



Asking questions is an act of faith. Many people today are raising serious doubts about God, the Bible, and Christian beliefs. What if, instead of feeling threatened by our critics, Christians addressed the skeptic's questions as the beginning of a potentially life-changing journey? Join us as we wrestle with - and answer - some of the most profound questions that people are asking about faith today!

Group Discussion Guide: April 7th

Opening Question - Think about a time when you engaged in a meaningful and/or intense conversation about faith and doubt. Maybe you were a Christian having a discussion with a skeptic, or perhaps you were the skeptic, grilling a believer. How did that conversation go? What went well, what didn't, and why?

Read Matthew 28:16-20. This passage illustrates Jesus' mandate that his followers should go and make disciples of all nations. How does this mandate apply to us today in a culture where "evangelism" and "proselytizing" are discouraged? Why do you think so many Christians are uncomfortable rising to Jesus' invitation?

In **Matthew 5:13-14**, Jesus told his followers, "You are the salt of the earth..." and "saltiness" can be a helpful analogy for Christian evangelism today. Let's think about the word "**SALT**" as our framework to have more heartfelt conversations.

S _____!

Read Romans 10:13-14. Why is "showing up" such an important first step toward having more heartfelt conversations? Why do you think many Christians find it hard to "show up" for these conversations?

A _____!

Read Proverbs 18:13. Can you think of a time when you asked a really good question that ended up turning into a great conversation? What did you ask? Why are questions like this so transformational?

L _____!

Read Matthew 9:37-38. What role should prayer play in our efforts to have more heartfelt conversations with unbelievers? What happens when we forget this step?

T _____!

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20. Have you ever shared your salvation story with a skeptic/unbeliever? If so, how did it go? If not, what is holding you back?

As a “case study”, let’s think about one of the most common questions that many skeptics are asking these days. **“Why do we need God at all?”**

Once you “show up” for the conversation, what questions might you ask the person who doubts that believing in God matters at all?

How would you pray for someone who has such doubts about the difference that faith makes?

How might you tell your faith story in a way that specifically responds to this question, and that illustrates the difference that faith has made in your life?

News & Events:



All Women Are Invited: Women's Retreat

On Saturday, May 11 (10am to 2:30pm), we're excited to host a special women's retreat with guest speaker, Wendy Speake! This retreat is open to women of ALL ages and will include worship, fellowship, a beautiful craft to take home after, and two sessions with Wendy. Register: thestory.church/retreat



Upcoming Partnership Course

If you're ready to commit to The Story Church as a Partner, our next three-week course begins on Monday, April 15 at 6:30pm. Visit this link to learn what it means to be a Partner and register for an upcoming course.: thestory.church/partnership



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Group Discussion Guide: April 14

Opening Question - Let's begin with everybody's favorite icebreaker game: *2 Truths and a Lie*. Each person in the group should think of two interesting things about themselves that are TRUE and fabricate one LIE as well. After each person shares their "three things", the rest of the group can try to guess which one is the lie.

We're going to be thinking and talking about TRUTH today. Try and think of something that you once believed to be true, but you no longer do. Write about it here, and if you're comfortable, share it with your group.

A recent Gallup poll reported that 2 out of 3 Americans believe *there is no such thing as absolute truth*. Why do you think belief in the concept of objective truth is on the decline today, and what might some of the consequences of this sort of *relativism* be?

Read John 18:28-38. What do we know about Pontius Pilate?

What is so extraordinary about his three-word question, "What is truth?" What might have motivated a man like Pontius Pilate to ask such a question?

Have you ever been in a similar head-space as Pilate was in this story - conflicted and confused about even an elementary concept like *truth*? If not,

perhaps you've known someone who has. How do otherwise intelligent people wind up denying the obvious, common-sense reality of truth itself? This is where last week's *SALT* acronym may come in handy. As a reminder, the purpose of this series isn't simply to provide Christians with factual talking points, but to equip us to have more heartfelt conversations with unbelievers about God. Last week we learned that, in these conversations, it can be helpful to remember to:

S. SHOW UP!

A. ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN!

L. LIFT THEM UP IN PRAYER!

T. TELL YOUR STORY!

Oftentimes, when we take the time to show up, ask questions, and listen, people will share with us the deeper reasons for their resistance to the concept of absolute Truth. Here are three common reasons people often reject objective Truth claims:

1. **PEER PRESSURE.** Think of one example you've seen of a person who denied the Truth because they wanted to be accepted (or they feared being rejected) by others. (see Matthew 16:26, Proverbs 4:14-15)
2. **PERSONAL PREFERENCE.** How might a person's patterns of sin deceive them into believing that truth is relative? (see Romans 1:25)
3. **PAST PAIN.** How can the trauma of our past distort our understanding of Truth? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:15)

Read John 8:32. What is the Gospel's answer to our culture's anti-Truth epidemic?

Why does it matter that, according to Christianity, TRUTH is a Person (as opposed to a platform, political ideology, religion, etc.)? What difference does it make?

How has knowing Jesus as a person changed your understanding of Truth?



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Group Discussion Guide: April 21

If you look back through your life has your view of the Bible changed over time? When did you trust the Bible the most, and why?

Why should anyone trust the Bible?

According to a recent Gallup poll, around _____ of all Americans believe that the Bible "is a collection of legends, fables, history, and moral precepts recorded by man,". Only _____ of Americans believe the Bible is "the actual word of God and is to be taken literally", and _____ believe that the Bible is "inspired by God" but is not to be taken literally. Which category would you say you're in today, and why?

Let's examine what the Bible says about...*the Bible!* **Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and Hebrews 4:12.** What do these passages say about Scripture, and how should this shape the way Christians approach the Bible?

Think for a moment about your most skeptical friends and family (or perhaps even yourself): what are some of their (or your) most pressing questions or objections when it comes to the Bible?

One of the most common objections to the Bible stems from the morally objectionable material it seems to contain and promote. For example, **read Psalm 137:9.** What does this verse of Scripture appear to be saying?

Now read the rest of Psalm 137. What is this Psalm really about in context?

The Bible is full of examples of God extending mercy and promising justice to people who've been brutally oppressed. (ex., Psalm 34:18, Deut 27:19, Isaiah 61:8, Luke 4:18-19) How should this change the way we understand Psalm 137:9 as part of God's Word?

Some attempt to discredit or diminish the Bible by suggesting that Jesus, and not the Bible, is the Word of God. So, which is it: is the Bible the Word of God, or is it Jesus? Both? Neither? Why? (ref. John 1:1, 14, Matthew 5:17-19, Matthew 24:35)

Most Christians would say they trust Jesus because "the Bible tells me so." While this is perfectly valid, others have come to trust the Bible because *Jesus tells me so*. What is the difference, and why is this so important - especially in our present age of skepticism and cynicism about religion?

How can you apply S.A.L.T. to your conversations with people who struggle to accept and understand the Bible?

News & Events:



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Parents Night Out

Take the night off while your kids hang with our StoryKids team! Friday May 17 from 5:30-8:30pm for children ages 3-10 Register for \$15 per child today: thestory.church/pno



Summer Discipleship at The Story

Registration is open for our summer discipleship efforts for all ages, including VBS, student camps, and our adult weekly Bible study for six weeks. Learn more and register today: thestory.church/summer



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Group Discussion Guide: April 28, 2024

Opening Question - The great Christian preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right." Think of something you've been "almost right" about. What was it, and how/when did you decide that being "almost right" wasn't right enough?

We're going to be thinking and talking about RELIGION today by addressing the frequently-asked question: "**Is Jesus the only way to God?**" Why do you think people ask this question? What deeper issues or concerns lie at the heart of it?

Many Christians struggle with this question because it presents us with something of a false dilemma. Biblically speaking, "Is Jesus the only way to God?" isn't the best question to ask because:

JESUS IS NOT JUST _____.
OR EVEN JUST _____.
JESUS IS _____!

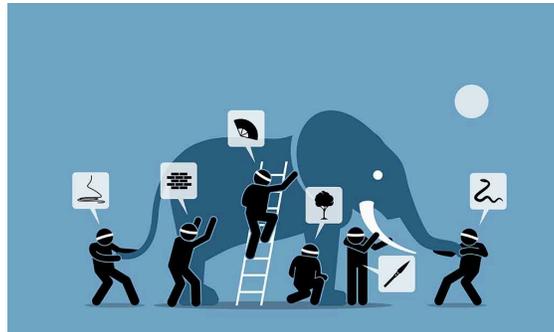
Read John 14:5-7. Here, Jesus famously calls himself "the way," but he does so while making an even more radical claim about himself. What was it?

What is the difference between the *religious* claim that "Jesus is the way to God" and the *theological* claim that "Jesus is God"? Why does it matter?

Read 1 Timothy 2:3-5. For whom did Jesus give his life as a ransom? What does this say about our God?

Another question that runs adjacent to “Is Jesus the only way to God?” compares Christianity with other world religions - **“Aren’t all religions basically the same?”** Over half of all Americans believe the answer is yes. While many religions share similar core values, why is it logically impossible for all religions to be equally true?

A common illustration people will make to support the argument that all religions are the same is the “Six Blindfolded Men and the Elephant” meme.



What is true about this meme, and what is misleading?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. How is Christianity different from all other religions - be they monotheistic, pagan, etc.?

_____ IS WHAT SETS CHRISTIANITY APART

What makes grace so amazing? Have you ever experienced it? If so, how has grace changed you?

Throughout this series, we’ve tried to apply “S.A.L.T.” (Matthew 5:13) to our interactions with unbelievers in hopes of pursuing more heartfelt conversations. To jog your memory, “S.A.L.T.” is:

- S. SHOW UP!**
- A. ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN!**
- L. LIFT THEM UP IN PRAYER!**
- T. TELL YOUR STORY!**

When it comes specifically to those who struggle with today’s question about the exclusive claims of Christianity, how can you apply S.A.L.T. to your conversations with them?



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Discussion Guide: May 5, 2024

“Why are Christians So Un-Christian?”

What is hypocrisy, generally? More specifically, what is “Christian hypocrisy”?

How have you seen the negative or damaging effects of Christian hypocrisy in your life and/or in the lives of people you know? What happened?

What are the two types of Christian hypocrisy identified in the Bible?

1. Hypocrisy before _____. (see Matthew 6:1)
2. Hypocrisy before _____. (see 2 Timothy 3:5)

What are the temptations and dangers of each type of hypocrisy?

What are some potential pitfalls of calling out Christian hypocrisy?

Read Matthew 7:3-5. What stands out to you about Jesus’ teaching on hypocrisy?

Read Matthew 23:13-28. What habits or tendencies did Jesus call out in this lengthy anti-hypocrisy diatribe?

How can Christians fight hypocrisy?

1. _____ (See James 4:10)

How does humility help to destroy hypocrisy?

2. _____ (See Proverbs 28:13)

How can honesty about our sins disable hypocrisy's power?

3. _____ (Read 1 Peter 1:16)

How is the pursuit of holiness a hypocrisy killer?

Take a moment to consider some of the specific ways you've been hypocritical. If you're studying alone, confess your hypocrisy to God. If you are in a group, take this opportunity to courageously confess your hypocrisy to one another.

Throughout this series, we've tried to apply "S.A.L.T." (Matthew 5:13) to our interactions with unbelievers in hopes of pursuing more heartfelt conversations. To jog your memory, "S.A.L.T." is:

S. SHOW UP!

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T. TELL YOUR STORY!

When it comes specifically to those who struggle with today's question about the hypocrisy of Christians, how can you apply S.A.L.T. to your conversations with them?

Q&A! Write your questions and reflections here: