



Pilgrimage moments – A refugee story

Introduction

This lesson explores the idea of religious freedom and whether faith must be freely chosen in order to be meaningful. Using a short extract from Pilgrimage Moments: A Refugee Story, students encounter the testimony of a refugee from Afghanistan who reflects that while living in Afghanistan he was required to pray, but now, living in a refugee centre in Austria, he has the freedom to decide whether or not to practise his faith.

Through this story, students are introduced to the concepts of freedom of religious belief and freedom of religious expression. They will explore how different traditions and thinkers understand religious freedom by examining sources of wisdom and authority from Islam, Christianity, and the philosopher John Locke.

By studying the historical context and meaning of these texts, students consider whether religious belief can be genuine if it is forced, and why many societies regard freedom of religion as an important human right.

The lesson encourages students to reflect on the key question: Is faith still real if someone is forced to practise it?

Overview:

Suitable for: Key Stage 4 This lesson is useful for GCSE Themes units that focus on religious freedom or for none examined KS4

Key Question: Is faith still a faith if you are forced to practice it?

Time: 1 hour

TrueTube Film: [Pilgrimage Moments: A Refugee Story – TrueTube](#)

Vocabulary: Freedom of religious belief

Freedom of religious expression

Refugee

Linked text: Qur'an 2:256. *“There is no compulsion in religion”*

Galatians 5:13 *You my brothers and sisters, were called to be free*

John Locke *“No man can be forced to be rich or healthy whether he will or no; but men may be forced to church whether they will or no”*

Lesson

Starter: Begin the lesson with a Think-Pair-Share activity, which is: 30 seconds alone to think about an answer to a question (or questions), 1 minute to discuss their answers with a partner, and then a short class discussion with contributions from the pairs.

Question: Is faith still real if someone is forced to practise it?

Main Activities:

Explain the meaning of the key words, students can write down the words and meanings should you wish.

Freedom of religion means people can choose their beliefs and practise them freely.

Freedom of expression means people can say and share their opinions and beliefs.

In order to check the understanding of these words you could show the students examples and none examples from the list below, perhaps using mini whiteboards.

Examples (this is freedom of religion)

- A student chooses to pray during their lunch break.
- Someone decides to change their religion.
- A person chooses not to follow any religion.
- A Muslim is able to fast during Ramadan.

Non-examples (this is not freedom of religion)

- A government forces people to pray.
- Someone is punished for changing religion.
- A school bans students from practising their religion.
- A person is forced to follow a religion they do not believe in

Examples (this is freedom of expression)

- Someone writes an article explaining their religious beliefs.
- A person peacefully shares their opinion about religion online.
- A student explains why they agree or disagree with a religious teaching.

Non-examples (this is not freedom of expression)

- Someone is arrested for peacefully expressing their beliefs.
- A government bans people from criticising religion.
- Someone spreads hate or threats against a religious group

Clarifying language

You will probably want to distinguish between matters of freedom of belief and freedom of expression. Freedom of belief is to do with choosing a religion and freedom of expression is about how you express that belief.

After you have taught the difference, you might wish to use examples and non examples to check their understanding. You could use the ones below.

Freedom of belief examples

- Choosing to be Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or atheist
- Deciding to change religion
- Choosing not to follow any religion

Freedom of expression

- Wearing a religious symbol or clothing
- Praying in public or at school
- Attending religious services

Finally ask students to produce their own definitions of freedom of religious belief and freedom of religious expression. Check these definitions are secure before moving on to the video task.

Before showing the truetube film ask the students, direct their attention by asking them to record on their mini whiteboards anything that is said that relates to freedom of religious belief of expression. You are after the quote

Nelufar: Wow. Here. He's free to pray or not pray. But in Afghanistan, he had to pray. So then. Which is faith, which is real? You know,

[Pilgrimage Moments: A Refugee Story – TrueTube](#)

Think Pair Share

Using what they have written on their whiteboards think, pair share the link with freedom of religion and belief.

Some questions to ask in the think, pair and share

- 1) When does the refugee experience religious freedom and when was his freedom taken away?
- 2) Does this example support or challenge the idea that in order to be meaningful faith must be freely chosen.

Reading Task

There are reading sheets for each of the 3 quotes of the lesson to give the quote context. Each sheet also has question to check understanding

Text Task

Complete the table task, this checks that students can contextualise each passage and link with the topic of religious freedom.

Discussion Task

This links back to the clip because the refugee was practising his faith, but it was also compulsory in Afghanistan.

“Could someone still practice a religion sincerely even if the law requires it?”

Plenary:

On your whiteboard write down one quote that supports the idea of religious freedom. Say who it comes from.

John Locke and Religious Freedom

In the 1600s, England experienced many conflicts about religion. The Church of England was the official state church, and the government expected people to attend Anglican services. People who followed other Christian groups, such as Catholics or Protestant dissenters (Nonconformists), could be fined or excluded from certain jobs and universities if they refused to attend. Because of this situation, some thinkers began to question whether governments should have the power to control religion.

The philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) argued that religion should be a matter of free choice. In his famous work *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), he argued that true religious belief cannot be forced by laws or governments. Locke believed that the government should deal with things like laws, safety, and protecting people's rights, but it should not try to control people's religious beliefs. According to Locke, belief happens in a person's mind and conscience, and this cannot be forced.

He explained this idea using the following comparison: *"No man can be forced to be rich or healthy whether he will or no; but men may be forced to church whether they will or no."*

Locke's point is that forcing someone to attend church does not mean they truly believe in the religion. Just as a person cannot become healthy or wealthy simply because they are told to, they cannot genuinely believe something if they are forced. For Locke, real faith must be freely chosen. His ideas helped shape modern views about freedom of religion.

Exam Tip

John Locke argued that religion should be freely chosen because forced worship does not create genuine belief.

Check Your Understanding

- 1) Why were some people forced to attend the Church of England in the 1600s?
- 2) What did Locke believe about the government's role in religion?
- 3) What point is Locke making in the quote about being forced to go to church?

St Paul and religious freedom

One Christian teaching about freedom comes from a letter written by the apostle Paul to early Christian communities in the Roman province of Galatia (in modern-day Turkey). These Christians were arguing about whether people had to follow Jewish religious laws, such as circumcision and food rules, in order to be true Christians.

Paul argued that faith in Jesus meant Christians were no longer required to follow these laws in order to be saved. Because of this, he said Christians had been set free.

He wrote:

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

Galatians 5:13

Paul’s message is that Christians are free from religious laws, but this freedom does not mean doing whatever you want. Instead, Christians should use their freedom to serve others and live in love.

This teaching can be linked to modern ideas about religious freedom. Many societies believe that people should be free to choose their religion and express their beliefs without being forced.

However, like Paul, many religious thinkers argue that freedom should also be used responsibly, without harming others.

Key Idea

Christians believe freedom is a gift from God, but it should be used to love and serve others, not just to follow personal desires.

Check Your Understanding

- 1) Why were the Christians in Galatia arguing about religious laws?
- 2) According to Paul, what does Christian freedom mean?
- 3) How could this teaching link to modern ideas about freedom of religion?

The Qur'an and religious freedom

One Qur'anic teaching that is often linked to religious freedom is:

"There is no compulsion in religion." Qur'an 2:256

This verse appears in Surah Al-Baqarah, one of the longest chapters of the Qur'an. It was revealed during the time when the Prophet Muhammad was leading the Muslim community in Medina.

At this time, the Muslim community lived alongside people of other religions, including Jews and Christians. Some Muslims wondered whether people should be forced to accept Islam if it was believed to be the true religion.

The Qur'an teaches that faith must be chosen freely, not forced. The verse explains that belief should come from understanding and conviction, not pressure.

The verse continues by explaining that truth has become clear from error, meaning that people should be able to recognise the truth and choose it themselves.

Because of this teaching, many Muslims argue that religion must be accepted freely and that genuine belief cannot be created through force.

Key Idea

The Qur'an teaches that true faith must be chosen, not forced.

Quick Check Questions

- 1) When and where was Qur'an 2:256 revealed?
- 2) What does the phrase "no compulsion in religion" mean?
- 3) Why might this verse be important in discussions about religious freedom?

Sources of wisdom on religious freedom.

Quote	Put the quote in your own words	Who is the quote from? What is the context?	What is the link with religious freedom?	Does this quote support the idea that faith is more meaningful if it is freely chosen? Give a reason.
<p><i>“There is no compulsion in religion”</i> Qur'an 2:256.</p>				
<p><i>“You my brothers and sisters, were called to be free”</i> Galatians 5:13</p>				
<p><i>“No man can be forced to be rich or healthy whether he will or no; but men may be forced to church whether they will or no”</i> John Locke</p>				

