

Conversational English for International Students

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Discussions around a theme, using quotations from:

'A Treasury of Christian Wisdom', by Tony Castle, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001

'Oxford Concise Dictionary of Quotations', OUP, 2001.

'Visions of Hope: an anthology of reflections', William G. D. Sykes and Bible Reading fellowship, paperback 1993.

1. Acceptance

QUOTES:

'What will be, will be.' Anon

'We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope.'
Martin Luther King

'The will of God.....cannot be simply that we accept the situations of life, but must be rather that we go through them and emerge from them.'

John S. Dunne

'You often try to run away from your life, but you're wasting your time.

If you sincerely believe that your life is worthwhile and necessary, then you will have accepted it.'

Michel Quoist.

'Out of evil, much good has come to me. By keeping quiet, repressing nothing and remaining attentive, and by accepting reality - taking things as they are, and not as I wanted them to be - by doing all this, unusual knowledge has come to me.....I always thought that when we accepted things they overpowered us in some way or other. This turns out not to be true at all, and it is only by accepting them that one can assume an attitude toward them. So now I intend to play the game of life, being receptive to whatever comes to me, good and bad, sun and shadow that are forever alternating, and in this way, also accepting my own nature with its positive and negative sides.

Willheim and Jung (extract from a former patient)'

As in a game of cards, so in the game of life we must play with what is dealt out to us; and the glory consists not so much in winning as in playing a poor hand well.

Josh Billings

'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Job 1.21, The Bible

Acceptance says 'True this is my situation at the moment. I'll look unblinkingly at the reality of it. but I'll also open my hands to accept willingly whatever a loving Father sends.'

Catherine Marshall

2. Receiving Acceptance

QUOTES

I have accepted all and I am free. The inner chains are broken as well as those outside.

Charles F. Ramuz

'Sometimes.....a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You're accepted. You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and a name of which we do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much.... Simply accept the fact that you are accepted! If that happens to us, we experience grace.'

Paul Tillich

'One of the greatest needs of the human heart is to be appreciated. Every human being wants to be valued.....Every human being craves to be accepted for what he is.....When I am not accepted, then something in me is broken.'

Peter G. van Breeman

The task ahead of us is to know ourselves as not acceptable, and to accept that knowledge.

Simon Tugwell

3. Advent

Advent means 'coming'. It is a time of waiting. What are you like at waiting for things? Think of something you waited for a long time - maybe you have got it, or maybe you are still waiting. How did it feel? (discuss in pairs if appropriate) Write thoughts on board. Was it like you expected when it came?

Read quotes on waiting, and discuss

Anyone here do marketing or advertising? If you are planning a big launch for a new product, or a big event like the Olympics, what kind of strategies are used? (Draw out the ideas of awareness raising, poster campaigns to introduce the concept, make it desirable etc)

In the Bible, God used this strategy to prepare the Jews for the coming of Jesus.

Read story of Zechariah Luke 1 v 1 - 25, 59 - 66

v7,13 what do you think Z had been praying for? Did he still expect an answer? v18. He had a period of silence and waiting. What was he told would be special about John?

If there is time, read story of Mary too.

QUOTES

"Time is

Too slow for those who wait,

Too swift for those who fear,

Too long for those who grieve,

Too short for those who rejoice,

But for those who love

Time is not."

Henry Van Dyke

"I cannot help it that my pictures do not sell. Nevertheless the time will come when people will see that they are worth more than the price of the paint."

Vincent Van Gogh

They also serve who only stand and wait

Milton, sonnet 16

4. Adversity

QUOTES

Thus sometimes hath the brightest day a cloud.
And after summer evermore succeeds
Barren winter, with his wrathful nipping cold;
So cares and joys abound, as seasons fleet.
William Shakespeare

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
William Shakespeare.

Let us give thanks to....the God from whom all help comes. He helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1 v 3- 4 The Bible

My brothers, consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure.

James 1 v 2- 4 The Bible

“Turning past evils to advantages”
William Shakespeare

.....yet famine,
Ere it overthrow nature, makes it valiant.
Plenty, and peace, breeds cowards; hardness ever
Of hardiness is mother.
William Shakespeare

Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me.
Psalm 23 v4. The Bible

“God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble.”
Psalm 46 v 1. The Bible

5. Ambition

DEFINITION:

**Either; An ardent desire for distinction (and possibly the presence of selfishness)
Or ...the outworking of particular gifts and talents, exercised for the common good, and as such, sources of hope.**

QUOTES

A man with no ambition is worse than dough that has no yeast to raise it. Henry Ward Beecher

Ambition is the spur that makes man struggle with destiny. It is heaven's own incentive to make purpose great and achievement greater. Anon

It is not at all necessary to be great, so long as we are in harmony with the order of the universe.

Henry Frederic Amiel

The grand secret of enjoying yourself with a free heart is to get rid of ambition, rid of even the most trifling competitions with other devils. But we must have our pride; and we must have a very deep pride. We must have a pride in simply being ourselves and beyond any conceivable competition.

John Cowper Powys

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

James 3v16 The Bible

Ambition makes the same mistake concerning power, that avarice makes concerning wealth; she begins by accumulating power as a means to happiness, and she finishes by continuing to accumulate it as an end. Ambition is, in fact, the avarice of power, and happiness herself is soon sacrificed to that very lust of dominion which was first encouraged only as the mode to attaining it. Charles Caleb Colton

Ambition is a good thing, but I think that one may take it as one's aim only in things that one has set oneself to achieve, has made the reason for one's existence. In anything else, it's nonsense. The only essential is to live with ease; and moreover one must sympathise with one's fellow creatures, and strive to win their sympathy in return. And if, indeed, one had no other determined aim, this would by itself more than suffice.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Proverbs 16v9 The Bible

Does a person gain anything if he wins the whole world but loses his life? Mark 8v36 The Bible

6. Beauty

Brainstorm – what is beauty? Write words down on large sheet

Read the quotations, and ask for any words you don't know. In pairs, discuss which one interests you most, and why

QUOTES

I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin-deep. That's deep enough. Jean Kerr

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. John Keats

Flowers, shade, a fine view, a sunset sky, joy, grace, feeling, abundance, and serenity, tenderness, and song, - here you have the element of beauty. Henri Frederic Amiel

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent, or praiseworthy - think about such things. The Bible: Philippians 4 v 8

I see and find beauty through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures, truthful songs, are highly beautiful. Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then Art will arise. Mahatma Gandhi

He has made everything beautiful in its time. The Bible: Ecclesiastes 3v11

In Lourdes, I realised for the first time something that would be confirmed to me in my teens and later as an adult in Africa. Mankind at its most desperate is often at its best. When the physical is reduced to an ugly irrelevance the possibilities of blinding human beauty emerge. Bob Geldof

She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. Jesus, The Bible: Mark 14v6

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The Bible: Matthew 23 v 27

The aesthetic sense is very close to the religious: beauty has a great educative power. When it takes the form of sacrifice, heroism and holiness it irresistibly attracts men towards the heights. It is this beauty which gives life its meaning, nobility and joy. We must show every child that any existence, however humble and painful it may be, becomes radiant when it is illuminated by an ideal of beauty and love. Alexis Carrel

7. Character

Think of someone you know, or would like to meet, who is a very interesting person - maybe because of their experiences in life, their ability to talk and explain well or for some other reason. In England we sometimes call that kind of person a 'real character'. Talk to someone else about your person. (Tell them to change over from listening to talking after 5 minutes)

Share what you learned from your partner with the larger group.

QUOTES

There is no sight more beautiful than a character that has been steadfastly growing in every direction, and has come to old age rich and ripe.

Henry Ward Beecher

People's characters are tested in three ways: By the circumstances in which they live, by the people whom they meet, and by the experience of their own failures. Their characters are tested by the degree in which these things draw forth from them love and not bitterness, a humble penitence and dependence on God and not despair.

Father Andrew

Don't eat at the table of a stingy man, or be greedy for the fine food he serves. "Come on and have some more" he says, but he doesn't mean it. What he thinks is what he really is.

Proverbs 23 v 7. The Bible

I do not think that there can be any life quite so demonstrative of character as that which we had on these expeditions (to the Antarctic). One sees a remarkable re-assortment of values..... Here the outward show is nothing, it is the inward purpose that counts.

Edward Wilson

Talent develops in quiet places, character in the full current of human life.

Goethe

Look at the Little Book of Character,

Choose your favourite quote today, and say why you chose it.

8. Courage

QUOTES

The Italians call it Corragio, or greatness of heart; the Spaniards, Corage, the French Courage, from whom we have borrowed it. And we understand it to mean manliness, bravery, boldness, fearlessness, springing not from a sense of physical power, or insensibility to danger or pain, but from the moral habit of self-command, with deliberation, fully weighing present dangers, and clearly foreseeing future consequences, and yet in the path of duty advancing unmoved to its execution.

Cardinal Manning

How few there are who have courage enough to own their own faults, or resolution enough to mend them.

Benjamin Franklin

One has to be courageous not to let oneself be carried along by the world's march; one needs faith and will-power to go cross-current.

Carlo Carrretto

It takes courage to push things forward

Mo Mowlam, (referring to visiting Loyalist prisoners in Northern Ireland)

Happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous.

Thucydides 400BC

God is no refuge for the coward, cringing soul. He is the goal and the sustainer of those who dare. 'Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.' Come then, let us get our backs beneath it – whatever it is. Our God demands courage! May he observe that courage in us all!

W.E. Sangster

The most precious thing about Jesus is the fact that He is not the great discourager, but the great encourager.

William Barclay

Bible verses to consider:

Luke 12 v 1 - 12

Acts 4 v 13

Matthew 11v 28, 29

John 8 v 1 - 11

9. Deception

Discuss: Have you ever been deceived? How did you feel?

QUOTES

Human beings seem to have an almost unlimited capacity to deceive themselves, and to deceive themselves into taking their own lies for truth.

R.D.Laing

To deceive a deceiver is no deceit.

English proverb

The wolf will hire himself out very cheaply as a shepherd.

Russian proverb

Do you hate to be deceived? Then never deceive another.

St John Crysostom

One may smile and smile and be a villain.

William Shakespeare.

When the fox preaches, look to your geese.

German proverb.

10. Hypocrisy

Discuss: Have you ever encountered hypocrisy that angered you?

QUOTES

Don't stay away from church because there are so many hypocrites. There's always room for one more.

Arthur R. Adams

A bad man is worse when he pretends to be a saint.

Francis Bacon

Hypocrisy - prejudice with a halo.

Ambrose Bierce.

Better be a sinner than a hypocrite.

Danish proverb.

The old style hypocrite was a person who tried to appear better than he actually was: the new style hypocrite tries to appear worse than he or she is.

Charles Templeton.

1 John 1 v 8

Matthew 22 v 1 - 12 & v 23 - 32.

**Do you see any examples of hypocrisy in society as a whole?
How can we avoid hypocrisy ourselves?**

11. Gifts and Giving

What is one of the best gifts you have ever received? Why?

QUOTES

The more he cast away the more he had. John Bunyan.

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Sir Winston Churchill.

Complete possession is proved only by giving. All you are unable to give possess you. Andre Gide.

God has given us two hands - one for receiving and the other for giving. Bill Graham.

We must not only give what we have; we must give what we are. Desire Joseph Mercier.

He who gives to me teaches me to give. Danish Proverb.

Give and spend, and God will send. English Proverb.

He gives twice who gives quickly. English Proverb.

Many look with one eye at what they give, and with seven at what they receive. German Proverb.

What brings joy to the heart is not so much the friend's gift as the friend's love. St Ailred of Riveaulx.

It is easy to want things from the Lord and yet not want the Lord himself: as though the gift could ever be preferable to the Giver. St Augustine of Hippo.

What gifts do we take for granted?

Is there a gift that you value now much more than you did in the past - why?

John 4 v 10 (read from v 5 - 15)

Romans 6 v 23

Ephesians 2 v 4 - 10, especially v 8,9.

12. Happiness

What things make you happy? Think of three and write them down. Go round the group, share one at a time - put them on the board as a spider diagram.

Read quotes - (see next page), explain words.

Think for a while, then choose your favourite. Go round the group.

Read Matthew 5: The Beatitudes. Happy are.....

QUOTES

..to be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness. Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness*, Unwin Paperbacks, 1984

The happy person is he who is striving to actualise his potentialities. A.R. Orage

It is not our level of prosperity that makes for happiness but the kinship of heart to heart and the way we look at the world. Both attitudes lie within our power, so that a man is happy so long as he chooses to be happy and no one can stop him. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward*; Penguin Books, 1972

When I looked outside right into the depth of nature and God, then I was happy, really happy... so long as I have that happiness here, the joy in nature, health and a lot more besides, all the while one has that, one can always recapture happiness.

Riches can all be lost, but that happiness in your own heart can only be veiled, and it will still bring you happiness again, as long as you live. As long as you can look fearlessly up into the heavens, as long as you know that you are pure within and that you will still find happiness.

Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Pan Books, 1954

This afternoon I walked over to Lanhill.

As I came down from the hill into the valley across the golden meadows and along the flower scented hedges, a great wave of emotion and happiness stirred and rose up within me. I know not why I was so happy, nor what I was expecting, but I was in a delirium of joy, it was one of those supreme moments of existence, a deep delicious draught from the strong sweet cup of life. It came silently, suddenly, and it went as soon as it came, but it left a long, lingering glow and glory behind it as it faded slowly like a gorgeous sunset, and I shall ever remember the place and the time in which such happiness fell upon me.

Rev Francis Kilvert 1977

We are to give our heart to God that he may make it happy, with a happiness which stretches its capacity to the full. Gordon S. Wakefield, in *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, SCM Press, 1986

13. Listening (notes)

1. In twos, ask your partner to tell you about a friend or relative they enjoy spending time with and why. Then tell other people what they said.
2. How well did your partner listen? Did they get it right?
3. Read the quotations on listening. Give plenty of time for them to ask questions about the meaning of words etc. Ask them to choose one they like, and say why and what it means to them. Discuss the quote, then ask if anyone liked another. Repeat.... Who do you know who is a good listener? Are you a good listener?
4. Read Elijah: 1 Kings 19 v 4 - 13. How was Elijah feeling? Why did God speak so quietly? Has anyone had an experience of hearing a quiet voice speaking in their mind? What do you think about this story, can you learn anything from it?
5. Read the call of Samuel: 1 Samuel 3 v 1 - 21. Explain first that Eli is an old man, a priest, and Samuel is a very young boy who lives with him and works in the temple. Why did God speak to a child do you think?

Read for them to listen, Essence p94, 'Letter to a friend'.

QUOTES

Listen for the meaning beneath the words. Anon

The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside
Dag Hammarskjöld, Markings, translated by W. H. Auden 1964

If he didn't tell you what was on his mind, it was because he didn't feel he could.

You think he was afraid. In a way that's true, but if he was afraid, it was because you weren't really inviting, you weren't 'empty' enough, loving enough, to receive him. Listening isn't easy!

Michel Quoist, With Open Heart, translated by Colette Copeland, 1983

And when, as happens more and more here, people bring their problems to me, I know that it is no compliment to my learning. It is better than that. It is a recognition on their part that I am free to listen to them, that I am open to them, that I am in some sort a free man.

Dan Billany and David Dowie, The Cage, Longmans, 1949

There are different kinds of listening. There is the listening of criticism; there is the listening of resentment. There is the listening of superiority; there is the listening of indifference. There is the listening of the man who only listens just for the moment because he cannot get the chance to speak. The only listening that is worthwhile is the listening which listens and learns.

William Barclay, The Gospel of John, 1974

He (God) cannot be seen, but can be listened to.

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufman, 1971

Before we can hear the Divine Voice we must shut out all other voices, so that we may be able to listen, to discern its faintest whisper. The most precious messages are those which are whispered.

Mark Rutherford, *More Pages from a Journal*, OUP, 1910

Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 3v20, *The Bible*

Read the quotations on listening. Choose one you like, and say why and what it means to you. Repeat....

Who do you know who is a good listener? Are you a good listener?

Read 'Letter to a Friend' from *Essence*. Story of Elijah: 1 Kings 19 v 4 - 13

14. Loneliness

Do you like being alone? At what times do you like/ dislike it? Are you lonely at those times?

QUOTES

Men love because they are afraid of themselves, afraid of the loneliness that lives in them, and need someone in whom they can lose themselves as smoke loses itself in the sky. V.F.Calverton

There is none more lonely than the man who loves only himself. Abraham Ibn Esra

At the innermost core of all loneliness is a deep and powerful yearning for union with one's lost self. Brendan Francis

The deepest need of man is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. Erich Fromm

We are born helpless. As soon as we are fully conscious we discover loneliness. We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are to know anything, even ourselves. C.S.Lewis

People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges. Joseph F. Newton

Better be quarrelling than lonesome. Irish Proverb

Language has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone, and the word solitude to express the glory of being alone. Paul Tillich

We all carry our own deep wound, which is the wound of our loneliness. Jean Varnier

The soul hardly ever realises it, but whether he is a believer or not, his loneliness is a homesickness for God. Hubert Van Zeller

Loneliness, far from being a rare and curious phenomenon peculiar to myself and to a few other solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence. Thomas Wolfe

Which is your favourite quote today?

Read Genesis 2 v 18 -24; Psalm 22 v 1 - 11; Matthew 27 v 45, 46; John 13 v 33-35.

15. Obedience and Choice

QUOTES

How will you find good? It is not a thing of choices; it is a river that flows from the invisible throne, and flows by the path of obedience.

George Eliot.

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice. George Eliot.

Don't listen to friends when the Friend inside says, "Do this!" Mohandas Gandhi

Obedience is the mother of success, the wife of safety. Greek Proverb

Justice is the insurance we have on our lives, and obedience is the premium we pay for it. William Penn.

No one can rule except one who can be ruled. Latin Proverb.

Obedience is the fruit of faith; patience is the bloom on the fruit. Christina Rossetti.

'..we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.' Romans 5 v 3&4

Every great person has first learned how to obey, whom to obey, and when to obey. William A. Ward.

Q: When is it right for us to choose, and when should we obey?

In darkness there is no choice. It is light that enables us to see the difference between things; and it is Christ that gives us light. Augustus W. Hare.

Q: What kind of principles did we read about last week that Christ gave to His followers? (Luke 6 v 20 - 36).

How do these relate to 'obedience and choice'?

Choose a favourite from this week's quotations.

16. Order

Discuss in pairs:

Are you an 'orderly' person? Do you always want to keep your space tidy? Give some examples.

QUOTES

Good order is the foundation of all good things. Edmund Burke

Put things into their places, and they will put you in your place. Arab proverb

"Whenever I prepare for a journey I prepare as though for death. Should I never return, all is in order."
Katherine Mansfield, Journal (1927)

Prose = words in the best order; poetry = the best words in the best order. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Table talk (1835)

"Order reigns in Warsaw"

After the brutal suppression of an uprising, the newspaper Moniteur reported on 16/10/1831, "Order and calm are completely restored in the capital".

In peace, children inter their parents; war violates the order of nature and causes parents to inter their children. Herodotus, Histories, book 9.

Order is heaven's first law. English proverb

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order. Life refuses to be embalmed alive. Alfred North Whitehead.

All of you may proclaim God's message, one by one, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged.....God does not want us to be in disorder, but in harmony and peace.....Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14 v 31,33,40.

What are the advantages of being orderly?

What are the disadvantages of being disorderly?

Who enjoys being in 'creative disorder'?

Do you like routine?

17. Personality

Have a large bowl of potatoes or satsumas. Invite each student to take one, look at it, and notice any special marks features etc. Collect them up, then ask them to identify their own. Make the point that each one is different, even if we can't see that. So, each of us is unique.

Look at quotes on Personality.

Has anyone had the effect on you described in quote no 1? Discuss some more.

Think - who am I? What is my personality? Is it something we know ourselves, or more something that others see?

Give out paper. Ask Ss to draw (no need to be artistic) 3 symbols representing something about your identity. Talk about what you have drawn – in twos if there are many, or as a group. Can you change your personality?

Back to the satsumas. What did we learn from them? (We are all unique)

Read Psalm 139 v 1 - 16 to finish. You are valuable as well as unique to God.

QUOTES

The impact of one personality on another can indeed produce the most wonderful effects. Very often a man has been launched on a career of scholarship by the impact of the personality of a great teacher upon him. William Barclay

Physical fitness, temperament, and circumstances are not prime causes and do not of themselves explain radiant personality. For the secret spring of that we must look elsewhere. W.E.Sangster.

Personality is born out of pain. It is the fire shut up in the flint. J.B.Yeats

Every normal person would like to be a radiant personality: to be respected, attractive and, indeed, loved: to be at peace within, useful, happy and sought after - not just for the things they might be able to give, but for themselves alone. W.E. Sangster, The Secret of Radiant Life, Hodder & Stoughton, 1957,p.13

Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality. Erich Fromm

Personality should reside in the will as in a castle, and issue orders to the passions and intellectual apprehensions, who, in their turn, should inform their master of external happenings and await his decision.

Robert H. Benson

If you have to choose between a good reputation and great wealth, choose a good reputation. Proverbs 22 v 1, The Bible

18. Revolution and Reform

Q: If you had the power, what one thing would you like to change in your nation or in the wider world?

QUOTES

Every revolutionary ends by becoming either an oppressor or a heretic.

Albert Camus.

The great revolution of the future will be nature's revolt against man.

Holbrook Jackson.

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.

John F. Kennedy.

Every revolution by force only puts more violent means of enslavement into the hands of the person in power.

Count Leo Tolstoy.

Every successful revolution puts on, in time, the robes of the tyrant it has deposed.

Barbara Tuchman.

Q: What about the removal of Ceausescu in Romania, or the breaking down of the Berlin Wall?

The best reformers the world has ever seen are those who commence on themselves.

George Bernard Shaw.

Every generation needs regeneration.

Charles H. Spurgeon.

To make a crooked stick straight, we need to bend it a contrary way.

Michel de Montaigne.

If omnipotent love did truly transform our hearts, the exterior work of reform would already be half done.

Jaques Maritain.

Revolutionary behaviour: Read Luke 6 v 20 - 42.

19. Vision

Brainstorm ideas for the meaning of 'vision'.

Discuss in 2s:

- 1. Who can you think of as a person of vision? What kind of role do they have in society?**
- 2. Do you have any vision for your future - where do you want to be in 10 years time?**

Together:

Do we need people of vision? How do we get it?

Read the quotes and discuss.

Has anyone had an experience they would call a vision?

QUOTES

For most of us most of the time, the world of everyday experience seems rather dim and drab. But for a few people often, and for a fair number occasionally, some of the brightness of visionary experience spills over, as it were, into common seeing, and the everyday universe is transfigured. Here is a ... description of this transfiguration of the everyday world.

'I was sitting on the seashore, half listening to a friend arguing violently about something which merely bored me. Unconsciously to myself, I looked at a film of sand I had picked up on my hand, when I suddenly saw the exquisite beauty of every little grain of it; instead of being dull, I saw that each particle was made up on a perfect geometrical pattern, with sharp angles, from each of which a brilliant shaft of light was reflected, while each tiny crystal shone like a rainbow...The rays crossed and re-crossed, making exquisite patterns of such beauty that they left me breathless... Then, suddenly, my consciousness was lighted up from within and I saw in a vivid way how the whole universe was made up of particles of material which, no matter how dull and lifeless they might seem, were nevertheless filled with this intense and vital beauty. For a second or two the whole world appeared as a blaze of glory. When it died down, it left me with something I have never forgotten and which constantly reminds me of the beauty locked up in every minute speck of material around us.'

Aldous Huxley, *Heaven and Hell* Chatto & Windus, 1956, page 17

Prejudice can distort our vision. There is nothing which so destroys a man's judgment as prejudice does. It prevents him from forming the clear, reasonable and logical judgment which it is the duty of any man to form. It blinds him alike to the facts and to the significance of the facts. Almost all new discoveries have had to fight their way against unreasonable prejudice... One of the most necessary things in life is the fearless self-examination which will enable us to see when we are acting on principle and when we are victims of our own unreasonable and unreasoning prejudices. In any man who is swayed by prejudice the eye is darkened and the vision distorted.

William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The Saint Andrew Press, 1987, volume I, page 243

20. Favourite Places to visit

Describe a favourite place you have visited and tell us why you like it so much.

How do we choose a place for time out? What kind of places appeal to you?

Some of us feel the need to go to quiet places, other prefer a challenge of doing something new and different.

A very busy person might prefer to go somewhere very quiet.

See Luke 4. Jesus had had a very busy day; his response : v 42 and see also Luke 5 v 15&16
Luke 6 v12 & 13. Why did Jesus stay up all night praying?
Luke 12 v 1 Jesus is hugely popular!
Luke 22 v 39 Going to pray there seems to have been his habit.

We get tired and need refreshing:

Matthew 11 v 28&29 Read in NIV and then Message version

Matthew 11 v 28 - 30, The Message

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?
Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.
I'll show you how to take a real rest.
Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Line 4 - relationship not rules. How do we 'watch how' he does it?

What do you think of when you read 'unforced rhythms of grace'?

** (Bring along some local tourist info if possible)

Talk about any places you'd like to visit. Maybe plan a trip out?

21. Saving Energy, Saving the Planet

How many ways can you think of saving energy? Make a list in pairs.

Go round and ask for one idea per couple at a time.

Do you do this or do you know people who do?
Is the idea easy or difficult to do?
Is it very effective/ practical?

What form of distance transport is best for the environment? The worst?

What will happen if we don't take care of the planet? Does it worry you?

Recycling. Discuss in pairs what you can recycle in the home - make a list. Share with others.

Why should we bother with recycling? Why do we spoil the earth?

Read Genesis 1 - what did God say about the things he made?

One way of saving energy - don't worry! Read Matthew 6 v 25 - 34

Saving money, spending wisely lesson.

In pairs: make a list of ways that you can save money. Share with the group.

(cooking your own food, being vegetarian, shopping around for deals: '2 for 1', internet shopping, saving energy, stocking up, walk/cycle not drive or ride on bus, buy secondhand) Which do you do?

When is it better to pay more for things? Examples from experience?

Cheap, easy options are not always best.

Read Luke 6 v 46 - 49: wise and foolish builders

Matthew 7 v 24 - 27 " "

Luke 14 v 25 - 33: weigh up the cost

Matt 25v 1-13: Wise and Foolish virgins buying for the future/stocking up!

Mark 14 v 3 - 9: waste of money?

Matthew 13 v 44 - 46: hidden treasure/ valuable pearl.

Have you ever saved up and spent a lot of money on something special?

What are the most valuable things in life? Make a list together.