

Animal Rights

“Did you see that programme about vivisection on TV last night?” asked Chris.

“Yeh, it was *disgusting*. I can’t believe the way they treat those poor animals,” replied his girlfriend Jackie. “I’m going to stop buying cosmetics that have been tested on animals. It made me feel sick watching that poor rabbit with the puffy eyes and the little dogs trapped in those cages. It’s so *cruel*. Next time I see those people in the High Street with a petition I’m going to sign it. I might even find out about joining Animal Aid or something. I can’t believe that we still need to test stuff on animals in this day and age.”

“You’re right Jackie, but you can go over the top you know. We need to test stuff on animals before we can give it to humans. I don’t like it, but if I was dying and someone tried to give me a drug that had been tested on animals, I wouldn’t exactly say no and neither would you.”

“I might after that programme last night!”

“No, you wouldn’t and I bet if a drug could save your mum’s life you wouldn’t try and stop her from taking it.”

“Well all right, maybe not. But that’s not the same as testing make-up and perfume on them. That’s different. I don’t *need* mascara to stay alive.”

“Could’ve fooled me!”

“Chris I’m *serious* about this. I thought you of all people would agree with me.”

“I *do* agree with you, but I’m just saying don’t go over the top and say that *all* experiments on animals are bad. Look there’s Paul and Rob, let’s catch them up. We’re late anyway.”

Jackie ran with Chris to catch the others up, but she was not entirely happy with Chris’ attitude. He had seen the same horrendous things as she had last night, but he seemed happy to carry on as usual, as though those dreadful things weren’t really happening. She just couldn’t understand how he could talk about football with Paul and Rob, when the programme had shown so many animals suffering every day in laboratories. When they arrived at school Chris said goodbye to Jackie and went off to his

lessons with a sense of doom. He knew Jackie in this mood. She had a real bee in her bonnet about this animal rights stuff and she would be going on about it for ages now. He hoped she wouldn't want him to get too involved in whatever it was she was going to do. He didn't know what that would be yet, but he knew there would be something!

Chris didn't have to wait long to find out what that 'something' would be! Jackie came running up to him at lunchtime, her face as black as thunder.

"Can you *believe* what they've got planned for us in science?"

Chris was worried. He had never seen Jackie this annoyed before.

"What?" he replied cautiously.

"They only expect us to cut up sheep's eyes! I can't believe it. I've told Mr Simms that I refuse to do it on principle and that I don't think anyone else should be allowed to do it either." Chris considered his options carefully. He could agree with Jackie and possibly be spared his life, or he could say what he was really thinking!

He decided to be brave.

"Well, I know you think it's cruel Jackie, but those sheep wouldn't have been killed just for us. They were probably killed for meat or something and the eyes were just sort of...going spare."

This was *not* what Jackie wanted to hear at that moment.

"Some boyfriend you are!"

"What's that supposed to mean? Am I supposed to agree with every word you say, just because I'm your boyfriend?"

"No, but a bit of support would be nice."

Fortunately, at that moment their friend Tom came over. Never the most sensitive bloke, he didn't seem to notice the atmosphere between Chris and Jackie and soon had them laughing at a joke he had just heard.

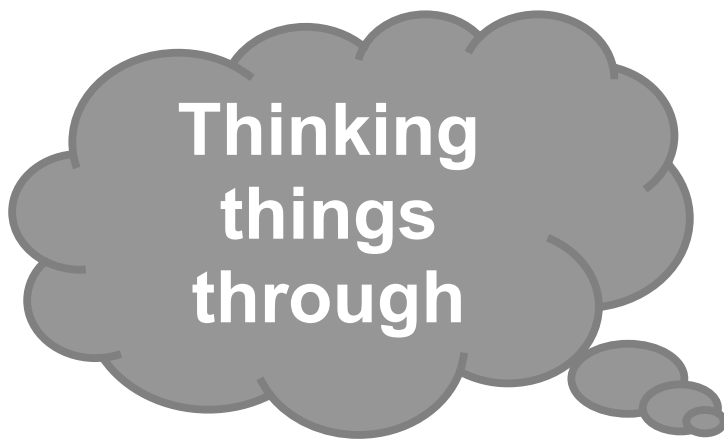
For the next couple of days Jackie carried on going on about the science lesson where they were going to dissect sheep's eyes, but then she seemed to forget about it. Chris was surprised and wondered what was going on. It wasn't like Jackie to give up

without a fight, but he didn't ask her about it. He didn't want any more arguments.

He was shocked when he got to school the next day and heard people talking about the police being called in to school and that Jackie had been excluded for three days.

It took him a while to get the whole story, but apparently Jackie had got to school really early that morning and had broken into the science prep room, through a window. She had known that the sheep's eyes would be there ready for the lesson, and intended to steal them as a protest. But Jackie hadn't bargained for the window being alarmed, connecting straight through to the police station. A teacher had walked in, just after the window had been smashed and had, of course, taken her straight to the Head, just as the police had arrived. .

Chris was annoyed. Why didn't Jackie use her brain? If she really wanted to campaign about something there were plenty of ways she could do it, without getting herself suspended from school.



- 1) Write a paragraph explaining your own views on animal experimentation. Is your view the same for cosmetic testing as it is for medical testing?
- 2) How can you check whether the things you buy have been tested on animals or not? How would that affect what you buy?
- 3) What are the differences, if any between animal rights and human rights?
- 4) Sometimes animal rights campaigners do things which endanger human life in order to get publicity for their cause. Can you give any examples? Do you think this is acceptable? Give reasons for your answer.
- 5) What other things could Jackie have done to campaign against the dissection lesson, which would have been just as effective without causing criminal damage?

A Christian Perspective on Animal Rights

Like the rest of society, Christian attitudes to animal rights have changed in recent years.

In the story of creation in the Bible, it says:

“God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. *Rule* over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every other living creature that moves on the ground’ ”

Genesis 1:28

Christians used to interpret this verse to mean that, since people were in charge of everything on the earth, they could do whatever they wanted with it. Today more people are aware of their responsibility to look after the environment and animals. Christians now see that, in the same way that a parent in charge of a child has a responsibility to look after it, so people have a responsibility to look after the earth, the environment and the animals in their care. In fact they use the word *steward* to describe this role. This really means that they are caretakers! In other words they don't *own* the world, but they are looking after it for future generations.

There are several big issues to do with animal rights that concern people today, e.g., hunting, circuses, eating meat, zoos, and scientific testing using animals. While there is no specific teaching in the Bible on this last issue, many Christians do have a view on it, based on the principles they find in the Bible.

Christians believe:

- All animals are part of God's creation and should therefore be treated with care and respect.
- But at the same time God has given human beings the privilege of caring for the created world and using it for human welfare.

Personal Perspectives on Animal Rights

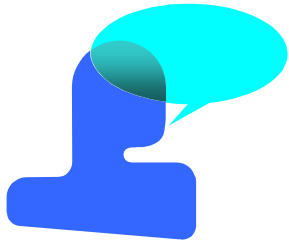
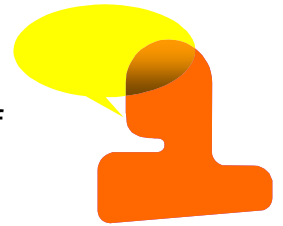


“Some testing on animals for the purpose of relieving human suffering could be considered to be justified, but such experiments should never inflict serious suffering on the animals concerned. There can never be any justification for using animals to develop cosmetics and other things which are purely for human self-gratification.”

Rt Rev Michael Langrish, Bishop of Exeter

“Cruelty is wrong. Animal testing that is cruel is wrong. I feel very uncomfortable with what we do to animals in the name of science.”

Father Paul Cummins RC priest

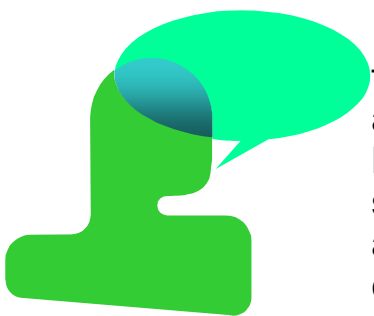
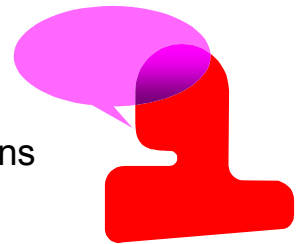


“I do believe that it is wrong to rest cosmetics on animals, but I think an exception can be made for cures to terminal diseases etc. All God’s creatures should be cared for, and I believe it is a sin to mistreat animals.”

Sarah-Jade Riley

“I think animal testing is an important part of medical research and it is very helpful when trying new drugs and learning more about how our bodies work. For these reasons I don’t have a problem with it.”

Dr Chrissy Vimlanathan GP



“Human volunteers for drugs trials are not very easy to find, but it is very easy to find people who will, when they are ill, take drugs that have been tested on animals. Maybe those who don’t accept drug testing on animals should be a little more forward in volunteering their bodies as test material! Animals for cosmetic testing – Nope!! I can’t see this as furthering mankind or easing anyone’s suffering.”

Dr Guy Bradley-Smith

When it comes to the other issues mentioned above most Christians make up their own minds, based on the principles we have already mentioned.



Things to talk about

- 1) What do you think is the main point the Bishop is making? Do you agree with him?
- 2) Based on the information above, what do you think a Christian would think about:
 - (a) hunting for sport
 - (b) hunting for food to survive?Give reasons for your answers.
- 3) Some Christians choose to be vegetarian, (this is a personal choice not because they are required to do so by the church.) What things might a Christian take into account when thinking about this issue?