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A CONVERSATION
ABOUT FAITH

Group Discussion Guide

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Group Discussion Guide

God. Faith. Life. What is the point?

Whether you are a lifelong Christian, someone new to the faith, or a non-Christian who is just exploring God, there are times we all have questions about the bigger issues of life. Sometimes, those questions are so big, we aren't sure where to even start.

This series, which is based on a concept developed by the team at North Point Christian Church in Atlanta, is designed to help you find or rediscover your starting point in Christianity.

In short, Starting Point can impact your life wherever you are on the faith spectrum. It is designed to get us all thinking about some of the bigger issues of faith and life in a safe setting where we can ask any question, share any opinion, and trust that we are not alone.

This guide is filled with session summaries, key takeaways, and discussion questions designed to help you engage with this series in a deeper way. You can work through it on your own, but we recommend working through it with another person or group. The questions are simple but thought-provoking and will help you explore your own faith journey as well as learn more about others' faith journeys.

Video recordings of Brian Gerard's sermons in this series can be found at MiddletownChristian.org/Sermons.

Something Happened

Session 1

It may surprise you, but the Bible was never really intended to be the starting point for our faith. Instead, there is something far more powerful and more important that needs to be discovered first.

In this session, we explore where the starting point of our faith should be and why it is so important that we get this right.

Scripture

Acts 17:16-33

Key Take Away

The starting point for the Christian faith is a question: Who is Jesus?

Discussion Questions

1. What did your faith look like growing up?
2. What do you associate with the Bible?
3. How has your view of God changed during different seasons of your life?

Coming to Terms

Session 2

There is a word out there that no Christian really likes to talk about, at least when it comes to our own lives. But when it concerns others, some of us talk about it far too often.

That word is SIN!

What if the way we often use that word is not the way Jesus intended it to be used at all? In this session, we explore that possibility - one that just might give us a new Starting Point in how we talk about and deal with the concept of sin.

Scripture

Matthew 5:20-22, 27-28; John 3:17

Key Take Aways

- Jesus raised the behavioral standard so high that no one could make a passing grade.
- God is on an endless pursuit to restore God's relationship with sinners.
- Jesus never minimized the seriousness of sin, but he did not condemn sinners.

Discussion Questions

1. Where have you experienced or observed the inadequacy of labeling something a "mistake"?
2. What do you associate with the word sin?
3. How do you react to the idea of being called a sinner?

Trusting the Promises

Session 3

From the time we are children, we are taught to trust God and God's promises for our life. Some of us were even given Promise Books that were meant to serve as a guide book for our life. But what happens when the promises on those pages, or even in the pages of scripture, don't seem to stand up to the realities of adult life?

In this session, we explore that tension and discover where we might find a better Starting Point for trusting in the promises of God.

Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3; 15:6; Romans 10:9

Key Take Away

- The introduction of sin into the human experience left God with a choice. Instead of walking away, God waded into the mess.
- The righteousness available to Abraham through faith is also available to us.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you believe what you believe?
2. When have your personal experiences ever caused you to doubt or change your beliefs?
3. If you could hear one promise from God, what would you want it to be?
4. How do you know when someone really believes something?
5. What do you believe it takes for God to accept someone?

The Role of Rules

Session 4

Rules. Every religion has them. Every follower of religion has mixed feelings about them. Some love them while some have left the church because of them.

In this session, we explore the role of rules in our faith and gain a new Starting Point in our relationship with them.

Scripture

Exodus 20:1-2

Key Take Aways

- Rules always assume a relationship.
- God's rules didn't establish God's relationship with Israel; they were a confirmation of God's relationship with Israel.

Discussion Questions

1. In general, how do you respond to rules? Do you tend to keep them or break them?
2. What were the most important rules for you growing up?
3. Which rules are still important for you today?
4. What value do the Ten Commandments have today?
5. What rules do you think matter most to God?

Ultimate Sacrifice

Session 5

Very early on in our faith, most of us were taught that Jesus died for our sins. That idea is found throughout scripture. But what if there is more to it than that? What if Jesus' death is about more than just our sins?

In this session, we explore that possibility, one that could lead to a new Starting Point in understanding both the sins that haunt us and the deep love God has for us.

Scripture

John 8:34; Colossians 2:13-15

Key Take Away

- Experiencing personal forgiveness for personal sin is often the starting point for personal faith.
- In all of history, only Jesus offered himself as the answer to the question of what to do when we can't forgive ourselves. You don't have to forgive yourself; yourself has already been forgiven.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about the idea that you need to forgive yourself?
2. Was Jesus' death necessary?
3. According to this section, what is required of you to receive God's forgiveness? What do you believe it takes for God to forgive?
4. Do you ever struggle to accept God's forgiveness through Christ?

The Resurrection

Session 6

We all know the story of Easter and the empty tomb, but what do we really know about grace?

In this session, we explore the reality of grace and what it really means for our lives. Ultimately, we proclaim that as important as Easter is, it is not the culmination of our faith - it is merely the Starting Point.

Scripture

Ephesians 1:8-9

Key Take Aways

- People often assume that God's grace is earned or merit-based.
- With God, grace is the rule, not the exception.

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you feel the effects of merit-based rewards world most?
2. How does that influence/relate to/differ from your view of God?
3. When is a time where your actions merited a negative response but you were let "off the hook"? How did you feel about it?
4. How would you explain the grace of God to someone else?

Something to Believe In

Session 7

Faith is one often of the most abused and confused concepts in religion. At the same time, faith is one of the most powerful forces known to humankind. But what is faith? How can we trust the message our faith proclaims?

Are you sure you know the answers to the above?

This message offers a new Starting Point for understanding faith and its power.

Scripture

Hebrews 11:1

Key Take Away

Faith is one of the most powerful tools at humanity's disposal.

Discussion Questions

1. How do your environment, family, and friends impact what you believe?
2. Have you ever changed what you believe? How did that happen?
3. Is there any belief or cause you are willing to die for?
4. How central is the resurrection to the validity of the Christian message?

Who Do You Say I Am?

Session 8

As the last session in this series, this sermon takes us back to the question with which we began, “Who is Jesus?”

This time, we dig quite a bit deeper into what that question means for our lives of faith. Additionally, we explore a new way of viewing the story that led to Apostolic Succession, a tradition deeply important to many churches. Finally, we ask the question that will hopefully lead to a new Starting Point for each of us.

Scripture

Matthew 16:17-18, Ephesians 2:19-20, 1 Peter 2:4-7, Romans 10:9

Key Take Aways

- Christianity requires faith in a person. This is why for anyone investigating Christianity the first question that must be answered is who is Jesus?
- Your uniqueness finds its fullest and best expression when connected to God’s divine purpose in the world.
- The church began as a growing gathering of people who believed Jesus was the Son of God.

Discussion Questions

1. When have you felt the need for deeper meaning in your life?
2. What do you see as your gifts and talents?
3. What do you think of the idea that God has a plan for your life?
4. What do you associate with the word “church”?
5. What would your response be if Jesus were to ask you, “who do you say that I am?”
6. Where could you see your gifts and passions being used in the church?



MiddletownChristian.org
Sunday Worship
In-Person at 8:30, 9:50, & 11:10 AM
Online at 11 AM