



## A session on Saints and Scripture

These sessions have been designed for youth groups to look at the theme of Saints and Scripture. There are discussion questions and suggestions for activities. They are just ideas - feel free to use and adapt them as you wish!

### Session A

(suitable for younger groups or those not used to talking about their faith)

**You will need:** 2 large sheets of paper, some post-it notes and a felt pen for everyone; a CD player with a CD of quiet background music; a candle and matches; a basket or other small container; the 6 sentences (\*) below written on strips of paper.

Give the young people a post-it note each and ask them to write on it the name of a famous person they admire/is their hero. Then go round the group and ask them, in turn, to stick their post-it onto a large sheet of paper headed 'Our Heroes'. Hopefully they will think of a range of people - there may be some lively disagreement as to who they have chosen!

Now comes the fun part. Tell them that only 3 of these can be accepted as a hero. Between them they have to choose who can stay and who must go. Go round the group and ask each person to 'defend' their hero by saying why they think their hero should stay. Then have a 'vote-off'. This can be done in the style of the Weakest Link (though with more than 6 this would take ages) or a show of hands. As each person is voted-off remove their post-it note. It might be they never agree in which case allow them to talk and argue a little while and then agree to disagree and move on to the next stage.

Now ask the group to nominate one person they *know* who is a hero/they admire greatly. Again they write them on a post-it note. Using a new sheet of paper headed 'Heroes we Know' ask each group member in turn to stick their hero on and next to them write why they have been nominated (just a few words or a couple of sentences is enough). Leave all these in the centre, for all to see.

Now tell them the theme of this evening is 'Saints'. Ask the question 'What do you think of when someone says the word Saint?' They will come up with all sorts of ideas.

You could read the following – or better still, have it ready printed for them to read a sentence each in turn:

*The Greek and Hebrew words for saint means holy, devoted to God, or sacred.  
Yet each of the 60+ times it is used in the Bible the word saint is not actually applied to special, holy, perfect people.  
But it is used about ordinary people doing everyday jobs such as fishermen, teachers, doctors, tent makers and carpenters.  
The people of the church - The people, just like us, trying to live out their faith every day.*

Ask them to choose a piece of paper from the basket. Those with the first colour can read their text out to the group.

\* Acts 9:32 'Now as Peter was travelling through those regions he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda'

\* Philippians 4:21 'Greet every saint in Christ Jesus'

\* Romans 16:2 'that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints...'

\* Ephesians 4:12 'For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ'

You say: so, everyone in the church then was called a saint. But we think of them as all being really good-perfect even so perhaps it was easier for them. But they weren't perfect and they got things wrong just like we do.

Now ask those still with paper from the basket (in a different colour than the 4 above) to read these texts to the group:

\* Galations 2:11 'When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.'

\* Acts 15:39 'They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.'

They were just Christians like us. We are the saints of today! Whether or not you live up to the title depends on you....

**Response:** Play some quiet music and light a candle in the middle of the group. In the quiet read out the things they wrote on the 'Heroes we Know' sheet. Then ask them to pray in the quiet and ask God to show them one way they could be heroes or saints to the people they know.

If there is time left you could use an activity from the games section

## Session B

(for older group or those used to talking about faith and keen to explore)

**You will need:** Large sheet of paper, felt tip pens; the 2 sentences in italics below written out on separate pieces of paper; Bibles; A sheet of paper for each person present with the words '..... is a saint to me because:'; CD player – 2CD's one of quiet background music and the other a song such as 'Here I am once again';

In the centre of one sheet of paper write 'heroes' and ask the group to write the names of their heroes and in 2 or 3 words why they are admired. Pick out the adjectives or key words they use (for example: brilliant at football, amazing guitarist, wonderful storyteller) and write them in the centre of a second sheet of paper.

Have the following written out and ask one person to read it

*'The Greek and Hebrew words for saint means holy, devoted to God, sacred'*

Ask the question: 'Our heroes are all the things we have written to us, but would you describe them as Saints?' This should lead into an interesting discussion about what is a Saint, what you have to be like to be one etc.

When the question is asked about whether 'ordinary' people can be called Saints you can ask someone to read out the following:

*'Each of the 60+ times it is used in the Bible the word Saint is not actually applied to special, holy, perfect people but about ordinary people doing everyday jobs such as fishermen, teachers, doctors, tent makers and carpenters. The people of the church in fact! The people, just like us, trying to live out their faith every day.'*

Ask the group how they feel about the idea of them being Saints. How do they think they should live/be if they are Saints?

Some are likely to argue they can't be Saints or this isn't true. Now turn to their Bibles. Give them the following texts (they can read out one each).

Acts 9:32 'Now as Peter was travelling through those regions he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda'

Philippians 4:21 'Greet every saint in Christ Jesus'

Romans 16:2 'that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints...'

Ephesians 4:12 'For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ'

Ephesians 5:3 'Immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among the Saints'

So, in the early church *all* were referred to as Saints. Ask the group why they think the early church were called Saints and we are not. They will most likely say it was for the first Christians only/because they were persecuted for their faith/they were perfect.

Take a third sheet of paper and write in the centre of it 'why we are Not Saints'. Ask the group to give answers to this and as they do you write them on the sheet.

Now ask 2 people to read the following texts:

Galatians 2:11 'When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.'

Acts 15:39 'They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.

So they were not perfect either. They made mistakes and argued amongst themselves. Just like us in fact! We are the saints of today! Whether or not you live up to the title depends on you.

(If the subject of persecution comes up remind them that many are persecuted today for their faith. If your group wishes to pursue this issue perhaps you could look at this issue in detail another week? )

**Response:** put on the quiet background music while they are doing the following:

Take the papers with the words '..... is a Saint to me because:' and give them out to each person including yourself. Ask them write their own name on the ..... and then to pass them to the right and then write a word or phrase about the person whose name is at the top saying in what way they are like a Saint (you always listen, you make me smile etc.), then when everyone has done that pass them to the next right. Continue until everyone has written on each sheet and they get their own back.

Now put on the song and light a candle. Ask the group to read through what has been written about them and then listen to the song and ask what they intend to do to become more saintlike-more like Jesus this week. If your group do not know each other well perhaps you could read Galatians 5 about the fruits of the Spirit as the quiet music plays and when you play the song ask them what they intend to do to become more saintlike-more like Jesus this week.

## Session C

(for older groups who want to go deeper into Scripture)

**You will need:** 1 large sheet of paper with a vertical line down the centre to make 2 columns; 1 large sheet of paper; felt pen; Bibles; CD player and suitable CD; Candle and matches

This session gives a quick overview of Peter's life. You may wish to add or take out some material according to the time available. When looking at the passages of Scripture it is a good idea to ask the person on one side of you to read the first passage and then the one next to them the next and so on. Before you begin the reading don't forget some people struggle with reading aloud so do remind them that if they don't want to they can nudge the person next to them to pass. Make sure you ask these people questions so they still feel a part of the group.

Take the large sheet of paper with 2 columns. Head one column 'Saints' and get the group to think of as many saints names as they can in 3 minutes. Now heads the other column 'characteristics of a saint'. Look at the names you have and ask the group to think of the things these people did that made them special/Saints and write them in the other column (keep it short such as: brave, faithful, spoke out for faith etc).

We are going to look at the life of St Peter and see just what he was like

**Peter:** We first meet Peter when he is called by Jesus to follow him (Matthew 4v17-19). He is just a fisherman. We read more about him during the life of Jesus and find that he is always there and one of the 'special' 3 who Jesus takes everywhere with him (the others are James and John). We know he was married (Matthew 8v14 - tells of his mother-in-law being healed).

Peter often seems to say the first thing that comes into his head -and gets things wrong. But it is Peter who dashes out to meet Jesus and tries to walk on the water (Matthew 14v 30). And it is Peter who is first to realize that Jesus is the Christ the son of God (Matthew 16v 16). In Luke 5 v 8-10 we read 'When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. So we know he recognizes his own weaknesses.

But he gets it really, really wrong at the trial of Jesus when he denies even knowing Jesus not once but 3 times (John 18v 15 &25). Yet Peter is also the one who Jesus says he will give the keys of the kingdom and who he calls the 'rock' to build his church upon (Matthew 16v18).

So Peter is a very mixed character. Sometimes he gets it right, often wrong, sometimes very wrong. Yet he keeps trying.

After the resurrection we see a much bolder, braver and wiser Peter. He takes control in the upper room. In Acts 1v 15-22 Peter is the one who stands and says they should choose another to replace Judas and they all agree.

In Acts 2 after the pouring out of the Spirit it is Peter, the uneducated fisherman, who stands up in the massive crowd and preaches the most amazing sermon. In verse 41 we read 3,000 became believers that day-what a sermon!

In Acts 3 Peter performs a miracle and then uses it to explain to those gathered around about the power of Jesus.

Peter and John are arrested and put in prison for the first time. The temple priests and educated people are amazed (Acts 4 v13). When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.'

Many began to realise how special Peter was and that he was a man of God:

Acts 5v15: 'As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.'

But Peter always pointed the glory away from himself and onto Jesus: Acts 10v25-26 - As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

Peter was full of confidence in the Holy Spirit and ready to speak out to individuals or crowds about Jesus. But even after all that happened he still got things wrong sometimes:

Paul knew that Gentiles didn't need to observe Jewish customs such as circumcision and he writes: When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? (Galatians chapter 2 v11& 14)

Not perfect then but a great Christian - a Saint.

Look again at the sheet of paper you started the session with and the characteristics of saints. What can you add to that list about Peter? Make sure Peter's failures are included such as not accepting Gentiles as they were, not believing Jesus (when he said to cast their nets the other side) denying knowing Jesus.

**Response:** (If you have time you could use the response in session 2).

Play the CD, light a candle in the centre and ask the group to sit quietly and think about the areas of their lives where they fail God and how they could change. When the song ends pass the candle round the group asking each person to ask God for a characteristic from the list on the sheet of paper.