



2.1 Christianity in the UK

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know some of the ways Christianity influences the UK today
- ▶ To discuss the importance of Christianity in the UK today
- ▶ To assess whether Christianity has relevance today



Big question

Is Christianity still relevant in the UK today?

Talk it out

Is Christianity still noticeable in the UK today?

Is Christianity still relevant in the UK today?

What Christian influences can you think of in the UK today?

The UK today is a **secular** society, which means that the powers of the Church and government are separate, and the Church doesn't have power over laws and policies set by the government.

The UK is a **pluralist** society. There are many different influences (for example, different religious beliefs) which are taken into consideration when laws are made.

Christian influences in the UK

Here are nine ways in which Christianity influences life in the UK today.

You have a Christian name – it is your first name. Many people have been christened as well. Common names in the UK often come from the Bible – Adam, Jacob, Jessica, Hannah.

Our seven-day week includes Sunday, when most people take it easy. This follows the belief that God rested on the seventh day of creation. We can do many things on Sundays, but most factories, businesses and workplaces are still shut.

The 'big' holidays are Christian. Christmas celebrates Jesus' birth, and people give and receive gifts to celebrate. Easter remembers Jesus' **crucifixion** (his death) and **resurrection** (his coming back to life) – Easter eggs celebrate new life. Valentine's Day is named after a saint and Pancake Day is actually Shrove Tuesday: the day before Lent begins. Mothers' Day is halfway through the Christian period of Lent and used to be the date to go to a service at your usual church.



▲ Pancake day (or Shrove Tuesday) is a day in the Christian calendar and marks the start of Lent.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND
BAPTIST CHURCH
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
FRESH EXPRESSIONS
CHURCH OF IRELAND
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
WESLEYAN
SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
LUTHERAN
METHODIST
NEWFRONTIERS
GEOORGIAN ORTHODOX
GREEK ORTHODOX

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX

BULGARIAN ORTHODOX

ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC

COPTIC ORTHODOX

ERITREAN ORTHODOX

ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX

SYRIAC ORTHODOX

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

ELIM PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Many people still celebrate the most important events (weddings, funerals, etc.) in their lives in a church.

Food is influenced by Christianity. Even non-Christians often give up food for Lent.

We refer to religion in our everyday language – such as ‘bless you’ when someone sneezes. Just think of the words you use when you are surprised or annoyed!

The Church set up some of the first schools in the UK. In 2011, a third of all state schools were Christian.

Many songs are religious – just check the wording. At sports events we sing *Jerusalem*, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, *Bread of Heaven*, *You’ll Never Walk Alone* – all of these are Christian messages.

Our law is influenced by Christian principles. Most crimes break the Ten Commandments somehow. Most law is based on the idea life is special so must be protected. Police and law courts are based on *justice* – a key idea about God.

Activities

- 1 What does ‘secular society’ mean?
- 2 What does ‘pluralist society’ mean?
- 3 Give three important ways that Christianity has influenced the UK today.
- 4 Think about food – can you think of any Christian-sounding foods?
- 5 Think about music – do you know any pop songs with Christian messages?
- 6 Look at the nine boxes on these pages. For each, decide whether, in your opinion, it has a big or little influence on how we live our lives in the UK today. Explain your answer in each case.
- 7 Can you think of any more ways in which Christianity influences the UK today? Give as many examples as you can.
- 8 ‘Christianity doesn’t affect the UK nowadays.’ Do you agree with that statement? Explain some reasons for your opinion. Try to explain some arguments which would oppose your opinion.

INDEPENDENT METHODISM
BRITISH ORTHODOX
UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
KINGSWAY INTERNATIONAL
BRITISH NEW CHURCH MOVEMENT
ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY
FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
BRITISH NEW CHURCH MOVEMENT
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA
METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND
Jehovah's Witnesses
QUAKERS

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES
EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
LDS CHURCH

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

CONGREGATIONAL FEDERATION
UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
GRACE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION



2.2 Key beliefs 1 – Trinity

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know about the Christian concept of the Trinity
- ▶ To understand the roles of the persons of the Trinity
- ▶ To evaluate how Christians express their belief in the Trinity

? Big question

Can one thing also be three?

Christians believe in God as the Trinity. They believe there is only one God, but that God appears in three forms or 'Persons': the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For Christians, this doesn't mean they believe in three separate gods – they believe that each are three aspects of one God. For example, in the same way you could be a son, a brother and a cousin. Each person of the Trinity is completely God.

In the New Testament, there are many times when the Trinity is mentioned – in Matthew 28:19, the **disciples** are told by Jesus to go and baptise people in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity has become the most important belief for Christians.



- ▶ This image represents what the Trinity is and also what it is not: God is all three persons and all three are God, but each person is not the same as the other two.

What is the Trinity?

The Apostles Creed, which is a statement of Christian belief, describes the three persons of God in this way:

- God the Father created heaven and earth and keeps it all going. God is all-powerful, all-knowing and all-loving. God is eternal (has always existed) and ever-present. Some would say God the Father is beyond our understanding.
- God the Son is Jesus. He was **incarnated** (born) as a human to bring God's message and to be sacrificed for humans. His death as a sacrifice broke down a barrier between God and humans which was caused by the sins of humans. He was resurrected (brought back to life) to show that death can be conquered, and people can go to heaven. We can relate to God the Son as he was a human like us.
- God the Holy Spirit is the presence of God on earth. After Jesus went to heaven, he left behind the Spirit as a comforter and guide. This means God is always with us.

How Christians express their belief in the Trinity

Christians express their belief in the Trinity in many ways. Here are some of the most obvious ones.

Repeating the belief

As it is a central belief, Christians say 'in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit' very often. They might say it in times of need, or times of reflection. Some will say it when they wake up and before they go to sleep. It helps them to stay aware of God, and their own beliefs. By staying aware of God, they are less likely to behave in ways they shouldn't as a Christian.

The sign of the belief

You might have seen Christians make the sign of the cross. Believing Jesus died on the cross as a sacrifice, then rose from the dead is also key to being a Christian. They tap their forehead, then their heart and then their shoulders, one after the other. These physical actions help them remember the words: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Many Christians make this sign when they enter or leave church; church leaders use it when blessing people. It is common to see some footballers do this before they start to play, or when they score a goal, for example.

Displaying the belief

Go into most churches and you will see the Trinity symbolised. It might be in paintings, or in art which indicates three-in-one. Many Christians also have the symbolism of the Trinity in their home. Some Christians wear jewellery which represents the Trinity. Being such an important belief, Christians use it as a focus for their **prayer** and worship.

Activities

- 1 What does the term 'Trinity' mean?
- 2 Draw a symbol for the Trinity and label the three parts with the names for the Persons of the Trinity. Add two pieces of information about each.
- 3 Explain why many Christians might repeat the description of the Trinity every day.
- 4 What evidence is there to say that the idea of the Trinity is very important to Christians?
- 5 'God the Son is the most important part of the Trinity.' Do you agree with that statement? Explain some reasons for your opinion. Try to explain some arguments which would oppose your opinion.



2.3 Life of Jesus – birth

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know the stories of Jesus' birth (found in Matthew and Luke)
- ▶ To explore the way these stories show Jesus to have been special from birth
- ▶ To reflect on the importance of Jesus' birth

? Big question

Is every child special when they are born?

Key belief

Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God, one of the three persons of the Trinity. They call his birth as a human the **Incarnation**. The story of his birth is the **Nativity**.

Talk it out

Quiz three classmates about the story of the birth of Jesus. Pool your knowledge and try to come up with the full story.

1. The story takes place more than 2000 years ago.

2. An angel came to Mary, a young Palestinian woman. She was told God had chosen her to be the mother of His child even though she was a virgin.

3. Mary's husband, Joseph, had to go to Bethlehem for a census. He took his heavily pregnant wife with him.

8. Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt to escape Herod's murderous search.

7. The angel told the wise men not to return to Herod. Herod felt threatened by this new 'king' and ordered his soldiers to kill all male babies.

6. Wise men had heard a King had been born, so visited King Herod's palace where they would expect to find a King. When they didn't find him there, they left to find Jesus and gave him special gifts.

4. All the inns in the town were full. A kindly inn keeper allowed the couple to stay in the stable, where Mary gave birth.

5. An angel visited shepherds telling them to go and show respect to Jesus.



Prophecies about Jesus

Prophecy means a foretelling or prediction about the future. Christians believe that Jesus' birth had been predicted by prophecies in the Jewish holy book, referred to by Christians as the Old Testament:

- In the book of Isaiah, it says a virgin will give birth to a child. When Mary, a virgin, was told she was to have a baby, the angel said it would be the Son of God.
- In Hosea, it says 'When Israel was a child ... out of Egypt I called my son'. Joseph had to take his family to Egypt to keep them safe from King Herod. After Herod died, they returned to their home in Palestine.
- In Micah, it says that a person who will rule over all Israel (the **Messiah**) will come from Bethlehem. Jesus was born there.

Significant visitors

Jesus was visited by three groups of people – angels, shepherds and wise men from the East.

- The angels obey God and worship God. If they came and worshipped Jesus, this tells us he is God.
- Angels told the shepherds to visit and pay their respects to the baby Jesus. Shepherds were very poor in Jesus' day – they represent the ordinary person.
- The wise men, or kings, from the East are presented as wealthy and educated. This means the rich and wise came to visit.
- Animals were already in the stable – they represent the rest of God's creation.

Special gifts for a special child

The wise men brought three gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh. Strange gifts for a baby!

- Gold has been valuable throughout history, a symbol of wealth and power. As a gift, it tells us that Jesus was powerful as a leader of men.
- Frankincense is a perfume which was used to **anoint** priests. This gift suggests Jesus would give important religious messages.
- Myrrh is an expensive perfume which was used on dead bodies as part of the burial process. It tells us that Jesus was destined to die, so is a prophecy of his end.

Activities

- 1 Copy and complete the following:
Jesus was born in _____. An angel told his mother, called _____, that she would give birth to the _____ of _____. He was visited by _____ and by _____. They brought gifts of _____, _____ and _____.
- 2 Describe two Old Testament prophecies about Jesus.
- 3 Why do you think it is important that the story has Jesus visited by angels, rich people, poor people and the animals in the stable?
- 4 Imagine you work for a film company which is about to make a film about the Nativity. Draw/write the storyboard for the film's eight main scenes.
- 5 'Jesus' birth shows us he was very special.' Do you agree with this statement? Try to think of at least two reasons to agree, and two reasons to disagree with the statement.

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2.4 Life of Jesus – miracle worker

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know about some of the miracles Jesus performed
- ▶ To explore the idea of why Jesus performed miracles
- ▶ To reflect upon the meaning of Jesus' miracles

? Big question

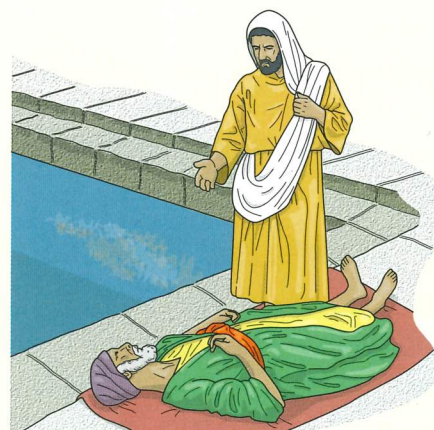
Can anyone perform a miracle?

Christians believe Jesus was the Son of God, so had special powers and could do impossible things. They see these **miracles** as proof that he was the Son of God, and that God is active in the world.

The first four books of the New Testament of the Bible record Jesus' life and teachings. They are called the four **Gospels**. The Gospels give accounts of many of Jesus' miracles: here are three examples.

Power of healing

At the pool at Bethesda, it was said that an angel came to touch the water. The first person into the pool after the water rippled would be cured of any illness. Many people went every day to try to be the first. One man, paralysed for 38 years, could never be first. On the Sabbath, Jesus asked him if he wanted to be well. The man said he was too slow to reach the water. Jesus instructed: 'Pick up your bed and walk'. The man did – he was cured! Later he was challenged for carrying his bed on the Sabbath – the day of no work. He explained that his healer had told him to, but he did not know his name. Still later, Jesus approached the man in the temple and told him that as he had been made well, he should not sin any more. It was after this that the man told people Jesus had healed him.



▲ Jesus healing the man at Bethesda.

Power over nature

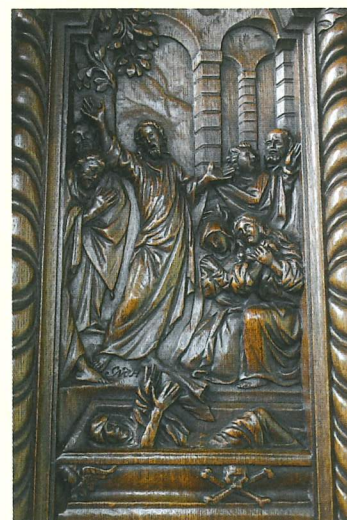
Thousands had come to hear Jesus' words and be healed. Showing compassion, he wanted to feed them. His disciples found only five loaves and two fishes. Jesus blessed the food and began to break it. The disciples then distributed it to the crowd. It fed everyone who was hungry *and* they collected back 12 basketfuls of leftover food.



▲ Jesus blessing the food.

Power over life and death

Jesus heard his friend Lazarus was very ill. Instead of going to him, Jesus stayed where he was for a few days. He told his disciples that Lazarus suffered so that God's power to send miracles could be shown. When Jesus finally arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days, so was in a tomb. Lazarus' sister was sad and angry that Jesus had not come earlier – now it was too late. Jesus asked if she believed in him, and she said she did. Jesus went to the tomb, where crowds saw he was upset. He demanded the stone be removed from the entrance to the tomb. He then called for Lazarus to come out. Lazarus walked out still covered in the grave cloths. Jesus had raised him from the dead.



▲ A wood-cutting showing Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

- Firstly, Jesus was doing the right thing and showing compassion (love) for others. Someone like the man at Bethesda would have had to beg for his whole life – there was no system of benefits from the government. After being healed, he would be able to work.
- Secondly, we are told that Jesus' miracles made people praise God. In other words, the miracles showed God's power and love to everyone.
- Thirdly, people's faith made miracles possible – Lazarus' sister believed Jesus could still help her brother, even though Lazarus was dead.

Activities

- 1 List some of the kinds of miracles Jesus did.
- 2 Why did Jesus perform miracles?
- 3 What do the miracles Jesus performed tell us about his character?
- 4 Look up these miracles in the Bible – write one of them in your own words.
 - a) Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52)
 - b) Calming the storm (Mark 4:35–41)
 - c) Girl restored to life, woman healed (Luke 8:40–56).
- 5 Write a newspaper report about one of Jesus' miracles. It should describe what happened and include an eye-witness account and an image.
- 6 'Jesus only performed miracles to help people.' Do you think that is true? What might have been his other motives? Explain your arguments.



2.5 Life of Jesus – teacher

Learning objectives

- ▶ To understand what a parable is
- ▶ To explore some parables
- ▶ To reflect on how useful parables can be

? Big question

Why do people tell stories?

Talk it out

Have you ever been told a story which was intended to teach you something?

What was it?

How effective was it?

Jesus was a teacher. He used stories in his teaching called **parables**. These stories helped people understand how to live as God wanted them to. People could go to the temple and listen to priests, but their words were often difficult to interpret for ordinary life. Jesus' parables made everything very clear for ordinary people. In the Gospels, there are 37 different parables. Here are three of the best known:

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)

A rich man had two sons. The younger son asked for his share of an inheritance and left to travel. He had a great time, partying wherever he went; he was a prodigal (waster). Meanwhile, his older brother kept working hard on the family farm.

Eventually, the party money ran out. Being too ashamed to go home, the younger son found a job looking after pigs, but it paid so little that he was forced to eat the pigs' food to survive. He realised that his father's servants had a much better life, and he decided to go home, beg forgiveness and ask for a job from his father.

On his return, his father was overjoyed and threw a huge party. He even killed the calf he had been fattening for a feast. The older brother was angry and jealous – after all, his brother had wasted all that money but he had been loyal. Now it looked as if the father was not bothered about his younger son's selfishness. His father took the older brother aside. He reminded him that everything now belonged to him, and his brother had nothing. However, everyone had thought the son had gone forever, so it was right to celebrate the return of this son and welcome him home.

Everyone who returns to God is forgiven – even the badly behaved.

Parable of the Sower and Seed (Mark 4:1–20)

A farmer went out to plant seed. As he scattered it, some fell on the path and was gobbled up by the birds. Some fell on rocky soil and sprouted quickly but also died quickly, having nowhere to send its roots. Some seeds fell among the weeds and were choked before they could grow properly. Some fell on good soil. These seeds put down good roots and were well nourished by the soil. They grew into fine plants.

The seeds are the Christian message and the soil types are people who hear it. The good soil is people who accept the Christian message and live by it.

Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30)

The master of a house had to go away on business. He called three of his servants to him. To one he gave five talents (a talent was a high value coin), to the next he gave three and to the third he gave one. Then he left.

The first two servants decided to use their money to earn more from it. Both doubled their money by the time their master returned. The third was afraid to lose it, so hid it.

On his return, the master praised the first two servants and said they would be greatly rewarded. He was furious with the third, as he had expected more back – even by investing it in the bank, the servant would have earned a little interest. The master threw him out.

The talents are the Christian message which grows if others are told about it.

Activities

- 1 What is a parable? Why were they told?
- 2 Write out this table correctly so that each parable matches its correct meaning.

Parable of the Prodigal Son	We should not hide the skills and talents we have. We should use them to do better.
Parable of the Sower and Seed	People can change and should be praised for positive change. We should never be afraid to ask for help when we need it.
Parable of the Talents	People respond differently to the same message – some ignore it, some seize on it but lose interest, some are influenced by others to forget it, some listen and do well because of it.

- 3 Choose one parable. Retell it in your own words, or as a cartoon strip or storyboard. Explain the meaning of the parable you chose.
- 4 People use parables all the time to explain things. Do you think that is true? Explain your answer.
- 5 'Parables have messages for everyone who hears them, not just Christians.' Do you agree with that statement? Explain why using at least two reasons. Can you think of a different point of view? Give reasons to support that view.



2.6 Key beliefs 2 – the two Great Commandments

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know the two Great Commandments of Jesus
- ▶ To understand how Christians put these Commandments into practice
- ▶ To explore whether all people can follow religious principles

? Big question

What is the most important principle to live by?

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the **Sadducees**, the **Pharisees** got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest **commandment**. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'
(Matthew 22:34–40)

Matthew records Jesus as having given a series of teachings to help people understand the religion. As they do today, before Jesus the Jewish people had 613 mitzvot – or rules – from God and they had to follow all of them.

Some religious leaders asked Jesus what the most important rules were. By asking Jesus this question, the Jewish religious leaders were actually trying to trick him and get him in trouble, because saying that any of the 613 rules weren't important would have been disrespectful towards God (**blasphemy**).

Jesus was really clever, because his answer just combines all the rules into two big ones (the Great Commandments) – love God and love each other. The idea being if you love God, you follow all his rules; if you love each other, you live in a kind and compassionate way, helping others, not hurting them. The second Great Commandment can be followed by everyone – Christian or not – we call it the Golden Rule. Essentially it is just that we should try to be a decent human being. If everyone lived by this principle, imagine what the world might be!

How Christians have put these Great Commandments into practice

There are many ways to put these commandments into practice. Loving God is done through worship of God and by following God's rules and by looking after God's world. Jesus said that everyone is our neighbour – not just those who live next door. So, showing love, i.e. kindness, to anyone we meet fulfils the second Great Commandment.

Take a look at the people opposite – how do they meet the Commandments?

My name is Sarah. I worship God at church on Sunday. I say little prayers daily. I also attend Bible study classes. I give 10 per cent of my earnings to the church and charity – this is called 'tithing'. My donation shows I love God, but also helps others. My current charities include **sponsoring** a child in Brazil, donating to cancer research and a wildlife charity.



My name is Keith. I'm an ambulance paramedic. My job lets me directly help people in need. I am also a street pastor – after praying for strength and guidance, street pastors go to towns and cities late at night to help people in need. Many people drink a bit too much and need a little help to get home safely, for example. Of course, it is obvious we are Christians, and some people ask about our beliefs, but the point is to help not to convert people.

My name is Ami and I teach at Sunday school, helping young people understand what Jesus taught and about our beliefs. I am studying for a degree in zoology and want to work with endangered species when I graduate. Hopefully, I will be able to work in other countries doing this, helping save animals and educating people.



My name is Sam and I go to church and worship regularly. I often have a job within the service – giving hymn books out, taking the **collection**. I help out at church events which raise money for the church and for charity. It is important to be kind to other people, whoever they are. I have several elderly neighbours who I regularly check in on, making sure they are fine and asking if they need anything. It isn't difficult to give them a bit of time, have a cup of tea with them and pick up some shopping for them when I do mine.

Activities

- 1 What are the two Great Commandments?
- 2 Give some examples of how a person could keep the Golden Rule.
- 3 Read the four people's speeches. How does each person:
 - a) show they love God
 - b) show love for others?
- 4 For Christians, the only Commandment they need is 'Love God'. What is your opinion of that statement? Can you explain why someone might say that?
- 5 'You don't have to be religious to keep the second Great Commandment.' What is your opinion of that statement? Can you explain why someone might say that?



2.7 The Christian moral code

Learning objectives

- ▶ To know what Christian moral behaviour is based on
- ▶ To learn about some examples of how Christians put their faith into action
- ▶ To reflect on how strongly being religious affects behaviour

? Big question

How should people behave?

When it comes to deciding how to behave Christians are guided by all the things everyone else is guided by – their families, the law, what society accepts (or does not), their school teachers, their friends ... However, most importantly they are guided by what is and isn't acceptable in their church. This comes directly from the teachings of Jesus and St Paul.

Jesus said the second greatest commandment is 'Love your neighbour' (Matthew 22:39).

James said that 'faith without action is dead' – i. e. worse than pointless (James 2:17).

St Paul said 'Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not selfish, it is not easily angered, it doesn't keep scores. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always keeps trying' (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

St Paul said that of three qualities which are important – faith, hope and love – 'the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13).

For Christians, love is the quality which makes everything else work well. If we show love, we are kind, we want good for others and we make it happen. This is the basis of the moral code followed by Christians.

Look back at Lesson 2.6 for some examples of how individuals have put into action their understanding of 'love your neighbour'.

Helping others

St Paul explained what love was through saying what it wasn't, and essentially said that it means to not hurt others in any way. However, for Christians it isn't enough to just 'not hurt others', they must do something positive and help others, especially those in need. Many people help others – it is in their nature to behave that way; however, for Christians, when they help people they are doing what Jesus wanted, and they are helping Jesus. In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31–46), Jesus says, 'Whatever you do for one of these, you do for me', referring to people in need.

When Jesus said, 'Faith without action is pointless', he was showing that people need to translate their beliefs into activity. He was saying that it is not enough to just believe in something – the actions are the proof of real belief. Throughout history, Christians have tried to do this. Let's look at some examples.