

B L I N D F A I T H

WEEK 2 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

You find yourself surviving on a desert island. You are able to choose one pet to have as a companion, what would you pick and why?

SHARE

Welcome to our series, "Blind Faith."

We all have faith in something. Whether it is faith in ourselves, faith in God or faith in something or someone else, we all have faith. Faith is developed by the belief in what we perceive to be evidence. Take a chair for example: when we sit down in it, we are trusting that the chair will support us. Because of our past experience, we have faith that the chair will hold us. Our belief system isn't really all that blind.

There are reasons behind why we believe what we believe. For some, our belief system is based on truth, for others it might be based on something completely false, but is still a belief. We can feel emotionally strong about something and it still is untrue. We can also feel that something is completely false, when in reality it is completely true.

So what about faith in God? Is there enough evidence to point to a loving God who exists and knows your name? Are there logical reasons to believe in God? Does our notion of right and wrong in the universe point to a higher law given by God? What is the actual evidence that the Bible is trustworthy and without error? And ultimately, we know Jesus of Nazareth historically lived on this earth and made outrageous claims of being God in the flesh, but did he really prove it by resurrecting from the dead? Is Jesus really the only way to Heaven?

These are real questions that deserve real, intelligent answers. For far too long people have thought of Christianity as a blind faith. Throughout this series, we hope God will open your eyes and hearts to what we believe is the irrefutable evidence established by logic, reason, historical facts, and experience.

This entire series is based on questions we have received from people attending Red Rocks Church. We are grateful that so many of you sent in these great questions and we will do our best to help answer them. When it really comes down to it, regardless of how airtight the apologetics and arguments for God's existence are, we trust God will speak to you and reveal himself to you throughout this series.

This week we talked about the fact that we all have 'faith' assumptions. Whether we are Christians, Atheists, or anywhere in between, we put our faith in something. Shawn talked about the need for every

person to take time to make an attempt to reasonably decide—based on the evidence—whether there could be a God. Not deciding is still deciding. It's putting faith in the idea that God is not important enough to waste your time looking into and that there won't be any major consequences for living this way.

Some will respond to all this, "my doubts are not based on a leap of faith. I have no beliefs about God one way or another. I simply feel no need for God and I am not interested in thinking about it." But hidden beneath this feeling is the very modern American belief that the existence of God is a matter of indifference unless it intersects with my emotional needs. The speaker is betting his or her life that no God exists who would hold you accountable for your beliefs and behavior if you didn't feel the need for him. That may be true or it may not be true, but, again, it is quite a leap of faith.

-Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*

Whether we are atheists or Christians, we all have faith in something for different reasons. What would be the major differences in faith between the two?

If you are a Christ follower, what arguments, evidences or experiences most convinced you that there is a God in the universe who desires a relationship with you? In other words, why is putting your faith in Christ the most reasonable choice considering the evidence?

G R O W

In the message, Shawn talked about one of the most obvious arguments that atheists, non-believers and agnostics make and that is how can Christianity claim it is the only true religion? The exclusive claim, according to the skeptics, is narrow minded, arrogant and downright foolish. Atheists simply just believe there is no God. Agnostics, defined as those who believe that nothing can be known of the existence or non-existence of God, would say that we just couldn't know, so Christianity (and thus Christians) is over-reaching to say they know the truth. Most skeptics of Christianity ridicule the faith and the followers of Jesus because they believe Christians are the least inclusive, out of step with the progressive times and politically incorrect.

There are a multitude of problems with this idea that Christianity seems narrow minded and arrogant. All religious beliefs are exclusive and narrow-minded if we are honest. From Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, to Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology and Mormonism—all claim to know the truth and believe their truth to be the only truth. So what makes Christianity so different? When you compare them side by side, you will see a stark and compelling difference.

Let's look at Christianity's founders. They never claimed to be perfect, never claimed to be God, but just simply claimed they personally knew the one and only truth. Most of these religions require that to attain Heaven or the next level of understanding and/or a spiritual promotion, you must do enough good works, give a certain amount of money, or reach the next level of understanding. And here is the kicker; even if you do all the requirements, give all you have and steadfastly practice all the tenets, you are not truly ever secure, but must live with the continual and exhausting need to achieve to earn your place. The question continually nags the religious, "Have I done enough yet?"

Christianity is different. Jesus claimed he was God. Jesus claimed he was perfect. Jesus told us we couldn't be good enough to earn salvation. Jesus told us we couldn't change on our own or take our own sins away. Jesus exclaimed with his last breath as he was dying on the cross for our sins that it was finished. Because he finished the work, there is nothing we need to do but believe and trust in Him. There are no secret hidden paths to find. In fact, Christianity, when compared with all other religions is the most "inclusive," offering help and hope to everyone willing to believe in the claims of Jesus Christ.

When we look at what Jesus actually claimed about himself, we will quickly realize the same thing the great theologian, C.S. Lewis realized, that Jesus can't be just a good moral teacher. He is either a "liar, a lunatic or Lord." There is no middle ground.

Let's look at the claims of Jesus. Have each person in the group look up and read aloud each claim:

1. He claimed he would judge the world at the end of time. (Mathew 7:21-23)
2. He claimed he had the power to give eternal life. (John 5:21,40)
3. He stated that to see him, was to see God. (John 14:9)
4. He stated that to know him, was to know God. (John 8:19)
5. He claimed he had the ability to forgive sin. (Mark 2:5,10)
6. He claimed titles exclusive to God. (John 8:56-59)
7. He claimed he and God the Father were one. (John 10:30)
8. He claimed he had been in Heaven previously with God. (John 17:5)
9. He claimed he had the ability to answer people's prayers. (John 14:14)

After reading these claims Jesus made, what stands out to you most?

Does Jesus offer us any middle ground regarding his divinity? Why or why not?

MOVE

One of the most remarkable claims of Jesus that distinguishes Christianity from all others is found in the Gospel of John. Thomas, a follower of Jesus, asked Jesus where he was going and how he can know the way there.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In the New American Commentary on the book of John we read the significance of Jesus once again using the phrase, "I am" in the following paragraph:

Thomas's question provides the setting for one of the most frequently quoted verses in the Gospel of John. Jesus' response is introduced by another *egō eimi* ("I am") saying. In this case Jesus asserted that he is "the way, the truth, and the life."

In previous chapters *egō eimi* has been used to indicate that Jesus is the Messiah (4:28), the bread or sustenance of the community (6:35, 48, 51), the light of the world (8:12; 9:5), the one who is from above and not from the world (8:23), the gate or entrance way to the sheepfold (10:7, 9), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), and the resurrection and life (11:25). Here John joins three powerful ideas of "way," "truth," and "life" to produce a classic statement concerning the significance of Jesus in providing salvation.

It is difficult to read all the claims of Jesus and his promises to those who believe and come to the conclusion that Christianity is just narrow-minded and arrogant. Quite the opposite! We can read the claims and see plainly that there is a real God, who came to this earth to redeem us, so that we can have a relationship with Him forever if we choose to believe and receive that good news. Instead of arrogance, we find humility. There are no secret doors or special ways to earn salvation, but a free gift of salvation for those who believe. The invitation is to all those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

For those who are still skeptics, consider this, that if there was a God, why couldn't God choose to make it plainly known to all people the way and the truth and the life? If you are interested in reading more about the claims of Jesus, check out some of the *additional books and media* listed at the end of this study.

Considering all the claims that Jesus made, why can't we just allow Jesus to be a good moral teacher and leave it at that?

Can you recommend an apologetic book to the group that might be encouraging for people who are dealing with difficult questions regarding the claims of Christianity?

PRAY

Let's take some time and pray for one another. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13

ADDITIONAL BOOKS AND MEDIA

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Remarkable book by one of the world's most respected theologians.

Jesus among other Gods by Ravi Zacharias

Why is Jesus different than every other religion and why that matters.

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel

A journalist for the Chicago Tribune with a law degree from Yale goes about to disprove the claims of Christ and the overwhelming evidence changes everything.

Youtube.com

Consider going online and look up "Ravi Zacharias" or "Timothy Keller" clips, many of them are loaded with great philosophical, historical and biblical evidences that will help answer difficult questions.