

More Than A Carpenter

Discussion Group Guide

Chapter 1: My Story

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) Josh McDowell's quest for "happiness and fulfillment" ended with him describing his life as "lost, meaningless, lousy, no direction or control" and literally "hell" (pp. 1-3). Can you identify with any of these words?
- 2) What caused Josh to consider Christianity?
- 3) Josh stated "I'm fed up with religion. I'm fed up with the church. I'm fed up with the Bible." (See p. 5.) In what sense is Christianity not a religion? Does this affect your view of Christianity?
- 4) How did Josh plan to strike a deathblow to Christianity? (See p. 6.)
- 5) Like Josh, how can someone go from believing that Christians are "walking idiots" to the place where he confessed that "to remain intellectually honest, I had to admit that the Old and New Testament documents were the most reliable writings in all of antiquity?" (See p. 7.)

Chapter 2: What Makes Jesus So Different?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) Why can people talk about God and not get upset, and yet when Jesus is mentioned, things can get tense?
- 2) How does the New Testament present Jesus as God? (See pp. 10-12.)
- 3) For what crime was Jesus Christ on trial, and why was His trial unique? (See p. 24.)
- 4) Is it clear in your mind that Jesus claimed to be God? Why or why not (Hebrews 1:8, Titus 2:13)?

Chapter 3: Lord Liar Or Lunatic?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) C.S. Lewis comments, "...A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse." (See p. 28.)

What would you say to a statement that says Jesus Christ was a great moral teacher and certainly a great leader, but nothing more (John 10:30-33)?

- 2) What other alternatives do we have to Jesus being either a liar, a lunatic or Lord?
- 3) Does it make any sense for Jesus to have been a liar or just someone who was sincerely wrong about who he was? Why or why not? (See Schaff quote on pp. 31-32.)
- 4) Why would someone not be able to accept Jesus as Lord if they clearly believe He was neither a liar or lunatic?

Chapter 4: What About Science?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) What may be the true motive of skeptics who ask for scientific proof for the claims of Christianity? (See p. 41.)
- 2) Why is "scientific proof" not the only way to determine if something is true or not? (See pp. 42-43.)
- 3) What is "legal-historical proof," and can you give an example? (See p. 43.)

Chapter 5: The Challenge of the New Atheism

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) Is atheism a new perspective?
- 2) Have you read any of the following books: Sam Harris' **Letter to a Christian Nation**, Richard Dawkins' **The God Delusion** or Christopher Hitchens' **God Is Not Great**? How have these

“New Atheists” differed in their views from past atheists such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Bertrand Russell?

- 3) How have you been influenced by their views?
- 4) Is science at war with religion?
- 5) At the end of chapter 5 on page 62, Josh McDowell quotes Matthew 22:37 and then makes a comment about our minds. (“Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and *all your mind*’” (*emphasis mine*), and then Josh says, “We’ve been given minds enabled by the Holy Spirit to know God, as well as hearts to love him and wills to choose him. We need to function in all three areas to have a full relationship with God and to glorify him.”) How has this realization changed your life?

Chapter 6: Are The Bible Records Reliable?

Discussion Questions: (30 minutes)

- 1) What surprised you most in this chapter about the reliability of the New Testament?
- 2) Why do you think our culture is so quick to believe the false “facts” given to them (by professors, scientists, intellectuals, media, etc.) that the Bible isn’t a reliable document?
- 3) Do you think the same objective standard of testing the validity of literature should be applied to secular and biblical literature? Why or why not?
- 4) Describe how the Bibliographical Test (p. 70), the Internal Evidence Test (p. 77) and the External Evidence Test (p. 84) differ. Why is it unreasonable for the New Testament to be a collection of myths and legends? What was the approximate period of time between the New Testament events and the existing copies of the New Testament (See p. 65-66)?
- 5) Why is it important that the New Testament accounts of Jesus were recorded by men who had been either eyewitnesses of events or who related others’ eyewitness accounts (Luke 1:1-4)?
- 6) Regarding writings of antiquity, the time between an historical event and the earliest existing copy of that event is on average a 1000 year span. Caesar’s Gallic War, written about 50 B.C., and its first copy around 900 A.D leaves almost a thousand year span. The latest events of the New Testament between 80-90 A.D. and its first copy in 125 A.D. leaves about a 35 year span. How does this one fact affect your view of the credibility of the New Testament?

Chapter 7: Who Would Die For A Lie?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) How do we account for the radical change in the lives of the disciples from cowards in hiding to bold proclaimers of Christ within a few weeks?
- 2) How did most of the disciples die? Looking back at the page (90) that describes the methods of death of the apostles, which one would you choose (other than John) as a way to die?
- 3) Have you ever known anyone who would die for a lie if he/she knew it was a lie?
- 4) Did the disciples have to be convinced that Jesus was who He said He was? What helped most in convincing them (I Corinthians 15:4-7)? How was Paul convinced himself (1 Corinthians 15:8)?
- 5) Why do you suppose no historian, no eyewitness, no antagonist has recorded having seen the body of Christ after his death?

Chapter 8: What Good Is A Dead Messiah?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) What was the national attitude in Israel about the Messiah during the time of Christ? Would the attitude of the disciples before the death of Christ been different from the people around them (Mark 10:35-38)?
- 2) Jesus warned His disciples that he would suffer many things and die (Mark 10:32-35). Based on their response after His crucifixion, do you think they were prepared for His death?
- 3) Can you describe the vision the disciples had for the Messiah while Jesus walked with them in the flesh? Was their vision too big or too small? Explain.
- 4) Their national patriotism had led the disciples to look for a political Messiah for their nation and with His death their vision died. Speculate on what the disciples must have been thinking as Jesus revealed Himself alive over the next 40 days after His resurrection.

Chapter 9: Did You Hear What Happened To Saul?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) Why is it so amazing that Paul became such an influential leader of Christianity?
(See pp. 76-77.)
- 2) Is there someone you know who you think, like Paul, would never place his/her faith in Christ? Why not?
- 2) How were the experiences for the disciples after Christ's resurrection similar to Paul's?
(See p. 118, also 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8.)
- 4) How would you describe the difference between how Josh states that Paul proclaimed the gospel out of necessity and not choice? (See p. 118, also 1 Corinthians 9:16.)
- 5) Describe how Paul's life was changed after receiving Christ? (See pp. 118-120.)

Chapter 10 Can You Keep A Good Man Down?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) How important is the resurrection to the whole concept of Christianity? (See Josh's response on p. 125, also 1 Corinthians 15:14.)
- 2) Describe the beating and death of Christ? (See pp. 126-127.)
- 3) Of the alternative theories listed in opposition to the resurrection of Christ, are any them reasonable? (See pp. 130-136.)
- 4) As you consider the objective evidence for the resurrection and the alternative theories presented, what takes more faith--"Christ rose from the dead," "someone stole the body," etc.?
- 5) Because of what Christ has accomplished through the resurrection, what ways can it bring about change in your life? (See p. 140.)

Chapter 11: Will The Real Messiah Please Stand Up?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) The Old Testament contains about 60 major prophecies concerning the Messiah and probably 270 additional references to Him. How many variables in your address does it take to single you out from everyone in the world (6 or 7)? Do you think God was making it crystal clear who His Chosen One was? If so, why would He want it clear? (See pp. 119-120 regarding Paul's "message" and p. 143.)
- 2) Share some of the "address" details that God gave us for the Messiah. (See pp. 145-146.)
- 3) The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. How can it show that the prophecies about the coming Messiah could not have been written down during or after the life of Christ? (See p. 143.)
- 4) Some people claim Jesus deliberately attempted to fulfill the Jewish prophecies. Name several prophecies that were beyond the control of Christ to fulfill. (See p. 149.)
- 5) The greatest prophecy of all for those who will accept it is of new life through the Messiah. What do the verses Ezekiel 36:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 mean? (See p. 150.)

Chapter 12: Isn't There Some Other Way?

Discussion Questions: (20 minutes)

- 1) How are the attributes of God different from the attributes you and I might adopt for ourselves? (See p. 1152.)
- 2) How would you describe what sin is? (See p. 152, also 1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10-18, 23; 6:23.)
- 3) Because God is loving but also holy, righteous and just, sin cannot survive in His presence. What dilemma does this present to God and how did He solve it--satisfy His love without sacrificing His justice? (See pp. 1153-154, also John 1:14 and Philippians 2:6-7.)
- 4) Jesus lived a sinless life and yet was executed on a Roman cross 2000 years ago. God accepted Jesus' death as payment or satisfaction for our sins ("the wages of sin is death" – Romans 6:23). Why is it that Buddha, Mohammad, Confucius or any other religious or ethical leader could not have "paid" for our sins? (See p. 157.)

- 5) How does the “speeding illustration” relate to you spiritually? Have you had someone step down off their judgment seat and pay the penalty for your crime (sins)? What does it mean to “accept” their payment for you? (See pp. 155-156.)

Chapter 13: He Changed My Life

Discussion Questions: (25 minutes)

- 1) What distinguishes Christianity from all world religions? (See p. 166.)
- 2) Are there any questions or doubts you have had about the deity of Christ, the resurrection, or the Bible that have been clarified for you in this book?
- 3) Why do you think it is so difficult for people to receive or accept help from others? Do you find this principle true in your own life?
- 4) In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, “Behold (look) I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in...” Even though Josh knew intellectually that Christianity was true, what kept him from inviting (accepting) Christ into His life? Can you relate to this? (See pp. 159-160.)
- 6) Once Josh accepted Christ, what were some of the changes Christ made in his life? (See pp. 162-166.)
- 6) Josh came to the realization that Christianity was not a myth, a fantasy, or a hoax played on the simple-minded, but rock solid truth. What is your thought process at this point concerning Christ? If you have accepted Him, how has this study affected your faith? If you have not accepted Christ, what is keeping you from doing so?