

I'm too young to be important,
but I don't forget what you tell me.
Your righteousness is eternally right,
your revelation is the only truth.
Even though troubles came down on me hard,
your commands always gave me delight.
The way you tell me to live is always right;
help me understand it so I can live to the fullest.



119.145-152 I call out at the top of my lungs,
"GOD! Answer! I'll do whatever you say."

1058

My antagonists are t
but I don't swerve
I took one look at th
they walked away
Take note of how I l
out of your life of
Your words all add u
Your righteous de

I've been slandered
but my awe at yo

BASIC QUESTIONS

INVITING OPEN DISCUSSION
ON 6 KEY QUESTIONS ON THE
CHRISTIAN FAITH



ADULT DISCUSSION GUIDE

ROOM FOR DOUBT

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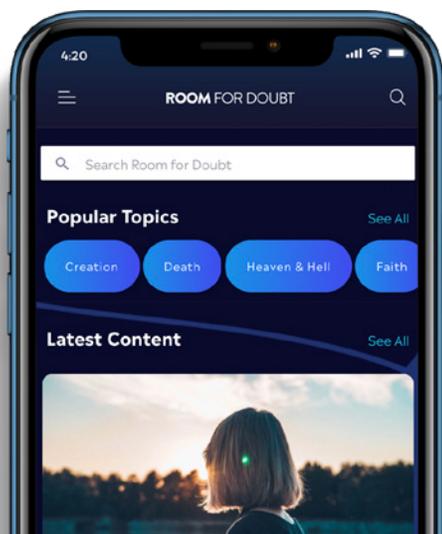
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WELCOME TO THE ROOM FOR DOUBT DISCUSSION SERIES!

This curriculum was created with the conviction that it is acceptable and even commendable to ask tough questions and candidly express doubt.

Spiritual truth is worth pursuing, and this series will help you pursue it and hopefully come to know it. Speaking through Jeremiah, God says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). This guide will prompt you to seek God and seriously examine some basic claims of Christianity. We pray that it will help you see that these foundational Christian beliefs are reasonable and true. Whether you are a church member looking to fortify your faith or strengthen someone else’s faith, a believer with doubts who is searching for answers, or a skeptic who is willing to consider the truth claims of the Christian faith, this guide will lead you to a fascinating exploration of vital spiritual questions.



Download the Room for Doubt App
and access additional resources:

ROOMFORDOUBT.COM



DISCUSSION GROUPS

While this curriculum can be adapted for a more traditional class setting, it is ideally designed to give both Christians and non-Christians a chance to raise questions and investigate the basics of the Christian faith within the safe context of a small discussion group. These groups typically consist of a community of eight to twelve people who gather on a regular basis, primarily to discuss spiritual matters. Groups can meet at a wide variety of locations: homes, offices, restaurants, churches, coffee shops, bookstores, or park district picnic tables!

This curriculum is intended to enhance these group discussions and create a fresh approach to exploring the Christian faith. All people, no matter where they are in their spiritual journey, are welcome to join the discussion. It is our greatest hope that each participant will be challenged to consider earnestly whether he or she should accept the claims of Christ and pursue a meaningful Christian way of life that is based on a growing love for God.

Another purpose of this curriculum is to help Christians explore answers to the tough questions that others are asking. If you are already a Christian believer, the process of wrestling through these issues will not only strengthen your own faith, it will provide you with insights for entering into informed conversations about Christianity with your friends and family.

DISCUSSION GUIDE FEATURES:

BACKGROUND STORY

At the beginning of each session is a short, continuing story. You may want to read this before your group meets. Or, depending on time, you may want to ask someone in the group to read this introduction aloud at the beginning of each meeting. This optional introduction is simply a way to get participants thinking, and to inspire everyone to engage in the discussions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Each session in this curriculum contains about a dozen questions your group can discuss. You may find that it is difficult to get through all of these questions in one session. That's okay. The important thing is to engage the topic at hand—not to get through every question. Your group facilitator may even wish to choose the questions ahead of time that are most relevant to your group. In any case, the questions in these sessions are designed to give everyone the opportunity to process their thoughts and express them out loud.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

At the close of each session is a brief thought to include in your closing prayer time and some suggested actions to pursue in the days ahead. The discussions themselves are just the start of what God fully intends.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

The sessions are designed to generate dialogue rather than provide short, simple answers. Strictly speaking, these sessions are not Bible studies, though they regularly refer to biblical themes and passages. And they are not crafted as lessons with packaged material to be taught. Instead, they are topical discussions meant to get everyone to disclose what they think and feel about some of the most important issues of life. You will be invited and encouraged to share your experiences, questions, and perspectives as each meeting unfolds.

Your time together will be more rewarding and more productive if you keep the following suggestions in mind as you prepare for, and participate in, the group discussions:

- 1.** You may be using this curriculum as part of a church-wide effort that includes weekend messages on the same topics that are presented in a particular order. However, if you are using this material as a stand-alone curriculum, the lessons do not need to be discussed in any specific order. The topics can be discussed independently of each other, based on everyone's interests and questions.
- 2.** Read over the material before each meeting. Familiarity with the topic will greatly enrich the time you spend in the group discussion.
- 3.** Be willing to join in the group interaction. The facilitator of the group should not lecture, but rather encourage everyone to openly discuss their viewpoints, including their agreements and disagreements. Plan to share your ideas honestly and candidly.
- 4.** Be sensitive to the other members of your group. Listen attentively when they speak and be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage quieter members to participate. Always remember to show respect toward others in your group, even if they don't always agree with your position.

5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. By all means participate, but allow others time to speak.
6. Try to stick to the topic being examined. There normally won't be enough time to handle the peripheral questions and issues that may come to mind during your meeting.
7. Each lesson will likely have more questions than you have time to cover in one session. Feel free to select the questions that seem most relevant and valuable for your group. However, some questions tend to build on one another, so it would generally be better to follow the basic progression of the discussion items as numbered.
8. It would be helpful for your group to use a good modern translation of the Bible. You might prefer using a Bible that includes notes, such as *The Journey Bible: Revealing God and How You Fit Into His Plan* (Zondervan, 2014). This could be especially helpful to those who are relatively new to the Christian faith or who just don't know much about it. Unless noted otherwise, biblical quotations in this series are from the New International Version (NIV).

As you wrestle together with these issues and questions, be assured that satisfying, reasonable answers are waiting to be found. God bless you on your spiritual journey!

“
**SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND;
KNOCK AND THE DOOR WILL
BE OPENED TO YOU.”**

– Jesus (*Matthew 7:7*)

This discussion guide was written by Garry Poole with additional contributions by Dr. Richard Knopp, Program Director of Room For Doubt at Lincoln Christian University in Lincoln, Illinois. The “Basic Questions” series includes message manuscripts; videos for discussion starters, message introductions, leader training, and event promotion; as well as recommended resources for each of the six questions covered. See the searchable website at www.roomfordoubt.com for more information. ©2019. All rights reserved.

SESSION 1

1 2 3 4 5 6

IS DOUBT ALWAYS BAD?

“NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR,
THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN.”

HEBREWS 11:1

BACKGROUND STORY

Tom grew up going to church with his family. When it came time for him to “declare his faith” by getting baptized, there was no doubt he was ready. That’s what he wanted to do. It was a given. After all, it’s not like he didn’t believe. Plus, he received lots of support and encouragement to take this step from his family and the church crowd. But Tom began questioning his faith when he entered his freshman year at an out-of-state university. Suddenly he was thrust into a world filled with skeptics. They raised some of the questions he had wondered about in high school, but he had quickly dismissed them because he didn’t want to disappoint anyone—especially his parents. He wanted his faith to be true but felt uncomfortable questioning it. But now that he was far from home, he felt the freedom to entertain these doubts. It didn’t help that most of his friends, and even his professors, scoffed at the claims of Christianity. So, for the first time in his life, he gave himself permission to consider carefully the questions he had long had about his beliefs. Initially, he was fearful about allowing himself to raise issues about a faith he treasured so much. But the more he did, the bolder he got.

Isn’t the Bible outdated and full of mistakes?

Why are there so many different religions?

Who really knows what’s true?

How could Jesus be God?

Is there really life after death or is this life on earth all there is?

What evidence is there for God’s existence?

Are Christians just arrogant and narrow-minded?

He began reeling as these questions swirled in his mind. But even worse, Tom felt like he had no answers. And he dared tell no one.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Maybe you can relate to Tom. How open and honest do you feel you (or others you know) can be around Christians about your spiritual doubts? Elaborate. What makes you (or others you know) feel safe and secure enough to be able to express spiritual questions?
2. In what ways can doubts sometimes be a good thing? Can you give an example where a doubt in your life led to something positive?

“Doubt is but another element of faith.” - St. Augustine

3. Do you think it is possible to have a sincere and genuine faith and yet still have questions and doubts? Why or why not? Someone once said to Jesus, *“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief”* (Mark 9:24). What do you think the person meant by this?
4. Discuss a particular doubt about the Christian faith that you or someone else has faced and try to identify its primary cause. For example:
 - Is it emotional or *psychological*?
(E.g. “I find it hard to be personally confident about anything”)
 - Is it *relational*?
(E.g. “I had a bad experience with a professing Christian or church leader”)
 - Is it *spiritual*?
(E.g. “I never feel good enough”; “I just can’t be sure that God can accept me”)
 - Is it *intellectual*?
(E.g. “Some Christian beliefs don’t seem reasonable”)
 - Is it *volitional*?
(E.g. “I don’t really want to believe”)

Do you think it’s important to recognize different causes for doubt?
Why or why not?

“Father, we can see and understand only a little about you now, as if we were peering at your reflection in a poor mirror; but someday we are going to see you in your completeness, face to face. Now all that we know is hazy and blurred, but then we will see everything clearly, just as clearly as you see into our hearts right now. And, Father, we can have confidence in that because of what you have already chosen to reveal to us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

1 Corinthians 13:12, Living Bible

“
**THE PROUD MAN NEEDS TO
DOUBT BECAUSE THE SENSE OF
HIS OWN IMPORTANCE DEMANDS
IT. IT IS NOT IN HIS NATURE TO
BOW TO ANYONE.”**

- *Os Guinness*

5. Read the quote by Christian thinker, Os Guinness. To what extent can our attitudes or our will influence our susceptibility to doubt our beliefs? If you can, use an example.

6. It seems undeniable that we cannot know all the answers to our faith questions in this life. On a scale from 1-10, how much does this bother you and possibly cause you to doubt? (10 means “a lot.”) Do you think it’s possible to lack absolute certainty and still have a faith that is adequately supported?

7. What does it mean for faith to be “blind”? Do you think it’s okay—at least sometimes—for faith to be “blind”? If so, under what circumstances? Do you think it’s possible to have a “reasonable faith”? How important do you think it is to have a reasonable faith? (For some relevant Bible passages, see Acts 1:3; Acts 17:2-4, 30-31; 1 Peter 3:15.)

8. Without mentioning names, is there someone in your life who is dealing with doubts about Christian beliefs? What practical steps could you take this week to encourage and strengthen them in their faith? If you are wrestling with some doubts, what practical steps could you take this week to address them?

FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Pray that your discussion will lead you to be more open with your questions and more open to some answers. Express your honest doubts and heartfelt need for God’s guidance this week. Perhaps you could write a brief letter to God that expresses your key questions and your doubts.