most positive and wide-reaching impacts of Christianity in our world, upon culture, upon thinking and how we treat others? As far as you are aware, are these effects unique?  
*(Optional: See Booklet #7, Pg 15, some of the points and quotes in Booklet #5, Pg 9-12, and the end note in discussion guide 5#)*
6. With physical miracles or healings, why might people remain sceptical, even when examples of miracles are available?  
*(Optional: See Booklet #7, Pg 8 for the argument of sceptics, and Pg 11-13 for some other reasons).*
7. What physical miracles are you aware of, where people prayed in the name of Jesus and then something happened?  
*(Optional: See Booklet #7, Pg 13-15. These examples and similar can be found on YouTube or through the purchase of the referenced video).*
8. How many miracles are needed to prove that miracles can happen?
  - Is it logical to say "If I don't see or experience it in person I won't believe it"?
9. Regarding other types of miracles, in what ways does Christianity make a unique difference in peoples' lives?
  - What was the 'Jesus Factor' referenced in the video, all about?
  - In what areas of life have studies shown the Christian faith to be beneficial?*(Optional: See a range of points and statistics in Booklet #7, Pg 16-25)*
10. Regarding our own experiences, does anyone have a testimony of something God has miraculously done in their life – whether revealing his love, helping you overcome a challenge, changing something in the way you think, or providing courage or strength?

## DISCUSSION PART 2 – ENGAGING THE CONVERSATION

**Purpose:** For participants to explain how their personal experience of God's power points to God's existence.



### An Exercise

List possible objections arising from today's discussion topic.\*

1. What **possible points** could you make in your response to these objections?
2. What **stories or illustrations** could you briefly insert into your conversation (ideally with humour) to communicate in an interesting yet gentle way?
3. What **questions** could you ask that might help to make these points – or to open discussion around them?

### An extension to the Exercise:

In pairs, raise possible objections relating to today's topic. Then take turns to engage each other in a conversation using cheerful comments, simple stories and questions.



### TO TAKE HOME

1. How useful has this series been to you personally?
  - Has it successfully answered the questions that you had?
  - Do you feel more confident in your faith as a result?
2. Do you feel better equipped to talk with others about your faith? How so?
  - Were the tips on conversational tips and skills discussed useful?
3. Are there any questions this series hasn't fully answered for you, that you are now more motivated and confident to look into?
4. With whom could you share this resource, or encourage them to consider some of the things it covers?

**Note**

- If participants wished to go deeper, they could be encouraged to read the full series of booklets that accompany the videos - to consolidate and expand their understanding for their own benefit, and also the benefit those they might encourage through conversation as a result.

**CLOSE WITH PRAYER**

## Notes for the discussion facilitator

\* Consider:

- *There is no such thing as a miracle*
- *People in other religions have spiritual experiences too\*\**
- *You can't trust an experience*
- *Until I've seen or experienced a miracle myself, I'm not willing to believe they exist.*
- *Etc.*

*\*\* This can be a difficult to answer without first-hand knowledge or experience of the other faiths. Most religions do not actually claim miracles in the same way Christianity does – neither the volume or type of experience, and certainly not the results following in lives afterward. The reason some say spiritual experiences are the same in various religions is possibly because they live in a broadly Christian culture. They have made an assumption that, because Christianity claims certain things, all the religions must claim the same. That assumption is not true.*

*Beyond the number of spiritual experiences that exist in connection with the Christian faith, the nature of those experiences is also to be considered. Christian experiences are specifically and consistently accompanied by an overwhelming sense of God's love, acceptance and peace. The contrast being an experience of being overcome by a power, or even unconsciousness.*

*Beyond this initial experience a profound life change of some kind also usually follows an encounter with God when recognising Jesus' role and place in that picture – like in the various examples given in Booklet #7. Anger subsides; freedom from substance abuse results; long-felt anxieties fade away; a desire to live differently, better and more selflessly develops.*

*While individuals might occasionally be found in other faiths who can claim similar things, the author suggests there is a difference in the patterns, if we consider (a) the volume of people claiming an experience is considered, (b) along with the nature of that experience, and (c) the longer-term results in their lives afterwards. To state that there are hundreds of millions of examples of this in Christianity is not an overstatement, and any person could investigate the matter by finding a Christian church that seems to have an authenticity to it (noting churches can become stuck in traditions), to ask people why they believe.*