

GCSE Religious Studies (from 2016)

Christian Aid: theology and ethics

Lesson ideas from RE Today

Lesson title:

What is the point of modern Christian mission?



We believe in life
before death

RE Today
Services

This lesson explores the history of Christian mission, and different definitions of that word today. It considers the extent to which Christian Aid, a charity that expressly does not proselytize, might be said to engage in modern Christian mission.

Flexibilities:

The learning ideas in this lesson can be used as they are written, but are flexible. You might like to try:

- further work to grasp the scope of Christian expansion around the globe. Two examples of historical mission are given but you could explore any that support your GCSE teaching.

Good learning: what's working well here?

- It is based on factual learning, but quickly moves on to require students to analyse and argue.
- It links Christianity, beliefs, practice and a philosophical problem.
- Students are challenged to think for themselves about links between religious, political and social questions.

Text and Beliefs

This work enables students to study some biblical texts about justice and peace, and consider what they mean and how they should be interpreted.

Text used here include:

- Matthew 28:16-20

Impact

Students examine the ways these biblical and spiritual ideas make a difference in the practice of Christian Aid.

Key concepts of Christian mission; the nature of evangelism; the idea of the church as a worldwide community; ecumenism; and the mission for justice, peace and the integrity of the natural world.

Connections

Students are challenged to consider what impact these concepts might have on their own opinions and behaviour: would the world be a better place if we all followed these teachings? In what ways?

They are encouraged to reflect on the purpose and nature of Christian mission in today's world.

Learning outcomes:

Emerging

- define Christian mission and evangelism
- explain some reasons why Christians 'spread the word'.

Expected

- outline why Christianity is an evangelistic religion
- explain one period of Christian mission
- outline why Christian Aid set out to tackle poverty
- offer a reasoned view as to whether or not Christian Aid is engaged in Christian mission.

Exceeding

- examine different viewpoints about varieties of Christian mission today including examples of evangelism and social mission.

Teaching notes

Preparing for this lesson

You will find it helpful to think about what your students already know about the ideas explored here. You might want to source a map and look at the links listed.

1: Jesus' great commission

a) Teach your class about Christianity's early expansion: show the class how Christianity spread from its first century origins in Syria and Palestine to being the world's biggest faith. Find a video which shows the spread of Christianity around the globe at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ0dZhHccfU>

Extension (if time): show the class two major factors in the spread of Christianity: Paul the Apostle's missionary journeys and the conversion to Christianity of the Roman Emperor Constantine. To visualise how far Paul travelled, do an internet search for 'Paul's missionary journeys' and display a map. More information on Paul can be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/paul_1.shtml

Show a map of the Roman Empire after Constantine, such as one at the year of his death, at <http://www.roman-empire.net/maps/empire/extent/constantine.html>. Visualise the extent of this now Christian empire. Discuss which factor did more to spread Christianity.

b) Do the class know why Christianity grew from being a small sect of Judaism to a global religion? Display Matthew 28:16-20 (below). Explain that this occurred after Jesus' death. What does this event confirm for Christians? What instruction does Jesus appear to give them? This is often called Jesus' Great Commission, or the Great Commission. Split the class into groups, give each group a region to research and report back information about Christians in that region. Find out about language, appearance, and unique ways Christianity is expressed. Examples could be: Coptic Church (Egypt), Ethiopian Christianity, Messianic Jews, South Korean Pentecostalism, Chinese Christianity, Indian Christianity.

c) Explore the diverse ways Christianity has been communicated, such as: preaching by the apostles; translations of the Bible; adaptation of pagan customs; representations of Jesus in many cultural and ethnic forms; televangelism; and modern religious figures' Twitter or Instagram accounts.

Discuss how each medium has helped to spread Christianity and how it has proved effective.

Do students know what 'to evangelise' means? Give the etymology: 'ev' = 'good', 'angel' = 'messenger' (in Greek), so an evangelist is someone who brings the 'good message' or 'good news' about what Jesus offers humanity. Recap the Great Commission: Jesus' earliest followers believed they had been given a duty to evangelise by Jesus.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Matthew 28:16-20

Explain that today, 'mission' is commonly understood to mean an organised effort to spread the Christian faith, and 'missionaries' are commonly understood to be Christians who spread their faith across boundaries (often geographical boundaries, i.e. other countries).

2: Christian mission

a) Due to the Great Commission, the first Christians saw evangelism – teaching others about Jesus – and offering them the chance to become Christians as a fundamental duty. Early Christianity spread through mission, or Christians travelling to new places and meeting new groups. Recap or define the words 'evangelism' and 'mission'. Remind students of the map you watched at the start of the lesson. Display a world map on the whiteboard, or attach a large paper world map to the wall. Hand out luggage labels or small pieces of card that can be attached to the map.

b) Give groups periods of Christian mission to research and present brief information about them, such as the information on Paul's mission and medieval mission below. Each group should report back the era and region, any problems associated with the mission and how successful it was.

Write the era and name of mission on the labels and attach them to the world map.

c) Teach that most missions affirm the 'Doctrine of Love', based on agape, where Christian missionaries must still support people who do not accept Christianity. However, at times in history Christians have used the notion of mission to justify control and subjugation. Ask students to find out about the book *Malleus Maleficarum*, or 'Hammer of Witches', written by Dominican clergy. It was used to justify the persecution and murder of pagan women in Europe. And research periods of European invasion and colonisation of non-Christian regions.

d) Discuss: is mission still appropriate today? What should modern missionaries be like? Share the Starter sheet on page 7 with students. They can jot down their own thoughts or details about any missions that they have researched.

3: The founding of Christian Aid

a) Show images of refugees in Europe after the Second World War, and images of the scale of destruction in towns and cities after the war. Ask students to write down the three things they think these refugees most needed. Display this quote from Christian Aid, which explains the charity's earliest aims:

'In the aftermath of the Second World War, British and Irish church leaders met, determined to do everything possible to help European refugees who had lost everything. The name they gave themselves was Christian Reconstruction in Europe. Their purpose was not to evangelise, but to alleviate suffering for ordinary people, no matter what their faith.'

b) Explain that Christian Aid has never been a missionary organisation, in that it has never sought to convert people to Christianity. But, it has always been inspired by a deeply Christian mission to help the world's poor. It was set up to help refugees in Europe after the Second World War, and currently works with people of all backgrounds, faiths and cultures across the world. It never proselytizes. Can pupils see the distinction between these two very different kinds of mission?

c) Of the things the students judged the war refugees needed, how many are practical (food, clothing, water, shelter, jobs)? Did they identify any

emotional or spiritual needs such as hope, comfort, love, or friendship? What about social needs such as healthcare, education and community? Teach that Christian Aid offered practical help from the beginning, and was not a missionary organisation.

d) Search the internet for 'Janet Lacey', you might find her picture in the National Portrait Gallery. Lacey became president of Christian Aid in 1952 and set out to explicitly tackle the causes of poverty itself, a bold move! In 1957 Christian Aid Week was launched, and a refugee camp was installed in St Martin in the Fields Church in London's Trafalgar Square.

e) Christian Aid set out to reveal and then fight the causes of poverty, which is still the charity's purpose today. Watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/user/thisischristianaid>. As it plays ask students to jot down what Christian Aid wants to achieve, and how it does it. Gather all the aims and methods recorded by students into two columns of a table.

f) Take school as a case study. Decide, through discussion, what is unfair about school life, that is: what elements of school life disadvantage some students and privilege others? Write 'Hypothesis', 'Aims' and 'Data' on the board. Having identified the presence of unfairness in school, create a hypothesis as to why it exists. Write under 'Hypothesis'. In groups, ask students to design a research project to test this hypothesis (to provide data). Share all ideas and plans. Now transfer the idea of a hypothesis and research aims to Christian Aid's work. Looking at the two columns, can students begin to hypothesise why the world is unfair? Can they begin to offer ways this hypothesis could be tested?

4: Is Christian Aid engaged in mission?

a) Display images of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and the Red Crystal. The Red Cross has symbolised medical assistance in battle since the mid-1800s. The Red Crescent was introduced in Ottoman areas a few years later, as a cross would alienate Muslim soldiers. The crescent is Islamic and the cross is Christian, but both symbols represent medical assistance. The Red Crystal has been used since 2005, to represent medical aid in regions where crosses or crescents are not appropriate. Reflect with the class on the power of symbols. Can any symbol ever be neutral?

With this in mind, what do the class think about the name of 'Christian Aid'? Although the charity does not evangelise and works with people of all faiths

and none, does the name imply a subtle evangelism? Present groups with the information and response sheets on pages 9-10 and give them time to debate and decide their answers to the question:

Remind students that while Christian Aid is inspired by the teachings of Jesus, it does not evangelise and it works with people of all faiths and none.

'Christian aid is not engaged in mission.'
Discuss.

Paul's missionary journeys

Mid 30s-mid 50s, 1st century CE

Paul was a Roman citizen born into a Jewish family. He travelled around Asia Minor and the Mediterranean, establishing churches and appealing to both Jewish and Roman audiences.

Paul is probably the single most important factor in the spread of early Christianity. Some argue that 'Christianity' is in fact 'Paulianity', as he developed Jesus' teachings into a coherent theology of salvation, derived from a belief in Jesus as the incarnate God.

Paul opened up Judaism to non-Jews by arguing that they didn't need to adhere to Jewish

rituals and laws, especially the requirement for men to be circumcised. Instead, they could be baptised into Christianity and follow Jesus' 'new commandment' to love God and love one's neighbour.

Irish and Roman mission in England

6th and 7th centuries CE

The Irish abbot Columba travelled to Scotland in 563 and founded an abbey on the island of Iona.

In 635, the Irish monk Aidan founded Lindisfarne monastery off England's north-east coast.

The Irish version of Christianity, known as Celtic Christianity,

differed in some ways from the Christianity which came out of Rome, known as Roman or Catholic Christianity.

From 597, Rome sent people to convert the 'pagan' Angles, who had settled in Britain in the post-Roman period.

There was a clash between the two approaches and, in 664, at a meeting in Whitby, the Synod (church council) decided English Christianity would follow the Roman model rather than the Irish. The Picts in Scotland had their own Christianity and fought the Angles.

English Christianity remained Roman Catholic until the Reformation in the 1500s.

Supporting the Christianity paper

This page summarises the ways in which this lesson contributes to meeting the requirements of the GCSE Christianity papers.

In the specifications

AQA

Christianity: Practices

The role of the church in the local and worldwide community.

The role of the church in the local community, including food banks and street pastors.

The place of mission, evangelism and church growth.

The importance of the worldwide church including:

- working for reconciliation
- how Christian churches respond to persecution
- the work of one of the following: Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Tearfund.

Edexcel

Christianity: Practices

The role and importance of the church in the worldwide community: how and why it works for reconciliation and the problems faced by the persecuted church; divergent Christian responses to teachings about charity; the work of Christian Aid, what it does and why.

Eduqas

Christianity: Worldwide church

- The importance of mission, evangelism and church growth
 - The work of development charities: Christian beliefs in action
 - Persecution of Christians past and present
- Working for reconciliation: the World Council of Churches, the Ecumenical Movement
- Grace and the Spirit: Acts 2:1-6. The role of Holy Spirit in evangelical worship.

OCR

Practices: The role of the church in the wider world

- the meaning of the term ecumenical
- the meaning of the word church (spiritual and temporal) and of churches as individual communities
- purpose of the World Council of Churches, including reconciliation through ecumenism
- the work of ecumenical communities, for example: Taize, Iona, Corrymeela and the Churches Together movement
- the purpose of one of the following agencies: Christian Aid, Tearfund, CAFOD
- different interpretations and emphases given to sources of wisdom and authority.

Glossary

Proselytize means to attempt to convert someone to another religion.

Evangelise can mean the same as proselytize, or it can mean simply to tell someone about another religion. In Christianity, it often means preaching the Gospel.

Mission has several meanings for Christians. Some take this to mean a duty to spread the word of God and convert others to Christianity, traditionally overseas. Others might see it as a much more personal calling to live in a Christian way and live their life in the example of Jesus.

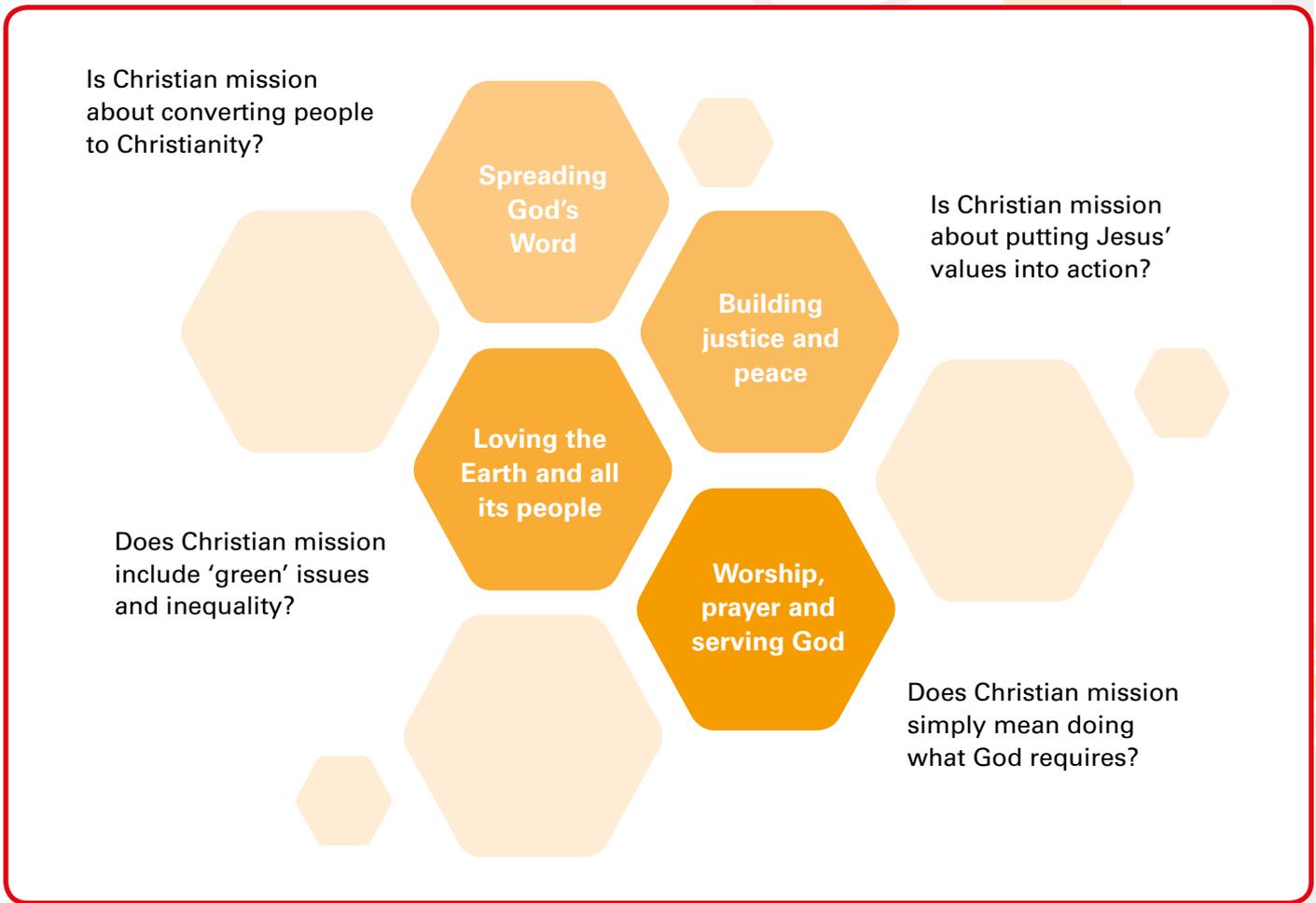
A **Missionary** is someone who does mission, often overseas.

Agape is an Ancient Greek word which means a specific type of love. It means non-sexual love, the love of God for humans and humans for God, and charity. Agape also translates as 'the highest form of love'.

Subjugation is the act of controlling and making something or someone else inferior.

Colonisation is the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

Starter sheet: Introducing some different ideas about Christian Mission



The concept of 'Christian mission' is complex, and multiple ideas are held in Christian communities.

Add your own notes, examples and Bible references to the diagram above, and write 50 words below to say how you balance the different views of Christian mission you have discovered. Are any parts of Christian mission more important today than they used to be? Can you ask some Christians to give their views?

My view

Information sheet: Is Christian Aid engaged in mission?

Read the information below to find out more about the inspiration for Christian Aid's work. Then decide if you think that Christian Aid is engaged in any sort of mission. Read the opinions on the Response Sheet, and consider if Christian Aid fulfils those different definitions of mission.

Humanitarian Work

Christian Aid is engaged in humanitarian work (helping people in urgent need). The charity was founded after the Second World War to help refugees in Europe, and it continues to work with refugees, people affected by disease and disasters and war today. The charity works all over the world to help people overcome poverty.

Christian Aid is inspired by Jesus' teaching to do this work. The charity says, 'Jesus loved people. He did it radically, unexpectedly, extravagantly. He had open arms for those on the edges, a welcome for those who'd been shunned. We show that same love to the world's poor – our sisters and brothers. We provide food and shelter after natural disaster, and the tools and training for people to make a living in the world's toughest places'.

Helping the sick

If you're sick and can't access healthcare and medicines, it's hard to live life to the full. Christian Aid partners work hard to make sure that people can access services to improve their health.

Christian Aid is inspired by Jesus' teaching to do this work. The charity says, 'Jesus held sick people close. He healed broken bodies and broken lives with the same touch, giving dignity to flesh, blood, skin and bone. We use clinics, health workers and vital medicines.'

Rebalancing power

Christian Aid believes that lack of power is the root of poverty. So all its work is concerned with empowering people and communities to be stronger and more resilient. That might mean helping people to recover after disaster, or it might mean making sure that things are shared fairly and that everyone's voices are heard.

Christian Aid is inspired by Jesus' teaching to do this work. The charity says, 'Jesus turned over the table of the money lenders. He stirs us to stand in solidarity with the poor; moves us to challenge the powerful; urges us to reset the scales of fairness'.

Peace building

Without sustained peace, the productivity required to sustain and transform the lives of the poor is not possible. Christian Aid directly tackles violence and helps to build peace in order to ensure that fragile communities can blossom and grow in strength.

Christian Aid supports partners to provide protection to those at risk of violence. They help their partners to explore peaceful problem-solving approaches and to promote local measures to improve justice and decrease conflict, particularly those with women at the centre.

Christian Aid is inspired by Jesus' teaching to do this work. The charity says: 'Jesus told Peter to lower his sword. He pursued peace over retaliation, even as he was being taken away to be crucified. We help people whose lives have been torn apart by conflict.'

Response sheet: Is Christian Aid engaged in Christian mission?

What is the mission of the Christian church?
Five different opinions, five different emphases.

Examples and evidence: Does Christian Aid put this idea of Christian mission into action?

'The mission of God is a mission for life on Earth, that's what God wants. So Christians must do all that makes it possible for people to live life to the full. That is about culture, justice and spirituality.'

How does this apply to Christian Aid?

___/10 for putting this into practice

'The mission of the church is to worship. The whole point of the Christian community is to give God the glory He deserves for his creation and grace towards us. This worship is not just singing hymns and saying prayers: it has to have an impact on all we do in everyday life.'

How does this apply to Christian Aid?

___/10 for putting this into practice

'The mission of the Christian community is to evangelise, to tell people the good news that Jesus died to bring them forgiveness and enable them by trusting him, to be reconciled to God through faith in him.'

How does this apply to Christian Aid?

___/10 for putting this into practice

'Christian mission is about lots of different things. The church should work for justice, peace, the saving of the Earth and the saving of individuals from lives of sin or brokenness. Helping people with whatever hurts or harms them – divorce, poverty, loneliness or feeling guilty, it is all Christian mission.'

How does this apply to Christian Aid?

___/10 for putting this into practice

'The Prophet Micah asks: "what does God require?" He gives three answers. "Do what is just, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God". Those are pretty much the three areas of Christian mission. Christians in today's world should struggle for justice for everyone, practise forgiveness for wrongs and live their spiritual lives humbly, not claiming they know all the answers.'

How does this apply to Christian Aid?

___/10 for putting this into practice

Now use your thinking and answers above to write 350-400 words in response to this question: Is Christian Aid's work a good example of Christian mission in the 21st century? Give examples, reasons and arguments to support your viewpoint. Refer to the idea that Christian mission must include inviting people to become Christians. Explain why Christian Aid does not do this.