



Convinced and Compelled

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the themes of *conviction* and *confidence* and the part that they play in sharing faith, and to take steps to build our own conviction and confidence so that we might be more fruitful ambassadors for Christ.

Opener

Either

- Start your session by passing around three cards to selected members of your group. Two cards should have the word 'False' on them and one 'True'. Give each person some time to think about an unusual incident from their past life: the incident should be either true or false as per the card, but if false should be convincing in some respect; or
- Prime three people in advance to prepare their stories as above – one true, and one false.

Ask the three people to share their stories and then have a group discussion and vote for the true story.

What convinces you about the truth of someone's story?

Bible study

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21.

Question 1

In verses 11-15, Paul talks about persuasion (11), answering (12), and conviction (14). What is his motivation for trying to convince people (see also the use of the words "appeal" (20) and "imploring" (20) a few verses later), and what is he trying to convince them about?

Paul's motivation is both the fear of the Lord (11) in the context of a final judgment (10), and the love of Christ (14) – which could be interpreted as either Christ's love for us, or ours for him. He wants to convince those who will listen that Christ died to release us from death's captivity (14,15).

Question 2

In verses 16-21, Paul writes about reconciliation: God's reconciliation of the world to Christ (19), and the handing down to us of the message of reconciliation for us to share with others (19). The word itself and the way Paul defines it ("not counting people's sins against them") point to the problem of our alienation from God (compare Ephesians 2:1-3 and Colossians 1:21).



To what extent is the idea that there is a problem in our relationship with God unpalatable and unacceptable to those we want to convince to become followers of Jesus?

Question 3

“It is not our role to convince people. That’s the Holy Spirit’s role.” Discuss!

It’s easy to opt out of our role in persuading others by pointing to the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit normally works in partnership with us, not instead of us. There are two truths to hold on to – that the Holy Spirit alone can open a person’s heart (Acts 16:14), but that he does so most often in partnership with our persuasion (see question 1 above).

Application

Watch the video for this session. This video is available from https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/540998/Where_do_we.aspx.

Question 4

In the video, Ken lists some of the reasons why he is convinced about the message of Jesus:

- creation
- start and end of life experiences
- the life and death of Jesus
- Jesus’ words and teaching
- the lives of the early disciples and of Christians today

Think about why you are a Christian *today* (as opposed to why you decided to follow Jesus at some point in the past). What is it that convinces you to be a follower of Jesus?

Question 5

A woman once asked Bertrand Russell what he would say if it turned out he’d been wrong and found himself standing outside the Pearly Gates. He replied, “Why, I should say, ‘God, you gave us insufficient evidence!’”

What would you say in response to Russell’s statement?

Question 6

“Christ’s love compels us, *because we are convinced...*” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

What things do you feel Christ’s love might be compelling you to do, or to say, or to be this week?



Question 7

Think about the relationship between *conviction* and *confidence*. To what extent will our conviction about the message of Jesus affect our confidence in sharing it?

Taking it forward

Watch the feedback video for this session. This video is available from https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/540998/Where_do_we.aspx.

What would give you more *confidence* in sharing your faith?

In the video Ken suggests that to have a good short answer to a faith objection you need to have a good long answer first.

Consider this faith objection: “The Bible is just a collection of myths”¹.

- Spend some time as a group discussing how you might respond to this statement if you had plenty of time (your long answer).
- As individuals, using no more than 150 words, write your own short answers to the statement.

Note ¹

There are other faith objections you might discuss. The ones below are some of the most common. Choose your objection in advance – don’t make it a group discussion or you will spend too much time selecting your objection! The following are from “The 10 Most Common Objections to Christianity” by Alex McFarland.

1. God is not real
2. Creation is a myth
3. The Bible is not completely authentic
4. The Bible is not completely accurate
5. Jesus was just a man
6. Jesus is not the only way to heaven
7. A loving God wouldn’t send people to hell
8. People are basically good
9. Christians are all hypocrites
10. A merciful God wouldn’t allow suffering