



Discussion Guide





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Chapter 1: When You Believe in God but Don't Really Know Him

"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." James 2:19

It's interesting that the verse says demons not only believe, but they shudder. They believe that He is powerful, and they know enough that they shudder and fear Him, but that is the extent of their knowledge. Believing in God is different than personally knowing God.

- In your relationship with God do you only believe enough to shudder?
- What is the outcome to just believing?

If we accept what has been told to us about God instead of finding out for ourselves, we will never really know Him, rather only know what we have been told about Him. This is stopping short of truly knowing God and leaves us with only the option of believing in Him. When you just believe it causes you to live by your own rules.

- How does life look when you live by your own rules?

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:3-4

- What truth is the verse talking about and how do you acquire this truth?
- What does knowing Him have to do with obeying Him?
- Why is a right heart required over only right actions when it comes to obeying God's commands?

Next Steps:

When believing in God is as far as you go, you follow a religion. When you begin to know God, you start to live in right relationship with Him.

- What moves you from a religion to a relationship?
- Describe what your relationship with God currently looks like.
- What are your expectations of God? To keep you out of hell, shower you with blessings, or to be your God?
- What does God want to change so that you can have an intimacy with Him, making Him your God just as David did?
- What does the process of moving from believing to knowing look like for you?



Chapter 2: When You Believe in God but Are Ashamed of Your Past

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

In this chapter, Craig uses the phrase “Prison of Shame” to describe how we beat ourselves up for our past. Prison is a place that barricades us in a small place with bars of guilt and self-consciousness that lock us into hating our past and ourselves. We live continually aware of what put us in that prison to begin with. Living with shame never allows us to feel the freedom of God’s grace or the healing power of His forgiveness.

- In what ways do you hide so people won’t know the real you?
- Do you equate what you do with who you are?
- Do you see a difference in doing something bad and being a bad person?
- Why do you feel that you have to wear masks?
- How does wearing masks make knowing who God created you to be difficult?

“You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” 1 Corinthians 7:23

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” Galatians 5:1

God does not want “our past pain to become our present identity.”

- Are you allowing past and current circumstances to define who you are instead of God’s word?
- How do we change what is defining our identity?
- How could staying confined in your “prison of shame” be considered selfish?

The truth is that Satan uses shame to keep you focused on yourself, not able to live the way God designed. It’s time to move forward!

Next Steps:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

“We are not our sins and we are not what others have done to us.”

- Identify who God says YOU are in some of the following verses:

John 1:12; Romans 8:1; Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:13-14; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Proverbs 3:32; John 15:6; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:6; Romans 8:35; Romans 8:31; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 5:18; Ephesians 3:12; Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Colossians 2:10; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 2:18

Steps in becoming free from shame:

1. Accepting that which cannot be changed
 2. Bringing your past or current situation out into the open
 3. Filling your life with the truth of who God says you are
 4. Asking for forgiveness, not just saying you are sorry
 5. Embracing the God can change your future
- What is your next step in becoming free from shame?



Chapter 3: When You Believe in God but Aren't Sure He Loves You

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

- What is your understanding of God's love for you?
(e.g. conditional, temporary, required)
- What prevents you from knowing and accepting that God loves you?
Past guilt, present sin, insignificance?
- Do you find yourself comparing your lifestyle to others?
- How does comparing ourselves destroy the truth of God's love for us?
- How can God love people who say they love Him but still lie, steal and cheat?

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:8

- "Love is not something God does. It's who God is."
- How is God's love the only love that can make each of us significant?
- Does the fact that God's love covers our bad choices give us an excuse to knowingly choose the wrong path? Why?
- If you really walked in the reality that God loves you, what would it do to you?

Next Steps:

- Reread John 3:16

Exercise: Write John 3:16 on an index card with your name inserted. Take time to read it everyday for the next week, letting the truth and depth of God's love penetrate your mind, heart and soul.



Chapter 4: When You Believe in God but Not in Prayer

“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full . . . and when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.” Matthew 6:5,7

Not a lot has changed since this verse was written. We try not to, but we see prayer as a spiritual marker, just as the Pharisee’s did: The more you pray and the more eloquent your prayers, the more spiritual you are. Prayer has become a required ritual that doesn’t come easy to most of us. We do it to be a “good Christian” and minimize our feelings of guilt.

- Define prayer in your life right now? Get people to include their expectations of prayer and what keeps them from praying.
- Prayer is “communicating with God.”

What a simple concept that we take and make complicated and boring. We think that we all have to communicate with God in a certain way. God created us and knows that we all have different ways of communicating with Him.

- In what style of communication do you feel the most comfortable and closest to God?

“pray continually . . . for this is God’s will for you in Christ” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

- Is this type of praying possible in your life?
- Does knowing that God doesn’t want “longer prayers” but “more frequent prayers” make praying continually seem more achievable?
- Are there issues that God does and doesn’t want us to pray about?
- Do you expect God to answer when you pray?
- How do you respond when God does or does not answer your prayers?
- Why is it sometimes hard to hear God’s answers, whether they are what we want or not?

Next Steps:

- Praying continually is a lifestyle change that comes with time. How can you go about making this type of lifestyle change?
- How does your style of communication with God need to change so that you will do it more?

The following are several things that really matter when we pray. Evaluate where you are at in regards to each of these areas.

1. Making sure our relationships with others are in order- Mark 11:24
2. Checking your motive for your prayers- James 4:3
3. Living a Godly lifestyle- James 5:16 and Psalms 34:5
4. Faith- James 1:6
5. Knowing His will may be different than our desired outcome- 1 John 5:14-15

Exercise: Commit this next week to pray *immediately* when you receive a prayer request.



Chapter 5: When You Believe in God but Don't Think He's Fair

The statement "life isn't fair" is something we start saying during childhood...and sometimes never stop. The reality is that our lives are all different and none of them are "fair" when comparing them to the ideal life, but we must learn that our lives are in the hands of God. We would do good to look at our life in reference to what God's plan is for us, and not our own.

- Do we determine what is fair by comparing our lives to those around us? If not how do we determine what fair is?
- What makes you think that God does or does not care?
- When God does something we consider unfair, how could it change our view of God?

"For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones" Isaiah 49:13

- Does this verse seem true in your life?
- Is it hard to find comfort in God who is present but at times chooses not to intervene or change our circumstances?

Psalm 103:10-12- "(God) does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."

- How would you define grace?
- What does the fact that God gives us grace in all areas of our life have to do with life being fair or not?
- Why do we seemingly have to have an answer for everything that happens?
- Do you see people casting blame when there is no other explainable answer for a situation?
- Do you think that God disciplining His children is fair?
- In your own words what is the distinction between God allowing pain but not causing it?
- Do you believe that God truly uses what we go through in life for His purposes?

- Do you still trust that God is good, loving, and wise in everything even if you don't understand why things happen?

Next steps:

- How does this change your view of wanting fairness in your life?
- What must you do so that even when you don't understand, you can still believe in God?

If you are willing, identify how many times you compare yourself to others instead of focusing on what God wants for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you aware of those moments.



Chapter 6: When You Believe in God but Won't Forgive

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Hebrew 12:15

Exercise: As a group, come up with a meaning for this verse in your own words.

- What happens when we refuse to forgive?
- How could forgiveness set you free and what would you be free from?

*"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other**, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:31-32*

- How is forgiveness possible when you do have bitterness, rage, and anger, but it seems justified?
- Where do bitterness, anger, revenge, and hatred get you?
- Is forgiveness in these verses a suggestion or a command?
- Have you contemplated your choice to not forgive as disobedience to God?
- What does it mean that God's power is perfected in our weakness of not forgiving?

Read the following passages:

"...bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you..." Luke 6:28

"...you have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matthew 5:43-44

- Why does God ask us to pray for these who have wronged us and love our enemies?

"Prayers for others may or may not change them. But my prayers always change me."

- Do you agree with this statement? Why?
- How could forgiveness change you?

Next Steps:

“But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:11-12

- Are you willing to “fight the good fight” of battling through feelings of unforgiveness?

If you are willing:

- Out of obedience commit to praying for those who have wronged you.
- Start Simple
- Realize you may never receive an apology.

Identify scriptures that deal with forgiveness on an index card and put them where you will read them everyday.



Chapter 7: When You Believe in God but Don't Think You Can Change

"Even though I believe in God, I don't really think he can help me. After all, this is how he made me. Maybe, like the apostle Paul, this is simply the thorn in my flesh. Many believe a common lie. A lie believed as truth will affect you as if it were true."

On page 127 of his book, Craig shares about the power of training a dog and setting up boundaries.

- Not to compare anyone to a dog, but who are you allowing to "train" your thinking?
- In general, what are some "common lies" people tend to believe?

"Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God'." Mark 10:27

- Give some examples of how your thinking/life might be different if you took this to heart. How might the church be different?

Identify an area of life that you've held back from changing (for whatever reason). Discuss with the group.

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'." 1 Corinthians 15:33

- Write down 3 people in your life who care about you enough to confront, encourage, and/or hold you accountable to making positive changes. *If you don't have anyone, now is the time to look around the group you're in, and find a couple of people.*

Next Steps:

- Is there a lie that you have believed? Be bold and share with the group.
- What has kept you from overcoming a lie in your life?



Chapter 8: When You Believe in God but Still Worry All the Time

- What are some general things we (or specifically you) tend to worry about in life?
- Rather than putting our trust in God, what or who do we trust in?

Read the following passages:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 4:6-7*

“But the man who has doubts is condemned, because his eating is not from faith; and *everything that does not come from faith is sin.*” *Romans 14:23*

- How is holding on to worry a sin?
- What does worry typically do to us physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually?
- What does our level of worry show about our level of faith?
- Why is it easier to put our trust in our own abilities?
- If we truly believe that God is our provider, why do we worry so much about our circumstances?

Two steps towards moving from worry to faith are to do what's wise and to think on right things.

- How do we move forward in faith when God hasn't made a direction clear to us?
- What responsibilities do we have while we are trusting in God?
- Brainstorm some wise moves and thoughts together.

Next Steps:

“If you do catch yourself worrying even after you've done what was wise, remember that God is bigger than our problems, and that he wants us to hand them over to him. Worry then becomes a signal alerting us that it's time to pray. Any time you hear the alarm start to blare, stop. It's time to stop worrying and start praying.”

- What is one thing you can do this week to begin removing worry from your life?



Chapter 9: When You Believe in God but Pursue Happiness at Any Cost

- Besides your faith in Christ, what are some of the things in your life that give you happiness?
- Why do most people want more than they already have?
- Describe a time when you have put your immediate happiness above doing what was right.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12

- Why is it so easy to get distracted in life and focus on temporary living and happiness?

“I tried religion, but it didn’t make me happy. I went to church and it didn’t make my life any better. God didn’t help me have a better life, so either he failed me or he’s not real. Either way, I’m not interested.”

- What’s wrong with this line of thinking?
- What is the difference between God wanting us to be happy and making happiness an idol in our lives?

Read Matthew 5:1-12

- How do you think a person might behave if he or she were hungering and thirsting after righteousness?
- How (if at all) does the promise of future blessing affect us in the present?

“Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.” Psalm 97:12

*“Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.”
Psalm 112:1*

- What does it mean to you to be truly happy?

Next Steps:

- With your group pray that God will help you strip away the false beliefs you have regarding true happiness in your life. Ask God to help you seek happiness through Him only. Thank Him for the blessings he has given you in your life so that you can truly appreciate the comfort and happiness that comes through His blessings.



Chapter 10: When You Believe in God but Trust More in Money

- What is the one thing you would describe as your most valuable possession? Why is it so valuable to you?

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Luke 12:34

- What are some of the “treasures” or possessions in your life currently distracting you from focusing on God? What specific things can you do to remove these distractions?
- Have you ever known anyone who was completely satisfied because of the “riches” they obtained. What does chasing wealth typically lead to for people you’ve known (or yourself)?
- If we cannot take anything with us when we die, why do you think we work so hard to acquire things in our lives?
- When you grow in your relationship with Christ, it often results in becoming unexplainably content with what we have. Are you more content today than you were last year? How has your relationship with Christ in the last year affected your level of contentment?
- Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Describe a time you gave sacrificially and the affect it had on you. Is there any way you could give even more sacrificially? If so, what would it be?

Read the following passages:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices...But you have neglected the more important matters of the law...You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”

Matthew 23:23

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’” Malachi 3:10

“But the king replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing’.” 2 Samuel 24:24

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” 1 Timothy 6:17-19

- How should these passages affect our giving?

DISCUSSION LEADER'S NOTE: The purpose of this discussion/study is not to debate the theology of tithing for today. Some people view the "tithe" as part of the Old Testament law, whereas others see it as a command for today. Here are some things to consider as you guide people:

- 1. The tithe was established before the Mosaic law.**
- 2. Jesus tithed.**
- 3. Jesus affirmed the tithe to His disciples (Matthew 23:23).**
- 4. The tithe is the starting point, not the end.**
- 5. If the tithe is an issue for someone, refer to the New Testament practice of giving: Acts 2:42-47.**

Next Steps:

- With your group and during your personal prayer time this week pray for God to help you focus more on Him rather than money. Pray that He will help you obtain true contentment through Him.
- What is one thing you can change today in your life that will help shift your focus away from money and possessions and back towards God?
- What can you do this week to accept and better appreciate the things God has given to you?



Chapter 11: When You Believe in God but Don't Share Your Faith

- Share about a time you have regretted or been frustrated with yourself for not sharing your faith.
- Why are so many of us slow to share our faith?

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...” 1 Peter 3:15

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being low, 10 being high), how prepared do you feel you are to share your faith? Explain.

Exercise: Hand out index cards to each person. Give them a couple minutes to write out what they would say to someone if asked the following question:

“Can you tell me exactly what it means to be a Christian and how I can become one?”

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

- How should our belief in eternity affect our actions and words towards one another and those who don't follow Christ?
- What is one thing you are going to do this week to share your faith with someone?



Chapter 12: When You Believe in God but Not in His Church

- Craig begins this chapter with a story about a waiter who expressed all Christ had done for him, but refused to attend church. Do you know people like this?
- What are their reasons for not being part of a local church?
- What would happen if people who have a negative bent towards the local church put their energy into making it better?
- Name some differences between *going* to church and *being* the church?

Read this entire passage: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- What is our responsibility to one another as part of the “body of Christ?”
- What happens to the church when individuals remove themselves?
- What happens to individuals when they remove themselves?

Read the following passages:

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17

*“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:15
“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” Colossians 3:12-14*

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

- What should our response be to people who are hurt, disillusioned, or offended?
- What specific issues and people in your community would be different if the church was living out what Jesus said it would (the gates of hell could not stop it)?
- What is one way you personally can make your church greater, according to who God’s created you to be?



The Afterword: Third Line Faith

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” Matthew 16:25-26

- How could some people possibly see this passage as “extreme?”

Line 1: “I believe in God and the gospel of Christ enough to benefit from it.”

- What are some examples that you see in our culture of this approach to faith in Christ?

Line 2: “I believe in God and Christ’s gospel enough to contribute comfortably.”

- How is this level of commitment different from Line 1?
- What are some examples of comfortable contribution?

Line 3: “I believe in God and Christ’s gospel enough to give my life to it.”

- Why do you think Jesus should be ruler in our lives?
- Who in your life has exemplified this type of commitment? How?
- How would our lives be different if we believed in God and Christ’s gospel this much?
- How would our world be different?

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me- the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Acts 20:24

Line 1 Question

- What is one thing in my life that exemplifies this “line”?

Line 2 Question

- Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Describe a time you gave sacrificially and the affect it had on you.
- In what area of life are you comfortably contributing right now?

Line 3 Question

- What would it take to make our lives nothing to us, existing only to do what Christ wants us to?
- What is one specific “next step” you can take to move towards “Third Line Faith”? When will you do it? Who is going to hold you accountable?