

Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers

Leader/Discussion Guide



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Using This Leader Guide

Welcome to *Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers*. As the group leader for this book, you probably have a few questions of your own. The resources in this Leader Guide are designed to help you facilitate a small group working through the book. It is assumed that each participant will have his or her own copy of *Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers*.

Ideally, small groups would include an adult or peer leader and six to eight participants. Groups could meet as often as once a week, reviewing a chapter each week. For less frequent meetings, consider covering few chapters at a time. The pace of reading will be determined by your group's level of interest and discussion.

The format and timeline for working through the book depends on your group, its reading speed, and interest level in the subjects presented. This simple Leader Guide allows for flexibility in scheduling discussion sessions. A detailed book outline follows the author's introduction. Page numbers on the outline correspond to page numbers in the book.

To facilitate group discussions, we've included some discussion questions with possible answers for each chapter. Open-ended questions allow you to expand your students' understanding of the subject matter.

Introduction

The Reason for *Life's Big Questions*, *God's Big Answers*

According to a 2002 Barna poll, 70 percent of church youth left home after high school and then left the Church.¹ When asked the reason for leaving the Church, 32 percent (in an open-ended question) listed intellectual skepticism—religion made no sense, there was no proof, or there were no answers to legitimate questions (2005 National Study of Youth and Religion).² Young adults have questions—does the Church have answers?

Our culture redefined some terms that affect our youth and how they process God's Word. For example, 70 percent of church youth say no absolute moral truth exists, since truth is created by individuals and cultures.³ Tolerance means recognizing that everyone's beliefs are equal—there is no truth greater than any other. Furthermore, no one has the right to judge anyone because claiming objective truth or judging the beliefs and lifestyles of others involves trying to dominate them.⁴ Young people say there is no truth—is that true?

Josh McDowell notes that our young people's view of their church and youth groups is not positive. Besides church services, which are just events to observe with no relationships to people, youth find worship irrelevant to issues of today. Moreover, youth groups are often boring, with untrained volunteers and little content.⁵ Youth say fellowship is irrelevant—does the Church have anything to say to us today?

Since our youth have questions about the veracity of their faith in a culture that says there is no truth, what are we doing to show them that Christianity is true and Jesus is real? How can we keep them in the one true faith? Hopefully, this resource will answer young people's questions and reveal truth that *is* relevant for us today.

I have been teaching religion in two Lutheran high schools for over twenty years. During that time, I have been invited to speak on various topics to youth and youth workers in fifteen states. Everywhere I go, people have the same basic questions. Young people want to study the Bible, but they also want to know it is true. What's more, they want to know how to apply Scripture to their lives. So back home I start every class, every day, with the same approach—are there any questions we should answer? I found that by explaining why Christianity is true and the Bible is dependable, students grow stronger in their faith. Here's an e-mail from Jackie, a 2008 graduate of Milwaukee Lutheran High School. After her first year of college, she wrote:

I wanted to sincerely thank you for last year. I grew so much in my faith during my last two years at Milwaukee Lutheran. Your class did so much for me; I really don't know where I would be without it. It really makes me wonder how people without faith survive. You are one of the people of God that I respect most, and I wish that I could know the Bible like you do. Without your class I would not be able to answer half the questions that I have

¹ George Barna, *The State of the Church: 2002* (Ventura, CA: Issachar Resources, 2002), p. 110.

² Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 89.

³ George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, Ltd., 1999), p. 47.

⁴ Josh McDowell, *The Last Christian Generation* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2006), pp. 41–49.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–65.

been faced with already this year. So I just wanted to say “thank you” for helping me grow.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we all grow in faith, and may this book shed light on the issues that trouble people in their search for the truth. May they find it in Jesus Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6).

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Discussion Questions

Chapter 1 Are You Ready to Defend Your Faith?

- 1. What is the definition of apologetics?** (Apologetics is defending the faith.)
- 2. How have you defended the Christian faith?** (Answers will vary.)
- 3. Why is what we say (content) and how we say it (delivery) important when witnessing?** (While we need to share the truth, it must be done in a way that is neither condemning nor condescending.)
- 4. What are three reasons people won't believe the Gospel?** (Some people are subject to spiritual warfare; others caught in pride can't admit they were wrong; still others are unwilling to change their lifestyle.)
- 5. If the Holy Spirit converts unbelievers when we are witnessing, why do we defend the faith?** (While the Spirit brings about conversion, our own faith is strengthened by the Spirit through our defense of the faith.)

Chapter 2 What Is a Worldview?

- 1. If a worldview is a collection of the claims that explain reality, give an example of a formal and personal one.** (The author uses the example of a formal worldview as a map, while the personal worldview is using the map to go somewhere.)
- 2. With what do all worldviews start? Give an example.** (All worldviews start with an assumption—for example, the existence of God.)
- 3. All worldviews have a philosophy and ethical stance. Explain each and give examples.** (Answers will vary.)
- 4. What are three basic questions that all worldviews should answer? Give examples of each.** (Where did we come from? Why are we here? What can we do about evil and suffering? What happens when we die? Or stated another way: what are man's origin, purpose, and destiny? Examples will vary.)
- 5. What are three basic tests for worldviews? Give examples of each.** (Does it fit the facts? Does it have contradictions? Is it useful in life? Examples will vary.)

Chapter 3 Does Evolution Explain the World?

- 1. With what assumption does evolution begin?** (At some point in the past, all matter in the universe compressed and then exploded with a big bang.) **What question can you pose in response to this?** (How do you know this is true?)
- 2. How is the second law of thermodynamics incompatible with the big bang theory?** (The second law of thermodynamics says that things go from order to disorder. For evolution to be true, the opposite must happen.)
- 3. How is the law of biogenesis incompatible with the evolution of life?** (Life can come only from life, not from nonliving things.)
- 4. State two problems with mutations as the answer for differences in species.** (Most mutations are destructive; mutations are generally sterile.)
- 5. What is the problem with transitional fossils in explaining the differences in species?** (Truly transitional fossils do not exist.)

Chapter 4 Does Creation Explain the World?

- 1. Explain the cosmological and teleological arguments for God's existence.** (Cosmology looks at the working of the universe, because the universe works implies the existence of One who made it work. Teleology studies design and purpose. The existence of such a design implies a Designer.)
- 2. Explain the moral order argument for God's existence.** (We have a moral order of right and wrong; every moral law has a lawgiver.)
- 3. List three reasons why the days in Genesis 1 would literally be twenty-four-hour periods.** (The Hebrew word used for day refers only to a twenty-four-hour period. The concept of a twenty-four-hour day is supported elsewhere in the Bible.)
- 4. Give the approximate age of the earth from Genesis. How is that derived?** (The earth is approximately 7,000 years old. Evidence from coral-reef growth and supernovas support this number.)
- 5. What was Jesus' stance on the creation account?** (His words reflect the creation story. He should know because He was there.)

Chapter 5 What Are Humans?

- 1. What is our purpose?** (Our purpose is to glorify God by using the gifts He gave us.)
- 2. What is our nature?** (Because of the fall into sin, we are by nature sinful.)
- 3. What is the source of evil in the world?** (Satan is the source of all evil in the world.)
- 4. What is our greatest need?** (Our greatest need is for a Savior, who is Jesus Christ.)
- 5. What is moral relativism? Why can no one actually live as a moral relativist?** (Moral relativism teaches that there are no absolutes, that anything is okay based on the situation. In order to exist in this world, you must have some base.)

Chapter 6 Is the Bible True?

- 1. Explain inspiration of Scripture.** (Answers will vary. The Holy Spirit worked through human writers to record the events of Scripture.)
- 2. How could the Bible be accurately transmitted through the centuries?** (The Bible was carefully copied and checked. There are more early generation manuscripts of the Bible than of most major ancient manuscripts.)
- 3. What does inerrancy mean?** (The Bible is without contradiction or error.)
- 4. What causes a variation in the manuscript?** (Variations may be attributed to minor errors by copyists.)
- 5. If one reads all the footnotes in the Bible concerning variations in manuscripts, what will not occur?** (You will find no contradictions in the contents of the Scriptures.)

Chapter 7 What Is the Canon?

- 1. Give a definition of the canon.** (Basically, the canon is the accepted list of books of the Bible.)
- 2. How did we get the Bible?** (Much of it came from the Church through the years. The Old Testament was essentially in place at the time of Jesus; the Early Church adopted the books of Paul and others.)
- 3. How did Jesus view the Old Testament?** (Jesus quoted the Old Testament, the known

Scriptures during His lifetime.)

4. What was the problem from AD 100 to 350 with seven of the New Testament books? (The authorship of the books was in question.)

5. Why aren't the books of the Apocrypha in all Bibles? (The source and authorship of these books are in question. Their content is inconsistent.)

Chapter 8 Was Noah's Flood a True Worldwide Event?

1. Explain one of the 270 flood stories from across the planet. What is/is not similar to the Bible? (Multiple answers are possible.)

2. How much water would cover the earth if the planet were as smooth as a billiard ball? (Water 1.7 miles deep would cover the entire earth.)

3. What were the two sources of water that flooded the earth? (The water for the flood came from both the heavens and the wells of the deep.)

4. Why is the construction of the ark proof that the flood was not a local one? (The ark was built far from a body of water large enough to float it.)

5. Give two of the four geological implications of the flood found today. (Multiple answers are possible.)

Chapter 9 What about Dinosaurs?

1. When was the word *dinosaur* first used, and what was the term used before that? (The word *dinosaur* was not used until 1841. Before then, *dragon* or *leviathan* was commonly used.)

2. What was the average size of dinosaurs? Why would some be so large? (The average dinosaur was the size of a modern-day sheep. Dinosaurs, like other reptiles, continued to grow throughout their long life spans, resulting in large sizes.)

3. What led to the near extinction of dinosaurs? (The flood wiped out most dinosaurs.)

4. Give dragon/dinosaur references from historical times. (Answers will vary.)

5. Explain specifically what *behemoth* and *leviathan* are from the Book of Job. (Likely a variety of dinosaur.)

Chapter 10 Did Jesus Really Exist?

1. What did the Talmud's arrest warrant for Jesus say? (It seeks Jesus' arrest for teaching sorcery and causing unrest.)

2. What did Josephus write about Jesus? (Josephus records the work of Jesus and its effect on His followers.)

3. What did Tacitus write about Jesus? (Tacitus affirms Jesus' crucifixion and reports the spread of faith as far as Rome.)

4. What did Lucian call Christians? On what basis did he use this derogatory language? (Lucian called the Christians "misguided creatures," based on their belief in Jesus' lordship.)

5. What did Pliny say the Christians called Jesus in songs? (They were so bold as to call Jesus *God!*)

Chapter 11 What about Jesus' Death, Resurrection, and Their Effects?

- 1. Explain the swoon theory and why it is an insufficient explanation for the resurrection.** (The swoon theory says that Jesus merely fainted on the cross, and despite His weakened condition, He somehow managed to get out of the tomb.)
- 2. Explain the theft theory and why it is an insufficient explanation for the resurrection.** (If Jesus' followers stole His body, why would they allow themselves to be persecuted for what they knew was a lie?)
- 3. Explain the hallucination theory and why it is an insufficient explanation for the resurrection.** (The theory says that Jesus' followers were so overcome with grief that they imagined His resurrection. But group hallucinations are not possible.)
- 4. Explain the "Lord, Liar, Lunatic" alternatives for who Jesus is.** (See quote from C. S. Lewis on pp. 120–21.)
- 5. Explain the concept of Christianity as a "done" religion, compared to all other "do" religions.** (The work of salvation has already been done for us; all other world religions require the faithful to work out their own salvation through works.)

Chapter 12 What Is Postmodernism and the New Tolerance?

- 1. Postmodernism claims that there is no truth. How would you respond to that?** (The very claim that there is no truth becomes a truth.)
- 2. Define a meta-narrative. How would you respond to the claim that there are none?** (A meta-narrative is an overarching explanation of what constitutes reality. Examples will vary.)
- 3. Postmodernism claims that there is no real meaning to a text. How would you respond?** (The very logic contradicts itself. Not everyone can have his own explanation.)
- 4. How is postmodernism antirealistic in its philosophy?** (Not every culture can have its own version of truth. One must be true.)
- 5. Explain the old and new definitions of tolerance. What are the consequences of the new one?** (The old definition of tolerance is recognizing other's beliefs without sharing them. The new definition of tolerance is that everyone's beliefs are equal, and no one truth is greater than others. The consequence for Christians is that by claiming to have *the* truth, they are labeled as intolerant.)

Chapter 13 How Can We Witness Effectively Today?

- 1. Explain the two-story truth. Explain how Christianity is total truth, satisfying both.** (The two-story truth combines reason and objective fact with faith and values. As Christians, our reason and fact directly affect our faith and values.)
- 2. With what do all worldviews begin? Why is that important to remember in witnessing?** (All worldviews begin with an assumption. We need to be aware of the assumptions others make before witnessing to them.)
- 3. Explain how the best witnessing occurs when the worldview and reality are examined.** (We need to understand the reality of the nonbeliever before we can begin to share the Gospel.)
- 4. What is the danger of using worldviews without being aware of them?** (If you don't understand worldviews, you cannot begin to explain your worldview to others. Your worldview must be consistent with your message.)