

THE 7 BIG QUESTIONS DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

4

Session Four: Is Christianity Too Narrow?

Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to catch up and reconnect over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

Introduction

Christianity is seen by some as a narrow and mostly irrelevant belief system. Why? The Christian Church at one point in history was sought out for knowledge of reality. The Church was taken seriously by the wider culture. In many circles, that is no longer true. Let's see how some people responded to today's question: Is Christianity too narrow?

Video 1: *Pulse of the World on Christianity & Culture*

This video is a 2.5-minute survey of many people's responses to this question.

Questions for Discussion

- Did you identify with anyone's expressed views in the film? If so, who and what resonated with you?
- What do you think about the statistic that "nearly half of all US adults believe it doesn't matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons"?

Video 2: *The Curiosity Collective: Is Christianity Too Narrow?*

This is a 10-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the question "Is Christianity too narrow?" It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week's topic. See what they have to say and then discuss it.

Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in *The Curiosity Collective*? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- Does the media represent Christianity accurately? Do Christians represent Christianity accurately?
- In the video, Corey suggests, "When people say that all religions are the same, that sounds really humble and tolerant." Why does he go on to say that those claims are actually exclusive?
- How have people used religion for good? For bad?
- What are some examples of situations in which most people believe that narrow ideas are good?
- What exclusive claims do you hold? Do you allow yourself to be vulnerable when discussing your views with others?

Wrap-Up

Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group's discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

Many people would insist that it's intolerant or "ignorant to say that Christianity is the only right religion." But, in the end, it might be best to admit that we're all exclusivists. All of us make exclusive claims about most things—religion included. Yet the challenge seems to be finding a tone of gentleness in the midst of conversation and even disagreement.

In Jeremiah 29:4-11, God calls his people to be present in their city in a way that enables it to flourish, while remaining focused on God. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7). In other words, the God of the Bible commands his people to be gracious and charitable toward all people—including those who do not share the same faith. Is it possible to have an honest yet graceful dialog about important matters like faith?

Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Acknowledge that with a topic as big as this, there is no way to answer the question comprehensively.
- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.

Explore More on Christianity and Culture

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration of the topic of Christianity and culture. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

Videos

- Do Christians Represent Christ?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/do-christians-represent-christ-video>)
- Acceptance in Culture
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/acceptance-in-culture-video>)

Articles

- What Is Christianity?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-is-christianity>)
- What Makes Christianity Different?
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-makes-christianity-different-from-other-religions>)

Daily Stream of Inspiration

- Inspirational Readings for New Christians
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/40-inspirational-readings-for-new-christians>)

White Paper

- A Deeper Look at What the Bible Says about Religion
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-the-bible-says-about-religion-paper>)

Recommended Books

- *Mud and the Masterpiece*, John Burke
(<http://amzn.to/19KY9Dv>)
- *But Don't All Religions Lead to God?*, Michael Green
(<http://amzn.to/19Xclrd>)

Additional Content on Christianity and Culture

- "Christianity," Explore God
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/christianity>)
- "Culture," Explore God
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/culture>)

Scripture Focus

In Jeremiah 29:4-11, God calls his people to be present in their city in a way that enables it to flourish, while remaining focused on God. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7).

What are some practical ways you can seek the peace and prosperity of your city? How might these actions contribute to the common good in the world? If you keep a journal, take some time to note your responses there.