

Faith

Chapter Summary

Weekly Win

The win is for participants to understand that Christian faith is founded on a person and an event that are supported by historical evidence.

Bottom Lines

- Faith is one of the most powerful tools at humanity's disposal.
- The thing that makes Jesus different from other religious leaders isn't something he taught; it's something he did. He died and came back to life.
- Christianity requires faith in a person. This is why for anyone investigating Christianity, the first question that must be answered is, *Who is Jesus?*

Before the Meeting

Pray

Continue to pray for your group members individually. Pray they will continue to allow God to work in their lives as they process last week's discussion about grace and their reaction to the *Grace* film. Also, pray that they will desire to take a step toward God.

Communicate with Co-leader(s)

As leaders, you should address the following items:

- Evaluate the previous meeting with your co-leaders soon after it's over.
- Decide who will be facilitating which parts of the discussion for the next week.
- Clarify which leader will follow up with any group members who may need individual attention.
- Encourage each other about the growth you've seen in the group members and your co-leaders.

Contact Group Members

Engage in a conversation with your group members individually by email, phone, or text about the right next step for them after Starting Point. Talk with your church staff if you are not clear on what options are available to group members. Generally, joining a community group or serving on a team at church is the best next step for group members.

We've created this [email template](#) to use as you contact your group members each week. We

recommend sending an email a few days before your group to serve as a reminder.

Prepare the Environment

Prepare a welcoming environment for the group members by being available before and after group. Also, ensure you are starting and ending the group on time.

Schedule Social Gathering

Schedule a date for your next social gathering. This will be a time of encouragement for your group members and a recap of the Starting Point experience.

Discussion | Section One

Everyday Faith

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand the broader definition of faith and the challenges associated with contemplating new or different beliefs.

Section Summary

Faith is not just a religious concept; faith is something we all express on a daily basis whether we are aware of it or not. We act in faith every time we get on an airplane or sit in a chair. When it comes to our personal beliefs (faith), we tend to be defensive or closed to information that challenges them. As we discuss the idea of faith/belief, being aware of this tendency will be helpful.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- How is everyday faith, or belief, similar or dissimilar to religious faith?
- How do your environment, family, and friends impact what you believe?
- Have you ever changed what you believe? How did that happen?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: While both everyday faith and religious faith involve acting as if something is certain without knowing it is certain, we often don't think about everyday faith. We eventually sit in enough chairs or fly on enough airplanes that they no longer feel uncertain. Having faith in an event we did not personally witness, like the resurrection, or in a future eternal state, like heaven can feel far less tangible. Consider showing the [60 Seconds on Faith in Everyday Life](#) video.

Question 2: Most people intuitively understand how much their environments influence their beliefs. For some participants this can be a significant emotional barrier to faith in Christ. If a participant grew up in a different religious context, choosing to become a Christian means believing many of your friends and family are wrong. It can be helpful for facilitators to share from similar personal experiences if they have them.

Question 3: The goal of this discussion is to get participants to talk about the steps and processes they have gone through in the past when they've changed what they believed. This can be political beliefs, theological beliefs, or even relational beliefs (a trusted relationship that became untrustworthy or vice versa). Obviously, the greater and more significant the belief, the harder it is to be open to change. A person's worldview is about as big as it gets. A discussion that reminds participants that they have changed in the past may be helpful in opening up the possibility in the future.

Discussion | Section Two

Belief That vs. Trust In

Section Win

The win is for participants to understand the unique nature of Jesus' claims about himself and the significance of his disciples' dramatic turnaround.

Section Summary

Christianity differs from other faiths in that Jesus called his followers to believe in him as a person not just in what he taught. As a result, when he was physically crucified, the movement he started died philosophically. His followers fled and hid for fear of what the consequences of their association might be. Strangely, only days later, those same cowardly followers boldly challenged the very same authorities. What could explain such a dramatic change in behavior? They claimed they had seen a resurrected Jesus.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- How do Jesus' statements about himself make him unique? What do they tell about him?
- Why was Jesus' death particularly devastating for the continuation of his message?
- How does the disciples' behavior lend credibility to the claims of Christianity?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This question determines if participants picked up on the main point of the text. Jesus claimed to be equal with God and declared himself as the solution to humanity's need to

reconcile with God. His own testimony makes it impossible for us to embrace him as simply a good moral teacher or model humanitarian.

Question 2: Again, the message and the text explain that Jesus' focus on himself meant the apparent end of his movement at his crucifixion. Be prepared to provide clarity if this is not understood.

Question 3: The fact that they fled and hid in fear only to become bold days later with claims of witnessing a resurrected Jesus is a compelling piece of data. It is possible they made the whole thing up, but is that likely? Many of them died because of this belief. People die for lies they sincerely believe to be true, but how likely is it that people would die knowing it was for a lie?

Discussion | Section Three

Faith Isn't Blind

Section Win

The win is that participants understand that the Christian faith is an informed faith, not a blind leap.

Section Summary

It takes a step of faith for an individual to trust Christ—not a blind leap of faith but one that is informed and supported by some compelling evidence. Christians don't believe just because the Bible tells them to but because of the number of eyewitnesses who claimed to have seen a risen Jesus.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

- Is there any belief or cause you are willing to die for?
- How central is the resurrection to the validity of the Christian message?
- How has your view of Jesus been impacted over the past seven weeks?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This discussion helps to focus awareness around how strong a belief has to be in order to die for it, as many of the disciples did.

Question 2: Without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. This event is the cornerstone upon which the credibility of Jesus and, therefore, the entire faith rests. Some participants have had bad experiences with Christians or Christian churches that have not been clear on the foundational aspect of the resurrection. This is an opportunity for you to peel back the many

layers of traditions and practices to help focus on the fundamental foundation of Christianity—the resurrection.

Question 3: This question gives you the opportunity to find out what, if any, changes are taking place on a personal belief level. As leaders, we often look forward to these questions in hopes that some huge steps have been taken. Remember that heart change is up to God, so be prepared no matter what. A person placing his or her trust in Christ is a God-sized decision. More than anything, these answers will help us know how to pray for participants.

Wrap-Up

Review Bottom Lines

- Faith is one of the most powerful tools at humanity's disposal.
- The thing that makes Jesus different from other religious leaders isn't something to be taught; it's something he did. He died and came back to life.
- Christianity requires faith in a person. This is why for anyone investigating Christianity, the first question that must be answered is, *Who is Jesus?*

RESOURCES REMINDER AND PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

Remind the group of the additional resources on the website. Also, they are to answer the Chapter 8 questions in the guide and listen to the message for Chapter 8: "Invitation."

Some group members may be intimidated by this chapter title "Invitation," thinking that we will ask or force them to accept Christ based on how the term has been used in their past. Let them know that next week's discussion will center around church. Not the building "church," but the real church--God's people.

SCHEDULE SOCIAL GATHERING

Set a date for your social gathering and cover any details related to it (location, food, time, date). This will be a time of celebration and remembering their Starting Point experience.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you close in prayer, thank God that you can have faith in Jesus and still have doubts.