

FOCUS – Part 1
Community Group Discussion Guide
June 6, 2021

We take the Bible seriously because we take the Gospels seriously.

We need a short and ***focused*** answer to the question of why we've chosen to follow Jesus. To do that we need to ***focus*** on the essentials of our faith and how we share that with others?

Sometimes we just get tongue tied, hyper focused, and start talking about technicolor dream coats, animals on an Ark, and oh yeah, Jesus rose from the dead. Or someone cuts you off and sort of dismisses your faith or makes a comment and leaves you feeling defeated.

One of the most frustrating things about being a Christian is in the moments when people ask us a question about what we believe, why we believe it, or question what we believe.

*Share an example of a time you experienced something like what was mentioned above. What was that experience like for you and how did it end?

We don't always have 15 minutes of people's undivided attention, where we can further explain ourselves or give an answer.

*Take some time to share how you have responded when someone has made the following comments to you.

- ***Regarding the Bible: "So, you believe all that?"***
- ***"So, you're religious, is that it?"***
- ***"So, how can you believe that?"***
- ***"Do you get to have any fun?"***
- ***"Not sure I can say this around you, so close your ears"***

Have you ever had a time when sharing our faith became overcomplicated?

This series is designed to help us focus on how to respond, not react, when there's little time and even less interest. Peter, the first post-resurrection evangelist is going to help us.

Read together 1 Peter 3:15

Scripture Support

Always be **prepared** 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*].

Be **prepared** to defend your decision to **follow** Christ. Be **prepared** to defend your **hope** or **confidence** in Christ and do so with gentleness and respect.

v. 15; Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. We should not be disrespectful or arrogant in sharing our faith, however, we should be ready to give an answer about our faith, our lifestyle, our Christian perspective. Be prepared to share what Christ has done for you.

Peter gave us the reason for his hope. It was the hope of the first-century believers. We should use it as well, because it is so **focused** and clear: His answer was the **resurrection**.

It often comes down to being able to answer this question; ***Why are you a Christian?***

*Take some time to go around your circle and share responses as to why you are a follower of Jesus, a Christian.

Don't over complicate it. Our response can be as simple as, "I believe Jesus died for my sin and rose from the dead. I don't believe it because the Bible says so, I believe it because of all the eyewitnesses; Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, James, and Paul.

"We evangelicals, with our **infallible** view of scripture ripped from our hands can be left gasping for air. If you crumple and toss out a literal reading of the Bible, then what does it mean to talk about Jesus literally dying for your sins?"

So, what about the Bible? Do we use the Bible to prove the Bible? No!

The term "Bible" comes from a *Latin* term that was derived from a *Greek* term that means "book" or "books."

Bible = Books; 66 books with four being the gospel of Jesus

The most important books in the Book are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

1. Christians don't believe the **Gospels** are reliable because they are in the Bible.
2. Christians believe the **Gospels** were included in the Bible because they are considered reliable.

The Gospels are considered reliable because of **who** wrote them (two eyewitnesses and two friends of eyewitnesses) and **when** they were written.

*Share an example of something you saw years ago and now believe it because you witnessed it. ("I wouldn't have believed it unless I saw it with my own two eyes.)

Read together Hebrews 12:2-3

Scripture Support:

v. 2; to "fix" means to **FOCUS, DECIDE, or SETTLE ON** something.

v. 3; When we face hardship and discouragement it is easy to lose sight of the big picture. We are not alone, there is help.

Read together 2 Timothy 4:2-5

Here Pastor Timothy is being reminded and encouraged by Paul to preach and teach the message of Jesus. Paul's charge to Timothy is to keep at it, regardless. We are not exempt.

Scripture Support:

v. 2; "be prepared" in and out of season means to always be ready to serve God in any situation, whether or not it is convenient. Be sensitive to the opportunities God gives you.

v. 3-5; often people seek power, not knowledge. Such people will not listen to sound doctrine, instead, they turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths, don't tolerate the truth, reject truth for sensationalism, or gather viewpoints to support their selfish desires.

Read together 2 Timothy 4:2-5

Here Pastor Timothy is being reminded and encouraged by Paul to preach and teach the message of Jesus. Paul's charge to Timothy is to keep at it, regardless. We are not exempt.

*Share with the group an opportunity or opportunities that God is giving you to share the good news on his behalf. How has it developed and what are the circumstances surrounding that opportunity? (family, friend, co-worker?)

Be prepared to share in your next meeting about the opportunity and conversation.

FOCUS