

**IT STARTS
WITH A
QUESTION**



**SERMON NOTES AND
DISCUSSION BOOKLET**



It Starts With A Question - Sermon Notes And Discussion Booklet

This booklet was created as a ministry of Maple Ridge Baptist Church. It can be used, reproduced and distributed with permission.

©2015 Maple Ridge Baptist Church

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*, ©2011 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



HOW SHOULD I USE THIS BOOK?

Though it is mostly empty at the moment, you never know the difference this little booklet could make. The following pages could literally change your life or someone else's life. It happens all the time these days.

This booklet is part of a sermon series that will require some work. You will be asked to do some serious thinking and some serious writing. During Maple Ridge Baptist Church's 11 part series, "It Starts With A Question", you will wrestle with some of Christianity's most difficult objections. It is our hope that by the conclusion of this series, you will end up with pages full of notes, some good questions to discuss and a satisfying, well documented response.

In order to do this, you need to do a couple of things: You need to show up to church each week. Don't forget to bring this booklet each week along with your favourite pen. Write down the points from the sermon, interact with the questions provided in these pages, and be sure you record any questions that require further investigation.

Next, we encourage everyone to join an MRBC Community Group. These are groups of fairly normal people who meet in homes throughout the week to discuss the sermon, life, and anything else that comes up. It is a place to explore some of your questions

along with people who have probably already asked them or are asking them now. Don't miss out on this chance to join a group right away. It is not too late. Check out our website: www.ridgebaptist.ca/ministries/community-groups or send an email to: jeremy@ridgebaptist.ca.



WHAT STARTS WITH A QUESTION?

Why does God allow so much suffering and evil in the world?

Why does God seem so hidden at times?

Do all religions lead to God?

These kinds of questions change lives. For some, questions begin a spiritual journey that leads to a relationship with Jesus Christ. For others, it leads them away from Christianity to a life of skepticism and doubt. Questions are powerful things. We need to take them seriously because they can determine our destinies. You might be surprised to know that we all have questions about the Christian faith. People are usually surprised to find out that others have been asking the same kinds of questions for thousands of years. Thankfully, Christians have been responding to them for just as long. That response is what we call, "Christian Apologetics."

Apologetics is the science and art of helping people see that the claims of Christianity are not make-believe myths but actually true and very reasonable to accept. It is a science because we are talking about timeless truths that never change. It is also an art because it is personal and takes some creativity to craft and share understandable analogies that people can wrap their minds around. The verse that inspires the task of Christian apologetics is found in 1 Peter 3:15:

But in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being 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.

Perhaps the most famous of Jesus' disciples, Peter commanded the early Christians to always be ready to "give a reason" for the hope they had found in Jesus Christ. This Greek word for defense is, apologia. That is where "apologetics" comes from. An apologia is still used in the Greek language today. It gives the picture of one standing before a court and defending a claim. Christians make claims like "God exists," "Jesus is alive" and "The Bible comes from God" and many others. Christians have to be able to defend these claims. Do you know the Christian "apologia" for these claims?

This series is for you because it will provide you with reasons why Christianity is intellectually credible and yet also satisfying to our experience. If you are exploring Christianity for the first time, you are encouraged to really wrestle with the material. If you are a Christian, I hope that your faith will be strengthened; that you will see that we are Christians not because our parents told us about Christianity or because of the time and place in history we were born in or because it feels right. We are Christians because the gospel is true.

We have nothing to be ashamed of and everything to offer the world.

IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE?

Sam is an atheist who is certain that modern science has eliminated our need for believing in God. He would love to believe in the idea that there is some “higher power” that created and governs the universe. The truth is, he just doesn’t see the evidence that God is real. Is belief in God some kind of wishful thinking or are there reasons to believe that he truly exists?

Discussing the existence of God can be tricky at times. Sam’s demand for absolute proof cannot be met. With God, we are not talking about a mathematical equation that can deliver 100% certainty. Then again, God’s existence has never been disproven either. What are we left with? Put simply, we are left with a bunch of clues. Those clues lead to a very compelling case for God’s existence. When taken together, it seems very reasonable to conclude that, indeed, God does exist. It makes the most sense of the world we observe. It also explains why so many people do not need convincing arguments to believe in God. They just do. For many thinkers like Sam, they need to see the evidence. Thankfully, there is no shortage of clues to offer them. He will find them in the beginning of the universe; the fine-tuning of Earth for life; within information and order; his moral inclinations; and in the words and work of Jesus Christ. There is no shortage of evidence for God’s existence. It’s really what we do with the evidence that matters most.



SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- We are not looking for proofs for God, just evidence (or clues) for his existence.
- The beginning of the universe is excellent evidence for God, not against him.
- The universe and the Earth are fine-tuned for human life.
- Such precision could not have come about by chance.

FURTHER READING:

- Gunning For God: Why The New Atheists Are Missing The Target (John Lennox)
- On Guard (William Lane Craig)
- Check out the growing Intelligent Design movement in the work of Michael Behe, William Dembski and Stephen Meyer
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison) *Chapters 4 and 5*

In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't.

Blaise Pascal
Pensees

Key Bible Passage:

Romans 1:18-20

Psalm 24:1

Questions For Discussion:

1. How would you respond to someone who says to you: "There is no evidence for God's existence."?
2. Read Romans 1:20. What do you think the Apostle Paul was talking about when he said that God's attributes are clearly perceived? What do you see in the world that could point to the existence of God?
3. What do you think is a reasonable amount of evidence that one can demand in order to confirm or deny God's existence?
4. Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." Knowing that God has already revealed some of himself in his created world, what is the role of the kind of "faith" the writer of this passage is talking about?
5. What difference does believing in a Creator make in our lives? In the world?

WHY DOES GOD SEEM SO HIDDEN?

Lindsay grew up in a Christian family. She was your classic Sunday school answer-toting kid. In high school she held to a simple faith. Her family believed in Jesus - so did she. It was that simple. After university, Lindsay struggled with relationships and where her life was headed. She prayed very hard for God to lead her. She prayed for a husband. No husband came. She prayed for a dream job. She didn't get it. She prayed for many things during this season of life. It seems like none of those prayers were answered. What happened? In honest moments, she still struggles with her seemingly countless unanswered prayers. Why does God seem so hidden? Perhaps she would learn to trust God more if she could get an answer to these questions.



If you were God, what kind of a relationship would you want with the people you made? Surely, with all the power in the universe (and more) at your disposal, you could do anything. You could blow them away into submission with physical flashes of your glory and grandeur. Or, like a genie, you could grant every wish they made. Or you could be an impersonal force that they have to try to connect with and use for good or evil. Or you could reveal yourself like a father to a child. It would be a personal relationship based on learning to trust and growing in love. According to the Bible, this is what God has chosen. Though we do not always like it, we can learn to trust that the Father knows best.

“Faith is not a leap in the dark; it’s the exact opposite. It’s a commitment based on evidence... It is irrational to reduce all faith to blind faith and then subject it to ridicule. That provides a very anti-intellectual and convenient way of avoiding intelligent discussion.”

Dr. John Lennox

Key Bible Passages:

John 14:8-11

Questions For Discussion:

1. Do you think that people need to seek God or do you think that God seeks us?
2. Why is the hiddenness of God such a deal-breaker for so many people's faith?
3. Why do you think people tend to focus on the hiddenness of God rather than exploring where he has revealed himself?
4. What does it mean that God “veils” himself? Do you think that this is a good thing? If you were God, would you veil yourself? Why or why not?
5. In what ways has God revealed himself to humanity? Do you think this is sufficient? Why or why not?
6. What does it look like to trust God even when we don’t feel like he is there?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Even though we do not always like the way God relates to us, any other way (genie, force, overwhelming presence) would not work.
- God relates to us like Shakespeare could relate to Hamlet. He writes himself into the story though is not limited to the story itself.
- Jesus is the revelation of God in human form.
- God has given us the witness of the Holy Spirit to live within us.

FURTHER READING:

- The God Who Is There (Francis Schaeffer)
- The Grand Weaver: How God Shapes Us Through the Events of Our Lives (Ravi Zacharias)
- Without A Doubt (Kenneth Samples)

WHO CAN SAY WHAT'S "RIGHT" AND "WRONG"?

Every year Tom wears a poppy for two straight weeks leading up to Remembrance Day. It is a big deal for him. He cannot understand how some people do not remember those who gave everything in the fight for the freedom we enjoy as Canadians. Those who fight for justice and against the forces of evil are heroes to Tom.

One day he had a conversation that left him deeply shaken. The man said that justice and evil were only in the eyes of the beholder. One who is a hero in one country is a villain in another. The man argued that what is considered “right” to one person could be “wrong” to another. The guy asked a compelling question: What human being has the authority to determine right and wrong for another human or culture or nation? Tom wasn’t sure how to answer this. Who has the right to determine “right” and “wrong”. Several years later, he still isn’t sure. However, that doesn’t mean that Tom will ever stop wearing his poppy.



Right and wrong, good and evil, are comparisons we use all the time. This week we will discuss the idea that these are not just arbitrarily chosen words but words that are rooted in the nature and character of God himself. God is the source of goodness from which we determine what is good. God is the source of truth from which we can evaluate what he has to say on what is right and wrong, good and evil. God is the Supreme authority who gets the last word on these common classifications.

“My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?...Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too — for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies...Consequently, atheism turns out to be too simple.”

C.S. Lewis
Mere Christianity

Key Bible Passages:

John 14:6, John 17:17

Questions For Discussion:

1. In the past week, have you seen anything going on around the world that you would deem “good”? What about something you would call “evil”? What authority do we have to declare something “good” or “evil”?
2. According to C.S. Lewis, why did his commitment to the existence of justice eventually lead him to commit to God?
3. Imagine if you saw someone speeding and texting while driving through a school zone. Is it judgmental to say that this behaviour is wrong? To whose authority do you appeal? Why do you think that people call Christians judgmental when they appeal to a higher authority like God?
4. Is there a way to affirm Christian morality without being obnoxious about it? How would you recommend that Christians do this in our culture today?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Straight sticks help us identify crooked sticks.
- God is the foundation on which we can stand and call things “right” and “wrong” or “good” and “evil”.
- Like the law of gravity, there is a law of morality and people know it intuitively. If there is a moral law, it follows that there must be a moral law-giver.

FURTHER READING:

- Mere Christianity (C.S. Lewis) *Chapters 1-3*
- Can Man Live Without God (Ravi Zacharias)
- On Guard (William Lane Craig)
- Can We Be Good Without God (Robert Buckman)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison) *Chapter 6*

IS CHRISTIANITY AGAINST MODERN SCIENCE?

Jared had his first experience with church back in high school when a friend invited him to a youth group event. He had a lot of fun, met some cool people and started coming to youth group on a regular basis. Jared had always prized himself as “a thinker”. He struggled with some of the thoughtless answers he received from pastors and youth leaders. During university, Jared stopped attending church altogether. Though he has fond memories of church, he wonders if Christianity can compete with all the advances in science over the years.



The truth is that Christianity does not conflict with science. Rather, they complement each other. That is, at least, the view held throughout most of the history of science. Johannes Kepler, Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, and Francis Bacon are just a few scientists of the highest level who held a firm conviction to both the findings of science and the teachings of Christianity. They believed it is necessary to study the two books of God's revelation: the book of his Word (the Bible) and the book of his world (the sciences). Christianity has a robust tradition of thinkers who have wrestled with these two books. Though people do not always agree how the two books work together, they are united in the belief that science has not, cannot and will not ever be able to disprove Christianity. Christianity, in fact, is the friendliest worldview to promote the study of science. It invites thinkers like Jared to join in the conversation.

“Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Law-giver.”

C.S. Lewis
Miracles

“Every one who is seriously engaged in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that the laws of nature manifest the existence of a spirit vastly superior to that of men, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble.”

Albert Einstein,
Dear Professor Einstein: Letters To And From Children

Key Bible Passages:

Psalm 19:1, 24:1

Questions For Discussion:

1. Psalm 19:1 proclaims that creation speaks of the glory of God. What can we learn about God from studying his creation?
2. Have you wrestled personally with this issue? If so, how would you describe the relationship between faith and science?
3. Can you give some examples of where the “conflict thesis” is most loudly preached? What happens when people embrace this idea?
4. Why do you think so many people accept the statement, “I do not believe in God because I believe in science.” Why doesn’t this statement work as a reason to not believe in God?
5. How were you challenged to look at the relationship between faith and science differently?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- If you hear about the relationship between Christianity and science, most of the time it is the conflict thesis driving it. We must be aware that there are different ways to understand their relationship.
- Just as understanding an iPhone does not disprove Steve Jobs, understanding the Earth does not disprove God.
- Within the realm of Christian orthodoxy, there are several ways to interpret Genesis 1. We must be charitable and loving to people who disagree with us.

FURTHER READING:

Because this topic goes very deep and broad, give yourself lots of time to develop a proper understanding of it. Remember that this subject is the topic of some people's PhD research!

- God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God? (John Lennox)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison) Chapter 3
- Science & Faith: Friends or Foes (C. John Collins)
- Navigating Genesis (Hugh Ross)

CAN WE TRUST AN OLD BOOK LIKE THE BIBLE?

Moses and the ten commandments. David and the giant. Noah and the ark. Jesus and the disciples. Does anyone actually think that these people really lived? Aren't these just a bunch of myths passed down through the ages? Adrian wonders how people in the 21st century can believe that these ancient stories actually happened. Furthermore, he can't figure out why people not only believe them, but they actually think that



somehow they still apply to our lives today! What kind of a book is the Bible? Is it just a collection of stories or did it originate from God himself? These are the kinds of questions that we must ask to determine if the Bible, the best-selling book of all time, is worth our time today.

Do you know anyone like Adrian? Many people have a hard time taking the Bible as the authoritative word of God. They have a hard time with authority in general - but authority from a book? Wasn't the Bible written by ancient men? Christians believe that while the Bible was indeed written by men, they were inspired by God who wanted us to know what he is like. A trustworthy God ensured we got a trustworthy book. When you take time to see what the Bible says about itself and how it has been carefully passed down from generation to generation, you can see that there is a very strong argument to be made that the Bible is both true and trustworthy. As a result, it is a very important book for us today.

Little by little, one city after another, one civilization after another, one culture after another, whose memories were enshrined only in the Bible, were restored to their proper places in ancient history by the studies of archaeologists... Nowhere has archaeological discovery refuted the Bible as history.

Dr. John Elder
Prophets, Idols and Diggers

Key Bible Passages:

2 Timothy 3:16

John 20:30-31

Questions For Discussion:

1. Why do you think that people struggle with the word “authority”? Do you think we should have the same struggles with the Bible being an authority over us? Could this be a factor motivating some people to look for reasons why they shouldn’t trust the Bible?
2. If someone asked you, “Why do you believe the Bible is the word of God?” how would you answer them?
3. Can you summarize the “Top-Down” argument for the trustworthiness of the Bible? What is the “Bottom-Up” argument (*Hint: See John Elder quote above*)? Which one do find more convincing?
4. Protestant Reformer, Martin Luther, once said: “When Scripture speaks, God speaks.” How should this affect our reading of the Bible?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- The authority of the Bible can be established two ways: Top-Down and Bottom-Up.
- The Top-Down approach looks at the trustworthiness of God and his desire to communicate clearly to his people. Since God can be trusted, God's word can be trusted.
- The Bottom-Up approach looks at the Bible as a trustworthy historical document as told by eye-witnesses. The writers took their content seriously and the church has translated it and passed it down carefully. The Bible's content has never been proven false. Therefore, it is a trustworthy document.

FURTHER READING:

- The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (F.F. Bruce)
- Systematic Theology (Wayne Grudem)
- I Don't Have Enough Faith To Be An Atheist (Norman Geisler and Frank Turek)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison)
Chapter 8

HOW COULD SOMEONE BELIEVE IN A PLACE LIKE HELL?

Sarah grew up in church and cannot remember a single sermon that focussed on the topic of Hell. She can understand why. Sarah doesn't like to talk about it. She doesn't even like to think about a place of eternal punishment reserved for those who do not know God. Then



again, what would happen if we gave up the doctrine of Hell? Would everyone go to heaven? Even Hitler? What about people that want nothing to do with Jesus? Would they even want to be in heaven?

Hell is something that Sarah has learned to take seriously. So must we. We do not have to decide whether or not we *like* the doctrine of Hell, but rather to decide whether or not it is consistent with a God who could be both completely loving and still allow people to spend eternity in a place like Hell.

Christians believe in Hell because Jesus was an authority on the subject and he talked about Hell more than anyone else in the Bible. In its appropriate light, the doctrine of Hell does not point to a brutish, tyrannical god. Instead, it reveals a loving and gracious God who thankfully has standards which allow freedom of choice and justice for all. He has gone to great lengths so that anyone who does not want to be in Hell does not have to be. Such great lengths involved the death of his Son, Jesus Christ.

“In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of Hell is itself a question: ‘What are you asking God to do?’ To wipe out past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But he has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone?

Alas, I am afraid that is what He does.”

C.S Lewis

The Problem of Pain

Key Bible Passages:

Luke 16:19-31

Romans 6:23

Questions For Discussion:

1. Can you think of any other teaching today in Christianity that is more unpopular than that about Hell?
2. 1 Timothy 1:15 states that Jesus came to save sinners. What has typically been your understanding of what Jesus has saved us from?
3. What picture of Hell (slavery, darkness, loneliness, rebellion) mentioned in this chapter made the most sense to you?
4. Does the concept of Hell make you live any differently here on earth?
5. If there were no hell and we just ceased to exist after death, would you be interested in having a relationship with a loving God? Why or why not?
6. How does a lively belief in Hell fuel the call to be missionaries in our world, telling people about the good news of Jesus?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Those who insist there should be no hell are usually inconsistent. When pushed they admit they want Hell for some but not others. They would like to be the judge. The Bible affirms that that role is already taken.
- Because the doctrine of Hell is so shocking, it should result in a redoubled effort to tell people about the Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- It is loving to talk about Hell. Jesus was the most loving person in history and he talked about Hell often.

FURTHER READING:

- Erasing Hell (Francis Chan)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison)
Chapter 10

IF GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP EVIL?

David could not figure it out. The Christians he knew told him that the God was both good and powerful. This did not make sense with the world the 19th century Scottish philosopher observed. If God was good, surely he would not have allowed evil to wreak so much havoc as it does on the earth. God obviously doesn't care about cancers, poverty, earthquakes, tsunamis or diseases. If he did, David concluded, he would not allow it. David argued that such allowances were not characteristic of a good or powerful divine being. His opinions are still argued at length by many skeptics who wonder why the God of the Christians does not stop evil in the world.



The first thing David needed to know is that the reality of evil is not logically incompatible with God's existence. Christian philosopher, Alvin Plantinga, has successfully shown that evil and God are not logical contradictions. God and evil could logically co-exist *if God had reasons for allowing evil that we may or may not ever understand*. Secondly, it is only atop the foundation of theism (belief in God) that one can call something evil. Anyone who condemns evil and insists there is no God, is sawing off the branch on which they are sitting. Lastly, humanity is responsible for much of the evil we assign to God. The Christian notes that while God did not bring evil into the world, he is the one who is at work getting rid of it. God is actually at work today, ending the powers of evil! Of course, there is much more that can be said to David Hume and others. Whether or not they will listen is another story entirely.

“Let us remember that every worldview—not just Christianity's—must give an explanation or an answer for evil and suffering...this is not just a problem distinctive to Christianity.

It will not do for the challenger just to raise the question. “

Ravi Zacharias

Key Bible Passage:

James 1:2

1 Peter 4:12

Questions For Discussion:

1. We use the word “evil” all the time but seldom take the time to define it. How would you describe evil? What is the source of this definition?
2. Why do you think people come to different conclusions about God because of suffering and evil?
3. How has an experience of evil affected your view of God?
4. Why is it important to see that we actually need a worldview that includes God if we are going to have a strong foundation to call something or someone “evil”?
5. Read the above quote from Ravi Zacharias. Can you summarize what he is saying here? Why is evil a challenge to all worldviews?
6. According to Christianity, what has God done as a response to evil? Does this satisfy you?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

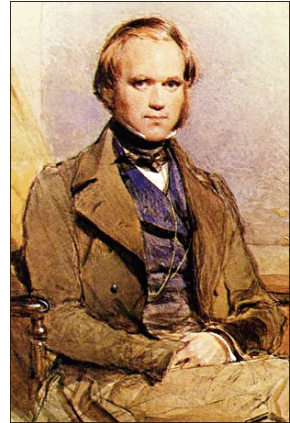
- “Evil” is best defined within a Christian worldview. You need a good God in order to say what is evil.
- If God has reasons for allowing evil, there are good reasons for why both evil and God can logically co-exist.
- As finite humans, we do not need to know those reasons, just that there are possible/plausible reasons for why God allows evil.
- The most simple reason is the “Free Will Defence”. God allows evil because he created humans with the ability to choose acts of evil.

FURTHER READING:

- God, Freedom and Evil (Alvin Plantinga)
- The Many Faces of Evil (John Feinberg)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison)
Chapter 12

IF GOD IS GOOD, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH SUFFERING?

Charles grew up in a home that prioritized church. His grandfather was an Anglican pastor who always dreamed that his grandson would follow in his footsteps in full-time ministry. Charles always believed in God, but as he grew up, he questioned what kind of a God he was. If he was as good as his grandpa said, why was there so much pain in the world? Everything seemed rooted in violence and pain. It was all around in nature and it hit his own family too. As Charles grew up, he suffered with a medical condition that continued to cause him great discomfort all



through his life. He prayed that God would take it away but he God never answered. The last straw was when he watched his ten year old daughter, Annie, die. The pain was so intense. Charles concluded that whoever this God was, there was no way that this deity would be a part of Charles' life.

This is the story of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the father of the theory of natural selection. For Darwin, the suffering in the world was too much for him to believe in a loving and all-powerful God. The problem is that when we look at the Christian response to suffering, we see that in Jesus Christ we see a God who is loving (He suffers with us and for us), and He is supremely powerful (He rose from the grave, defeating death and evil Himself). Rather than use suffering to run from this God, Charles Darwin should have run to Him.

“There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the parasitic wasp with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that the cat should play with mice.”

Charles Darwin

Letter to his friend, Asa Gray (1860)

Key Bible Passages:

Romans 5:3, 5:12, 8:18

Questions For Discussion:

1. Has there been a time of suffering in your life that has led you to ask the question, “Where is God?” How did you deal with it?
2. Consider the life of Charles Darwin as a case study. Why is suffering such a deal-breaker for people’s relationship with God?
3. Have you seen God use sorrow or suffering for good in your life?
4. Sunday reminds us all that our “present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18). What is the significance of Jesus’ resurrection when we’re talking about dealing with pain on earth?
5. A man named, J.W. Alexander has said of the Christian’s experience of suffering: “Each instant of present labour is to be graciously repaid with a million ages of glory.” Do you believe this future reward is sufficient to help us endure great suffering today? Why or why not?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Christianity contains the promise that whoever desires can live forever even in an eternity without pain or suffering. Heaven can even redeem our earthly suffering.
- Whatever suffering Jesus asks us to go through, we need to remember that he has gone through worse.
- Rather than use our pain to run from God, we should run to him. He is a Redeemer, Healer and Friend.

FURTHER READING:

- How Long, Oh Lord? (D.A. Carson)
- Suffering And The Sovereignty Of God. (John Piper and Justin Taylor)
- The Problem of Pain (C. S. Lewis)
- Making Sense Out of Suffering (Peter Kreeft)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison)
Chapter 13

DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO GOD?

After saving up for a whole year, Liz travelled around India for six amazing months. It was a great investment of her time and her hard earnings. The food was tasty. The people were amazing. And the culture was eye-opening. People



look at the world so differently there! She met people who see God totally differently from the way that she was taught to see Him. She met Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Christians there. Even though they don't usually get along, Liz could not help but wondering: Could they all know something about God that could teach the others? Maybe they are all leading to God but taking different paths to get there?

Liz's questions are certainly not unique to her situation. You don't have to travel across the world to find out that people believe many different things about God. You can find that in the grocery store or on the bulletin board at the nearest coffee shop. What we find when we study other religions is that on the surface they may look alike (they encourage devotion and good deeds) but they are fundamentally different at their core. That is, they say completely different things about God (if he exists at all), about what He is like and how we can have a relationship with Him.

Thinking logically, we know that when two things are different, they cannot be the same. Liz must remember that while many religions talk about God, since they say very different things, someone is wrong.

“Far from all religions leading to God, no religion can lead to God. He is too great. The creature cannot possibly discover the Creator unless He chooses to disclose Himself. That is one reason why all religions are bound to disappoint...Unlike other holy books, the Bible does not record the story of human beings in search of God, but of God in search of human beings.”

Michael Green

But Don't All Religions Lead To God?

Key Bible Passage:

John 14:6

Romans 10:9

Questions For Discussion:

1. What religions have you studied or been involved in? In what ways are they similar to Christianity? How are they different?
2. Do you think questions about “all religions” are really questions about the nature and character of God: (ie. *What is God like? How can we know anything about God? How can we have a relationship with Him?*)
3. Can all beliefs about God be equally valid? Why or why not?
4. What do you find appealing and not appealing about Christianity?
5. Read John 14:6. What would be the only qualification that would allow someone like Jesus to make a statement like that?
6. How have you been challenged during this important topic? What will your response be to this challenge?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Two people saying different things about the same thing cannot both be right. They can both be wrong but they cannot both be right.
- The major world religions may appear on the surface to be similar but fundamentally they are different.
- The major world religions disagree about the identity and claims of Jesus Christ. For Christians, that is a deal breaker in and of itself.

FURTHER READING:

- Jesus Among Other Gods (Ravi Zacharias)
- Neighbouring Faiths (Winfried Corduan)
This book is a helpful overview of the major world religions from a Christian worldview perspective.
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison)
Chapters 9-11

WHY DO CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

Nicholas Wolterstoff experienced shattering grief when his twenty-five year old son was killed in a mountain climbing accident. For Wolterstoff, the sting of death was immense. As a Christian he found comfort solely in the hope he found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death, though real and painful, was never to be the end of his or his son's story. To the grieving father, to believe in Christ's rising and death's dying is also to live with the power and the challenge to rise up now from the pain of his grief.



The Christian's hope is anchored in an empty tomb somewhere just outside of the city of Jerusalem, Israel. It is not the stuff of fantasy or science fiction. The Bible claims this as a literal historical event. Christians have believed in the resurrection of the man, Jesus of Nazareth, since the first eyewitnesses reported it three days after he was publicly crucified. Since it was a public event with written testimony, the resurrection can be tested. Christianity hangs on the thread of this event. Thankfully, based on all the historical evidence that has been collected and written about, it is a thread made of the strongest titanium that no skeptic has ever been able to break. This is important because people have long based their very souls on it. They are also, like grieving Nicholas, basing their hope on it. As Jesus said to encourage Nicholas and others like him, "Because I live, you shall live as well" (John 14:19).

“The easiest explanation by far is that these things happened because Jesus really was raised from the dead, and the disciples really did meet him... The resurrection of Jesus does in fact provide a sufficient explanation for the empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus. Having examined all the possible hypotheses I’ve read about anywhere in literature, I think it’s also a necessary explanation.”

-Dr. N.T. Wright

Key Bible Passages:

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Questions For Discussion:

1. What is it that makes death so awful and frightening?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Why do Christians face death differently from those with any other worldview? Christians are called to have hope that there is life after death. What is that hope anchored in?
3. Why would people value eyewitness testimony at a car accident but not a historical eyewitness account? What is unique about the changed life of the disciples and their eyewitness testimony?
4. Can you summarize some of the evidence that was given for the historicity (truth) of the resurrection of Jesus? Could you explain this to someone who was investigating the claims of Christianity for the first time?
5. Does the truth of the resurrection encourage you to tell others just like the early church did? Why or why not?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Miracles are God's to give; not ours to demand.
- The Bible is clear that, if the resurrection of Jesus did not happen, Christianity is false.
- The disciples were dramatically changed. Skeptics admit this but have a hard time explaining why.
- The resurrection affirms Jesus' divinity and the exclusivity of Christianity.
- This conversation is tied to one's worldview. If you believe God is real, miracles are possible. If you believe there is no God, they are not.

FURTHER READING:

- The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus (Gary Habermas)
- The Case for Christ (Lee Strobel)
- The Resurrection of the Son of God (N.T Wright)
- Clear Minds & Dirty Feet (Jon Morrison) *Chapter 11*

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

No matter what he did, Jake could not fight the empty feeling inside. He was well loved by friends and family. He was good at his job and made enough money to have a lot of fun. He went on exciting trips and was always posting about his adventures online. To anyone looking at him, Jake had it made.



But he still felt empty. What is the meaning of all this? Whoever he asked seemed to laugh and just shrug it off. Does anyone know the answer to such a strange but important question?

This started a search for purpose. Was there purpose to his existence or not? If he was simply a product of time, chance and mutation, he could not find any purpose in that story. If, however, there is a God, then Jake was the product of a Creator. If there is a Creator, then Jake's life had a purpose. As he quickly learned, the meaning of life is directly linked to the existence of God.

God made us. This is such a fundamental truth that we may not realize how foundational it is to finding meaning in life. According to the Christian doctrine of creation, God made us and so we know that our lives have purpose, meaning and value. Jesus, the author of life, is telling a story which we can belong in. It is a story rooted in relationship with him and others. This is what makes life meaningful. May Jake discover Jesus and find that life does indeed have purpose.

“I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of, so they can see it’s not the answer.”

Jim Carrey

“The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it in full.”

Jesus
John 10:10

Key Bible Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Mark 12:28-31

Questions For Discussion:

1. Why do you think that the “meaning of life” is such an interesting topic and yet rarely discussed?
2. Why is it that we often assume famous, successful, and wealthy people have life figured out?
3. What do you think a meaningful life looks like?
4. Can we determine the meaning of our own life? Can we determine another person’s purpose? How could meaning or purpose be found outside of ourselves?
5. Do you agree that what gives life meaning is being involved in relationship with God and people? Why would it be important to have both of these? How might it hurt you to have only one?

SERMON NOTES



POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- Paintings cannot give themselves meaning. Meaning is derived from the painter. Likewise, Christians believe that our meaning and value come from God, our Creator.
- Relationships with God and others are at the heart of what makes life meaningful. Sin is what breaks down those relationships.
- Jesus is at work restoring our relationships and restoring the meaningfulness of life.

FURTHER READING:

- Check out Apologetics Canada's resource *The Thinking Series*
- There are a lot of free online resources at apologeticscanada.com

GET CONNECTED TO MORE APOLOGETICS RESOURCES:



Apologetics Canada seeks to help thinkers believe and believers to think. This ministry is led by Andy Steiger and his team. Located in British Columbia, they are proud to serve Canadian churches in any way they can.

Check out the website for resources, blogs, and upcoming events at: **apologeticscanada.com**

Like them on Facebook: facebook.com/apologeticscanada

Follow them on Twitter: [@apologeticscanada](https://twitter.com/apologeticscanada)

Mark your Calendar for this year's **Apologetics Canada Conference** March 6-7, 2015.

For more info, go to: **apologeticscanadaconference.com**

