

reasons
we don't
believe

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Why do you believe what you believe? Are you afraid of people asking you?

Peter tells us that “even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” He encourages us to “have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.” And finally, he admonishes us to always be prepared “to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:14-16).

As believers, we should joyfully long for opportunities to share the hope that is in us. However, we sometimes have doubts. We can be deceived by the false worldview that says humans are fundamentally and innately good, truth is relative, and God— if there is one— remains far from us.

Through this series, we will look at texts that address common reasons many, including us, doubt. Ultimately, the answer to all our questions is Christ. While we may not know all the answers, we do know that God is good. The very fact that He designed a plan of redemption from before the foundation of the world, shows how good God is.

While there remain logical, historical, statistical, and rational answers to all of these questions, the foundational truth that upholds them all is Christ crucified and raised. This is why Paul says, “when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Whatever your question, the answer hangs on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—the eternal Word made flesh. Christianity offers more than religion. God, in Christ, offers us truth, hope, and restored relationship with the eternal God.

This discussion guide is made up of the following sections:

1. DISCUSSION

These questions are designed to help you get into God's Word, apply the sermon, and guide your group discussion. Use the questions that fit best with your group's situation or needs. Beyond your Small Group, these questions can also be used in the context of a Bible study, a discipleship relationship, or personal study.

2. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

These questions are created specifically with families in mind and we hope they're useful in facilitating family discussion (maybe around the dinner table, or another family devotional time). These questions are applicable for all ages, including young children. We pray these bless you as a family.

3. NEXT STEPS

Whether you take these steps or find other ways to respond, we hope you intentionally pray about, act on, and obey God's Word.

DISCUSSION

1. In order to fully answer the question, "How can there only be one way?" we must understand the reality in Romans 3:23. What is the reality in Romans 3:23?
2. How might falling short of God's glory (our sin nature) be an argument against any works-based religions?
3. Why do you believe that Christianity alone is the solution to a broken world, and the only hope for humanity?
4. Where do other religions fall short?
5. What does Romans 3:23-26 suggest about the nature of God and how we might have a restored relationship with Him?
6. How might that impact the way we approach our view of the world in regard to God's love and justice?
7. How is Christianity the only religion to uphold God's righteous justice? How is Christianity the only religion to uphold His righteous love?
8. Paul's argument seems to say that, because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the patience God has for sinners remains just. How does this reality give us hope personally? How does it give us hope for those who are perishing (2 Peter 3:9)?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. How many ways are there to a relationship with God?
2. Why can there only be one way?
3. How does God display His love and justice in Jesus?
4. Why can't people earn their way to God?

NEXT STEPS

- Attempt to engage in a discussion with a non-believer, tracing the storyline of the Bible.
- Learn the claims and beliefs of a few major religions. Think through how you would speak hope into the life of someone who believes one of those religions.

**THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION:
"CAN I REALLY TRUST THE BIBLE?"**

2 Peter 1:16-21

DISCUSSION

1. Read the following verses: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 John 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. What are some reasons from these verses that you believe the Bible should be taken as reliable?
2. Read 2 Peter 1:18-19. In light of this verse, why is it important to pay attention to God's Word closely? How does the coming "day" give us hope in this present darkness?
3. Read 2 Peter 2:1-4 and contrast this statement with 2 Peter 1:16. What do these texts say about those who change the claims of the Bible, or rationalize them away? How can we be sure to follow the claims of the Bible, and not cleverly devised myths?
4. In verse 19, Peter says that they have "the prophetic word more fully confirmed." Discuss what you think this means. How does this truth change the way we read the Old Testament? How does it change the way we live?
5. Examine 1 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. What stands out? Spend time thinking about or discussing the amazing realities in these two verses. How do these texts support the truthfulness of the Bible? How might you present these texts or the truthfulness of the Bible to a non-believer?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. Why can we trust God's Word?
2. How should we view the Old Testament and its relationships to the New Testament?
3. Where do we find all our answers for life and godly living?
4. If we believe the Bible is God's Word, how should that change our daily routine?

NEXT STEPS

- Memorize a large section of Scripture (a chapter or a book) to focus closely on the Word and “pay close attention as a light shining in a dark place.” Find others to memorize with you, and encourage each other as you do this.
- Thank God for the gift of His Word, and that He has opened your eyes to delight in it. Prayerfully consider how you can more fully apply God's Word to every area of your life (family, friends, work, children, sports, exercise, etc.).

**THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION:
"WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD?"**

Genesis 3

DISCUSSION

1. Read Galatians 3:16. In light of that text, how should we read Genesis 3:15? Despite the curse, how does the hope in Genesis 3:15 reveal God's love and mercy toward sinful humanity?
2. Compare Genesis 3:3 with 2:17 (read 3:17 also, which references who Adam listened to). What do these verses reveal about Adam and Eve's hearts? How might Eve's inability to listen to the Word of God encourage us to take God's Word seriously and study it closely? Was Adam or Eve's first sin the bite of the fruit? Discuss where the sin may have begun, and what that reveals about how we should fight sin.
3. Why is there evil in the world? Discuss as a group. After your discussion, consult the following passages: Acts 2:23; Acts 4:28; Colossians 1:24; Isaiah 53:10; and Romans 8:28-32. Does reading these passages change or inform the way you view evil? Why or why not? How would you answer someone who questions God's goodness or power because of the presence of evil?
4. Read Genesis 3:1-6. Look closely at how Eve is tempted. How is Satan's temptation of Eve similar to how we are tempted? Can you identify key ways or strategies Satan uses to entrap God's people? Spend time praying against these strategies and pray for each other (possibly breaking into gender-specific groups).

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

1. What happens when we obey the voice of the Lord? What happens if we listen to bad voices?
2. Why is there evil in the world? How can we have hope?
3. How can we trust God has our best in mind? (Romans 8:32; Acts 2:23-24; Revelation 13:8)
4. Why do you sometimes give into temptation (disobedience, lying, gossip, bitterness, etc.)? What are some examples? How can you fight against temptation?

NEXT STEPS

- Spend time meditating on how you have been tempted in the past, and think of lies you have believed from the devil. Pray that God would strengthen you to endure the flaming darts of the evil one.
- Reach out to someone you know who is ensnared or struggling with sin. Pray for them, encourage them with the truth, and exhort them to flee from sin.

