

What's a Christian, Anyway?

small group discussion guide

Chapter 1:

Finding Our Way Home

- What images and feelings come to mind when you think of home?
- Do you agree that “the church in Western societies today seems to have lost its way”? Why or why not?
- Do you know someone who has lost their faith? What did they say was their reason for doing so?
- What is the difference between opposition and indifference?
- What are some reasons people might be cynical about the church?
- In what ways is today's church similar to the early church?

Chapter 2:

What's in the Bag?

- What are some ways in which individual churches vary in their teachings?
- Why might an individualistic culture be uninterested in Christianity?
- What is your previous knowledge of the Nicene Creed?
- In what ways might knowing the Nicene Creed help someone understand the main tenets of Christianity?
- Who are some pastors or teachers that nourish your faith, and how do they do so?
- In what ways can the Nicene Creed be “an instrument of unity”?
- In what ways is it helpful to have a guide like the Nicene Creed to understand the Christian faith?

Chapter 3:

All Together Now

- What are some verses that discuss the importance of community?
- In what ways is community important in the Christian faith?
- What is the difference between knowing and believing?
- Why do you think it's important to know that God is close to us?
- In what ways is believing that there is a God different from believing in God?

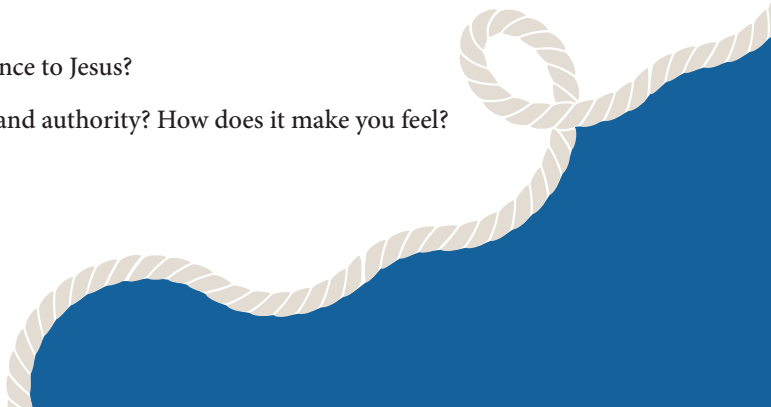
Chapter 4:

The One and Only

- What do you think it means that God is the source of life, and why is this important to know?
- In what ways is the sufficiency of God demonstrated in His being the one true God?
- What are some things that we might give too much power or significance to in the place of God?
In what ways do these things tempt us to believe that God is not enough?
- What do you think it means that God is our Father?
- In what ways does the juicebox analogy help you understand that God is the source of everything?
- What do you think it looks like to stay close to God?

Chapter 5:

The World's True Lord

- How would you explain who Jesus is to someone who has never heard of Him?
 - In what ways does it help you to know the meaning of each of Jesus' titles as discussed in this chapter? In what ways do they clarify what it means that Jesus is Lord?
 - What does "allegiance" mean?
 - In what ways might we be "the greatest rival to Jesus' kingship"?
How do we know if we've put ourselves before God?
 - What do you think it looks like to bend low in allegiance to Jesus?
 - What is your response to reading about Jesus' power and authority? How does it make you feel?
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Chapter 6:

The Story Above All Stories

- Why do you think it might be difficult for us to understand that Jesus died specifically for us?
- The Nicene Creed only mentions the human names of Mary and Pontius Pilate.
What is the significance of this?
- What is salvation, and why do we need it?
- Do you agree that sin is “always social”? Why or why not?
- Who in your life has shared the riches of God’s mercy with you?
How can you share those riches with others?

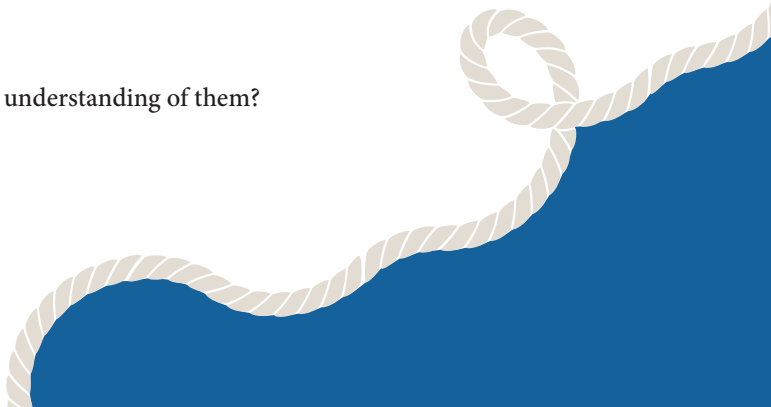
Chapter 7:

New Beginning in the End

- In what ways does Jesus’ death seem like a dead end when viewed without the resurrection?
- Have you ever experienced betrayal by or disillusionment with the church?
If so, how did your experience affect your faith?
- What are some of the skeptical questions you’ve had about Jesus?
If you’ve found the answers to those questions, where did you find them?
- What do you think it means to truly know Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus’ ascension was necessary?
- How do you feel when you think about Jesus’ final judgment?

Chapter 8:

Giver of Life

- What is your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
 - What is the role of the Spirit?
 - In what ways does the Spirit help us glorify God?
 - What is the fruit of the Spirit, and why is it important?
 - Are you familiar with spiritual gifts? If so, what is your understanding of them?
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Chapter 9:

An Impossible Dream

- How would you describe what the church should be? What has kept it from being that way?
- What do you think it would look like for the church to live in unity?
- What does it mean to be holy?
- What might make it difficult for us to see the church as holy? Do those problems change its holiness?
- Do you believe the church is a human institution? Why or why not?

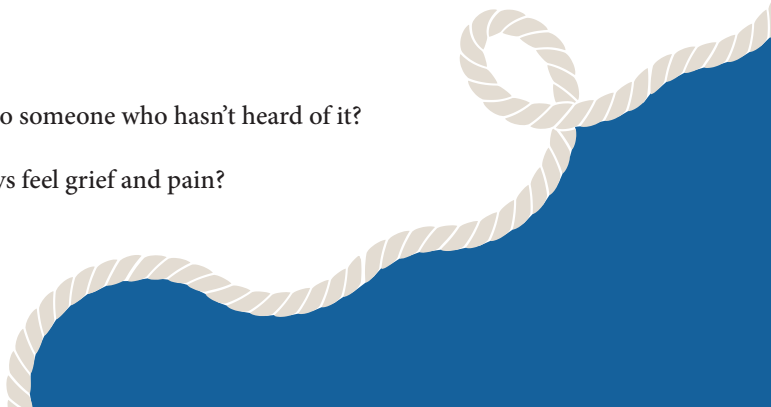
Chapter 10:

A New Family

- What does it mean that baptism is “entry into the church”?
- How does your church approach baptism? Is there a class before baptism?
What is done after baptism?
- In what ways is baptism a community event?
- In what ways does your view of the church change when you think of other Christians as your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Why is forgiveness important?
- In what ways are God's grace and forgiveness related?
- In what ways does forgiveness help build the church?

Chapter 11:

A More Beautiful Hope

- What is hope?
 - In what ways do you find hope in Christ?
 - In what ways is hope “future focused”?
 - How would you describe the resurrection of the dead to someone who hasn't heard of it?
 - How does it make you feel to know that we won't always feel grief and pain?
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Chapter 12:

Amen

- In what ways is faith a “public act of surrender”?
- Who have you seen demonstrate sacrificial love, and how did they do so?
- What comes to mind when you think of hospitality?
How could you extend these actions to bring people into your community?
- What is the church’s mission in the world? How does your church assist in that work?
- What did you learn by reading this book?
- Did your perspective of faith or the church change after reading this book? If so, please explain.

How can this strange story of God made flesh, of a crucified Savior, of resurrection and new creation become credible for those whose entire mental training has conditioned them to believe that the real world is the world which can be satisfactorily explained and managed without the hypothesis of God? I know of only one clue to the answering of that question, only one hermeneutic of the gospel: a congregation which believes it.”

— **Leslie Newbigin**

