

When I was young I loved to do jigsaw puzzles.

I would start by looking for the four corner pieces.

Once these were in place, I would then find the edges and piece them together to form the outer frame.

I would then focus on the easiest bits of the puzzle and piece them together. Then I would work my way to the hardest bits.

After all the pieces were in place, I would reflect on its picturesque beauty.

Life is like a jigsaw puzzle.

Sometimes we don't know how to fit together the pieces of our life puzzle.

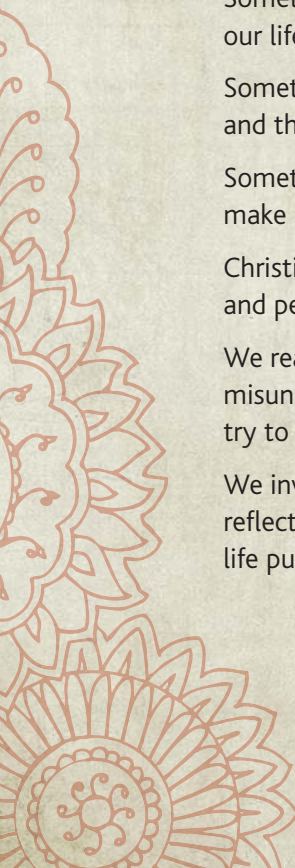
Sometimes we try to put the wrong pieces together and they simply don't fit properly.

Sometimes we haven't yet discovered all the pieces which will make up the complete picture of our lives.

Christians believe that the purpose of life is peace with God and peace with each other.

We realise that there are questions, issues and sometimes misunderstandings about the Christian faith. In this booklet we try to answer some of them.

We invite you to journey through this booklet, to think and reflect and perhaps find some new pieces which may fit your life puzzle!





Manoj's story

In 2007 I was living the high life. I was a successful businessman, buying and selling blocks of apartments throughout the country. However, as I entered the New Year, my good fortunes took a downturn. As the credit crunch set in, my property business began to wobble. But this paled into insignificance as my two-year-old son was suddenly taken severely ill with breathing difficulties.

Though I was a born-and-bred Hindu, I had never really practised my faith. I always thought Christianity was something that was more to do with Europeans and Americans than with Asians like me. But at school I had learned a little about the Christian faith, and it had resonated with me.

But as my wife and I sat in the hospital with my son's life slipping away before us, I had a powerful sense that God truly exists, and that He alone could help in our hour of need. All the while a Christian couple we had only recently befriended were praying for us.

On the fourth day the consultant came and told us our son was gravely ill—she seemed to be preparing us for the worst. An hour later, to everyone's utter astonishment, my son suddenly sat bolt upright in bed. We had witnessed what could only be described as a miracle.

I agreed with my wife that we should visit our local church to say thank you to our friends for their prayers. But as I met for the first time with real Christians who loved me and cared for me, and listened to teaching about Jesus from the Bible, I began a journey which challenged my previous perceptions and beliefs about life. I felt called to re-evaluate my life, and new values and priorities began to take shape. I discovered that there was a God who loved all and died for all. Within just a few weeks I found myself walking to the front of the church to commit my life to Jesus Christ. My business is no longer what it was. But what does that matter? When I found Jesus, I found a new purpose in life.

Is Christianity a Western religion?

1

"If you are English, you must be a Christian, right? And if you are Pakistani, you can only be a Muslim? If you are Chinese, you must be...?"

It's common to link different religious beliefs and practices with certain parts of the world. So a person born into a family of a particular culture may accept those religious beliefs and practices as part of their identity—something they did not choose, but which was handed down to them.

In the same way, many people automatically link Christianity with Europe, America, and countries like Australia. They assume that all white people are "Christian". But the situation is actually much more complex.

Christian faith has been firmly fixed in the culture of Europe for nearly 2,000 years. So it has influenced every aspect of life. But the true meaning of "Christian" is to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Following Jesus is not tied to any particular place or culture. It is not linked to any political system or form of government. Jesus' followers are found all around the world. In fact most of the world's Christians now live in Africa, South America and Asia.

Jesus Himself was not European but Middle Eastern. His first followers were Jewish, but people from other cultural backgrounds quickly began to follow Him too. The message about Jesus—the gospel—actually arrived in India before it came to much of Europe. According to tradition, the Apostle Thomas, one of Jesus' 12 disciples (followers), followed

the trade routes to India. In Kerala, in southern India, you can see a beautiful beach where he is believed to have landed. He went on to tell people about Jesus in both north and south India before dying near Chennai.

Non-Western people struggle to separate Christian and non-Christian parts of Western culture today. Some countries are called "Christian", but there might seem to be very little that is "Christian" about many of the people that live in them. Followers of Jesus in the West also are saddened by the materialism and greed in Western society, and are distressed by the sexual chaos and breakdown of family life. The West as a whole is slowly becoming less religious and rejecting any idea of looking to God for guidance.

So is Christianity a Western religion? It's true that it has very much influenced Western culture. But following Jesus is not about culture, language or outward appearances. It is about a relationship. Jesus Christ came to open the way to God for all people from every background and country. His message is about everyone's need for inner change—change to a life with God at the centre. That is our deepest need.



Destination	Platform	Time
London	1	10:15
Manchester	2	10:30
Edinburgh	3	10:45
Birmingham	4	11:00
Cardiff	5	11:15
Sheffield	6	11:30
Nottingham	7	11:45
Leeds	8	12:00
Liverpool	9	12:15
Belfast	10	12:30
London	11	12:45
Manchester	12	13:00
Edinburgh	13	13:15
Birmingham	14	13:30
Cardiff	15	13:45
Sheffield	16	14:00
Nottingham	17	14:15
Leeds	18	14:30
Liverpool	19	14:45
Belfast	20	15:00

← Lift to West End Underground
← Tickets & information
↑ Travel & tourist centre
↑ Bus station For City Airport
↑ Underground
↑ Way out
Stansted Express
Customer lounge
By Platform 10
Cycle store
By Platform 10
First Class lounge
By Platform 10
Left luggage
By Platform 10
Taxis

Jesus said: “A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.” The Bible, John 13 v 34-35

Why are so many Christians not like Jesus?

2

Jesus led a perfect life. He not only taught the highest moral values but He put them into action too. His life was the perfect example. So how do Christians measure up to His standard?

It's important to realise that not everyone who claims to be a Christian has a genuine faith in Jesus Christ. No amount of church going, Bible reading or religious activity makes someone a Christian. It doesn't depend on the family or culture you've been born into either. In fact, the Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus came from the most religious homes and knew their Scriptures very well. But they were the ones who had Jesus crucified.

Many things in history have been done in the name of Christ by people claiming to be Christians. But they actually went against His teaching. For example, in the Crusades, European people disobeyed Jesus' command to love everyone.

The Bible teaches that someone only becomes a Christian when they put their personal faith (trust) in Jesus as the Lord (ruler) of their life. At that point, God forgives the wrong things they have done, they receive God's Spirit in their heart, and start a whole new life. As God works in them, they are slowly changed to be more like Jesus Himself. This is a lifelong process.

Jesus' true followers have done many things throughout history to put into action Jesus' commands and teaching. Christians have pioneered famine relief, education, healthcare and housing for

the poor. Christians campaigned against the transatlantic slave trade, segregation in America and apartheid in South Africa. Christians also organised the Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel the debts of the poorest nations at the start of this millennium. They also pioneered the hospice movement to provide dignity and care for the dying.

Even so, Christians are not perfect—just forgiven. The most devout Christian, because they are still a weak human, will not always imitate Jesus Christ perfectly. Every Christian has to keep working hard at obeying Jesus and trying to be more like Him. Many true Christians have tried to live like this and some have died for their faith in Jesus.

If we really want to follow Jesus, we need to turn away from living life our own way. And we need to ask Him to forgive us, and lead us into a new life by the power of God's Spirit. The aim of every true Christian is to be more like Jesus.





“You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.” The Bible, Psalm 139 v 1

How can I relate to God when He seems so distant?

Every day a huge amount of information passes through the air around us via mobile phones, radio and television broadcasts, and the internet.

These are all channels of communication with us, but are we aware of them? Often we are not, because we are not “tuned in”. Similarly, we may miss God’s communication with us because we are not “tuned in” to what He is saying.

Many of the world’s religions started in Asia. They came from people who have searched for God. They wanted to submit to His will, to move from falsehood to truth, and to be free from attachment to this world. Despite this religious heritage, many still feel that God is distant from them.

Perhaps some of us may not wish to “tune in” to God. After all, if God is so distant, why make the effort? We wonder: is anybody really there? Is God really interested in us at all? Or we do not find the time to look for Him, in the stress and rush of life. Are we ready and willing to seek Him with all our heart?

The Bible explains that God has spoken to us through His prophets. He is the Creator God who made us, and wants us to know Him, to love Him and to enjoy Him. God made humans in His image, so that we would reflect something of what He is like and would enjoy a relationship with Him.

How can we come to know God? We can see the greatness of His wisdom and power as we look at the universe around us, and as we consider some of

the wonderful achievements of human beings who are made in His image. The Bible tells us about God’s love for us, and His plan to make Himself known through His word throughout history.

Most of all, we can enter a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is called the Word, because He shows us what God is like—just as we come to know each other through our words.

Jesus showed the character of God, the loving Father, by His care for the weak and suffering. Through His teaching, He showed that God requires us to be just and holy, and that we have all failed to be like this. But Jesus did more.

Because of His love for us, Jesus died on a cross to remove the barrier of our shame and wrongdoing between us and the perfect, holy God. He became our mediator, the way to God. Through Jesus, we can relate to God.

So what is our first step to a relationship with God? The Bible’s answer is to approach God in humility, recognising that He wants us to come to Him and that we need His mercy. Then we need to accept Jesus’ sacrifice and invite Jesus to take control of our lives. He promises to come to us and change us by His Spirit living in us.

What will be the result? A new peace, strength in our inner being, deeper bonds with others and a personal relationship with God.