



GROUP MATERIAL
TERM 3 | 2024

*How do we respond
to big questions in
our life?*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

At the start of each session, acknowledge the Country and traditional owners of the land your group is gathering. Below is a template you could use.

Today we meet on _____ Country.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters from which we've all come or crossed over to arrive here today. We commit ourselves to being voices of reconciliation.



LIFE LABS 1

*What do we do when
we have questions
about faith?*



INTRODUCTION



There are lots of different philosophies and beliefs in the world. Some people grow up religious; others choose to be part of a religion. Some people are spiritual but not religious, while others think there's nothing spiritual about life. When people have ideas different from ours, they might question or even criticise our beliefs. When we're challenged about our beliefs, we might feel like we don't have the right answers. Our beliefs can also be challenged when we go through difficult times in life. We might start to wonder if what we believe is true. All these experiences can leave us with questions about our faith. While it's normal to have questions about our faith, if we can't find answers, we can feel lost and confused.

What do we do when we have questions about faith?

PLAY THE '20 QUESTIONS' GAME



How did you go with the game? Did you find it difficult or easy to come up with questions? Have you ever had questions about what you believe but did not know how to ask them?

DO THE 'TRIVIA CHALLENGE' ACTIVITY



READ THE SCRIPTURE

²⁴ Thomas (called Didymus) was one of the twelve, but he was not with the other followers when Jesus came. ²⁵ They told him, “We saw the Lord.” Thomas said, “That’s hard to believe. I will have to see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side. Only then will I believe it.”

²⁶ A week later the followers were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand here in my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

²⁸ Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹ Jesus said to him, “You believe because you see me. Great blessings belong to the people who believe without seeing me!”

John 20:24-29 (ERV)



Write down 3
people who you feel
comfortable asking
questions about faith.

1.

2.

3.

CONCLUSION



There are many different philosophies and beliefs in the world. When others criticise us or we go through tough times, we can have questions about our faith. The Good News is that asking questions about our faith is normal. Just like Thomas, we can turn to Jesus and his followers for support when we have questions about our faith, and they can help us find the answers we're looking for.



LIFE LABS 2

*What do we do
when we're struggling
with our faith?*



INTRODUCTION



Sometimes, we can wonder if faith makes sense in our lives. We might learn about new ideas, struggle with religious rules, or feel different from our friends and others in society because of our beliefs. We might look at others around us who seem to belong at church and feel lost because we don't feel the same way. This can leave us wondering if faith is for us, if we can fit in at church, or if faith will be a part of our lives in the future. We know that faith can be meaningful in our lives, but what do we do when we're struggling with it?

PLAY THE 'MAGIC SHAPE' GAME



How did you go with the game? How did you feel when you struggled to work out the riddle? What do you do when you're struggling to work something out in your life?

DO THE 'FAITH CHALLENGES' ACTIVITY

Write down 2 supports that you have found helpful in the past

1. _____

2. _____

Write down 2 new supports that you would like to try

1. _____

2. _____

READ THE SCRIPTURE

JESUS PRAYS ALONE

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his followers to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, “Sit here while I go there and pray.” ³⁷ He told Peter and the two sons of Zebedee to come with him. Then he began to be very sad and troubled. ³⁸ Jesus said to Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, “My heart is so heavy with grief, I feel as if I am dying. Wait here and stay awake with me.”

³⁹ Then Jesus went on a little farther away from them. He fell to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, don’t make me drink from this cup.[a] But do what you want, not what I want.”

⁴⁰ Then he went back to his followers and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Could you men not stay awake with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation. Your spirit wants to do what is right, but your body is weak.”

⁴² Then Jesus went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if I must do this[b] and it is not possible for me to escape it, then I pray that what you want will be done.”

⁴³ Then he went back to the followers. Again he found them sleeping. They could not stay awake. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away one more time and prayed. This third time he prayed, he said the same thing.

⁴⁵ Then Jesus went back to the followers and said, “Are you still sleeping and resting? The time has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the control of sinful men. ⁴⁶ Stand up! We must go. Here comes the one who will hand me over.”

Matthew 26:36–56 (ERV)

CONCLUSION



Sometimes we can wonder if faith makes sense in our lives. This can leave us wondering if faith is for us, if we can fit in at church, or if faith will be a part of our lives in the future. The Good News is that when we struggle with our faith, we can turn to Jesus and people like Him for support. While our faith might be challenged, these times are an opportunity to grow, try new practices, and better understand what we believe.



LIFE LABS 3

*How do I work out
what I believe?*





INTRODUCTION



As we grow, we develop a set of beliefs. These beliefs shape what we think and how we act. Some of these beliefs come from our parents, while others can come from our peers or faith community. Our beliefs are also shaped by our culture and society. But what do we do when we hear new ideas that challenge our beliefs? Without a strong understanding of our values and beliefs, we can feel lost and confused about what to trust. We need firm beliefs to guide us, but how do we figure that out?

How do I work out what I believe?

PLAY THE ‘BELIEFS WALK’ GAME



How did you go with the game? Were there any answers that you felt strongly about? Why do you believe that?



HOW TO DO THE 'MY VALUES PART 1' ACTIVITY

COMMON VALUES:

<i>Loyalty</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Stability</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>Love</i>	<i>Openness</i>	<i>Influence</i>	<i>Justice</i>
<i>Creativity</i>	<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Wealthy</i>	<i>Recognition</i>
<i>Peace</i>	<i>Courage</i>	<i>Boldness</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Leadership</i>
<i>Fairness</i>	<i>Honesty</i>	<i>Compassion</i>	<i>Faith</i>	<i>Contribution</i>
<i>Adventure</i>	<i>Beauty</i>	<i>Wisdom</i>	<i>Kindness</i>	<i>Determination</i>
<i>Reputation</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Learning</i>	<i>Optimism</i>	<i>Community</i>
<i>Security</i>	<i>Fame</i>	<i>Respect</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>	<i>Service</i>
<i>Harmony</i>	<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>Happiness</i>	<i>Fun</i>	

List your top 3 values from the list, or think of your own:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why are these values important to you?

What may have influenced your values (people, places, experiences, etc.)

How are these values connected to what you believe?

How do your values affect your thoughts and behaviour?

How have your values changed or stayed the same throughout your life?

READ THE SCRIPTURE

THE VINE AND THE FRUIT

15 Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. He also trims every branch that produces fruit to prepare it to produce even more. ³ You have already been prepared to produce more fruit by the teaching I have given you.

⁴ Stay joined to me and I will stay joined to you. No branch can produce fruit alone. It must stay connected to the vine. It is the same with you. You cannot produce fruit alone. You must stay joined to me. ⁵ “I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I to you, you will produce plenty of fruit. But separated from me you won’t be able to do anything.

John 15:1-5 (ERV)

²² But the fruit that the Spirit produces in a person’s life is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these kinds of things.

Galatians 5:22-23 (ERV)



CONCLUSION



Sometimes we can wonder if faith makes sense in our lives. This can leave us wondering if faith is for us, if we can fit in at church, or if faith will be a part of our lives in the future. The Good News is that when we struggle with our faith, we can turn to Jesus and people like Him for support. While our faith might be challenged, these times are an opportunity to grow, try new practices, and better understand what we believe.



LIFE LABS 4

*What do we do when
others have questions
about faith?*



INTRODUCTION



Have your friends ever asked you questions about faith? They might have asked you why you believe in Jesus, question whether God is real, or wonder what their life means. Sometimes, it can be tricky to answer these questions. We might feel like we don't have the right answer, feel uncomfortable talking about our faith, or not want to push ideas on others. When our friends want to talk about faith but we don't know how to respond, we might struggle to help them find their way.

What do we do when others have questions about faith?

PLAY THE 'CHARADES' GAME



How did you go with the game? How did it feel to know the answer but only be able to communicate by acting? Can you think of a time when you knew something but felt stuck about how to share your opinion?

DO THE 'MY VALUES PART 2' ACTIVITY

In this activity you will share your answers from last week with a partner. You can ask whatever questions you like to get to know what their values are. Below are some questions to help you if you get stuck

Questions to ask your pair:



Where have your values come from? Why are these values important to you?

Who or what may have influenced your values?

How are our values similar and different from one another?

Why did you think _____ was one of my values?

What things have you heard me say which may have been influenced by my values?

READ THE SCRIPTURE

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He met Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ Philip was from the town of Bethsaida, the same as Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the man that Moses wrote about in the law. The prophets wrote about him too. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph. He is from Nazareth.”

⁴⁶ But Nathanael said to Philip, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

Philip answered, “Come and see.”

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said, “This man coming is a true Israelite, one you can trust.”

⁴⁸ Nathanael asked, “How do you know me?”

Jesus answered, “I saw you when you were under the fig tree, before Philip told you about me.”

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael said, “Teacher, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.”

John 1:43-49 (ERV)



CONCLUSION



Have your friends ever asked you questions about faith? Sometimes it can be tricky to answer these questions. When our friends want to talk about faith but we don't know how to respond, we might struggle to help them find their way. The Good News is that we can be a guide for others and help them find their place with Jesus. When we ask questions to understand where they are coming from and show them how Jesus cares for them, we can help them find their way.



SESSION 5

*How can followers
of Jesus respond to
climate change?*



INTRODUCTION



The climate around us is changing. We can see this for ourselves with more extreme natural disasters happening in Australia and around the world. We experience bushfires, cyclones, and floods that destroy everything in their path. But things don't seem to be changing. Climate advocates don't seem to be taken seriously enough, and the environment is being exploited. When money is prioritised over people and our planet, we can feel frustrated, insignificant, and helpless. The environment that we are all connected to is being exploited and we struggle to know how to respond.

How can followers of Jesus respond to climate change?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the Speed Landscape game.



PLAY THE 'SPEED LANDSCAPE' GAME



*How did you go with the game? What did you draw that's found in nature?
What do you like about the environment?*

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITY

In the group material: participants to identify what Indigenous Country they are on.

Country describes the lands, waters and skies that are connected through ancestral ties and family origins. There are hundreds of Indigenous Countries within Australia, and each have their own culture, customs, language, and law. Check out this website of the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia.

aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

Look at the map and discover the Indigenous Country you currently live on. Do some research into that Country and see what you can learn about their culture, customs, language, and law.



READ THE SCRIPTURE

⁹Then God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered together so that the dry land will appear.” And it happened. ¹⁰ God named the dry land “earth,” and he named the water that was gathered together “seas.” And God saw that this was good.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the earth grow grass, plants that make grain, and fruit trees. The fruit trees will make fruit with seeds in it. And each plant will make its own kind of seed. Let these plants grow on the earth.” And it happened. ¹²The earth grew grass and plants that made grain. And it grew trees that made fruit with seeds in it. Every plant made its own kind of seeds. And God saw that this was good.

¹³There was evening, and then there was morning. This was the third day.

Genesis 1:9-13 (ERV)

¹⁵The LORD God put the man in the Garden of Eden to work the soil and take care of the garden.

Genesis 2:15 (ERV)



Questions

What do you think about what we just read? How might it relate to what we do when we have questions about faith?

What do you think about what we just read? How do you think it might relate to how followers of Jesus respond to climate change?

The first Scripture from Genesis tells us that God created the environment and said that it was good. Why does it matter that God values the environment?

The second Scripture from Genesis teaches us that we are placed in the environment to take care of it. What do you think it means to ‘take care’ of the environment?

What are some practical ways that you could care for the environment?

CONCLUSION



The climate around us is changing. We can see this for ourselves with more extreme natural disasters happening in Australia and around the world. We might feel frustrated that there is not more action from people in power. The Good News is that God cares deeply about the environment and has called us to care for it. When others exploit the land, we can choose to live in a way that looks after the environment. We can connect with Country and speak up for what is right.



CLOSE THE **SESSION**

SESSION 6

*How do we
respond to poverty?*



INTRODUCTION



There are nearly three million Australians living in poverty, including 419,000 young people. For some, living in poverty is noticeable. A person experiencing homelessness might couch surf at their friends' houses or live on the street and not have a place to call home. For some, living in poverty is less obvious. A family might not have enough money to visit the doctor because they need the money for the week's groceries. With the amount of people living in poverty, it's clear that more needs to be done to help. But when we see or know people who are struggling, we can sometimes feel unsure about how to help.

How do we respond to poverty?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the Hundred Dollar game.

PLAY THE 'HUNDRED DOLLAR' GAME



How did you go with the game?

How did you make decisions about what to spend your money on?

How would you feel if you had to go without something important?





RESPONDING TO POVERTY ACTIVITY

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN:

What did you learn about how the Salvos are helping people in need in your local area?

How can your Life Labs group support the Salvos to make a difference in the lives of people living in poverty?

When we think about doing a big task, it can often feel overwhelming. So, what is the first step your Life Labs group can take to help?

How will you know you're helping people in your community who are living in poverty?

How will you keep motivated in supporting the Salvos to help people in need?

READ THE SCRIPTURE

³⁴ “Then the king will say to the godly people on his right, ‘Come, my Father has great blessings for you. The kingdom he promised is now yours. It has been prepared for you since the world was made. ³⁵ It is yours because when I was hungry, you gave me food to eat. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I had no place to stay, you welcomed me into your home. ³⁶ When I was without clothes, you gave me something to wear. When I was sick, you cared for me. When I was in prison, you came to visit me.’

³⁷ “Then the godly people will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you with no place to stay and welcome you into our home? When did we see you without clothes and give you something to wear? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and care for you?’

⁴⁰ “Then the king will answer, ‘The truth is, anything you did for any of my people here, [b] you also did for me.’

Matthew 25:34-40 (ERV)



Questions

What do you think about what we just read? How do you think it might relate to how we respond to poverty?

In this scripture, Jesus talks about the practical ways that we can help people in need, such as feeding people who are hungry and giving people who are thirsty something to drink. Do you think that society is taught to help people who are living in poverty? Why or why not?

Jesus is saying that whatever we do for those living in poverty, we do for him also. When you meet someone living in poverty, do you see Jesus in them? What difference would it make to see Jesus in that person?

Jesus himself was born in a stable and lived a life of simplicity. Do you think about Jesus being poor? Jesus could have chosen to have any kind of life, what might it mean that he chose to live alongside those in poverty?



CONCLUSION



There are nearly three million Australians living in poverty, including 419,000 young people. The experiences of people living in poverty can be very different, but are always difficult. When we see or know people who are living in poverty, we can sometimes feel unsure about how to help. The Good News is that even though the world values getting rich, having lots of things, and being successful, Jesus loves and cares for those who struggle. Jesus is with those who are living in poverty, and when we serve them, we serve Jesus.



CLOSE THE SESSION

SESSION 7

*How do we
respond to racism?*



INTRODUCTION



We all want to be celebrated for who we are. But some young people experience racial discrimination. Others may have witnessed racism happening to their friends or seen it in the media. Sometimes, racism is the result of an individual's attitudes towards a particular race or ethnicity. But it can also occur because of social structures and systems that favour some ethnicities over others. The Salvation Army is committed to fighting against racism wherever it is experienced, and speaking into places where we encounter racism. But what part do we have to play?

How do we respond to racism?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play Group Differences game.

PLAY THE 'GROUP DIFFERENCES' GAME



How did you go with the game? Was it easy to find differences in your group? What is it like to spend time with people who are different from you?



CONVERSATION FRAMEWORK

These conversations aim to bring about unity, not disunity. Each one of us needs to take responsibility for the issues in the world and commit to having conversations that lead to change.

Read each of the statements below, then discuss different responses that people might have to each of these statements. You might find it useful to firstly consider if you agree or disagree with each of the statements.

Discussion Prompts

- The effects of racism can be seen for generations. Discuss.
- Australia has a problem with racism. Discuss.
- There's nothing we can do about racism because it's about how people feel. Discuss.
- Systems are biased against people from other countries. Discuss.
- Indigenous Australians are not treated fairly. Discuss.

Step 1: Listen

It's important to listen to what the other person is saying.

- Give them eye contact.
- Focus on what they're saying and remain in the conversation.
- Don't let your mind wander while you're listening.
- Try and imagine what it is like to be them, and why they might feel the way they do.

Step 2: Ask Questions

Ask clarifying questions to make sure you've understood what the other person is saying. You can ask questions like:

- "I've heard you say... Is this what you meant?"
- "Can you expand on what you were saying about..."
- "What have you previously experienced about..."
- "How did you make up your mind about this topic?"

Step 3: Reflect and Respond

Take a moment to pause and reflect on what you've heard.

- What do you think about this topic?
- Why do you think that?
- What are your experiences of this topic?
- What do you think about what the other person has said?
- Are the perspectives being shared the whole story, or are there other ways of thinking about the topic?
- Remember, some silence is okay in a conversation because it allows you time to process why you might believe this.



Scan the QR codes for helpful videos to better understand the issues that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can face.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

²⁶⁻²⁷You were all baptized into Christ, and so you were all clothed with Christ. This shows that you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁸Now, in Christ, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or free, male or female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus. ²⁹You belong to Christ, so you are Abraham's descendants. You get all of God's blessings because of the promise that God made to Abraham.

Galatians 3:26-29 (ERV)



Questions

What do you think about what we just read? How do you think it might relate to how we respond to racism?

The Scripture explains that there is diversity in our world, with many people from different ethnicities. But it also says that whatever our culture, we are all equal in Christ Jesus. When you look around, do you see everyone treated equally?

One thing we all have in common is that we can be part of God's family. When you think about people from a different background to you, what else might you have in common with them?

We can receive all of God's blessings. How can we share God's blessing with everyone in our community and show them they are loved?



CONCLUSION



We all want to be celebrated for who we are. But some young people experience racial discrimination. The Good News is that we can all be God's children, loved equally in our diversity. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love all people equally, treat everyone fairly, and encourage others to do the same.



CLOSE THE SESSION

SESSION 8

How do we relate to people living with a disability?



INTRODUCTION



Around 1 in 6 Australians live with a disability. Disability refers to when an environment has barriers that prevent access for someone who has an impairment. Some disabilities are visible to others, like a person using a wheelchair or a walking stick. Other disabilities are invisible, like a hearing impairment or neurodiversity. It's only as we get to know the person that we learn more about them. Sometimes, when we meet someone living with a disability, we can feel unsure about what to say or how to act and unintentionally cause harm. We might be curious and ask lots of questions and focus on the disability not the person. Or we might assume they need help when they don't.

How do we relate to people living with a disability?

As a way to begin thinking about this, let's play the Learn Auslan with Me game.



PLAY THE 'LEARN AUSLAN WITH ME' GAME



*How did you go with the game? What signs did you learn?
How did you feel trying to communicate in a different way?*

Auslan Finger Spelling Alphabet



DO THE ACTIVITY AND DISCUSS THE QUESTIONS

HOW TO DO THE 'FRIENDS REFLECTION' ACTIVITY



Questions:

Who do you know who lives with a disability? It might be a family member, someone at school or church, or a celebrity or athlete.

What do you appreciate about their personality?

What's a fun memory you have with them?

What are the barriers people living with a disability can experience? Who's taught you about this?

READ THE SCRIPTURE

²⁷ So God created humans in his own image. He created them to be like himself.

Genesis 1:27a (ERV)

¹⁵ One of the men sitting at the table with Jesus heard these things. The man said to him, “It will be a great blessing for anyone to eat a meal in God’s kingdom!”

¹⁶ Jesus said to him, “A man gave a big dinner. He invited many people. ¹⁷When it was time to eat, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come. The food is ready.’ ¹⁸But all the guests said they could not come. Each one made an excuse. The first one said, ‘I have just bought a field, so I must go look at it. Please excuse me.’ ¹⁹Another man said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of work animals; I must go and try them out. Please excuse me.’ ²⁰A third man said, ‘I just got married; I can’t come.’

²¹ “So the servant returned and told his master what happened. The master was angry. He said, ‘Hurry! Go into the streets and alleys of the town. Bring me the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’

²² “Later, the servant said to him, ‘Master, I did what you told me to do, but we still have places for more people.’ ²³The master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and country roads. Tell the people there to come. I want my house to be full!’

Luke 14:15-23 (ERV)

Questions

What do you think about what we just read? What do you think it might have to do with how we relate to people living with a disability?

This Scripture in Genesis explains how we are created in God’s image. Where do you see God in your friends who live with impairments?

Sometimes people living with disabilities in our society are excluded and not valued. But in the Scripture from Luke, Jesus is saying that people living with disabilities are honoured guests. What can we do to honour and value people living with disabilities?

While the Scripture from Luke has language that is not how we describe people living with a disability today, the message is still clear. The Kingdom of God is for everyone. Who can you invite into your community so that they feel accepted and like they belong?

CONCLUSION



Around 1 in 6 Australians live with a disability. Disability refers to when an environment has barriers that prevent access for someone who has an impairment. Some disabilities are visible to others, while some are invisible. It's only as we get to know the person that we learn more about them. The Good News is that the Kingdom of God is for everyone. Each one of us is created in the image of God to be equal and has a place in our community.



CLOSE THE SESSION

NOTES

*Give us
feedback*





Contact Us

salvationarmy.org.au/youth-ya
equileaders.com.au

