

A Question of Faith: Revelation

New BBC Programmes for RE 2014

Age range	14-16
Topic	Is it possible to believe God is revealed by healing miracles?
Clip content described 12 minutes	<p>A Charismatic Christian community in Hull runs healing services where praying for God to heal illness and pain is a regular event. Contemporary worship and prayer in Jesus' name come as a surprise to our young researchers, one of whom has never been to a church service before. The 'testimony' they hear from people who have been healed raises as many questions as it answers. While it seems good to them all to see people recover from painful illnesses, the answers they get to questions they put to the Pastor of the Church aren't completely satisfying.</p> <p>Back in a studio discussion between all twelve of the group involved in the programmes, Sarah, a Pentecostal Christian, thinks that these healings are real evidence revealing God at work. Muslim young people say that there is a difference between inspiration (a feeling of the presence of God / Allah) and the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet – a revelation of universal importance. Some Christians find the healing service too emotional. Atheists may think it is manipulative. But the group are also alert to the mysterious and unexplained fact, that people who were ill are better, not by medicine but apparently by prayer. The programme finishes by asking if this is the work of God or can be explained some other way.</p>
Short synopsis	3 young people, atheist, Muslim and Christian visit a Christian healing service in Hull. They meet people claiming God has healed them. The visit prompts keen arguments. Angellica Bell leads debate between 12 young people about whether this kind of 'inspiring' evidence is a revelation of God.



Possible uses in the classroom	<p>Here are three ways to use the programme in exploring issues for the 16+ RE examinations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus the healer – then and now? Compare the programme with miracle texts from the Christian gospels. Many GCSE and Standard Grade syllabuses set the study of texts from the Christian Gospels which include miracle stories. Jesus was famous as a healer. Give a group of 4 pupils the text of 4 different miracle stories from the gospels, for example involving leprosy, blindness, mental illness and deafness. Ask them to compare the four accounts and see what kind of miracles the Bible says Jesus performed. They could consider: what powers does Jesus seem to have? What is the purpose of a miracle? How do people react? If this happened today, would it be similar or different? Then ask them: if the case study from Hull was written in a similar way (for inclusion in a ‘Third Testament?') how would they write it? Groups of learners compare the ways they have written the ‘new miracle’. 2. Arguing for God from religious experiences. Consider the argument or God from religious experience, in relation to other arguments. Some say that God is the first cause of the universe. Some say God is the designer and sustainer of creation. Some say God has planted moral consciousness in the human heart and mind. The ‘ontological argument’ offers a kind of logical proof of the necessity of God’s existence. But in Christian and Muslim communities, many people say they believe in God because of their own experience of inspiration, revelation, answered prayer, a sense of presence or a healing. Is the argument from religious experience the strongest one Christians and Muslims have to defend their beliefs about a great God full of love? What arguments stand against it? In pairs, ask pupils to develop a script for arguing between a theist and an atheist, using lots of rhetoric, and body language. Rehearse and perform their argument for the class. 3. What would be a convincing argument for ‘God revealed’? Research Christian healing (there are thousands of cases online) and see if there are more compelling examples than this one to be found. Or do all miracle claims fall over when they are tested? What would have to happen for you to be convinced that God had healed a person? Noticing that open mindedness requires a test of some kind to be passable, also ask students who do believe in divine revelation through healing: what would have to happen to shake your belief? Both atheists and theists who reject each others’ ideas without any willingness to consider if they might be wrong are in danger of a kind of bigotry. Another BBC Learning Zone Clip, ‘The Multistory Miracle’ is useful as a point of comparison here.
Key Words	Christianity, Islam, Atheism, revelation, healing, worship, miracle, inspiration, ethics, morality, religion, spirituality, discussion, opinion, thinking skills, debate, probability, evidence, proof.
Any other comments	Some of the GCSE and Standard Grade syllabuses require the study of Biblical materials. Accounts of spiritual healing in the Gospels, Acts and I Corinthians are appropriate material here. The Scottish philosopher David Hume provides a famous and vigorous account of the atheist view that any alternative explanation is more likely than a miracle. CS Lewis, Christian apologist, takes an opposite view. Students learning from Islam should consider the question: in what ways is Allah revealed through the holy Qur’an?

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