Beliefs, Values and Practices: Christianity
Christianity

What is Christianity?

Christianity is the largest religion in the world and also the largest in the UK and Scotland. In the 2011 Census, 53.8% of Scotland’s population identified themselves with Christianity, about 1,718,000 with the Church of Scotland, 841,000 with Roman Catholicism, and 291,000 with other Christian churches of various denominations.

Christians believe that God sent his son to Earth in the form of Jesus to save humanity from its sin, through the crucifixion as told in the Gospels of the New Testament. Within this section you will find information about how several prominent Christians put the beliefs and values of Christianity into practice.

This video shows one young Christian talking about what it means for her to be a Christian in Scotland today

Video

Watch – Testimony Christianity on YouTube  - https://youtu.be/0wsuAzEm3d0
Watch – Testimony Christianity on GlowTV (Glow login required)

Reflecting on Christianity

- What questions might you ask this young Christian?
- How has this young person’s life been shaped by her beliefs?
- What beliefs and values shape your life?
- Is it important to put your beliefs and values into action?
- How might you/do you put your beliefs and values into action?
- In what ways are your beliefs and values similar to/different from those of others?
- Why is it important to understand the diversity of beliefs and values in modern Scotland?
- What skills do you think are important when exploring beliefs and values?
- Why might understanding your beliefs and values and those of others be an important skill in the workplace?
Prominent figures: Corrie ten Boom

Introduction

Corrie ten Boom was the first licensed female watchmaker in Holland. She worked alongside her father in the family watch and jewellery shop in Haarlem, a small city close to Amsterdam. Not only could Corrie make watches, she was a great saleswoman too, and prided herself on the fact that the majority of customers who walked into the shop left having purchased a timepiece that she had sold them.

Corrie’s family were all devout Christians and, as such, Corrie saw it as her responsibility to help and care for others. Corrie ran a girls’ group and also started a group that helped people with learning difficulties.

For the first 50 years of Corrie’s life she lived a relatively peaceful existence. Corrie divided her time between the family watch shop, the various groups that she ran and the church community of which she was a part. As for so many others, the outbreak of World War II would cause Corrie’s life to be turned upside down.

Life under the Nazis

On 10 May 1940, German troops invaded the Netherlands. Despite fighting for five days, the Dutch army were defeated and Holland became the latest country to fall under Nazi occupation. The Nazis made life for the Dutch very difficult. People were under curfew and had to use ration cards to purchase food. Anyone who actively resisted the Nazi occupation was rounded up and sent to work camps in Germany.

It became obvious that the Jewish community was the main target of Nazi persecution. Jewish people were forced to wear the Star of David on their clothing, shops owned by Jewish families had their windows smashed and soon Jewish families started to disappear altogether.

The way in which the Nazis treated the Jewish people of Holland broke the hearts of Corrie and her family. As Christians they believed that the Jews were God’s ‘Chosen People’. Jesus himself was Jewish, again demonstrating the close relationship between the two faiths. Corrie saw Jewish people as her brothers and sisters.

The ten Booms fight back

It was Corrie’s brother Willem who first started to hide Jewish people. His house was slightly outside the centre of Haarlem making it a safer hiding place than the house above the watch shop where Corrie, her sister Betsie and her father Casper lived. Not only was this house in the very centre of Haarlem, it was also very close to the city police station.
Despite this, Corrie became convinced that she must help hide Jewish people after witnessing a close neighbour and fellow business owner Mr Weil being beaten up and forcibly removed from his house. Willem had managed to find a safe place for Mr Weil but was running out of room to hide other Jewish people.

Corrie prayed and soon became convinced that God would provide her with the means to hide some Jewish people. First, Corrie approached Fred Koornstra, a man whose daughter attended her girls’ group. Fred owned a shop which distributed ration cards. If he was caught unfairly allocating cards, he would most certainly be imprisoned. But Fred agreed to help Corrie. In fact, he faked a robbery, giving himself a black eye in the process, to make sure that Corrie could have the ration cards she so desperately needed.

The hiding place

Corrie now had the ration cards to provide the food for Jewish people, but how would she actually hide these Jewish people? In order to get some help and support Corrie attended an underground meeting where she met an architect named Mr Smit.

Mr Smit agreed to plan and build a secret room in Corrie’s house. This would involve building a partition wall 75cm out from the main wall. This tiny secret room would provide an ideal hiding place for Jewish people if the Gestapo decided to search the house. The secret room could only be accessed through a small panel at the back of a bookcase in front of the wall.

For the next few weeks Corrie received more deliveries and customers than she normally would. Building materials and paint were transported into the house inside clocks and other items of stock sold in the family watch shop. Mr Smit and his helpers did a fantastic job. The wall looked as if it had always been there. It was now time for the ‘guests’ to arrive.

From 1943 to 1944 there were around six or seven additional people living in Corrie’s house. The majority of them were Jewish people but some were members of the Dutch underground. It was vital that, if danger was close by, the guests could hide as quickly as possible. Therefore, from time to time Corrie would carry out emergency drills to get the guests into the habit of disappearing almost instantly. An alarm system was fitted in the front of the shop which, if pressed, rang a bell in the house upstairs to alert everyone.

All in all there were over 80 people who helped Corrie and her family to hide Jewish people. About half of them were teenagers, who did jobs such as carrying messages and delivering food. The job was incredibly dangerous and one helper called Jop, a 17-year-old teenage boy, was caught warning a nearby family, who were also hiding Jewish people, that the Gestapo were coming.

Everyone knew the risks involved, yet they all carried on helping. Many were motivated by their religious beliefs.

The family is betrayed

On 28 February 1944 the family were arrested. Corrie was not feeling well and was suffering from the flu. A man who she did not know came into the shop and asked to borrow some money to help save some more Jewish people. At first Corrie was reluctant to give the man money, but eventually she did so, hoping that the money she gave would save more lives.
The man was a traitor. Within five minutes the Gestapo were knocking on the door, demanding to be let in. The alarm was raised and the Jewish guests quickly ran upstairs into the secret room.

The Gestapo questioned Corrie and her sister Betsie, repeatedly asking them where the Jewish people were. When they were not given the answer they were looking for they hit the women and threatened them with death. The only person that Corrie believed could now help her and her family was God, so she cried out to Jesus and asked him for help. A member of the Gestapo was so angered by this that he said if Corrie ever mentioned Jesus’ name again he would kill her.

**Arrest**

After 30 minutes the Gestapo gave up looking for the Jewish people and put Corrie, Betsie, Willem, Casper and their friends into the back of a police van where they were taken to the nearby prison.

Corrie believed that God protected her and her family immediately after their arrest. For example, Rolf, a policeman who sympathized with the underground movement and also wanted to help the Jews, allowed Corrie and her family to use the prison toilet so that they could flush away any incriminating evidence. That evening Casper led the family in prayers and read a poignant excerpt from the Bible ‘You are my hiding place and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.’ (Psalms 119: 114)

That was the last evening Corrie saw her father alive. The next day the family was taken to The Hague, a city 25 miles away from Haarlem. Ten days later Casper, an old man of 84, was dead.

**Imprisonment**

Corrie’s illness continued to get worse and she was briefly admitted to the prison hospital. Again, Corrie believed that God provided for her in prison as the hospital nurse gave her a package containing a toothbrush, some soap, and most importantly for Corrie, copies of the Four Gospels. Corrie spent the next four months in a prison cell in solitary confinement, her only company being an ant which she used to feed and watch scurry across the dirty floor.

One day, a package arrived for Corrie. It was from Corrie’s other sister Nollie. Nollie was married, so was not at the family home when the Gestapo arrested her father and other siblings. In the parcel Nollie sent were some biscuits, a towel and some thread. Corrie noticed that the stamp was stuck on at a strange angle. She peeled off the stamp to uncover a hidden message 'All the watches in the cupboard are safe.' Knowing what this meant - that the Jewish hiding in the house had survived - Corrie was delighted and praised God.

Corrie was tried for the crimes she had committed and was interrogated by a man who was cold and heartless. This man made horrible comments about Corrie’s work with people with learning difficulties suggesting her work was pointless and a waste of time. However, something remarkable happened. The more time this man spent with Corrie, questioning her about her involvement with the Dutch underground, the more his heart appeared to soften. He eventually agreed to let Corrie out of prison for one day to hear the reading of her father’s will.

It was at the will reading that a relative managed to hand Corrie a tiny Bible. This Bible was to provide her with vital hope and comfort in the coming months. As she read and reread the
Bible, and in particular the gospels, the suffering that Jesus experienced began to mean so much more to her. For the first time she really appreciated how much pain Jesus had endured as he hung on the cross. She also came to think that good can come from suffering.

Camp Vught

In June 1944 Corrie was told to pack her belongings and was taken to the train station. The prisoners were being transported to Vught, a labour camp in southern Holland. On the platform Corrie was reunited with Betsie – it was the first time the sisters had seen each other in months.

While they were prisoners in Camp Vught, Corrie and Betsie were forced to build radio transmitters for German aircrafts. The working hours were long and there were harsh punishments for not working quickly enough. The Nazis were merciless in their treatment of the prisoners and, on one occasion, the prison guards shot 700 male prisoners.

Ravensbruck

In September 1944, Corrie and Betsie were transported to Ravensbruck concentration camp in Germany. Although hard to imagine, the conditions in Ravensbruck were far worse than anything Corrie and Betsie had experienced previously. The weather was terrible when they arrived and, for two nights, they were forced to sleep outside the barracks in torrential rain. The ground was a sea of mud and dirt.

Over 35,000 women were prisoners at Ravensbruck. Each morning they had to wake at 4 am to be ready for the roll call at 4.30 am. For lunch, if they worked hard enough, they were given watery potato soup. For dinner, they ate thin turnip soup served with stale black bread.

At night the women slept in barracks which slept 1400 prisoners. There were only 400 beds to share between these women and, every night, they squeezed on to their flea-ridden straw mattresses with other prisoners on either side.

Many women became sick because of the awful conditions they were living in and, if their temperature exceeded 40 degrees, they were admitted to the camp hospital. This was often a death sentence in itself, as the weakest patients were taken straight to the gas chambers. The chimneys of the crematoria towered above the camp belching out grey smoke day and night. Corrie described Ravensbruck as hell on earth.

Corrie finds strength in helping others

Corrie believed that God would see her through all of this and there were several notable events at Ravenbruck that, for her, led her to believe that God was protecting her.

For example, when being enlisted into the camp the women were subjected to an invasive search by Nazi guards. Corrie, of course, was carrying her tiny Bible. Books were forbidden in the camp and Corrie knew if she were caught, she would be badly beaten or even killed. Corrie prayed to God and asked him to send angels to protect her. Amazingly, whilst the woman in front and the woman behind Corrie were searched, Corrie walked right past the prison guards unnoticed.
Many of the women in the camp were badly affected by the treatment they had endured. They became aggressive towards one another and incredibly selfish. Betsie and Corrie prayed for the women and slowly but surely the atmosphere lifted in the barracks and women became kinder and more caring.

Corrie and Betsie started a Bible study group where they would read passages to a small group of women. There were women from many different countries in the camp and each woman who spoke more than one language would translate what Corrie and Betsie were saying. The number of women attending this group increased and soon the message of Jesus spread across the camp. The women were never caught because the camp guards were disgusted at the conditions in the barracks and many refused to enter because of the fleas. Corrie began to thank God for those fleas.

**Betsie plans for the future**

At night Betsie claimed to have many visions where God would show her a picture in her head of what he had planned for the future. She shared these visions with Corrie.

One was of an old house in the Dutch countryside where people could go to recover after experiencing the horrors of the war. Another was of a camp, like Ravensbruck, that was no longer surrounded by barbed wire and was repainted with fresh green paint. Here, German people who had suffered under Hitler could come and find peace. Betsie also would say to Corrie that after the war they would both travel the world telling people about God and sharing God’s love.

Betsie’s health had never been good and the conditions in Ravensbruck affected her badly. At first Corrie cared for her in the barracks, giving her vitamin drops in an attempt to restore her health. Betsie’s health deteriorated though, and soon she found herself in the dreaded camp hospital. Corrie was not allowed to visit her sister in her final days but, when she could, would look through the hospital window to catch a glimpse of her. Corrie could not bear seeing her sister in so much pain.

One day, Corrie looked through the window and Betsie’s bed was empty. Fearing that Betsie had been taken to the gas chamber Corrie ran to the room where the dead bodies were stored in the hospital. There, she saw Betsie’s body. While in hospital Betsie had been in so much pain, now she looked like she had found peace. Corrie recalled that Betsie had the face of an angel.

**Released**

On New Year’s Eve there was an unexpected roll call. Corrie’s name was called. She was petrified. Was she being moved to another camp, was she to be punished for not working efficiently enough or even worse, was she being sent to the gas chambers? Corrie walked forward and was given a pass. It read ‘Entlassen’. Corrie was being released. Moments later she was given the few possessions back that she had brought with her, an old set of clothes and a rail ticket to Holland.

Several weeks later she discovered that her release had been a mistake. Corrie’s paperwork had been muddled with another prisoner’s. It turned out that a week later in Ravensbruck, all female prisoners Corrie’s age were killed.
Spreading the word

It took Corrie a long time to recover from her ordeal. Her father was dead. Her sister was dead and her brother, Willem, had died after picking up an illness in prison in The Hague. Her nephew, Kik, Willem’s son, had also died in another German prison camp.

Despite experiencing so much tragedy, Corrie’s faith in God remained strong. She began telling people her story. One day a Dutch woman heard Corrie speak of Betsie’s vision about the house in Holland. She was so moved she decided to give Corrie her house. It fitted Betsie’s description exactly. Corrie used this house to help people find peace and to rediscover love.

Corrie also had the opportunity to work for an organisation which ran camps for refugees in Germany. Again, the camp Corrie ended up volunteering in matched the description of the camp that Betsie had described to Corrie when they were prisoners in Ravensbruck.

Finding forgiveness

Corrie had experienced the consequences of human hatred first hand and, although she did not find it easy, she was able to forgive even the former prison guards at Ravensbruck who had treated her and Betsie so badly. She believed her ability to forgive came from God and it was only by God’s grace that she could use her suffering to help as many people as possible.

Corrie spent the rest of her life visiting countries and telling her story. She wrote many books about her experience and continued to risk her life telling people about the love of God. For example, she spoke in communist countries such as China and Russia where religious belief was forbidden. The State of Israel was so grateful for what Corrie did for the Jewish people of Haarlem during World War II that, in 1968, Corrie was asked to plant a tree in the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles.

Corrie’s story moved so many people that, in 1975, it was made into a feature length film called ‘The Hiding Place’ on YouTube at https://youtu.be/XX0GwjXExFE. In 1977 Corrie retired to California where she lived for the rest of her life. In her later years she suffered from a stroke which left her unable to speak. Despite this she still continued to pray for people suffering around the world until she died on her 90th birthday on 15 April 1983.

Activities to support learning

• Create an imaginary Twitter account for Corrie. Think about what Corrie might have tweeted about.
• Consider how Corrie reacted to the situation around her. Research and find out about different Christian attitudes to the Holocaust and World War II and reflect upon the different responses.
• Print out a map of Europe. On this map, mark significant places in the Corrie ten Boom story. Mark out the route that Corrie and Betsie travelled from their house in Haarlem to Ravensbruck concentration camp.
• Corrie said that 'God has a telescope and microscope'. What do you think she meant by this?
• Corrie said 'I know that Jesus' light is stronger than the deepest darkness'. What do you think she meant by this? Do you agree?
• Corrie said 'The Bible tells us that we have nothing to fear because Jesus will never let us down.' Do you think Corrie was right to believe this? Write down arguments in support of this statement and arguments against.
• Find out what the term 'dehumanisation' means. How does this term apply to the female prisoners of Ravensbruck concentration camp?
• Was it right for Corrie to use teenagers to help her efforts to hide the Jews? Think of arguments for and against.
• Create a spectrum of forgiveness. On this, mark down things you could easily forgive and then move across to things you would find harder to forgive.

Reflective questions
• If you found yourself in a similar position to Corrie, how would you stop yourself despairing?
• Corrie said 'The devil is strong but his power is limited. Jesus’ power is unlimited.' Do you believe in the devil?
• ‘Sometimes I lost courage … and I remember once I said “Lord, all the stars are in your guidance but have your forgotten your child Corrie ten Boom?”’ Have you ever experienced complete hopelessness and loss? What advice might you give to someone in a similar position?
• Corrie believed that angels protected her from the Nazi guards. Why do you think people believe in angels? Do you think angels exist?
• In 1974 Corrie said 'Never has there been such a sick world.' What do you think she meant by this? Research events that were happening in the world at that time..
• Was Corrie right to forgive the former prison guard?
• Betsie had visions about the future. Do you think people have such visions?
Prominent figures: Desmond Tutu

Introduction
On 26 September 2009, the popular Scottish-American comedian and talk show host, Craig Ferguson, was asked which of the guests he had interviewed over his long career had changed his life most? His reply was ‘Desmond Tutu’. Ferguson went on to describe Desmond as an ‘incredible human being.’ Similarly Paula Ettelbrick, a US campaigner for gay and lesbian rights, called Desmond ‘the premier human rights leader’.

Who is this man who has reached out and touched the lives of so many people around the world in a positive way?

Childhood
Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born on 7 October 1931 in Klerksdorp, South Africa. His father was a teacher and, although Desmond and his family were slightly better off than other black people in the area, they still lived in a basic house that had no toilet or electricity. Desmond was bright and high achieving at school but his chances of being successful after school were slim to none. Why? Because Desmond was black and life for black people in South Africa was, for most of the 20th century, awful.

In the 17th and 18th centuries white settlers had moved to South Africa from Britain and Holland. The settlers looked down on the black Africans and steadily took away their rights. In 1913 a law was passed that meant black people could not own land. White and black children went to different schools, with all the money going to the white schools. Black people had no chance to get an education or a good job after school.

Aged 14, Desmond got tuberculosis (TB) - an illness caused by poor living conditions. He was in hospital for two years. During this time he made friends with a British priest called Father Trevor Huddleston and began to reflect on his spirituality and beliefs. Eventually he became a committed Christian.

Apartheid begins
In 1948 the South African government began to implement a policy called 'apartheid'. In Afrikaans, the language spoken by the Dutch settlers, apartheid means ‘apartness’. The government believed that black and white people should be separated both socially and politically. Day to day this meant that black people could not eat in the same restaurants, go to the same school or travel on the same buses as the white minority. It also meant that the black majority could not officially be represented in government.

The introduction of apartheid upset and angered the black population and many responded aggressively towards the white settlers. The largest anti-apartheid political movement was
called the ANC (African National Congress). Throughout the 1950s the ANC led a defiance campaign, calling for strikes and boycotts in order to make the National Party’s time in power as difficult as possible.

Desmond the teacher and the priest

In 1951, following in his father’s footsteps, Desmond trained as a secondary school teacher. He loved teaching and proved to be popular with pupils, but it was hard. Classes were very big and there was no money for books or materials. In 1953 the government introduced the Bantu Education Act. This act limited the school curriculum for black pupils. They could now only study subjects that would prepare them for low-paid manual jobs. Desmond’s heart was broken - he could no longer teach the subjects that he wished to. As a result, he left teaching.

In 1955 Desmond decided to join the Anglican Priesthood and in 1958 he started his training. Desmond believed he could make a real difference to the lives of black South Africans by giving them a louder voice in the Anglican Church. In South Africa, whilst many of the mainstream churches disagreed with apartheid, one branch of the church, the Dutch Reformed Church, claimed that God agreed with it. Leaders within the Dutch Reformed Church tried to find passages in the Bible that legitimised their prejudices against black South Africans and which supported apartheid.

Sharpeville Massacre

On 21 March 1960, fed up with the injustice of apartheid, black residents in a township called Sharpeville held a protest. They marched demanding an end to the injustice of apartheid. Whilst the protest was largely peaceful some protestors became angry and threw stones at the police. The police unexpectedly opened fire leading to confusion and panic. As a result 69 protestors were killed and a further 180 injured.

The event became known as the Sharpeville Massacre and, as news spread around South Africa, there were further attacks and murders. Worried about further protests and disruption, the government responded to the Sharpeville Massacre by banning the ANC and another black political movement, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAN).

Early church career

In 1960 Desmond was ordained as a deacon and then in 1961, aged 30, he was ordained as an Anglican priest. His church was in a township, a poor slum area where black Africans were forced to live.

In 1962 Desmond accepted an offer to gain a second theology degree in the United Kingdom. With his young family in tow, Desmond set off to their new parish in Surrey, England. St Mary’s, the church Desmond worked at in Surrey, was the polar opposite of the church he had
worked at in South Africa. The congregation was predominantly white and many were extremely wealthy. Desmond did not mind this as he believed that God’s love is for everyone, both poor and rich.

Desmond and his family, for the first time in their lives, experienced what life could be like without government-enforced racism. No longer did they have to travel on separate trains and buses. Importantly, they now felt safe – it was liberating! It was in England that Desmond began to become much more politically motivated. He took every opportunity he could of telling his congregation about the terrible conditions black South Africans were living in.

**Back in South Africa**

While Desmond and his family enjoyed peace and stability in the UK, life for black South Africans was getting worse. The ANC encouraged supporters to break the law, and the young Nelson Mandela led the ANC’s military wing in trying to cause as much disruption for South Africa as possible. The primary aim was to make apartheid inconvenient and expensive.

As a last resort, Mandela and other ANC leaders agreed that a bombing campaign on buildings such as government offices might help bring an end to apartheid. The military campaign was not as successful as the ANC would have liked and, in 1962, Mandela was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 1967 Desmond and his family returned to South Africa. Desmond was deeply upset by all that had happened. While he agreed with the sentiment of the ANC he believed that only through peaceful protest could apartheid be brought to an end. Desmond was becoming more and more politically motivated. Now, in speeches and sermons, he would make explicit references to the evils of apartheid. He also started attending student demonstrations against apartheid.

**Dean of Johannesburg Cathedral**

After various church positions, and some time spent back in the UK, Desmond became the Dean of Johannesburg - the first black leader of Johannesburg Cathedral. Johannesburg Cathedral is a spectacular building and, like his church in Surrey, the majority of the congregation were wealthy. Although blacks and whites were allowed to worship together there was still a clear divide between the two factions of the congregation. Desmond put an end to this by encouraging all members of the congregation to welcome each other and to shake hands with each other at the start of services.

One of the perks of the job, so to speak, was the Dean’s house. Desmond and his family were offered this house, which was in a lovely white area of the city. They could not accept this offer. Desmond needed to show the congregation that his heart was with the poor black South Africans who were incredibly marginalised as a result of apartheid. So the Tutu family moved to the slum area of Soweto. Like other townships and slums in South Africa, Soweto had very poor sanitation and hardly any infrastructure. There were poor roads, no electricity and no toilets.

**Black and feminist theology**

Desmond was quickly getting a name for himself as being a radical Christian preacher. Whilst lecturing in Lesotho, Desmond had become increasingly fascinated with Black Theology. Black
Theology attempts to understand the Bible and Christian history through the eyes of black people. Desmond believed that Christianity was for all people and therefore black people should be represented in the Church more visibly. He also believed that the way black people read and interpret the Bible can be different to the way in which white people do so.

Desmond was also a supporter of the feminist movement and a vocal supporter of the ordination of female clergy. He also had no issues removing sexist language from the Bible to make it more inclusive.

**Soweto Uprising**

Angered by the Bantu Education Act, over 15,000 school children went on a peaceful march on 16 June 1977. Black students were upset at being forced to learn and speak Afrikaans, the language of the white Dutch settlers. For them it symbolised oppression and racism. Despite police barricading the intended route of the march, the protestors found alternative routes. Police claimed that some protestors began hurling stones at them. Soon the police opened fire on the student protestors. The first victim was a 13-year-old boy called Hector Pieterson who was shot at Orlando West High School.

The uprising escalated and violence continued for several days. Hundreds of people died in the uprising and over 1,000 were injured. After the uprising, Desmond was bitterly upset with the government, believing that if the victims had been white rather than black there would have been a far greater government response.

**Nobel Peace Prize**

As Secretary General of the South African Council of Churches, a post he took up in 1978, Desmond was able to travel the world speaking out against apartheid. As a result of his work in the field of human rights, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. He returned to South Africa a hero and was met by crowds of supporters both black and white.

At a press conference later, Desmond made it clear that there could never be any real peace in South Africa where there was injustice. Again, Desmond reinforced his believe that violence was not the way to bring about peace and an end to apartheid.

**State of Emergency**

The 1980s were a very tense time in South Africa. The police had a heavy handed approach with the black population leading to violent attacks and further uprisings. Some black South Africans became frustrated with Desmond's belief in non-violence. Indeed, they were so desperate that many black South Africans turned on each other accusing individuals of being traitors and working with the police. Desmond witnessed a mother being tortured to death because she was accused of being an 'informer'.

At this point even Desmond had nearly had enough and he threatened to leave South Africa for good. Eventually in 1985 a State of Emergency was declared in South Africa and the international community started to put pressure on South Africa to end apartheid.
Archbishop of Cape Town

In 1986 Desmond was appointed as Archbishop of Cape Town. He was the first black man to hold this position. Being appointed as Archbishop anywhere in the world is a huge privilege but for Desmond it was even more special. He took up office in a difficult period.

During the late 1980s over 1,000 black people died in violence caused by apartheid. His sermons at Cape Town Cathedral were politically charged. On one occasion, when Desmond heard that the then US president, Ronald Reagan, was not supporting economic sanctions against South Africa, he declared that America could 'go to hell.'

The end of apartheid

Something remarkable happened in South Africa in 1989. FW de Klerk was elected as president of the country. De Klerk was the most progressive president that South Africa had seen and he wished to end apartheid. De Klerk was instrumental in organising the release of Nelson Mandela and also lifted the ban on the ANC and PAC.

Like Desmond, de Klerk wanted a peaceful end to apartheid and encouraged all South Africans to forgive and move forward together. Eventually, in 1994, after five decades of exclusive white rule, Nelson Mandela was voted as the first black president in the first truly democratic election South Africa had ever seen.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Nelson Mandela gave Desmond a leading role in the new government’s administration. So much injustice had occurred during the apartheid era and so many crimes had been left uninvestigated. Therefore, Desmond became leader of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Desmond and his team had the hard job of trying to ensure that justice was carried out. Both victims and perpetrators were encouraged to come forward and share their stories in order to establish the truth of the many crimes that had taken place. It was a hard and sometimes painful job, yet also incredibly rewarding.

The success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ensured that South Africa’s transition to a full democracy was as peaceful as possible. Finally, in 1996 a new constitution was put in place ensuring full equal rights for all South African citizens, both black and white. Desmond was delighted and called South Africa the ‘Rainbow nation’ a term that many use to today to celebrate the country’s ethnic diversity.

Desmond - the premier Human Rights leader

Desmond stood down from office as Archbishop of Cape Town in 1996 and, although he officially retired from all public duties in 2010, he continues to be an advocate for human rights around the world. He speaks out for the rights of all who are weak, all who suffer and all who are marginalised.

His work has taken him to Israel and Palestine, where he has spoken out against the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. He has also worked with his friend the Dalai Lama to speak out against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In 2003 Desmond supported the election of Gene Robinson, an openly gay Anglican priest. This proved to be a controversial move and some in the church again labelled Desmond a troublemaker. However, he has remained steadfast in
his beliefs and in 2007 in a BBC interview Desmond said 'If God, as they say, is homophobic, I wouldn't worship that God.'

Ubuntu

All of Desmond's life and work has been motivated by a South African philosophy called Ubuntu. Ubuntu means that we cannot be human on our own but only become human by accepting our place in relation to other human beings. We are all part of the world and should learn to accept and value each and everyone's individual uniqueness.

For Desmond, if we were all the same, the world would be an incredibly dull place. Every human being experiences hurt and heartache in their lifetime but, only by learning to forgive can we find peace, move on and live a happy and joyful existence. As Desmond said to Craig Ferguson in Ferguson's life-changing interview, 'There is actually no future without forgiveness.'

Activities to support learning

- Create a visual timeline of Desmond's life. Include all of the key events that influenced Desmond.
- Print out a map of South Africa. On this map, mark significant places in Desmond's life.
- Desmond said 'There is actually no future without forgiveness.' Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.
- Find out more about the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Dutch Reformed Churches stance on apartheid. Write down your findings as a magazine article.
- Find out more about the term 'ubuntu'. Who else applies it to their life? Do you think it is a good philosophy of life?
- Carry out further research on black theology or feminist theology. Write a 'For Dummies' guide on your chosen theology.

Reflective questions

- Do you agree with Desmond's belief in non-violence?
- Do you think that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ensured that justice was done?
- Are some forms of prejudice more damaging than others? Think about the types of prejudice that Desmond addressed.
- Read Galatians 3:28. What do you think it means?
- Desmond is an inclusivist, believing that there is value and truth in all religions. What are the benefits and difficulties of this standpoint?
- What kind of prejudice exists in Scotland today? How might we go about eradicating this?
Prominent figures: John Polkinghorne

Introduction

John Polkinghorne’s office at Cambridge University was large enough for five colleagues to gather. The people that met now knew each other well, two were even former students of Polkinghorne. After a few moments of silence the professors gathered their papers and began shuffling to their feet, indicating they were ready to be dismissed.

‘Before you go,’ Polkinghorne said, ‘I have something to tell you.’ The tiny audience settled back in their chairs.

‘I am leaving the University to enter the priesthood, I will be enrolling in seminary next year.’

So Polkinghorne walked away from physics. Other colleagues looked on in disbelief. Polkinghorne was more than just a physicist and he had already made his mark on that ancient science. Walking away was not difficult. But he wasn’t walking away. He was walking toward a new calling, responding to his growing desire to be a minister, toward a new life.

1 Dean Nelson and Karl Giberson, Quantum Leap (Oxford: Monarch, 2011), p.17

Beliefs, Values and Practices: Christianity
Childhood and family
John Charlton Polkinghorne is most notably recognised for his works exploring the relationship between science and religion. He is a theoretical physicist (which means he tries to find the answers to big questions of physics), a theologian (which means he writes about religion) and an ordained Anglican priest.

Polkinghorne had an unsettled childhood. He was born in 1930 with an older brother and sister. His older sister died when she was just six and his old brother, an RAF pilot, died while flying during World War II when John was 12.

The Polkinghorne family were devout Christians, taking John to church every week as a child. "I cannot recall a time when I was not a member of the worshipping and believing community of the church," he recalls, looking back. "I absorbed Christianity through the pores, so to speak, perhaps to a greater degree than a more direct form of instruction would have conveyed." John enjoyed church and liked the vicar, who in John’s eyes had the ability to bring Bible scenes to life.²

School years
John also like school, especially maths, which he discovered from an early age he was particularly good at. He also loved studying English and poetry, especially the works of Charles Dickens and Shakespeare. However for him, the world’s true poetry was displayed in mathematical equations. Polkinghorne loved what he felt was the 'rightness' of mathematics in contrast to vague and often confusing symbolism found in poetry.

He did so well at school the headmaster recommended that his parents send him to a different school in Ely where teachers could really stretch him. This excited John who worked very hard at school.

A love of teaching
After completing school in 1947, Polkinghorne carried out two years National Service, teaching maths as part of the Royal Army Educational Corps. These two years’ service gave him his first experience of teaching, which he enjoyed immensely. This love continued when he went to Cambridge University to continue studying mathematics, following in the footsteps of one of his idols, Isaac Newton.

Upon completing his degree work Polkinghorne received a prestigious fellowship to study processes involving particles much smaller than atoms. The study of the tiniest bits of matter is called 'elementary particle physics'.

Polkinghorne the physicist
Dr John Polkinghorne was one of the world’s top quantum physicists. He has become famous all over the world for being part of a team who demonstrated the existence of particles called quarks and gluons.


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Before Polkinghorne it was believed that the smallest thing which could possibly exist was a particle called an atom. Now atoms make up everything we see and are made up of neutrons, protons and electrons.

After finishing university Polkinghorne was put in charge of a team whose task was discover if there was anything smaller. John’s team guessed that there must be something even smaller than protons and neutrons, but they were so small no one could see them. The scientists knew they were there but they were moving too fast and there was no way to demonstrate their existence.

Using experiments and some very complicated mathematical equations the team were able to find proof for the existence of these new smallest particles called quarks and gluons by showing where they had been. So even though the team have to this day never seen a quark or a gluon, like a road map, they can show using mathematical patterns where these tiny particles have been. In Polkinghorne’s words 'the role my team played in quark understanding is that we made them mathematically respectable.'

The discoveries made by John and his team are still used in science today and that is why Polkinghorne was such as important scientist. The question we need to ask now is; why would such a brilliant and successful scientist, a leading genius in the world, leave science?

In an interview Polkinghorne was asked the question 'Do you have any regrets leaving physics behind?' He responded:

“No, I think I left at the right time. One reason is you don’t get better at these things as you get older. You probably do your best work in physics before you are 45. The other reason is that the subject has changed. All the time I was in physics, it was driven by experimentation. Now the subject involves a lot of guesswork”.

The Christian Century (Philadelphia), 29 Jan 2008

Polkinghorne the Priest

When he describes his line of work, John Polkinghorne jokes, he encounters 'more suspicion than a vegetarian butcher.' For a particle physicist turned Anglican priest, difference of opinion comes with territory.

Two years after leaving physics and retraining as a priest, Rev Polkinghorne began knocking on doors in his new parish and getting to know the people who lived around his church. His reputation as a world-class scientist went before him. Many people feared him, thinking he would be against religion. Most people didn’t care for the church and looked more to science for answers. For both groups of people John had encouraging words asking them to think about science and religion working together.

Life was completely different from that of the physics world of Cambridge. For Polkinghorne, the best part of being a priest was getting involved in the life of a small community. He played a part in the village flower show, the children’s costume contest and even a raffle put on by elderly groups. ‘As I wandered around town I could say hello to anyone I wanted,’ he recalls fondly.

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A lot of people have difficulty in understanding how a scientist like John Polkinghorne can believe in God when all his life he was taught to test, to do experiments and to gather evidence to prove whether something exists. He cannot do this with God, so why does he think he exists? Part of the answer comes back those little particles we looked at earlier called Quarks.

John and his team at Cambridge used mathematical equations to prove that Quarks exist even though you cannot see them. It is the same for God. John believes that even though we cannot see God there is evidence to show that he exists.

**The relationship between science and religion**

People sometimes say that science deals with facts but religion simply trades in opinions. In other words, science’s concern is with truth, but the best that religion can offer is something which is true for each person.

In 2010 a series of meetings were held at Oxford University to celebrate John Polkinghorne’s 80th birthday. The aim was to explore if science and religion could work together to find answers about the universe, as Polkinghorne has suggested for the last 25 years. The main questions were:

1. Are there any scientific theories that allow for God to control human actions?
2. Is there any evidence that God helped to create the world?

Now these are big questions over which there is a lot of debate. The famous scientist Stephen Hawking in his book ‘A Brief History of Time’ concluded that the universe could have been created without any need for a God. However Polkinghorne thinks differently.

‘My question was, is there a way of describing God’s actions that can be explained with science?’ he says.⁶ He continued to say that science can create a mathematical description of the world but, because it cannot yet explain everything, that there is a place where God can be the explanation”.

However, Polkinghorne does not just offer criticism of scientists such as Richard Dawkins. He also has wise words for the religious community. The reason religion and science need to work together is because religion thinks that God/gods created the universe, therefore they should be ‘grateful for all science can tell about its nature and history’.⁷

John Polkinghorne continues to challenge the world to use both science and religion to explain not just how the world was created but to understand why the world was created. The best way to understand this is to consider his own words:

“We need to find a middle ground where God is not the bad guy and we are all his robots. The answer must be that God has given humans complete freedom even though we sometimes get things wrong. The challenge is to prove if God is compatible with physics, which I think it is. Physics asks how the world works and discovers a complicated, patterned order to the universe. But it doesn’t explain where the order comes from. I believe that God created the order”.

Discover Magazine (New York), 14 July 2011 ⁸

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⁶ Zeeya Merali, 'The priest-physicist who would marry science to religion', Discover Magazine (New York) (14 July 2011)
⁸ Zeeya Merali, 'The priest-physicist who would marry science to religion', Discover Magazine (New York) (14 July 2011)
Polkinghorne's 80th birthday

It was fitting that Polkinghorne’s 80th birthday party took place at Oxford University. The area has seen both scientific discoveries and enduring works of imagination, both of which reveal the beauty and creativity of the universe. Just a few blocks away is the Eagle and Child Pub, where CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien read one another’s work and spurred on their imaginations. The Harry Potter movies were filmed in another university building nearby. The great science writer and Humanist Richard Dawkins lives just down the street.

On his birthday Polkinghorne was comfortable speaking to intellectuals who had gathered to honour him in Oxford. He loves to talk about what it means to be both a serious scientist and a person of faith. For him, it is all about evidence. 'Mastering physics is the perfect training ground for studying God because it’s the evidence that leads a physicist to believe in equations, and for a believer in God it’s the evidence that helps them to accept that he exists.'

Polkinghorne is the first to admit that despite all that’s been said and written and discovered, there is more to observe, more experiments to conduct and more to tell. When it comes to the age-old relationship between science and religion, there’s always more to the story.

Activities to support learning

- John Polkinghorne is an important person to study because he is a scientist and he believes in God. Why do you think some scientists do not believe in God?
- What reasons did Polkinghorne give when he left physics to retrain as an Anglican priest?
- If you could ask Polkinghorne two questions what would they be?
- Consider why someone might change career and alter their life view. What impact may this have on their life?
- Can you find other examples of people who have given up their career to take on a religious life?
- Polkinghorne strongly believes that science and religion should work together. Can you think of any problems science cannot solve that religion may be able to help with?
- In 1997 John Polkinghorne was knighted by the Queen. This means that he can now be known as Sir John Polkinghorne. However, he is never called this. Why is this the case?
- John’s favourite verse from the Bible is 2 Corinthians 4:6. Find out what this verse says and offer your own views on it
- John Polkinghorne won a very famous award called the Templeton Prize in 2002. How does someone win this award and how did he spend the £1 million prize money?

Reflective Questions

- Are science and religion opposites or complementary?
- Are there limitations to science and religion in relation to what they can and cannot explain?
- Some take the view that over time, science has replaced (or displaced) religion. What do you think?


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Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr was, and still is, a massively influential figure in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA but also a model that can be applied in the context of modern ethnically diverse Scotland.

The Jim Crow laws

To understand where King came from, it is necessary to look first at the issues that shaped his personal history. These issues can be embodied in what were known as the Jim Crow laws. These were a set of rules that applied the segregationist ideology of the Southern states of the USA, but were more like a caste system that became a way of life from 1877 until the mid-1960s.

The Jim Crow laws enforced strict racial segregation in all public facilities in the Southern states. This meant it was illegal for blacks and whites to go to the same schools, live in the same neighbourhoods, sit in the same theatres, cinemas or buses, even down to having to use separate public water fountains. In practice, it meant that public facilities for black people were inferior or non-existent, creating severe economic, educational and social disadvantages for the black population.

It was a system that was supported by the majority of the white community to the point where even theologians preached that black African-Americans were inferior to white people and were only good enough to be servants. Some scientists also supported this belief by trying to prove that blacks were naturally inferior to whites on an intellectual and cultural level.

Early life

This was the world into which King was born on 15 January 1929. Almost as soon as he was born he was immersed in the Christian faith, being brought up in the Baptist tradition of the American Deep South. He had two siblings, an older sister and younger brother, and by all accounts he was nurtured by a loving extended family unit that had the Christian faith at its heart.

As part of the Baptist tradition he soon started to read and discuss the Christian scriptures, his grandmother encouraging him with stories from the Bible. This tradition was strong in his family as both his father and maternal grandfather were Baptist ministers.
**Key influences**

At the age of 15, earlier than some of his counterparts, King entered Morehouse College in Atlanta. This was an all-black college due to the laws on segregation. It was whilst at Morehouse that King was to meet two of the pivotal influences in his life. These were Dr Benjamin E Mays and Howard Thurman.

Mays was the president of the school and it was his influence as a role model in the faith that first inspired the young King. The second influence was Thurman who had been a classmate of King's father and became the mentor for the young King. Thurman was a civil rights leader, theologian and teacher.

Whilst Thurman was working as a missionary he had met one of the eminent figures of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi famously used non-violent civil disobedience to end British rule in India. It was these influences that drew King to travel to Gandhi’s birthplace in 1959.

It was in these early formative years that King developed a belief in the power of non-violent protest. In an interview he was later to reflect that the methods of non-violent protest were the most potent weapon for an oppressed people.

Though Gandhi, being a Hindu, was from a different religious tradition, King saw that he epitomised the universal principles of ahimsa (non-violence in the face of aggression) and in that King saw his own faith’s principle of Christian brotherhood. For King it was the Christian faith in a loving God that gave non-violent protest its substance and potency.

**Career in the Church**

With his deeply Christian background and a role model like his father, it is not surprising that King too entered the Baptist tradition as a minister. When King, Sr heard of his intention to enter the ministry, apparently he told him to get up and preach at the Ebenezer Baptist Church. By all accounts it was a rousing sermon, and at the young age of only 18 years.

The following year the young King entered a seminary (a school for people wanting to become ministers) in Pennsylvania and soon was recognised as an outstanding student. He eventually became his class president in his senior year, ahead of some of the white students.

King was academically gifted and he won a scholarship to study theology at Boston, Massachusetts where he not only gained a PhD but also met his future wife, Coretta Scott, a music student. They later married on the front lawn of his father’s house on 18 June 1953.

The next few years saw King become the pastor of the Baptist Church in Montgomery, Georgia. The scene was now set for the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr to make his entry onto the public stage of the civil rights struggle in the USA. King’s faith pushed him to stand up against what he saw as a key issue that was contrary to his Christian beliefs, namely racial segregation.

**The battle for civil rights begins**

History tells of the ‘first lady’ of civil rights being Rosa Parks. In actual fact she was not the first to take the route of civil disobedience. What made her into the ‘first lady’ was the involvement of King, who was the pastor of the Baptist Church in Montgomery. One simple act of civil disobedience was to launch both of them into the history books.
The Montgomery Bus Boycott

It was 1955 and the Jim Crow laws meant that the local Montgomery bus company still enforced segregation on the buses. This meant that any black person had to give up their seat if the bus was full and a white person wanted to sit down. On Thursday 1 December 1955, this happened to Rosa Parks.

Parks was already involved in the Civil Rights Movement - she was secretary of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – and she decided the time had come to take a stand. She refused to give up her seat.

The police were called and Parks was arrested for breaking the segregation laws. She was found guilty and fined $10, but she refused to pay the fine and appealed against the verdict. While all this was going on, Parks' colleagues in the NAACP and the Civil Rights Movement took a stand of their own. They quickly wrote and circulated a leaflet throughout the black community in Montgomery, explaining what had happened to Parks, and requesting that on Monday 5 December, the day of her trial, all black people in Montgomery boycott the buses. The leaflet said:

“Another Negro woman has been arrested and thrown in jail because she refused to get up out of her seat on the bus for a white person to sit down. ...

This woman’s case will come up on Monday. We are, therefore, asking every Negro to stay off the buses Monday in protest of the arrest and trial. Don't ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday.

You can afford to stay out of school for one day if you have no other way to go except by bus.

You can also afford to stay out of town for one day. If you work, take a cab, or walk. But please, children and grown-ups, don’t ride the bus at all on Monday. Please stay off all buses Monday.”

The Martin Luther King Jr Research and Education Institute

At the same time, civil rights activists formed a committee called the Montgomery Improvement Association to run the planned boycott and chose the young pastor King to be in charge.

Organising the boycott

Monday, 5 December 1955 was a historic day. The black community had responded instantly to the request for a bus boycott. Few black people had ridden on the buses that Saturday, and by the Monday word had spread across the whole community and the boycott started in earnest. Black passengers stayed away in their thousands. At a public meeting that evening, King made a rousing speech, and the request that the boycott continue until the segregation laws were changed was met with cheers from the audience.

The bus company held out against the boycott as they believed that it would be over quickly, since the majority of African-Americans needed to travel on the bus from their segregated neighbourhoods to their places of work in white areas.
What actually happened was that the black community united under the leadership of King. They car shared, used bicycles and even walked rather than use the bus. Churches bought cars and buses to transport people to their workplaces. Some white employers even took to transporting their black employees themselves until pressure from the white community made them stop. At one point, black taxi drivers started to charge the same rate as the bus, which caused the bus company to apply to the courts to make this illegal.

Despite all the difficulties, the boycott rolled on and on for months. After receiving hate mail and death threats, King told a mass meeting, 'If one day you find me sprawled out dead, I do not want you to retaliate with a single act of violence. I urge you to continue protesting with the same dignity and discipline you have shown so far.' As the boycott continued, King steadily rose to the fore as a civil rights leader. He won over many from the white community with his talk of fairness and Christian brotherhood.

Victory

Finally, on 20 December 1956, 381 days after it began, the boycott ended after the Supreme Court found that the segregation laws were unconstitutional.

King later said of Rosa Parks that she was 'one of the finest citizens of Montgomery – not one of the finest Negro citizens, but one of the finest citizens of Montgomery'. King had led the boycott for 381 days during which time he had been intimidated, arrested and had his home fire bombed. He fought on, inspired by his faith in the equality of all men and women as well as the principles of Christian brotherhood and non-violent civil disobedience.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was the catalyst that united African-American communities throughout the Southern states of America. The Montgomery Improvement Association, led by King, had organised the boycott so well that even some of the white community leaders had to admit that it ran things with military precision. As a result, other ministers from the South Atlanta region gathered together and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (the SCLC) was formed with King elected as its first president. After the gains made in Montgomery, the SCLC turned its attention on the problems experienced by the African-American community of Birmingham, Alabama.

Letter from Birmingham jail

King's letter from Birmingham Jail is highly significant as it sets out his principles of civil disobedience through non-violent protest from a Christian faith perspective.

The Birmingham Campaign

In 1963 King participated in a series of protests against racial segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. The violence directed at the black community in Birmingham from the white segregationists got so bad the city earned the unfortunate nickname of 'Bombingham'. In this campaign children and teenagers joined in the marches. As they marched along singing songs the local police and fire department turned high pressure hoses on them and used police dogs to attack them. When this was seen by the nation on the news channels it caused alarm and distress across America.

For his involvement in this protest King was arrested and sent to Birmingham Jail. Whilst in jail he received news that some local church ministers had voiced their concern about what they

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saw as King coming in and creating disorder in their city. King’s reply to them turned out to become an explanation of his belief in the right and duty of an oppressed people to protest against injustice.

The letter from Birmingham Jail

In his reply to the ministers’ accusation that he came from outside the community to stir up trouble, King stated that he was one with his community and wherever his community were being persecuted he too would go. He also likened himself to the prophets of the Old Testament when they were called by the Lord to go and preach in foreign lands.

In his letter, King went on to explore what his principles of civil disobedience and non-violence were. He said that there were four elements or basic steps in any non-violent campaign. These were the collection of facts to examine what injustice there was, followed by a period of negotiation, self-purification and finally direct action. In Birmingham he pointed out that all of the first three principles had been adhered to and still the city was full of racial injustice.

“Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation”.

Martin Luther King, Jr's Letter from Birmingham Jail

The Christian basis for non-violent protest

King went on to explain that because of the intransigence of the ‘city fathers’, the African-American community had no option other than taking direct action in the form of non-violent protesting in order to get negotiations back on track. In this letter he states very clearly that he is not advocating law breaking, but argues that it is every moral person’s duty to fight against unjust laws. He explains in detail the theological principles of this through St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas’ writings.

The letter precisely affirms King’s commitment to the teachings of Christianity which he argues were also considered extreme when they were first received.

Read the complete text of King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail, as well as the Statement by Alabama Clergymen that prompted it.
I have a dream

Most people, even if they have not studied the life and works of King, will probably recall his most famous speech, generally referred to as 'I have a dream'.

This speech was given to a crowd of about 25,000 people who marched on Washington DC on 28 August 1963. The march had been arranged by various civil rights activists, King being one of them. The march called for the end of segregation of schools, the end of job discrimination on the premise of colour, the instigation of job training for minorities, but most of all a call to enact a New Civil Rights Act.

“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character”.

The passion with which King spoke roused the Civil Rights Movement, creating more cross-party support which resulted in Congress passing the Civil Rights Act in 1964. The images that King painted with his words revealed to a nation that it should not only afford everyone equality under the law but it could and must make his dream their own.

Listen to an audio recording of King's 'I have a dream speech'
**Assassination and legacy**

King’s last speech in Memphis, Tennessee turned out to be more prophetic than even he probably thought. He stated to his audience that he, like Moses before him, might not reach the Promised Land, but he was convinced that, as a people, they would reach it.

“Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop.

And I don't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!

And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

On 4 April 1968, after 11 years of campaigning, more than six million miles travelled, and with innumerable speeches, articles and six books to his name, King was shot while on the balcony of his motel room.

At the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King's story had started, 100,000 mourners attended his funeral. President Lyndon Johnson declared a national day of mourning - something unthinkable 11 years earlier.

**Legacy**

King's main legacy is the success of his struggle for civil rights. Days after his death the US Congress passed a new Civil Rights Act, which outlawed many of the unfair laws and practices that he had fought against.

King is still famous as one of the central figures of the civil rights movement. His 'I have a dream' speech was chosen as the top American speech of the 20th century by a 1999 poll of scholars of public address. Martin Luther King, Jr Day is observed throughout the US in January each year, near the date of his death.

Martin Luther King, Jr's life touched thousands of lives and made them better as a result. His example of civil disobedience to fight injustice has inspired millions and can still be seen in non-violent protests around the world today.
Activities to support learning

- In groups, discuss what rules you think would have been more appropriate on the Montgomery buses.
- Christian teaching states that you should 'love your neighbour'. How was this interpreted in the USA of the Jim Crow laws?
- Study the letter that prompted Martin Luther King, Jr to write from his jail cell. By referring to his reply, how does he justify his involvement in the Birmingham protests?
- If you were to summarise Martin Luther King, Jr’s principles of civil disobedience in his letter from a Birmingham Jail in eight words what would they be?
- Compose an acrostic poem about ‘Freedom’ (The first letter of each line of the poem spells out the word 'freedom'.)

Reflective Questions

- Why did some Christian communities approve of the Jim Crow laws?
- If Martin Luther King, Jr were born in our time and in our Scottish society, what would he be saying about prejudice today?
- Without the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, would he have become such an influential figure in the Civil Rights Movement?
- Martin Luther King, Jr and his inspirations Jesus of Nazareth and Mahatma Gandhi suffered persecution for standing up for their beliefs. How would they be viewed by today’s media?
- After all that has been covered in this resource, do you think that Martin Luther King, Jr would have called for the death penalty for the man who shot him?
- If he had not been assassinated, how would history have remembered King?