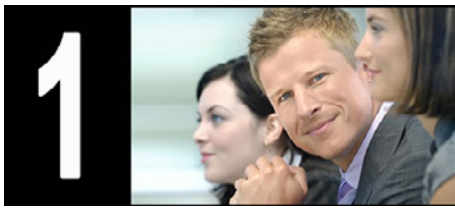




## Discussion Questions

Online at [www.faithexplorer.com](http://www.faithexplorer.com)



## Bible Credibility

### Cheng

He is Chinese and knows practically nothing about the Bible except that it is a holy book for Christians. He asks his Christian friends to explain. What should they say to give him quick understanding without totally confusing him?

### Brian

He thinks the Bible is just another holy book, like the Muslim Qur'an or Hindu Vedas. Why do Christians think the Bible is better than any other sacred scripture?

### Karen

She thinks a lot of the stories in the Bible are just fairy tales. Like the first woman being created from a rib of man, or Noah building a big boat to hold all the different kinds of animals, or Joshua stopping the sun for a day. How can any intelligent person really believe those stories?

### Terry

The Bible is so big and hard to read, and some of it seems really weird. How can an ordinary person possibly understand and remember all that stuff?

### Curtis

How do we know what to believe when there are contradictions in the Bible? Isn't the whole Bible the Word of God? Who's to say some parts are more important than other parts, or that some parts don't apply anymore?

### Sarah

What does *testament* mean? What's the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament? What difference does it make to me?

### Bruce

When was the Bible written? Who wrote it? Wasn't it just ordinary people? So why do Christians think those writers know more about God than any other writers? Isn't it all just speculation?

### Janet

She's heard that there's a protestant Bible, a Catholic Bible and all kinds of different Bibles being printed now, with different words and different styles. How can anyone know what Bible is right?

### Tina

What language did Jesus speak? In what language was the Old Testament written? In what language was the New Testament written? Into how many languages has the Bible been translated? Haven't we distorted a lot over time in the translation process?

### Kevin

People say there's really no need for a Bible because it's the message that's important, not the book. The message could be carried by other books, by word-of-mouth and today by television, newspaper, radio, Internet and social networking, even Twitter. But he counters by saying that if God had not given us a special book with divine credentials, how many philosophies would we have today? Without the Bible, how could anyone today know what the truth is?

### Scott

He just learned that the New Testament was written decades after Christ's death and after churches were started. If Christian faith is based on the Bible, how could there be so many good churches and new converts when those people didn't even have a Bible?

### Susan

Do you think there will be people in heaven who have never even heard about the Bible?

### Ashley

She started to read through the Bible, beginning with the Genesis, but by the time she got into the third book, she was confused and quit. She's ready to give Bible reading another try and now asks her friends for advice. Where should they tell her to start? Why?



## Reasoned faith

### Wendy

She believes that faith is just a crutch for people who aren't critical thinkers, who just believe whatever their minister, family or friends say. She believes the only value of spiritual faith is to make people feel good. Isn't it better to be honest and say that we don't know than to believe in feel-good fantasy?

### Greg

He thinks faith is a very good thing. The more faith we have, the better we are. Agree?

### Rita

She thinks the most important thing is to be sincere. Just be sincere about it, whatever you believe. Agree?

### Ken

What's the difference between *faith* and *fact*? What happens when we confuse the two?

### Linda

She's wondering about differences between *atheists*, *agnostics* and *secular humanists*. What do they believe or disbelieve? Aren't they people of faith, too, just different faith?

### Mahavir

He doesn't think a person should be changing religion. If a person has been raised a certain way, he should stick with it, for family unity. There are many positive ways to live. Really, can't they all work for our good?

### Jaun

He admits to having a lot of doubts. He feels bad about it and tries to get questioning thoughts out of his mind, but they keep coming back. He asks if it's sin to have these thoughts and what he should do about them?

## Amy

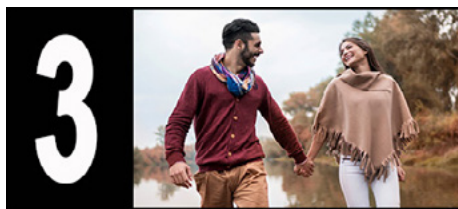
She says that some people say that prestige, education, fame and money can't make a person happy, but she thinks they just say this when they don't have those things themselves. She thinks those things would make her happy. Response?

## Keith

He says we need to get to key issues and not get tangled in the little stuff. What really matters most in life? What are the most important questions any of us can ask about ourselves?

## Cody

He throws out the question, *Will anything I do today make any difference to me 100 years from now?* The group gives personal responses.



## God's design plan

### Carol

She has trouble with people who praise their intelligence but ridicule *faith* and yet say with a straight face that they believe the world just happened by itself, from nothing, without any plan or design. How much *faith* does that take?

### Tad

He says virtually all reputable scientists agree that the world started 12-15 billion years ago from a *big bang* and has been evolving ever since. People at his university scoff at the Bible. Isn't there an irreconcilable conflict between science and the Bible? Isn't it time to admit that science wins?

### Jennifer

If we're just evolved as a higher animal, where are the *missing links*? Where are all the creatures in the gap between ape and man?

## Eric

[with a smirk] Is God powerful enough to create a rock so big he can't lift it?

## Sandra

If something exists that bears evidence of intelligent design, isn't it completely logical that there has to be a *designer*? Even for the universe?

## Emily

Doesn't there have to be a creator – a maker – to bring a design into existence?

## Dan

Can anyone give me even one example of how something inanimate becomes animate?

## Jason

He says it's obvious that God didn't design just a physical world, but also a spiritual world intertwined with the physical world. Agree? What kind of world? How does science deal with that?

## Carmen

She says that *survival of the fittest* is an important part of evolution. Animals kill each other, and that's okay and expected. But humans seem to have a *moral law* built right into them, something outside of nature and above nature. Where could that moral law come from?

## Megan

What is sin? Who determines whether or not some behavior is a sin? Isn't sin relative to each person's time, place and situation?

## Pamela

She says that none of this makes any sense to her. If God is all-powerful and wants us to be good, why didn't he just create us good in the first place?

## Derek

He thinks Christianity is just another religion. Except for different ways of worshiping, how does it differ in any material way from other religions? At the core, don't they all aim to worship and please almighty God?

## Troy

He thinks the key point of Christianity is to sin as little as possible. Be good. Agree?

## Nicole

She's heard that there's a sin even worse than murder, a sin so bad it can't be forgiven? Is there? What is it?



## God's trinity

### Lisa

She says that *trinity* isn't just a Christian concept, but something that applies to lots of things around us if we stop and think about it. How does this help explain the beauty and complexity of life?

### Tony

Tony says that *trinity* sounds like theological jargon and doesn't make sense. He understands how a person can have three roles at once. But isn't it inconceivable for a single person to be three persons at once?

### Chad

He's heard the phrase, *three persons of the Godhead*. Why would God want to be three persons?

### David

Is one part of God – or one person of God – more dominant and important than the other parts or persons?

### Saleem

He says he never gets a straight answer: Do Christians have one God or three Gods? Why do Christians equivocate?

### Rebecca

She asks about the Bible statement that man is *made in the image of God*. What does that mean?

### Angela

Does my dog have a soul?

**Julie**

Do we know for sure that God-the-father is a *he*? Not all fathers are good. Is he Father to everyone? What does the Father do?

**Dennis**

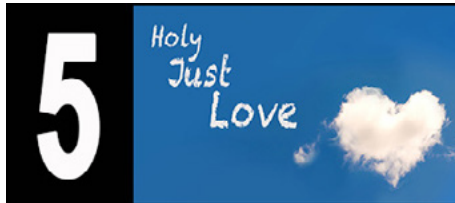
Why did God have to become God-the-son? Did *all* of God become the Son? Where was the rest of God when he was the Son? What part of the Son was human and what part was divine?

**Mitchell**

Why did God-the-son perform miracles? Why didn't he heal everyone he encountered?

**Carla**

If we can have a direct connection to God – like talking to Jesus in prayer – why do we need the holy spirit?

**God's character****Ann**

*Jesus Christ*. Is that his first and last name? What's the significance of his name?

**Charles**

What kind of laws does God have? Why? What happens when they're violated?

**Brenda**

She's more interested in who God *is* than what God *does*. What motivates him? What does he want me to do?

**Jose**

Why would God give us free will, deliberately making us in a way that would soon displease him?

**Michelle**

She wonders why God wanted animal sacrifices in times past but not now. Why did God change? Why isn't God consistent from the beginning?

**Larry**

What's the difference between sacrifices in the Old Testament and sacrifices in the New Testament? What sacrifices do I have to make?

**Brett**

Why does there have to be punishment? Why is a substitute needed? Why can't God just forgive? Why does forgiveness need to be so complicated?

**Margaret**

She says every religion has some concept of *salvation*. What does salvation mean to Christians? What does it mean in other religions? What are Christians *saved* from?

**Dan**

He hears Christians talk about God's *plan of salvation*. What's that?

**Cheryl**

She expresses her biggest problem with God: If God is love, how can he send someone to hell?

**Adrian**

He says that some people believe all you need to do is say a special prayer, and that gets you to heaven. Way too simple. He says God wants more than that, a good life. Response?

**Sara**

If Jesus was dead for only three days, and then came alive to a better life, how could that be the ultimate sacrifice?

**Jamie**

She says that she's done so many bad things and doesn't think God will accept her until she cleans up her life, but that she just can't seem to do it, but will keep trying. Response?

**Heaven / hell****Gary**

He notes that people at all times and places believe in life after death. Is this just perpetuated culture? Or is this knowledge built right into us?

**Tom**

If God is *holy, just* and *love*, how can there be both a heaven and a hell? Don't both violate his character?

**Melissa**

Is there really a spirit world of angels, devil and demons? Should we worry about fighting bad spirits and try to get help from good spirits?

**Jonathan**

Is heaven a place or a state of being?

**Laura**

What does the Bible say about hell? Is it the opposite of heaven?

**Kelly**

She says hell is what's left after God leaves. Agree? What would that be like?

**Rosa**

Can bad people go to heaven? Can good people go to hell?

**Logan**

What condemns a person to hell? Can a person know now what his or her judgment will be?

**Matt**

Some people say that God is always fair. But just look around. Do you really think he's always fair?

**Peter**

What is *original sin*? Does God make us sin? Are people who have never heard about Jesus doomed to hell?

**Anne**

What is *predestination* and *election*? Do we really have free will or is our life already determined for us?

**Denise**

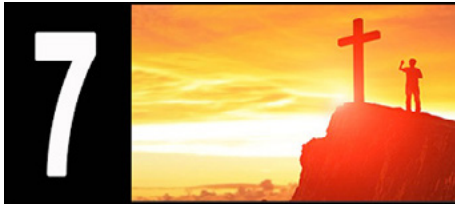
She says that she hears Christians talk about *justification*. What's that?

**Monica**

She hears the word *grace* used a lot by Christians. Is it a prayer before meals, or what?

**Greg**

He says that he understands the term *offer* and *acceptance* in the legal sense but doesn't understand how it relates to the Christian decision. What's the *offer* and what's the *acceptance*? What about no response?

**Jesus only way?****Jessica**

Isn't it arrogant for Christians to say that Jesus is the only way to heaven and that anyone who doesn't believe as they do is going to hell? What makes them think that they have all the answers and can judge others?

**Mary**

What does *progressive revelation* mean? What is *enlightenment*?

**Ray**

He doesn't think most people believe in heaven anymore. What do the surveys show?

**Holly**

Is there anything more important than getting it right about life after death?

**Mike**

In theology, what does *audience* mean? Does this help us understand how God deals with people who lived before or with-

out the Christian message?

**Allan**

What does *impute* mean?

**Melanie**

Did Jesus die just for our sins or for the sins of the whole world?

**Kurt**

How does the Bible say God will deal with the *uninformed* and *misinformed* living today? Does he have special arrangements for them? Who's to judge?

**Jeff**

He thinks that people who object to the way God is dealing with others usually do it as a smoke screen for their own resistance to God. Agree?

**Debra**

She says that we're without excuse because we have been presented with God's offer, or at least we've been put on notice to investigate. Agree? What are consequences of rejecting, ignoring or postponing?

**Daily living****Carolyn**

In what major ways is Christianity different from other religions?

**Pat**

Doing *bad* things is sin, but is it sin NOT to do *good* things?

**Travis**

He's been told that there are two aspects to the way Christians deal with sin: sin's *penalty* and sin's *power*. What's the difference? What's the most important part? What are we supposed to do about it?

**Randy**

He says that some people tell him that he only needs to confess that he's a sinner – broad term – and ask forgiveness once. Others say he needs to confess and ask forgiveness for every sin. He's confused. What does the Bible say?

**Karen**

She says every religious group seems to have its own *do's* and *don't's* list to identify sin and keep their people from sin. How can anyone ever know what's the right list?

**John**

If a Christian doesn't defeat sin by will-power, how does he do it?

**Diane**

Does we sin less after accepting Jesus as Savior? Why or why not?

**Dawn**

Do we lose our *salvation* when we sin again? Do we ever lose it?

**Jill**

She says that when she hears people pray, it often sounds like they're asking God to do things for them or get things for them. Is prayer mostly a way to get things from God?

**Terry**

He's heard that Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, and that Jesus gave them a model prayer. What are key points of the model?

**Adam**

What keeps God's message from becoming distorted over time? How do we know that human philosophies haven't crept into what's being taught as Christianity today?

**Betty**

Are there parts of the Bible that are no longer relevant for us? If so, is this because of changes in culture, or changes in God, or both?

**Mark**

He notes that there are hundreds of commandments in the Bible. How can we know what's most important?

**Jerry**

He says that God's presence is described in the Bible as *light*. What should we learn from that?

**Amber**

She hears Christians talk about being *filled with the spirit* and displaying *fruits of the spirit*. What's that all about?

**Church****Steve**

How does the Bible describe *church*? Whose idea was it?

**Stephanie**

How did churches get started? Who started them? When? Where? What were the early churches like?

**Andrew**

What does *apostle* mean? Who was Peter? Paul? Luke? Are there apostles today?

**Kimberly**

What's the purpose of church? What does it do for people? What does it do for God?

**Shawn**

How did Bible books get their names? Are some named after churches?

**Robert**

Why is Rome such a big part of church history?

**Amanda**

Are there more Catholics than Protestants? How many of each today?

**Heather**

What's the difference between *local* church and *universal* church? What does a person have to do to become a member?

**Brent**

Can anyone tell who is – or who is not – a genuine Christian by the church the person attends?

**Mario**

Why are there so many styles of worship in churches today? Have some strayed from the style prescribed in the Bible?

**Kristen**

What are *sacraments*? Are they just for Catholics, or do Protestants have them, too?

**Alicia**

Is a person *saved* by being baptized?

**Tracy**

What is *communion*? What is *eucharist*? Why?

**Darren**

What about all the hypocrites in the church? Doesn't that prove that much of what goes on in church is phony?