

FOCUS – Part 3
Community Group Discussion Guide
June 20, 2021

We are in series titled ***FOCUS***. The purpose is to offer some clarity when you get asked why you are a Christian or a follower of Jesus, or why do you even go to church.

One of the most frustrating things about being a Christian is those moments when people ask you a question about what you believe or question something you believe and you need ample time to provide an answer—not to convince them, but to leave them with something to think about.

*Share an example of a time when you got “baited” into having a conversation you weren’t ready to have or didn’t really want to have. What was it about? Explain.

Peter, an ex- businessman turned Jesus follower, who bailed in the end. **He lost faith and denied even knowing Jesus**, and then jumped back in to become the leader of the church in Jerusalem. He tells us that we should have something prepared. He writes:

1 Peter 3:15

Always be **prepared** [*be ready always for defense*] to give an **answer** [*defense, reply*] to everyone who asks you to give the **reason** [*explanation*] for the **hope** that **you** have [*the hope in you*].

Peter is not asking us to defend our Christian worldview, our religion, the Bible, our faith, or our church. He is not talking politics, views on masks, vaccines, or how to interpret Phase 5. He certainly isn’t advocating for the people that say, “Well I think Christians ought to” There was no New Testament at the time he wrote that, so the gospels weren’t in circulation, it was just events everyone had heard about or seen personally. And he lets his audience know we (Christians) should be **prepared** to defend our decision to **follow** Christ.

*What do you say when people ask, “***how can a loving God allow people to go through pain and suffering?***” Discuss.

Today’s message maybe for you if you are going through a difficult time or are talking to someone who is experiencing pain or suffering and sincerely asking, “why, *God?*”

The message is about how to talk to someone who is using the following as a one-liner to avoid God:

- If there is a good God, why is there so much **suffering** in the world?
Great question...
- If God is good, he **would** eliminate it.
- If God is all-powerful, he **could** eliminate it.
- Is God **unwilling**, or is God **unable**? Or has he lost power or something.

*As a group discuss the two responses that we can share in response to the above statements.

Response #1: “Have you **read** anything on that topic?”

Response #2: “If you could, would you remove everything **bad** from the world right now?”

*As a group discuss the two assumptions shared in the message.

Assumption #1: Certain things **ought** not be.

1. This captured C.S. Lewis’s attention as an atheist. Where did this *ought not* come from? If I made it up, then it doesn’t make any sense to conclude there is no God, based on a standard I invented.
2. But if I didn’t make it up—if it exists outside of me—where did it come from?
3. Unless there is a moral standard, we have no real basis for calling anything good or evil.
4. How can we hold God accountable to our manufactured sense of right and wrong (if he’s God, he ought to . . .)?

Assumption #2: The **world** is broken. Not just human beings—the whole world (weather, our bodies, disease, our minds from time to time, etc.).

Christians agree. But Christians believe that the current world is not the **final version**. The current world is the **best** path to the **best** possible world. Christians believe that the **best** possible world is a world where men and women are **free** to sin but **freely** choose not to.

We are all free to make whatever choices and decisions we want. Some choices and decisions in our lives have caused the basement to flood. Some of them we probably knew better. Some of them we were deceived, regardless, most of them caused some kind of pain or suffering. So, for God to get rid of pain and suffering in the world he would have to get rid of all of us.

*Read together Romans 8:18–22

Scripture Support

v. 19-22; Sin has caused all creation to fall from the perfect state in which God created it. Therefore, the world is subject to frustration and decay so that it can not fulfill it’s intended purpose. One day all creation will be liberated and transformed. Until that day all wait in eager expectation for the resurrection of God’s children.

v. 19-22; Christians see the world as it is – decaying and being spiritually infected with sin. Christians do not need to be pessimistic because of the hope they have for the future. Christians look forward to the new heaven and new earth that God has promised, and Christians wait for God’s new order that will free the world of sin, sickness, and evil.

Jesus points to a day where what ought to be, will be.

*As a group discuss how this series has helped you become more informed and prepared to have a conversation when someone asks you a question about what you believe or questions something you believe.

FOCUS