

GCSE Religious Studies (from 2016)

Christian Aid: theology and ethics

Lesson ideas from RE Today

Lesson title:

Salvation: spiritual or practical?



We believe in life
before death

RE Today
Services

This lesson explores a central belief of Christianity: that humans are sinful and that they can be 'saved'. It looks at different Christian teachings about salvation: through faith (Paul) and through deeds/ action (James). It teaches that Jesus called for radical change, and examines some Bible passages where that is communicated, before explaining how Christian Aid puts faith into action through its work on climate change and gender justice.

Flexibilities:

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

- setting the extended writing task at the end for high achievers, in which they consider the proposition: 'A Christian should be actively changing the world'
- reading a short biography of a radical Christian with social commitments and comparing it with the life story of an evangelist. Which kind of Christian life is

closest to the teaching of Jesus? Why?

- investigating liberation theologies from Latin America. Fresh visions of the meaning of Jesus' teaching for the whole of life were developed in the late 20th century by applying the Bible's anti-poverty messages to politics
- drawing attention to Christian beliefs and teachings about salvation in both the Bible and contemporary churches. Do Christian communities in the UK need to give equal priority to salvation for this life and for the next life, salvation from poverty and injustice as well as for 'heaven above'?

Good learning: what's working well here?

- It is based in the GCSE syllabus's requirement to teach the concept of salvation referring to different interpretations.
- It links dynamic learning in the classroom to 'real world' examples.
- It challenges students to think for themselves about the meanings of biblical texts.

Text and Beliefs

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

Impact

Students examine the ways these biblical and spiritual ideas make a difference in the practice of the charity Christian Aid, linking to a wider understanding of the kind of 'Saviour' Jesus was, and the kind of salvation he offered to Christians.

Connections

Students are challenged to consider their own opinions: is religion about belief, or about goodness, doctrines, or ethics instead? Or are these elements indivisible?

Learning outcomes:

Emerging

- define salvation
- give an example of how Christian Aid works to put faith into action.

Expected

- explain the concept of salvation in Christianity
- define praxis
- outline practical ways Christian Aid supports those in need
- outline theological justifications for Christian Aid's work
- offer a view as to how radical Christian Aid's work is.

Exceeding

- offer a view as to how far Christian Aid thinks 'salvation' might be achieved through practical action or spiritual reunion with God.

Teaching notes

1: Salvation

a) Teach that Christians (mostly) accept two premises about life: i) humans are in a state of sin, and ii) there is such a thing as salvation from sin. Ask pupils what they think 'salvation from sin' means. Explain that, in basic terms, Christian 'salvation' means that you can escape your sins and go to heaven – and therefore escape death (Matthew 19:16-25).

Read Genesis 3 as a class. What are the four most significant events in the story? Identify and present them in a four-square storyboard, with a title.

b) Watch The Secret Life of Children on temptation: <http://bit.ly/2d8EjeT> and the importance of lying: <http://bit.ly/2dZuQqO>

Do students think they are in a sinful state, or are just being human? Are there evolutionary benefits to being able to lie, cheat and steal?

c) Watch St. Augustine's concept of Original Sin: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p011lqgj>

This BBC clip explains Augustine's 4th century doctrine of Original Sin, which is where the idea of humanity being in a sinful state developed.

d) How do Christians believe humans can escape this sinful state: through what they believe or through what they do? Read the passages on page 6 where two of Jesus' followers, Paul and James, explore what his teachings mean. Split the class into two.

Ask half the class to underline all references to faith and salvation in the excerpts from Paul's letters. In groups they should prepare an explanation as to why Paul believes that faith is the key element of salvation. Use these questions to guide them:

- i) who can be saved, as long as they have faith?
- ii) why do humans need to be saved?
- iii) what does Paul mean by 'grace'?

Ask the other half of the class to underline all references to actions in the excerpts from James: which actions, good and bad, does he mention? Ask these groups to prepare an explanation as to why James believes it is our actions which are important. Use these questions:

- i) what actions are forbidden by the law?
- ii) what actions are encouraged by the law?

iii) why is it our actions towards others that show we are good people, rather than our beliefs?

e) Ask each group to present their arguments. Discuss as a class whether they agree more with Paul or with James. Can someone's character be better judged by their beliefs or by their actions?

f) Revisit the statements in point a) – i) humans are in a state of sin; ii) there can be salvation from sin – and ask the class to complete this sentence: to escape sin, Christians believe that humans must....

2: Salvation: spiritual or political?

a) Show Christian Aid's video 'Till and Keep' to introduce the class to the issues of climate change and Christian responses to this global issue. You could also show Christian Aid's video on their climate change work across the world, at <http://bit.ly/2v8BANc>

Ask students to summarise in a sentence why Christian Aid works on climate change, based on what they have watched. Then ask students to read the more detailed information about Christian Aid's work on climate change on the information sheet on page 7. Ask the class to summarise in a sentence why Christian Aid works on climate change.

b) Ask students to consider, alone or in pairs, the statements on the theological responses to climate change information sheet on page 8. Ask them to discuss their responses to the theologians' statements: what do these mean to them in this context? Pick groups to share back with the class. You could also ask them to summarise each of the theologian's points.

c) Teach that Jesus offered both spiritual and political change; he offered a new relationship with God but also called for Earth-based changes. You might want to help your students to understand the concept of radical political change through some modern-day examples.

d) Draw a version of the graph on page 10 on the board. Hand out the Jesus: radical or not? information sheet on page 9 and ask students to paraphrase each point. Then ask students to place the information where they think it fits onto the graph on the board, and ask them to explain their choice. Encourage them to debate and to share their responses. Steer the group to consider how radical Jesus' offers of Earthly change and spiritual salvation might be.

e) Ask students to look at the Christian Aid website, christianaid.org.uk, and find any examples of the charity's work that might be considered spiritually radical or politically radical. Add spiritually radical and politically radical work Christian Aid is engaged in to the graph on the board. Discuss how far Christian Aid works within the vision of radical change which Jesus offers. Discuss the distinction between on the one hand 'salvation' being achieved on Earth through practical change, and on the other 'salvation' being achieved in spiritual terms through a mended relationship with God.

3: Praxis: salvation by actions

a) Recap James' view that salvation is to be achieved through actions. Explain that 'praxis' means practice and actions, as opposed to theory and belief. This can be helpfully explained through the phrase: 'practice what you preach'. What actions are mentioned in the excerpts from James' letter? List them on the board. Do the class think that for Christians, actions are essential to earn salvation? Are they as important as faith in God?

b) Read Matthew 25:31-46, known as 'the sheep and the goats'. What actions does Jesus mention? Add them to the list. What does Jesus mean by saying 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'? Return to your discussion on James: what does Jesus seem to be saying in Matthew's Gospel about the importance of action?

c) Using the passages from James on action, the story of the sheep and the goats, and the passages from Paul about faith, ask groups to complete the table to answer the exam-style question on page 11: 'A Christian should be actively trying to change the world.' Discuss.

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

Jesus Christ and salvation

Beliefs and teachings about:

- the incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God
- the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension
- sin, including original sin
- the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
- the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.

Edexcel

The nature and significance of salvation and the role of Christ within salvation: law, sin, grace and Spirit, the role of Christ in salvation, including John 3:10–21 and Acts 4:8–12; the nature and significance of atonement within Christianity and its link to salvation.

Eduqas

Beliefs: Salvation

- Law: Word of God; inspiration and revelation; differing ways of interpreting biblical writings; Bible in relation to other sources of authority
- Sin as preventing salvation.
- Grace and the Spirit: Acts 2:1-6. The role of Holy Spirit in Evangelical worship.

OCR

Beliefs: concept of salvation

The meaning of the following terms:

- Salvation: restoring the relationship between God and mankind.
- Atonement – God in Christ reconciles the world to himself.
- Law – its function to identify sin by laying down commandments.
- Sin – Pauline views, all have sinned and fallen short of the mark.
- Grace – God's redemptive love to save sinners.
- Spirit – The Holy Spirit.
- The role of Christ in salvation: the sacrifice of Christ – paying the ransom to God for the sins of the world. Issues related to salvation: the belief in forgiveness and repentance for all.
- The nature of atonement for Christians.
- Common and divergent Christian beliefs about the need for salvation.
- Common and divergent Christian beliefs about the role of Jesus Christ in salvation.
- Different interpretations and emphases given to sources of wisdom and authority by different Christian denominations.

Glossary

Salvation is the act of being saved. There are different interpretations of what this means for Christians, and this lesson plan explores these. For many, salvation specifically means the act of being saved from death. This is because Christians believe in an afterlife which is made possible by Jesus, who sacrificed his life and 'paid' for their sins when he was crucified. For others, it might mean a more spiritual salvation from sin, by living a good life and following Jesus' example.

Praxis means practice and actions, as opposed to merely theory and belief.

Pacifism means being against war and violence, as well as promoting peace and non-violence.

Humility is the quality of being humble. For Christians, this can mean recognising one's relationship to God and understanding the limits of one's power.

Universal Basic Income is the idea of paying all citizens in a country a regular sum of money, unrelated to their work, in the form of a benefit or social security.

Repent means to feel or say sorry, for example about wrongdoing or sin.

In communion means the state of being joined together with others.

Prophetic can mean to 'read the future' or to 'predict future events'. In this context, it means to articulate what the prophets in the Bible said and to carry that forward in the present day.

Injustice means unfairness.

Divest means to stop investing money in something.

Bible study sheet: Salvation through faith or actions?

Through faith (based on Paul's ideas)**Romans 1:16-17**

...it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'

Romans 3:21-26

...the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Through action (based on James' ideas)**James 2:8-11**

You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

James 2:14-17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

James 2:24

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Information sheet: Christian Aid's work on climate change

Human actions have caused climate change: burning fossil fuels has caused pollution and raised levels of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere, which has changed the climate and damaged the environment. Christian Aid believes this means we have failed to look after God's creation.

We have failed the poor. Most of those affected by climate change live in poorer countries, but people in richer countries have caused the majority of the pollution. This means those who have done least to cause the problem are the worst affected. Christian Aid works with many such poor communities whose whole way of life hangs in the balance because of climate change.

Catastrophic climate-related impacts (droughts, storms, sea level rise) are hitting communities across the world, from Bangladesh to the Pacific Islands, Ethiopia to South Sudan, Bolivia to the Philippines.

Frank Zulu, a farmer in Malawi, knows firsthand how devastating climate change can be. When he was very young his grandfather taught him a calendar for planting crops, based on Malawi's regular seasons. But because of climate change, the weather has become unpredictable and more extreme, ruining his harvests. One year, when the maize he was growing failed in a drought, his four-year-old son became critically malnourished. Christian Aid's partner helped Frank to grow pigeon peas, a plant which grows well in harsh conditions, giving him the opportunity to thrive despite climate change.



Frank knows firsthand how devastating climate change can be.



Lidia Cuardado lives on the coast in El Salvador. In 2015, storms worse than ever before hit her house, sweeping away many of her belongings and leaving her ill. Many people in her community, including her sons, rely on fishing shrimp to survive. But the storms disrupted the ecosystem and are making it difficult to survive.

Christian Aid's partner is helping communities like Lidia's to mobilise and protect their local area from climate change. For example, they rely on mangrove forests to stabilise the land against flooding and to maintain habitats for seafood. They're fighting against organisations that want to illegally chop down mangroves and use the land for their own profit. Christian Aid is giving them the support they need to defend their homes in an increasingly hostile climate.

Information sheet: Theological responses to climate change

Christian Aid seeks to underpin its work on climate change with theology. Christian Aid believes that:

- Humans, especially us in rich countries, are polluting the earth. We should repent of our polluting lifestyles.
- We should live in communion with nature and look after God's creation
- We should address the injustice that sees poor communities suffering because of the greedy habits of the rich and powerful.
- Christian Aid sees all of this as prophetic. Prophets speak truth to those in power, even if this truth is unpopular and people don't want to hear it.

Several theologians have thought about how Christians should respond to climate change.

'The universe and everything in it (including humans) belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). The Earth (as far as we know) is the most habitable planet.'

We humans are a tiny component of God's creation, together with many other living species. Despite the intelligence with which humans are endowed, some of us treat the earth as personal property – as a source of resources to exploit at the expense of those with little or no power to resist.'

Professor Jesse N. K. Mugambi, Kenya

'The climate change crisis affecting life on our planet Earth, our home, is basically a spiritual crisis that will not be solved only through economic and political measures. We need a profound change in our hearts and in our minds.'

Elias Abramides, Argentina

Who can stop climate change? We can. We have a responsibility to do so that began when God commanded the earliest human inhabitants of the Garden of Eden to 'till it and keep it'. To keep it; not to abuse it, not to destroy it.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

As well as helping poor communities adapt to changing weather, as we've seen in Malawi and El Salvador, Christian Aid and its supporters are raising their voices to stop climate change.

They're calling on governments to reduce carbon emissions, for example by running petitions and holding marches to make sure that politicians know that people care about the environment.

They're asking churches in the UK to switch to green energy with their campaign, The Big Shift. Churches are also putting pressure on the UK's biggest highstreet banks to stop financing the extraction and burning of fossil fuels and to invest in renewable energy instead.

Information sheet: Jesus, radical or not?

Open to all

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28

They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries* broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi.

Matthew 23:5-7

Peace

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matthew 5:44

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:9

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer"; but you are making it a den of robbers.'

Matthew 21:12-13

*Small leather boxes containing Hebrew texts, worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to keep the law.

Humility

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

Forgiveness

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times'.

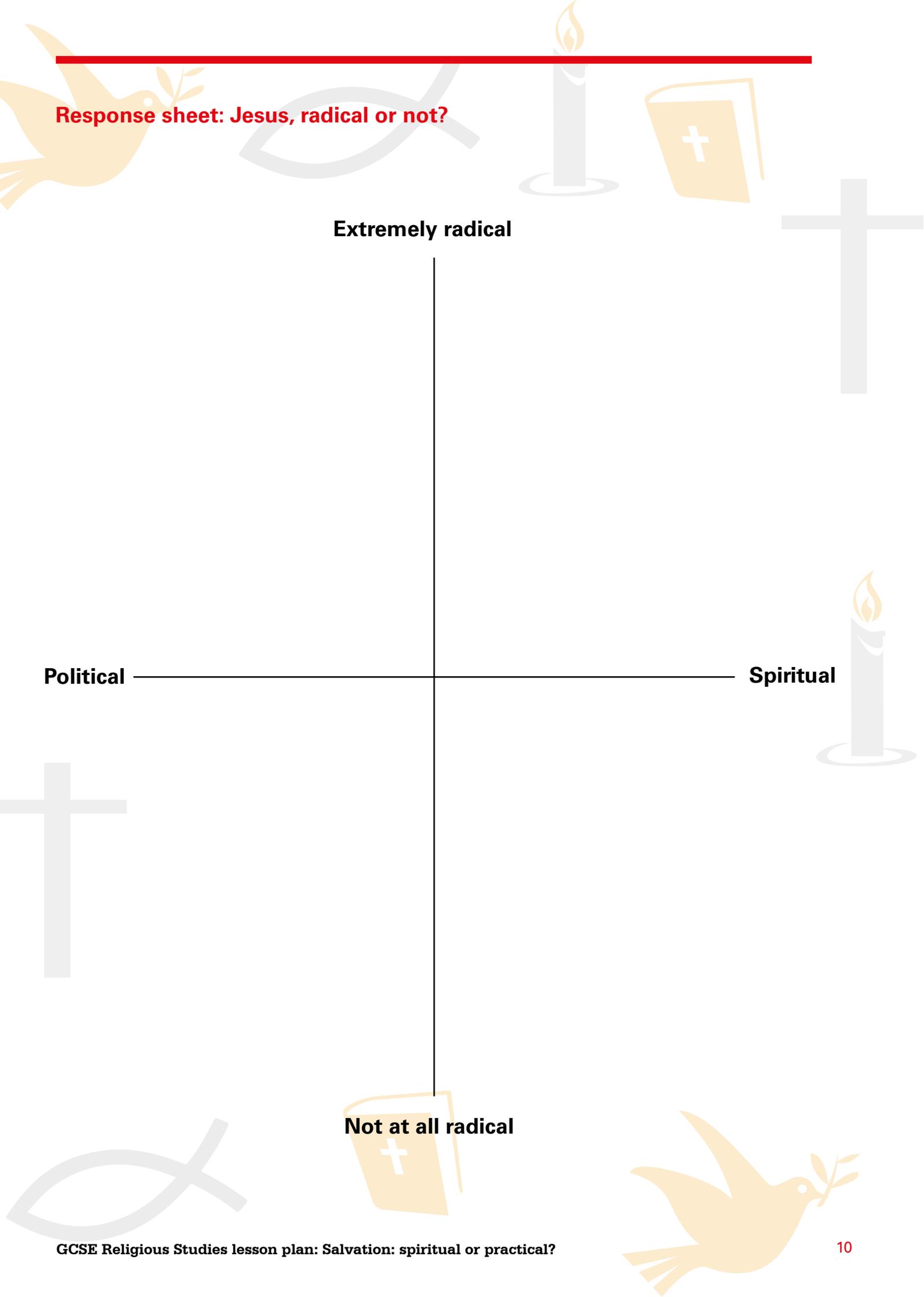
Matthew 18:21-22

Poverty

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight for the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Luke 4:18-19

Response sheet: Jesus, radical or not?



'A Christian should be actively changing the world.' Discuss.

Argument that supports this statement:

Based on biblical passages:

Argument that rejects this statement:

Based on biblical passages:

My conclusion: