



Week Five

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for being with us. Thank you for helping us connect with you and one another. Help our time be a gift to you and a gift to the friendships we share here. Amen.

Icebreaker

- Would you say it's difficult or easy for you to disagree with others? What about the process is challenging or simple for you?

Talk it Over

The foundational idea in this series, The Problem of God, has been that faith is not about blindly following something or avoiding all questions or doubts. We can be people of faith and still think critically or question issues surrounding faith, God, the Bible, and so forth. In fact, when we talk about faith we are talking about having reasonable confidence in the evidence presented about Jesus. Therefore, the invitation laid out for each of us in this series is that we stay open to following where the evidence may lead us — instead of pushing for where we hope the evidence leads or where we feel the evidence should go.

Will someone read our theme verse Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) out loud for us?

- Some people have said Christianity is narrow-minded and judgmental. In what ways have these observations been proven, or disproven by your interactions with Christians?
- How have you personally been narrow-minded and judgmental?

This week we looked at the big question of "Is Jesus the only way?". This is a hard question that can easily bring up a lot of tension. Some of the tension may come from this being the sort of question that can only have one right answer. The Law of Non-Contradiction, which we looked at this week, says this, "It is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be". In other words, on some topics, two people with different perspectives cannot both be right.

- Disagreeing with someone or believing you are right about something doesn't necessarily mean you are arrogant or that there needs to be relational conflict. What are some ways we can disagree with people without being arrogant or without creating conflict? Consider what Biblical truths speak to this or tell about personal examples you have seen.
- In what way is holding an exclusive faith position different than denying others the right to believe differently and practice what they believe?

Despite our pluralistic society where we make space for and appreciate differences, one area of culture that often creates polarizing views is religious faith. It's not uncommon for people to take one of two extreme positions. On one side, we have people who think they are right and anyone who disagrees with them is dumb or inferior. On the other hand, we find people who think what we believe doesn't matter as long as we are good people.

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- Looking at the two extremes just noted, which one have you been exposed to the most?
- What dangers might come from either extreme?
- What are some of the good things that come from honoring differences?

Instead of arguing why other religions are wrong, this week we looked at three assertions Jesus made about himself. The 'why' behind this format of exploration and communication was intentional. We want to avoid a disrespectful and defensive posture. Furthermore, if the claims of Christianity are true, they stand on their own merit and are sufficient without comparison.

Assertion #1 made by Jesus: Jesus is the only way.

Will someone read John 14:6-7 (NIV) out loud for us?

- In what ways are you comfortable or uncomfortable with this assertion?

Throughout Jesus' ministry, we see that Jesus made it clear that he intended to be much more than a moral teacher. For Jesus, what mattered most was that people had a relationship with him, not what they did or didn't do. Jesus believes he is the way.

- What would you say a relationship with Jesus looks like?

Assertion #2 made by Jesus: Jesus is the sole mediator.

Will someone read John 3:16-17 (NIV) and 1 Timothy 2:5-6 (NIV) out loud for us?

Every religion looks to present a solution for some sort of problem. Christianity looks to solve the problem of sin and teaches that Jesus is the solution and the one true "ransom" for our sins.

- Had God chosen to condemn us, what do you think that would look like or feel like?
- In what ways have you experienced the opposite of condemnation from God?
- Religious scholar Stephen Prothero says, "What the world's religions share is not so much a finish line as a starting point." In light of what you know about other religions, what do you like or what makes sense to you about Jesus being the solution, the ransom, or the finish line?

Assertion #3 made by Jesus: Jesus is the name above all other names.

Will someone read John 17:11-12 (NIV) and Philippians 2:6-11 (NLT) out loud for us?

- Names often come with stories and power. Do you know why you have the name you do? Do you know what your name means? Feel free to share about your first, middle, or last name.
- Have you ever found yourself calling out or clinging to the name of Jesus? If so, tell us about that experience.

Each of us has the choice to say 'yes' to Jesus. We each get to choose to him. We each can say 'yes' to his love, the ransom he has provided, and to the power of his name.

- Have you said "yes" to Jesus? If so, what was that process like for you? If not, do you have any thoughts you want to share on your process in light of this week's discussion? As we share about this question, let's make sure the conversation doesn't become about trying to convince anyone to make a decision about Jesus.
- Is there someone in your life this season that you hope will encounter Jesus as the way? Without oversharing and with respect to that person, what is your hope and prayer for this person? What do you hope they receive from Jesus and why?

Closing Prayer

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Leader Instructions: Feel free to lead this week's closing prayer either using the prompt below or praying your own prayer for the group.

God, thank you for being here with us. Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for showing us love in such bold, clear ways. Empower us and equip us to walk with you. Jesus, help us to experience the love, the solution, and the power that comes from you. Amen.

Closing Reminders For Our Group

- Let's each commit to closing out our series well. Be sure to join us next week.
- As a group, let's make sure we have all our group logistics squared away for next week. For example, who wants to bring snack next week? Are we all set on when we meet next? Are there any childcare details we should talk about?

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressure to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.

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