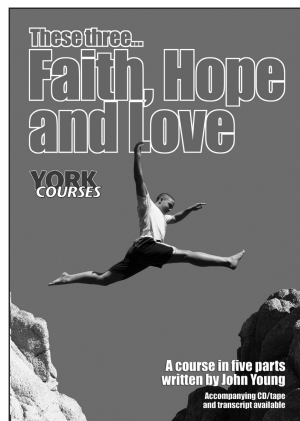


# SESSION 1



## BELIEVING AND TRUSTING

It was a lovely wedding. A beautiful bride, a handsome groom and an efficient – if nervous – best man. The stuff of fairy tales. In the Marriage Service we heard so many familiar words:

- To love and to cherish till death us do part
- In sickness and in health
- I will ...

And then the most famous words of all:

‘So faith, hope and love abide; these three. But the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13.13).

Those words, revolutionary when first written, are echoed time and again in the New Testament letters – and are themselves an echo of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. These three key qualities are what define – or should define – a Christian. As St Paul puts it elsewhere, the Christian life is about ‘faith expressing itself through love’ (Galatians 5.6).

The apostle Paul wrote those words – ‘faith, hope and love abide ...’ – to a small church in the city port of Corinth. ‘To play the Corinthian’ was a phrase which indicated a notorious lifestyle, based on a quite different creed from St Paul’s. His famous words have been a guiding light to sixty generations through war and peace, famine and plenty, life and death. Now it is our turn to feel their inspiration and challenge.

In this course we’ll take a leisurely look at what they might mean for us as individuals and as churches – and as a discussion group. In other words, these five sessions are an invitation to consider what it means to be a Christian believer in the twenty-first century.

### Faith

We all admire faith and value trust. ‘I believe you’ is something we all like to hear. ‘I trust him’ is a statement of high praise. And we recognise that words like ‘believe’ and ‘trust’ take us to the heart of so many areas of life which matter most to us – vital matters of life and death.

‘I believe people who are incurably ill should have the right to assisted suicide,’ argues Phil. ‘I believe that’s a slippery slope which will cause even more suffering in the end,’ responds Jane. ‘I am pro-choice and believe it’s a woman’s right to have an abortion,’ says Dave. ‘I believe the unborn baby has rights too,’ retorts Julie.

Words like ‘faith’, ‘trust’ and ‘belief’ are used in a wide range of settings – and are applied to a whole set of deeply important issues. Our beliefs – our convictions –

St Paul, in writing this [letter to the Corinthians], was writing to a bunch of syncretist, drunken Corinthian dockers, who couldn’t behave properly in church.

*The Abbot of Worth  
(on the course CD)*