

Talking about Jesus at work and home

What kind of King? Over the gate

Your neighbour saw the march on the news: "All those crosses and shouting. Is that church now? I thought I was a Christian."

Reader's edition

Level	Setting	Conversation	Topic
🌿 Growing	🏠 Neighbour	🚪 Open door & 🧡 It's personal	Christ is King and grief

Levels 🌱 Starter: new or unsure · 🌿 Growing: some confidence · 🍎 Confident: the harder conversations

St John's Church, Woking

Workplace & Neighbourhood Evangelism

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RUTH the Christian · LINDA the other person

THE NOTES IN THE CONVERSATION

1 STOP AND THINK 1 WHAT'S GOING ON 1 THE SPIRIT 1 BIBLE AND VOICES

Each note runs across the page, in its own colour, under the line it goes with. Underlined Bible references open the verse (NIV UK).

BEFORE YOU READ

This isn't a script to learn off by heart. It's one example of how a conversation like this might go. It's good to be prepared (1 Peter 3:15), but in a real conversation it's the Holy Spirit who leads, usually quietly, through the Bible, prayer and ordinary good sense, and sometimes more clearly. Jesus promised His followers that when they were put on trial for Him, the Spirit would give them the words (Luke 12:11–12), and He still helps us when we're put on the spot. So read it through, stop where it asks you to, and think about what *you* might say. Then pray for your own conversations. You don't need to get it perfect. It's God who brings people to faith, and He's pleased to use ordinary people like us to do it.

About this booklet

Goes with

- *What kind of King?* (at work) and *What kind of King? Sunday lunch*: the same question at work and at home
- *What kind of King? Hard questions*: the companion handout (questions 4, 5 and 7 go with this conversation)
- *Nations and the kingship of Christ*: the Go deeper booklet on this theme

How this booklet was made

This conversation was written with the help of AI (Claude, made by Anthropic). The AI did the research and wrote the drafts. A member of St John's chose the topic, decided what it should cover, read it through, asked for changes and approved it.

AI can get things wrong, and it can sound very sure of itself when it does. So the conversation has been through these checks:

- **The people.** A separate reviewer read each person's lines on their own, to check that they sound like one real person and that nobody changes their mind without a reason on the page.
- **Theology.** Separate AI reviewers read it against Scripture, the historic creeds and what Christians down the centuries have said. One reviewer was asked to hunt for error, for overstatement and for anything that might hurt someone who's struggling. Everything they found was put right and checked again.
- **Quotations.** Every quotation from another writer has been checked against its original source. Bible quotations have been checked against the NIV.
- **Facts and figures.** The research figures have been checked against the original reports, and the helplines against their sources.

It hasn't yet been reviewed by a trained theologian or a member of the clergy.

Please read it with care. Even after all these checks, some mistakes may remain. Test what you read against Scripture, as the Bereans did: they "examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). If something doesn't look right, please let Tim Parr know at timparr40@gmail.com.

The views in this booklet are the author's own. They don't necessarily reflect the views of the leadership of St John's Church.

The small print

What kind of King? Over the gate · Talking about Jesus at work and home · Reader's edition · Version 1.1, October 2026.

Quotations from other writers are used for comment and discussion.

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Part 1

The conversation

*The whole conversation, with numbered notes across the page under the lines they go with: what is going on, the Spirit, the Bible, and what Christians have said down the centuries. Where you see **Stop and think**, stop and decide what you would say before you read on.*

The setting

Sunday afternoon in Horsell, Woking. **Ruth** (48, goes to St John's) is putting the recycling out. **Linda** (71) lives three doors down. Her husband Geoff died in March, and Ruth has been popping in most weeks since: carrying bags, fixing the hanging-basket bracket, staying for tea. Sunday afternoons are the hardest for Linda, because she and Geoff used to do the crossword. She's "C of E": christened, confirmed, married in church, and she says the Lord's Prayer every night. Yesterday there was a big march in London, and it was all over the news.

1 "Is that church now?"

Linda

(at her gate) "Ruth, love, have you got a minute? How's your mum's eye, after the cataract?"

Ruth

"Much better, thanks. She's reading again."

Linda

"Oh, good. Tell her I asked." *(pause)* "Did you see that march on the news? All those crosses, and shouting 'Christ is King'. It frightened me a bit, to be honest. Geoff would have said they want their heads looking at."

Linda

"Is that what church is like now? Because I thought *I* was a Christian."

1 The Spirit

Ruth notices the second question is the real one. A quick silent prayer: *"Lord, she's asking about You. Help me be kind."* Nothing dramatic, just the sense that this is worth putting the recycling down for.

Ruth

"That's not what Jesus is like, and it's not what St John's is like, I promise. It bothers me too when people use His name like that. But what you just said is interesting. What makes you think you're a Christian, Linda?"

2 What's going on

With a neighbour you know well, *time and trust have already been built*, over bins, tea and a hanging-basket bracket. That's why Linda can ask straight out. Ruth answers the worry in one line, then follows the more important question with a question of her own. Neighbours matter more than they used to: in *Talking Jesus 2022*, among non-Christians who know a practising Christian, the share who named a neighbour doubled, from 4% in 2015 to 8%.

2 "Christened, confirmed, the lot"

Linda

"Well, I was christened. Confirmed at thirteen: I can still feel the bishop's hands on my head. Married at St Mary's. I don't go now, but I believe. In my own way. I say the Lord's Prayer every night."

3 Stop and think

Linda is grieving, and she's asking a real question. What would you say?

Option A (what Ruth said): she honours what's real in Linda's story, then gently explains what makes someone a Christian, and makes it an open door.

Option B (less helpful): "Being christened doesn't make you a Christian, I'm afraid." *Why it tends to backfire:* it's partly true, but said like that it's a door slammed in the face of a lonely widow. Linda will say "I'm fine, dear", go in early, and not raise faith again for months.

Ruth

"I love that you still pray it every night. And I remember you telling me about the bishop's hands. That meant a lot to you, didn't it?"

Linda

"For a minute I felt something was there. Silly, really."

Ruth

"I don't think it's silly. The way I'd put it is this: your christening and confirmation were pointing you to Jesus. Being a Christian is actually trusting Him yourself: trusting that He died for you and forgives you, and following Him as your King. It's a gift, not something you earn. And the lovely thing is that anyone can start, any day. I only really did in my thirties."

Linda

"In your thirties? I thought you'd always been churchy."

Ruth

(laughs) "Not at all."

4 What's going on

Ruth doesn't trample on what's there; she *points it towards Jesus*. She also says plainly that it's a gift, which matters because Linda has always assumed being good is enough. And because they're neighbours, Ruth has heard Linda's stories before. Remembering the bishop's hands shows she's been listening. Neighbours earn the right to speak by being around.

3 "Geoff was a good man"

Linda

(the smile goes; she turns her wedding ring) "But if it's not about being good… Geoff was a good man, Ruth. Never hurt anybody. And he didn't believe a word of it. 'When you're dead you're dead, Lin.'" *(pause)* "So where does that leave…" *(She can't finish it.)*

5 The Spirit

Ruth's stomach drops. She's been half-dreading this question since March. Silently: *"Lord, don't let me be glib. Or cruel."* No answer arrives, just the sense that honesty and kindness have to come together, and that she mustn't hurry.

6 Stop and think

Linda is asking about the person she loved most. What would you say?

Option A (what Ruth said): she honours Geoff, says honestly that she doesn't know what passed between him and God, and rests on God's character: He knew Geoff completely, and He's both fair and kind. *Why:* it's honest, it doesn't pronounce either way, and it rests on who God is (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 103:13–14; Psalm 139:1).

Option B (less helpful): "Oh, I'm sure he's in heaven, love." Or, at the other extreme, anything about judgement. *Why it tends to backfire:* the first is a promise nobody can make, and it quietly tells Linda that what she believes doesn't matter either. The second will close the door for months. Neither is what Linda needs.

Ruth

"He *was* a good man. He sorted out our fuse box the week we moved in, and wouldn't take a penny." *(Linda half-laughs.)* "Honestly, I don't know what passed between Geoff and God, especially at the end. None of us does. But God knew him completely, even better than you did, and you knew him better than anyone. And He's both fair and kind."

Linda

"There was a nurse at the hospice. A Filipino girl. She prayed with him one night when he couldn't sleep. And he let her. I couldn't believe it."

Ruth

"I'm so glad he had her. Only God knows what that night meant to him."

Linda

(brisk again) "Anyway! I've kept you. You've got things to do."

Ruth

"You haven't kept me. Can I pop round tomorrow after work? I'm hopeless at cryptic crosswords, but I can hold the pen."

Linda

(her eyes fill) "We did it together. Well, he did the clues. I held the pen." *(pause)* "Go on, then. Bring biscuits."

7 What's going on

The hardest question came sooner than Ruth expected. She doesn't pronounce either way, she doesn't change the subject, and she doesn't over-read the hospice nurse's prayer. And *she doesn't let the friendship end on it*. Linda says "Anyway!" because it's too much for the gate. "Can I pop round tomorrow?" tells her that the friendship doesn't depend on the answer, and that she won't be left alone with the question. Patience matters especially with older neighbours: after a conversation about faith with a Christian, only 12% of non-Christians aged 65 and over said they wanted to know more about Jesus, compared with 46% of 18–24s (*Talking Jesus 2022*). With them, the relationship carries more weight than any one conversation.

4 "He cried?"

Monday evening at Linda's kitchen table. Sunday's crossword is half done.

Linda

"I've been thinking about what you said. That He's fair and kind. I've always said everything happens for a reason, but I can't find one, Ruth. Pancreatic cancer. He never hurt anybody. Why him?"

Ruth

"I don't know why. I won't pretend to. But I know what Jesus did when His friend Lazarus died. He wept with the people who were grieving, and then He went to the grave."

Linda

(quiet) "He cried?"

Ruth

"He did, even though He knew what He was about to do. And then He raised him. Not long after, Jesus died Himself, for us, and rose again. He's a King who's stronger than death, and gentle with people who are grieving. That's the King I follow."

8 The Spirit

Linda's eyes have filled. Ruth doesn't rush on to explain heaven, or say anything more about where Geoff is now. She just says, "You miss him," and sits there with her. Sometimes the wisest thing is to stop talking.

Linda

(after a while) "You know I said I say the Lord's Prayer every night? Well, after it I say, 'Look after Geoff.' Is that allowed?"

Ruth

"You can tell God anything. The Psalms are full of people pouring their hearts out to Him. He knows how much you love Geoff, and you can leave him with God. And He loves you."

9 What's going on

It's the same "what kind of King?" idea as at work, but here it meets *Linda's real life*: not an argument about the marches, but a grave and a question with no neat answer. Ruth admits she doesn't know *why*, and points to *who*: a King who weeps, and who defeated death. She doesn't give a grieving widow a lesson on prayer at her kitchen table, and she doesn't pretend the prayer changes anything for Geoff either. She lets her know she can bring everything to God, including her love for Geoff, and that God loves *her*.

5 A next step

Linda

"Look at the time. You'll want your tea."

Ruth

"I'm all right for a bit. You said Pat's always on at you about the church coffee morning at Emmanuel. It's on Wednesdays, and I work from home on Wednesdays. I could give you a lift if you fancy it."

Linda

"Oh, I don't know, love. I tried the one at the community centre. Went twice and couldn't face it."

Ruth

"This one's small. You'll know half of them from the surgery. And if you hate it, I'll bring you home. And I'd love to lend you the bit of the Bible about Jesus and Lazarus. It's in John's Gospel. I'll pop it through the door."

Linda

"That's kind, love. I'll see how I feel."

Ruth

"And can I pray for you sometimes? You don't have to do anything."

Linda

"Would you? I never know the words."

10 What's going on

Neighbourly next steps happen side by side, not just as an invitation. "I'll take you" is easier to say yes to than "you should go". A Gospel through the letterbox, a friendly face she already knows, and a prayer. At work you'd send a link; on your street you knock on the door. In *Finding Jesus* (2025), the hospitality, generosity or service of Christians helped 38% of recent converts, and going to church in person helped 59%. And of non-Christians who'd talked about faith with a Christian they know, only 13% remember being offered prayer (*Talking Jesus 2022*), so Ruth's offer is rarer than it should be.

Ending A: Linda leans in

On Wednesday Ruth pulls up at ten, and Linda already has her coat on. At the coffee morning Pat makes a fuss of her, and Linda stays an hour. In the car home she says, "I read that bit you gave me. Twice. 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Do you really believe that?" Ruth says, "I really do. It's why I'm not scared of dying. Well, not much. Shall we read the rest of John together on Sunday afternoons, after the crossword?" Linda says, "I'd like that. They're the worst ones."

11 Stop and think

A few weeks later, halfway through John, Linda asks, "So what do I actually have to *do*, then?" *(pause)* "Geoff would have laughed his head off." What would you say?

Option A (a good way to answer): "Nothing to earn, Linda. Just tell Jesus you need Him. Tell Him you're sorry for the wrong things you've done, and for keeping Him at arm's length, and that you trust Him to forgive you and lead you. We could pray together now if you'd like, or you can take your time." *Why:* it's simple, it's grace, and it leaves her free (Mark 1:15; John 1:12; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8–9).

Option B (less helpful): a long explanation, or "Come to church every week and you'll be fine." *Why it tends to backfire:* the first buries a simple invitation, and the second turns grace back into something she has to earn.

Ending B: It goes cold

Linda says, "I'll see." On Wednesday morning she opens the door just a crack: "My knee's playing up, love. I'm fine, dear. Another time." Ruth doesn't push. She prays for Linda every night that week, and on Sunday she knocks with biscuits and the paper, and they do the crossword. Church isn't mentioned. On the 14th of the next month (Geoff died on the 14th of March), she takes round a cake. With a neighbour the door is never really closed. Being the one who keeps turning up, whether or not church ever comes up, is faithful witness.

PART 2

Toolkit

Quick answers for when you only have a moment, the main points to remember, and where you stand.

20-second answers

For when you've only got a moment at the gate. Each one aims to say something true with real weight, to leave a question in their mind, and to point to Jesus, "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

> **"Is that what church is like now?"**
>
> "Not the church I know, and not the Jesus I follow. He prayed for the people who killed Him, and He wept with people who were grieving." *(Luke 23:34; John 11:35)*

> **"I was christened and confirmed. Isn't that enough?"**
>
> "Those promises were pointing you to Jesus. Being a Christian is trusting Him yourself, and that's a gift, not something you earn. Anyone can start, any day." *(John 1:12–13; Ephesians 2:8–9)*

> **"He was a good man, but he didn't believe. Where does that leave him?"**
>
> "I don't know what passed between him and God, especially at the end. But God knew him completely, and He's both fair and kind." *(Genesis 18:25; Psalm 139:1)*

> **"Why him? He never hurt anybody."**
>
> "I don't know why. I won't pretend to. But when His friend died, Jesus wept, and then He defeated death. He's not far away from this." *(John 11:35, 43–44)*

> **"Do you think I'll see him again?"**
>
> "I can't promise what only God knows. But I can tell you Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Everyone who trusts Him is safe with Him, and He's inviting you." *(John 11:25–26; John 10:28) (If you know they trusted Jesus, say so with real hope: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14.)*

Three things to take away

1. **Answer the real question.** Under "Is that church now?" was "Am I a Christian?"
2. **Point what's there towards Jesus.** Honour a neighbour's story, then show where it leads: to a Saviour who forgives and a King who's stronger than death.
3. **Go side by side, and keep turning up.** "I'll take you" is worth more than "You should come", and "Can I pop round tomorrow?" is worth more than either.

How the Spirit guides us

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be with His followers as they speak about Him (Luke 12:11–12; Acts 1:8). Most of the time the Spirit guides us in quiet, ordinary ways: as we pray and ask for wisdom (James 1:5), through the Bible He inspired, as He brings to mind what we've learned from it (John 14:26; Colossians 3:16), and through the love, gentleness and self-control He grows in us (Galatians 5:22–25). Sometimes He gives a clearer sense of what to say or do, as He did for Philip (Acts 8:29), and sometimes He closes one door and opens another (Acts 16:6–10). Any sense like that should fit with the Bible and with His character of love, so weigh it wisely, perhaps with a Christian friend (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21). If you don't feel any special prompt, that's normal. It doesn't mean He isn't there. And He works in other people too, in ways we can't see: convincing people about sin and opening their hearts to Jesus (John 16:8; Acts 16:14). So pray, use wisdom, speak "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15), and leave the results with Him (1 Corinthians 3:6).

On your street

What's different about talking with a neighbour.

Friendship first, never a project. Keep visiting whether or not your neighbour ever comes near a church. If she senses she's a project, she'll close the door politely. If she knows she's a friend, she'll often ask the big questions herself, sooner than you expect.

When the hardest question comes, stay. "Where does that leave Geoff?" Don't pronounce either way, don't change the subject, and don't let it be the last conversation. "Can I pop round tomorrow?" tells her the friendship doesn't depend on the answer.

Trust is built slowly, then spent carefully. Bins, parcels, a hand with the gutters. Neighbours often only ask big questions once you've been around a long time. Don't waste it on a lecture.

The doorstep is short. Someone's tired, the phone rings, a grandchild arrives. Say one true thing, then leave it there. You'll see them tomorrow.

Invitations are easiest here. A coffee morning, a carol service, Christmas or Easter: neighbours often say yes when it's "come with me", not "you should go". In the Church of England everyone lives in a parish, and the parish church is there for them, whether or not they ever come. Wherever your neighbour lives, you can simply invite them along with you.

Be the one who keeps turning up. Cards on hard dates, meals, lifts. "Love your neighbour" is a command for every day, not a technique (Mark 12:31). And if grief is raw, know where to point people: Cruse Bereavement Support (0808 808 1677) or Samaritans (116 123). If someone says they want to die, take it seriously: gently ask them directly whether they've thought about ending their life, and know where to get help (NHS 111, the mental health option; Samaritans, 116 123; or 999 in an emergency).

Scripture

> "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

> "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25–26)

> "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:31)

Go deeper

The companion handout: *What kind of King? Hard questions*. It takes the questions that come up in the three "What kind of King?" conversations (this one, at work, and at Sunday lunch) one at a time, each with a question to ask back, something you could say, and more to read. Questions 4 ("I'm C of E"), 5 ("I've never hurt anyone") and 7 ("Do you think my mum is somewhere?") go with this conversation. Ask in the group for a copy.

The Go deeper booklet: *Nations and the kingship of Christ*. What Christians have said about Jesus the King, our rulers and our country, from the first century to today. Section 6, "Marches, flags and your neighbour", goes with this conversation. Ask in the group for a copy.

Short reads (free online)

- "When a Loved One Dies", Ray Pritchard, Keep Believing (about 2 minutes): gentle, honest and hopeful, for when you don't know where someone stood
- "Suffering with a Christian Worldview", Rebecca McLaughlin, Crossway (about 7 minutes): Jesus weeps at Lazarus's grave
- "You must be born again", St Stephen's and St Wulstan's, a Church of England parish (about 3 minutes): what makes someone a Christian

Longer reads

- "How to Grieve in Hope", Matthew McCullough, Crossway (about 9 minutes): written for Christians

Books

- *On Death*, Tim Keller (Hodder): short and gentle, on grieving with hope
- *Basic Christianity*, John Stott (IVP): who Jesus is, and what it means to respond

From the history of the church (quotation checked against the original text)

> "Christianity is not a geographical, but a moral term" (William Wilberforce, 1797: *A Practical View of Christianity*)

Wilberforce was an evangelical Anglican, writing to people who called themselves Christians because they'd been born in a Christian country.

Help with grief: Cruse Bereavement Support (0808 808 1677), for anyone who's grieving and for those supporting them. Christianity Explored's Hope Explored is a gentle three-session course on hope, for people going through hard times.

The same question, in other places

This conversation is one of three. The same question ("Christ is King?") comes up at work, at home and on your street. Each one is a different conversation with different people, so each one tests something a little different. Here's what changed from place to place, and what stayed the same. If you'd like to read one of the others, ask in the group for a copy.

The other two conversations

- **What kind of King? (at work).** Ruth's colleague Dan holds up his phone by the coffee machine: "Is this your lot, then?" Later, at lunch: "Imran prays five times a day… Do you think he's going to hell?" It tests being honest about the church's failures, holding truth and love together, and knowing where you stand at work.
- **What kind of King? Sunday lunch (at home).** Kirsty's dad Mike, carving the roast the day after a march: "You lot should be saying it louder." It tests staying calm when your family knows exactly how to wind you up, and loving a parent you disagree with.

	At work: Ruth and Dan	At home: Kirsty and her dad	On your street: Ruth and Linda (this one)
Where they stood	Dan was uneasy about the march, and worried for a friend	Mike was all for it: "You lot should be saying it louder"	Linda was frightened by it, and wondered if she was a Christian
History	A friendly colleague. Dan knows Ruth's work self	Thirty-five years. Mike remembers her at seventeen, and last Christmas	Years as neighbours (Geoff once sorted Ruth's fuse box); closer since Linda was widowed in March
What was at stake	Ruth's reputation, a colleague listening, and the law at work	The family peace, and the children watching	A friendship Ruth sees every day, and a widow's grief
The hardest moment	"Imran prays five times a day… Do you think he's going to hell?"	"Don't do that… make me the bad guy."	"Geoff was a good man… So where does that leave…"
The first move	Be honest, then ask a question	Agree where you honestly can, then ask a question	Answer the worry in one line, then follow the real question
What opened the door	Dan's own question: "So what's the difference?"	Being told he wasn't the bad guy, then family memory: Nan's faith	Linda's own question: "I thought I was a Christian."
The gospel, in plain words	A King who died for His enemies, me included: a rescue, not a club	A King who died in my place while I was living as if He wasn't King	A King who weeps with the grieving, died for us and is stronger than death: anyone can start trusting Him
The next step	A link to Luke's Gospel, and an offer to pray	Nan's Bible next Sunday, and a prayer for his back	A lift to the Wednesday coffee morning, the Lazarus passage through the door, and an offer to pray
If it went cold	Ask after Imran's mum a fortnight later	Talk allotments next Sunday; there's always another lunch	A cake on the 14th, the date each month that Geoff died

What stayed the same, wherever they were:

1. **Person before argument.** Listen first. Ask before you answer.
2. **Reclaim, don't reject.** Christ *is* King. Show what kind of King: the donkey, the towel, the cross.
3. **Point to Jesus, then offer one small next step** that fits where you are.



"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

St John's Church, Woking

Workplace & Neighbourhood Evangelism

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