

THE REASON FOR GOD

The Reason For God: What Story Are You Living In?

May 14, 2023 | Michelle Rader, Elder

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Note to Leaders: Every group is different, please choose the questions that relate best to your particular group and don't feel like you have to get to every question.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

We have come to a cultural moment in which both skeptics and believers feel their existence is threatened because both secular skepticism and religious faith are on the rise in significant, powerful ways. We have neither the Western Christendom of the past nor the secular, religionless society that was predicted for the future.

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People who blithely go through life too busy or indifferent to ask hard questions about why they believe as they do will find themselves defenseless against either the experience of tragedy or the probing questions of a smart skeptic. A person's faith can collapse almost overnight if she has failed over the years to listen patiently to her own doubts, which should only be discarded after long reflection.

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- While it may sound nice and inclusive to say that all religions are equally valid or all paths lead to God, the truth is that the different religions and belief systems have significant points of conflict – they cannot all be true.
- “Truth” is not a set of facts, beliefs, or assumptions. “Truth” is a person.

Jesus said, “I am the way and the **truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

We have a story we tell ourselves – consciously or unconsciously – about reality and our place in it. What is the story you are telling? How much thought have you put into it? Do you think your story is a good story?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

(sermon-based discussion guide for groups and individuals)

Additional Scripture to Consider: Acts 17:16-24 – What are some things you notice about how Paul presents the Gospel in a non-Christian context?

- 1 Discuss 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 – How was the story of Jesus surprising in Paul's day? In ours? What is unexpected or foolish about the cross?
- 2 Do you agree that the world is getting both "more religious" and "less religious" at the same time?
- 3 If you are a Christian, why are you a Christian? If you are still exploring Christian faith, what is it that is most troubling about the Christian message, what keeps you in the "exploring" stage?
- 4 What is the strongest argument AGAINST Christian faith?
- 5 Do you agree that one of the most difficult aspects of Christian faith for many is the Christian claim of exclusivity?
- 6 How do you respond to this quote, "If Christians are right about Jesus being God, then Muslims and Jews fail in a serious way to love God as God really is, but if Muslims and Jews are right that Jesus is not God but a teacher or prophet, then Christians fail in a serious way to love God as God really is."
- 7 How can a religious group's claim to exclusive truth lead to isolation from others, stereotyping others, and even violence against others outside the group? Is that where Christian faith's claim to exclusivity lead those who follow Jesus?

NOTES
