

INCLUDING WHAT
11-18 YEAR OLDS THINK

Talking
Jesus

What can
I do?

What people think of Jesus,
Christians and evangelism



'I'd love it if my friends and family became Christians.' 'I'd like to see our church grow.' 'I want to do what Jesus said and "make disciples".' There are lots of different reasons why we want to make Jesus known. So how do we go about it?

The Talking Jesus research among adults and young people in England has already been a huge encouragement to people who have read the results. Tim Rowlands from Festival Church, Chester said, 'We found it to be a real confidence boost ... you could see people's faces lighting up in the congregation when we talk about it.'

The surveys tell us that just 1% of non-Christians think of a church leader or Christian youth worker as their first point of contact with a Christian. But many of them know us, their friends, family, neighbours and colleagues. The responsibility and privilege of making Jesus known is ours. We each have a unique part to play and a distinctive set of friendships and connections. Many of the people we know in our villages, towns and cities want to experience God for themselves.

This booklet summarises the research and asks: what does this mean for me? Use the questions at the end of each section to help you individually, in your home group, or as a church. And pray that we will each be equipped and encouraged to make Jesus known.

Rev Canon Yemi Adedeji, director, One People Commission of the Evangelical Alliance and associate director of HOPE

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DEFINITIONS

Practising Christians: those in England who report praying and reading the Bible at least **weekly**, and attending a church service at least **monthly**. *It's important to note that this is a tighter definition of 'practising Christian' than that used in the 2015 Talking Jesus report, which referred to those who pray and read the Bible at least **monthly**, and attend a church service at least **monthly**.*

Non-Christians: those in England who selected any option other than 'Christian' when asked to identify which religion, if any, best describes their religious faith.

Young people: those aged 11-18, who took part in the youth survey in England.

BME: black and minority ethnic respondents – those who selected their ethnicity as Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British or mixed race.

HOW FACTS HELP TO CHANGE CHURCHES

‘I keep coming back to the Talking Jesus statistics whenever we need that extra encouragement that the national picture is nowhere near as dismal as the press would often have us believe. We all have a story to tell, we all have someone we can tell it to, and most people are willing to listen,’ says Lucy Brewster from St Matthew’s Church, Edgeley in Stockport, Greater Manchester.

She explains, ‘I heard a presentation on Talking Jesus. Not only were the statistics encouraging, but the encouragement regarding evangelism touched a chord. I was so excited by what I’d heard.

‘Our church leadership had decided that helping people in our congregation to share their own faith story should be the focus of our Lent course that year. We needed to be thinking about how we actively shared our faith with the community, and with our family and friends.

‘Many people felt that they had little worth sharing, so the Lent course was the first step... While we haven’t yet seen a huge influx of new people, there has been a steady trickle, but as a congregation we are beginning to get a bit braver about talking about Jesus to our friends, neighbours and colleagues.’

Pastor Tani Omideyi, who leads Temple of Praise church in Liverpool, says, ‘Our Talking Jesus event provoked vitally important conversations, bringing churches together to think about how we might make Jesus known in our region.

‘Significant momentum has been created with leaders calling for follow up events to discuss in more detail the practical next steps and what we can do together to share the good news across the Liverpool City region.’



TAKING A FIRST STEP

‘If someone feels nervous... talking about their faith, I try and encourage them... People say to me: “Well it’s ok for you, because you find it easy.” But I think we can all find it easy if we just take that initial step. I’m not special in anyway, I’m just a mum and a grandma, and I just have a conviction of my faith.’

You can watch Sheila tell her story at greatcommission.co.uk/watch where you will also find the other testimonies featured in this booklet.

Part 1: Who knows us and what do they think of us?

If our goal is to make Jesus known throughout our country, it helps to know the workforce. We found that 7% of the adults we surveyed are practising Christians – someone who says they pray and read the Bible **at least weekly** and attend a church service **at least monthly**. This figure is higher when it comes to young people – with 13% of the 11-18 year olds we surveyed being a practising Christian (monthly church services for young people might include chapel services at faith schools, youth groups, Bible studies, and prayer events).

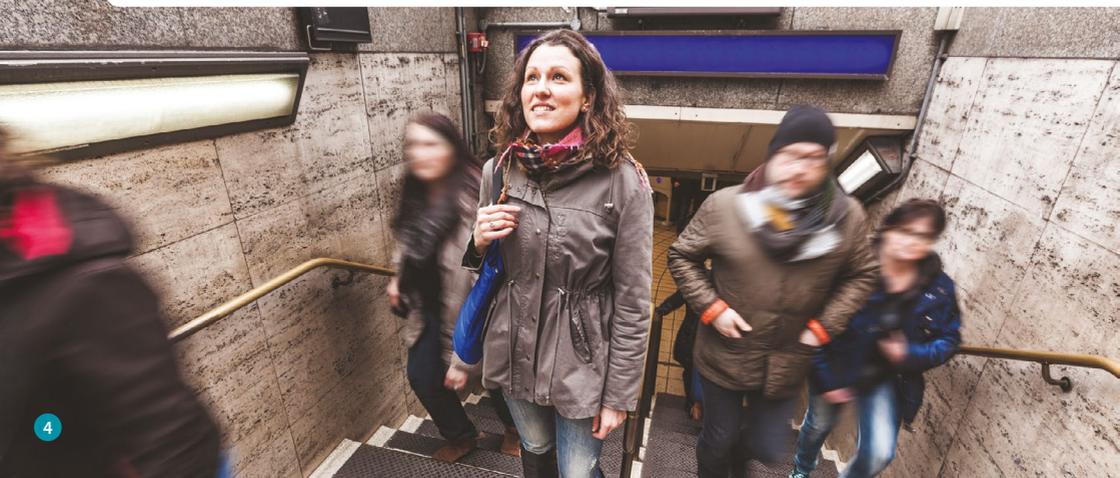
Another 51% of adults, and 28% of young people, are ‘non-practising Christians’ – people who call themselves Christians, but who don’t pray, read the Bible or attend church regularly. An additional 9% of adults, and 33% of young people haven’t yet made up their minds about God. This means a total of 60% of adults and 61% of young people are potentially open to Christianity but are undecided about God – what an opportunity!

WHO KNOWS US?

Two-thirds (67%) of non-Christian adults in England say they know a practising Christian – and that person is most likely to be a friend (40%) or family member (33%). What great openings we have as Christians to be sharing Jesus with the people we live alongside.

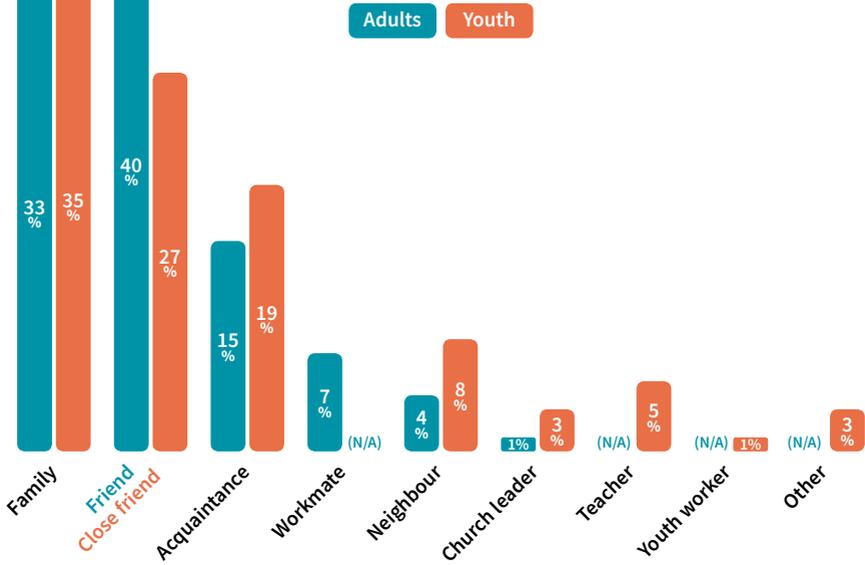
Non-Christian young people are less likely to say that they know an active Christian – with just 55% saying that they do.

It is important to note that just 1% of adults think of a church leader and 1% of young people think of a Christian youth worker as their first point of contact with a Christian. We can’t leave the task of making Jesus known to the ‘professionals’. We all have a story to tell and a unique set of friendships, connections and opportunities.



How do non-Christians know us?

% among non-Christians who know a practising Christian



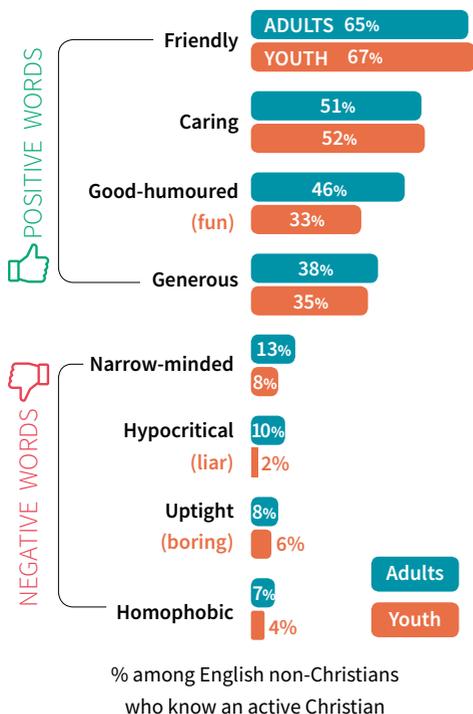
FAMILY VALUES

Ben grew up in a Christian family. Reading the Bible and praying were part of the family's bedtime routine. He says that his own father modelled the fatherhood of God. Ben knew that even when he did wrong, he was loved and would be forgiven. He made a personal decision to follow Jesus as a seven-year-old, and is now sharing his faith with others at school.

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF US?

The survey results show that non-Christians of all ages like the Christians they know. They're much more likely to describe us as friendly, caring or generous, with very small proportions saying that the Christian they know is homophobic, uptight or hypocritical. And only 6% of young people thought that the Christian they knew was boring.

How non-Christians describe the active Christian they know



SEEING GOD'S LOVE AND READING THE BIBLE

Danni experienced ten miscarriages, and in the midst of this fell pregnant with her daughter Eden. When Eden was born, Danni says, 'I had to publicly give thanks for this little girl and acknowledge God's part, and his hand in it.'

'I started to read my Bible more and more. And after having Eden dedicated, I realised that I needed to be baptised.'

When Danni found a church, she said, 'I saw the love of Jesus, in them and through them.' As a result, she became a Christian.

More than a quarter of adults say that reading the Bible was one of the top influences in them becoming a Christian.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

- People view the Christians they know really positively. How can this encourage you in your witness?
- Two-thirds of non-Christian adults (67%), and 55% of non-Christian young people in England say they know a practising Christian. How can we talk with them about Jesus?
- A third of non-Christian adults – as well as 45% of non-Christian young people – say they don't know an active Christian or aren't sure if they know one. Let's be intentional. Who could you make friends with, outside of your normal circle?

Part 2: What do people think of Jesus?

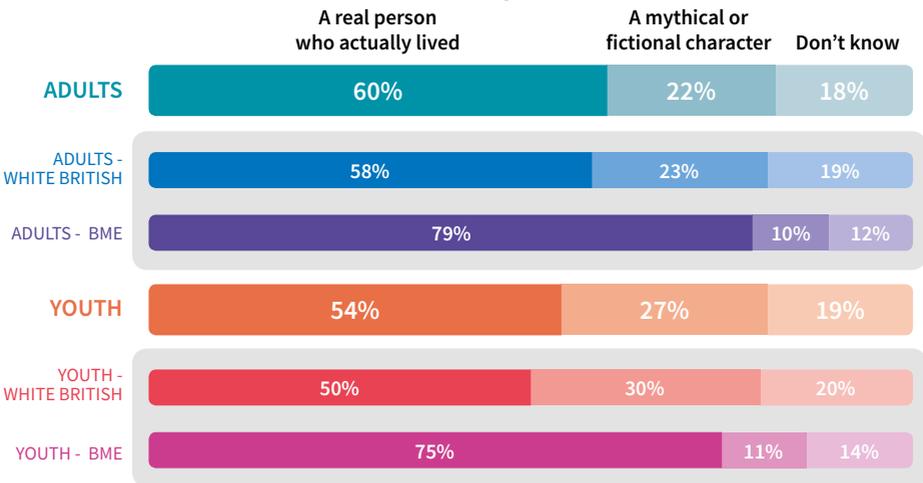
JESUS'S EXISTENCE

Four in 10 of all adults in England either don't believe or aren't sure that Jesus was a real person who lived on earth. Even more young people say they either don't believe, or aren't sure about Jesus being a real person (46%). With such a wealth of historical evidence about Jesus's existence, this statistic is an enormous challenge to the Church, but also to our education system and media.

Respondents from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background (both adults and young people) are much more likely to believe that Jesus was a real person who actually lived.

How people describe Jesus

% among all



EVIDENCE?

Benjamin grew up in a Christian family, but knew he wasn't a Christian himself. He recalls praying, 'God if you're up there I want to follow you but I need something to go on, I need evidence, can you show me a sign?'

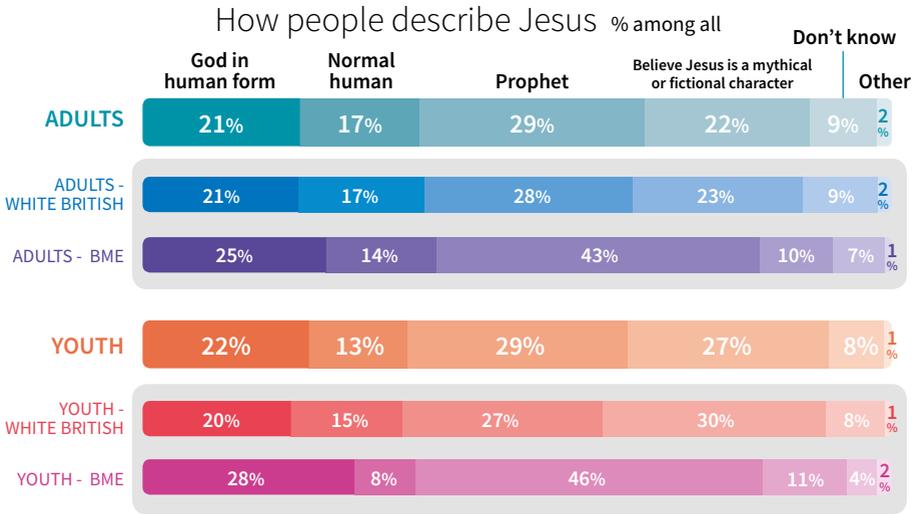


Six months later he was given a DVD of debates between two Oxford professors: John Lennox, a Christian, and Richard Dawkins, an atheist. 'It was the first time anyone in my life had shown me that there is evidence for Christianity, that there is reason to believe,' Benjamin says. 'I was convinced by the evidence and my faith followed suit.'

JESUS'S IDENTITY

Approximately one in five of adults (21%) and young people (22%) believe Jesus was God in human form, and three in 10 (29%) believe he was a prophet. Alongside this, almost a quarter of adults (22%) and young people (27%) believe Jesus was a mythical or fictional character.

Adults are slightly more likely than young people to say that Jesus was a normal human being (17% compared to 13%), or that they don't know (9% compared to 7%).



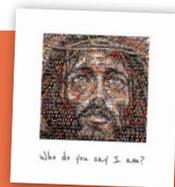
JESUS'S RESURRECTION

Our survey results show that 43% of adults in England say they do believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Some 37% of young people said that they do believe in Jesus' resurrection, with 40% saying they don't believe he rose again. Almost a quarter (23%) of young people said they don't know if Jesus rose again – what an opportunity for us to share with these people who are unsure!



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

- It seems lots of the population aren't even sure if Jesus was a real historical figure. How can you equip yourself to explain to people the evidence that Jesus did exist?
- Through your words and actions, how can you let people know that Jesus's resurrection isn't just something for the history books, but can have a powerful impact on their lives today?



HOPE's gift book *Who Do You Say I Am?* explains who Jesus is, why he died and the impact he has today.
hopetogether.org.uk/resources

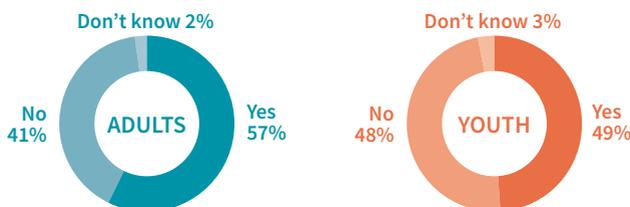
Part 3: Conversations about Jesus

ARE WE TALKING ABOUT JESUS?

Two-thirds of adult practising Christians in England (66%) have talked about Jesus with a non-Christian in the last month. Young practising Christians are even more likely to say they've shared recently, with almost three-quarters (72%) saying they've spoken about Jesus in the last month!

ARE THE PEOPLE WE KNOW HEARING ABOUT JESUS?

Has this Christian you know ever talked with you about their faith in Jesus?



% of non-Christians who know a practising Christian

Two-thirds of non-Christian adults (67%), and 55% of young people, say they know an active Christian. We asked this group whether the active Christian they know has ever talked with them about their faith in Jesus Christ. Four in 10 (41%) of these adults told us that the Christian they know has **never** spoken with them about Jesus. And half (48%) of these non-Christian 11-18 year olds **have not heard** about Jesus from the person they know who's a Christian. Could any of your family or friends say this about you? It's quite a sobering thought.

HOW CONFIDENT ARE WE?

When it comes to adult practising Christians, encouragingly 77% feel they **know how** to talk to non-Christians about Jesus, and 54% say they're **regularly looking for opportunities** to talk about Jesus with others.

A third of adult practising Christians told us they're **afraid of causing offence** when they talk about Jesus, 34% think **others are better suited** to share than they are, 26% say they **don't feel comfortable** talking to non-Christians about Jesus, and 21% feel they **don't know** how to talk about Jesus.

When it comes to young practising Christians, 26% feel that they don't know how to talk to non-Christians about Jesus all or most of the time. Just 28% said they are **looking out for opportunities** to talk about Jesus either all or most of the time.

It's clear from the surveys that some Christians still need encouraging and equipping to share their faith.

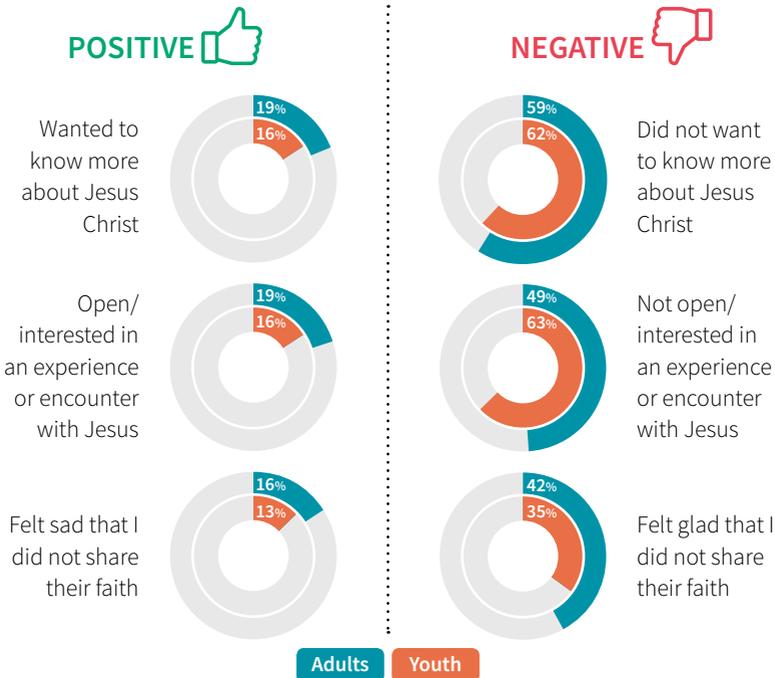
HOW THE CONVERSATIONS WENT

How do non-Christians react when we talk with them about Jesus? Here are the views of those who remained a non-Christian after the conversation. One in every five adult non-Christians (19%) says they're **open to an experience or an encounter with Jesus** following a conversation with someone they know about him. The same percentage **want to know more** about him. In terms of non-Christian young people, one in six (16%) **wants to know more** about Jesus following a conversation about him, and one in six (16%) is also **open to experiencing or encountering Jesus** for themselves – what an opportunity!

Bear in mind that these results only tell us the responses of people who didn't become Christians in the end. Those who did accept Jesus after a conversation would now be answering the survey as Christians! Take a look at the more positive responses from those who did become Christians - talkingjesus.org.uk/digdeeper

Having spoken to a practising Christian they know about their faith in Jesus...

% of those who remained a non-Christian after a conversation



Some of these responses show us areas we can work on.

CARING CLASSMATES

Conversations with Christians are often key to people becoming followers of Jesus. Kloe's brother had died suddenly when she was in Year 11. She says, 'My heart was very hard towards the idea of the existence of God.' But she became friends with a couple of Christian classmates.



'We became so close that they felt that they could openly share their faith with me despite my opinions. The only reason as to why I even let them open up these conversations, was because they genuinely invested in our friendship. They really genuinely cared about my opinions and so I really cared about them as my friends.'

'One day they invited me along to a Christian Union meeting... it was the first time I'd ever read a part of the Bible. It really hit a spot in me...'

Kloe was able to ask her two friends lots of questions and that led to her becoming a Christian.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

- One in five adults, and one in six young people, is open to an experience or an encounter with Jesus after we speak with them about him. What an encouragement for us to talk about Jesus with those around us!
- Have you ever reflected on how your own family, friends or neighbours responded to conversations with you about Jesus? Ask yourself:
 - Would those I know remember a time when I've spoken with them about Jesus?
 - Did I follow up, offering them the chance to find out more?
 - How can I make sure I am sharing with people sensitively?
 - Am I praying regularly for them?
- Good relationships are a great starting point for conversations about Jesus. Could you start praying regularly for five of your family, friends or acquaintances who don't know Jesus, and aim to share him with at least one?



SPREADING THE WORD!

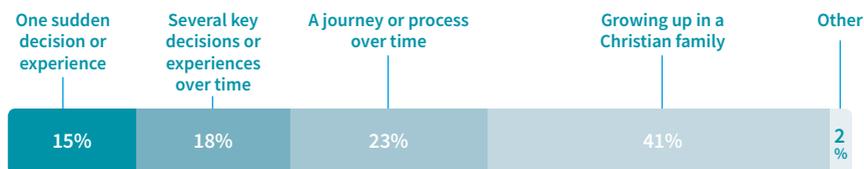
Mo Timbo spent two years in prison for selling drugs. He'd become a Christian just before he was sentenced. By the time he left, more than 600 men had given their life to Christ in a prayer and 35 had been baptised in the prison. 'God saved me so that I can help save others,' Mo says.

Part 4: How have people come to know Jesus?

God works in people's lives in so many ways, and each of us has our own story of how we came to faith in Jesus. For adult practising Christians, many of whom may have come to faith as children, 41% attribute coming to faith with growing up in a Christian family.

As we're praying for those we know to come to know Jesus, let's be open to the different ways he might be working in their lives and drawing them towards himself.

How do practising Christians describe their journey to faith in Jesus?



% among **adult** practising Christians
(Data was not available for young people)



IT CAN TAKE TIME

Laura started taking drugs at 13... 'By the time I was 21, I'd lost my job,' she says. 'Around about that time, people came and told me about Jesus... I wanted what they had, but I carried too much shame.'

More than 10 years passed before she responded to Jesus. 'I was 33... And I remembered back when people were telling me about Jesus... So, I went to a service one night and I said, "God, I want what they've got. You need to come into my life. You need to help me." God showed me how much he loved me and showed me the reason for the cross. He took that guilt. He took that shame. He took that hurt and the pain. That was the game changer for me.'

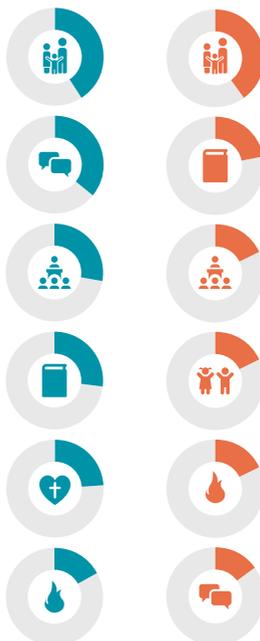
WHAT HELPS PEOPLE FIND FAITH?

We asked practising Christians which factors most positively influenced them in coming to faith (they could select the top two or three).

ADULT RESPONDENTS (many of whom may have come to faith as a child)



Top six influences



YOUTH RESPONDENTS

% among practising Christians

You can find resources to give at hopetogether.org.uk/give, thykingdomcome.global and greatcommission.co.uk/giveaways



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

- Conversations are one of the top influences on people coming to faith – so it's clear that talking about Jesus is really important. Do you feel prepared to have something to **say** about Jesus to your friends, neighbours, colleagues or children? Sharing your story of the difference Jesus makes in your life is a great way to start.
- The Bible is another key influence for adults and young people. Let's also be prepared with materials to **give** people – not underestimating the power of God's Word.
- We can also be intentional about offering an invitation – **invite** people to church services and events where they can encounter Jesus.
- Let's also be encouraged to **pray** for people, that they might experience Jesus's love for themselves.

FRIENDLY CHURCH

An unexplained spiritual experience and attending a church service both play a part in many people's journey to faith. Lee had a really weird spiritual encounter when he was in Year 10 at school. 'For about two weeks, I would be crying and crying, I wouldn't even know why and I could feel this presence but I couldn't tell you what it was. All I knew is that it made me ask deep questions. Questions like, what is the meaning of life, why is it that I exist?'



'Me and a group of friends, we went to a party and one of my close friends got cold, so I gave her my jacket. The next day, me and the lads met up... and it started raining so I said "My friend, she goes to a church around the corner. Is it okay if we go down to the church and get my jacket?"'

'So as we go to the church, she says, "Do you guys want to come in, we're having food after?"'

'So I go in and I encountered God. That for me was the beginning of my transformation.'

What can I do? Next steps



1. SOME PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR

One in five adults, and one in six young people who we speak to about Jesus is open to an encounter with him. Also, 18% of adults and 19% of young people say they don't know who Jesus is. They could be open to finding out more. What an opportunity! Commit to praying for five people you know to come to faith in Jesus. Pray with expectation that at least one of these five will respond positively. Also, pray for yourself, for opportunities and boldness to talk about Jesus.

For prayer ideas and resources, visit thykingdomcome.global/prayerresources

2. SOMETHING TO SAY

Let's look out for opportunities to share our personal story with at least five friends or family members, telling them about the difference Jesus makes in our everyday life. While some may reject our message, let's keep the conversations going, knowing that one in five who hears us is open to encountering Jesus. And let's follow up on the conversations we have, praying for the people we meet.

If you need ideas on how to do this, visit:
greatcommission.co.uk/individual-outreach

3. SOMETHING TO GIVE

Many Christians say that reading the Bible was a key influence in them coming to faith in Jesus. Do you have a Gospel or something Bible-based to give to the people you speak with? Why not carry something with you, so you're always prepared?

You can find resources to give at hopetogether.org.uk/give, thykingdomcome.global, greatcommission.co.uk/giveaways and cpo.org.uk/TheLife

4. AN INVITATION TO OFFER

Attending a church service was a key factor in many people's journey to faith. Are you on the lookout for opportunities to invite people to a church event where they can hear more about Jesus, and have the chance to respond? How can you make the most of opportunities throughout the year to invite people to events, such as guest services at Christmas and Easter?

Explore seasonal evangelism ideas at hopetogether.org.uk/rhythmofmission

5. SOMEONE NEW TO GET TO KNOW

With a third of non-Christian adults and 45% of non-Christian young people saying they don't know or aren't sure they know a Christian, who could you spend time and energy getting to know? Could you commit to making one new friend from outside your normal friendship group?

WHERE TO GO FOR FURTHER HELP



- Prayer ideas and resources: thykingdomcome.global
- Something to **give**: *The Story*, *Who Do You Say I Am?* and *The Life*. You can also explore greatcommission.co.uk/giveaways
- Something to **say**: HOPE Revolution Mission Academy Live (hopetogether.org.uk/MALive) and the Talking Jesus training videos (talkingjesus.org).
- An **invitation to offer**: make the most of seasonal events in a rhythm of mission such as Easter guest services, Summer Fun Days, Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas – visit hopetogether.org.uk/rhythmofmission
- Encouragement, tools, resources and video stories inspiring you to share your faith: greatcommission.co.uk
- Watch the testimonies of the people featured in this booklet at greatcommission.co.uk/watch
- *Speak Up* – a guide explaining your legal freedoms to share your faith in the UK – greatcommission.co.uk/speakup
- Evangelism and discipleship training for young people: hopetogether.org.uk/youth
- The BIG Church Survey – find out about the trends affecting the UK Church – talkingjesus.org
- The BIG Church Audit – use this tool to track how your church is doing in evangelism - talkingjesus.org



evangelical alliance 
together making Jesus known

HOPE *in our villages,
towns and cities*

Use this booklet and the discussion questions in your church or small group as you think about how to make Jesus known.

You could take a section at a time, using the booklet over four sessions, praying and discussing together how you can share Jesus where you are.

Order more copies and access the detailed research report at **talkingjesus.org**

Written by Lucy Olofinjana and Catherine Butcher

Designed by David Potter

Printed by CPO

Reference sources: 'Talking Jesus: perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism' research conducted in 2015 on behalf of the Church of England, Evangelical Alliance and HOPE, and 2016 research 'Talking Jesus: perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism amongst 11-18 year olds' commissioned by the HOPE Revolution partnership: HOPE, Church of England, Soul Survivor, Urban Saints, Tearfund, Message Trust, Limitless, Youth for Christ, PAIS movement.