

## Reunion Study Questions

### CHAPTER 1

#### Q & EH?

1. Sometimes people refer to followers of any of the three great monotheistic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - as "people of the book." How is this true and yet not true of people who follow Jesus?
2. "The message of Jesus changed the world, until the world changed the message." How did the Christian Church over time change, water down, and weaken the original message of Jesus? (Note: For more on this point, see chapter 6.)
3. In what ways do you see yourself as a seeker, saint, and/or sinner?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34.
- Think: What are some of the attributes of the promised New Covenant? How are these qualities different from the Old Covenant? Why is this good news?
- Meditate: The New Covenant has come.

### CHAPTER 2

#### Q & EH?

1. What is your reaction to Gandhi's quote at the start of the chapter?
2. What has been your experience with "evangelical" Christianity? How has that influenced your ideas about Jesus?
3. If one aspect of the gospel includes the good news that God is offering us forgiveness for our sins and healing for our souls, how can we communicate that in a culture that seems allergic to the idea of sin? In other words, how can we prevent this good news message of freedom from judgment from sounding like a bad news message that is very judgmental?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Romans 1:14-17.
- Think: Why is Paul "eager" to proclaim the gospel?

- Meditate: God's righteousness (not our righteousness) saves us when we receive it by faith (not by works).

## CHAPTER 3

### Q & EH?

1. What are some of the implications of the Bible's teaching that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God?
2. If love is a choice, and act and expression of will rather than emotion, what are some implications for how we love: a) family, b) friends, c) coworkers and classmates, d) strangers, e) enemies?
3. What one word most comes to mind for you when you think of the good news of Jesus? Why?

### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Genesis 1-3.
- Think: Ponder the ways this story sets the stage for everything that comes after, including and especially the gospel itself.
- Meditate: God is always relating within himself, and we are invited into that relationship every moment of every day, including this one.

## CHAPTER 4

### Q & EH?

1. The scandal of particularity means that before Jesus, God was best known through promise, prophecy, and foreshadowing, and after Jesus God is now best known through history - the study of the life and teachings of Jesus. How does this affect the way we read and study the Bible today?
2. If Ultimate Truth is more personal than propositional, more relational than mere facts, then we will access it more through trusting relationship than through mere academic study. What do you think about that idea?
3. "The Bible says it, that settles it, I believe it, let's do it." Why is this not the motto for a true follower of Jesus?

4. Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase, "The medium is the message." How does this apply to Jesus?
5. Dynamite plus particleboard is not more, but less. Jesus plus other additives is not better but worse. What other ideas, philosophies, or religions are you prone to mix with the good news of Jesus?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: John 1:1-18; 5:39-40.
- Think: The Bible is more like John the Baptist than Jesus - more of a pointer to the Word of God than God's ultimate Word. In what ways do these passages point to this truth?
- Meditate: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jesus)

#### CHAPTER 5

#### Q & EH?

1. Review the significance of each word choice in the good news in three words - Jesus is Lord. (In other words, why are these words even more significant than some other combination such as "God is Savior" or "Christ was Teacher" etc?)
2. What is the relationship between "Jesus is Lord" and those other three beautiful words, "God is love"?
3. Jesus didn't just point to Scripture as our ultimate authority, but to himself and his teaching as our ultimate authority (see the repeated "You have heard it said... But I tell you..." pattern in Matthew 5:21-45; the crowd's reaction in 7:28-29; Christ's direct claim in 28:18-20; Jesus' overriding of scriptural law in 19:1-9 and Mark 7:18-19; etc.).
4. If Jesus IS Lord, meaning he is leading and guiding us today in just as active and personal way as he did with his disciples two thousand years ago, then how can we best hear, listen, and respond to his leading today?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Philippians 2:5-11.
- Think: The apostle Paul writes that we should have the same attitude of mind and heart as Jesus, who gave up his power and privilege in order to serve others. How ready are you to be mentored by Jesus so that you can become more like him?

- Meditate: The mindset of Jesus is an example and inspiration for me.

## CHAPTER 6

### Q & EH?

1. Have you ever talked with someone who believes there are "many paths up the mountain to God"? (Maybe that's you?) What do you think about this chapter's response to that idea?
2. "I believe that one of the reasons you're reading this book right now is because of the activity of the Holy Spirit in your life. You have never been without the Spirit's influence. He has been with you all along as a voice of conviction and encouragement, patiently moving you toward Jesus." What do you think about this idea? Reflecting back over your life, or even just how you came to be reading this book, can you sense times when God has been at work?
3. The most popular Christian creeds emphasized the person of Jesus without touching on his life and teachings. Talk about the unintended negative influence of this shift in focus throughout church history.

### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Hebrews 1:3; 2:14-3:6; 4:14-16.
- Think: One point this text makes is this - Moses is to Jesus like a house is to its builder. What does this say about Jesus in reference to any other prophets or religious leaders (e.g., Moses, Mohammed, Buddha, the Bahauallah, etc.)?
- Meditate: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence..." (Hebrews 4:16)

## CHAPTER 7

### Q & EH?

1. How do you define "love"?
2. Recall the beautiful image of God's instinctual love for us in Isaiah 49... God loves us like a mother loves her newborn baby. Is this a helpful picture of God's love for you? Why or why not?
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to really accept and say, like the apostle Paul, that "God loves me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: Romans 5:6-10 and 1 John 4:7-21.
- Think: God loves you because it is his nature to love, not because you have done something spectacular to gain his love. Why is this such good news?
- Meditate: "Perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18)

## CHAPTER 8

### Q & EH?

1. Sometimes people say they don't believe in sin. This seems out of touch with the state of the word today, and throughout history. Of all the teachings of Jesus, the idea of "sin" is the most empirically verifiable. Evidence for this is all around us. Even people who believe in sin often don't like the word or how it is used in religious contexts. What is your emotional reaction to the word "sin"? What are some synonyms that might help us be more clear about this important reality?
2. Sin is a corrosive agent that erodes the love bond between relationships. Sin is a disease that infects relational closeness, replacing genuine other-centred love with growing, malignant self-interest coupled with creative excuses to justify our apathy toward others. As this chapter says, "Sin is a relationship disrupter. It separates people, divides groups, and fractures our own minds." How have you experienced the power of sin in your own life and/or in the lives of others?
3. Nearly 400 years before the birth of Jesus, Plato wrote a treatise on government called *The Republic*. At one point Plato addresses what he thinks would happen if a truly righteous and perfect man were ever to enter this world. He hypothesizes that our response would be complete rejection, perhaps out of fear or misunderstanding. That just man, wrote Plato, "will be scourged, racked, bound. He will have his eyes burned out. And at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled." Why do you think people rejected Jesus, our "Adam 2.0"?
4. Our salvation includes being "justified" ("just-as-if-I'd" never sinned) as a gift of grace, received by faith. How is this idea different from how salvation is obtained in other religious systems?

## DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 & 1 John 1:8-9.

- Think: If we pretend we are "fine," we won't want to receive the forgiveness God is offering us. But when we confess our sin, we are not only forgiven, we are also purified.
- Meditate: God is offering me his own righteousness.

## CHAPTER 9

### Q & EH?

1. Jesus said the kingdom of God is (not "will be") within you (plural). In other words, the kingdom of God is between us as persons and within our relationships (Luke 17:20-21). Have you experienced the kingdom of God recently?
2. Review the ten points of Bruxy's response to "Hank." Which points seem most or least convincing? Which points are new to you or most challenging to what you've heard from Christians before?
3. The LORD of the kingdom is Jesus; the LAW of the kingdom is love; and the LIFESTYLE of the kingdom is joy, gentleness, generosity, and peace. When it comes to the law of love, Jesus went beyond the Silver Rule (don't do to others what you don't want them to do to you) and even the Golden Rule (do to others what you would want them to do to you) to the Platinum Rule (love people like Jesus). This "love upgrade" could be worldchanging, here and now. Now here's the question: Comparing what you know about how Jesus loved people with the opportunities that lie around you, what are some examples of what it could mean to love people like Jesus?
4. When we love our enemies, we are going to war against the spiritual forces and bad ideas that have made us enemies in the first place. Talk about how this is true in the concept of "going the second mile," in the first century and in the twenty-first century.
5. Jesus began his Kingdom Manifesto, called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), with the words "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What do you think it means to be someone who is poor in spirit? Why are they the first to receive the kingdom?

### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.
- Think: Pay attention to ways the kingdom of heaven is more inside-out rather than outside-in.
- Meditate: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

## CHAPTER 10

### Q & EH?

1. People use the words "spirituality" and "religion" differently. What is a positive and negative meaning of each of those words?
2. Just before Jesus died on the cross, he cried out, "It is finished!" What was finished?
3. Through his crucifixion, Jesus became all three elements of the sacrificial religion of his day: the temple, the priest, and the sacrifice. Talk about the ways that Jesus' followers, the body of Christ, have now become each of these three things together.
4. In what ways is "grace" a powerfully irreligious concept?

### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: 1 Peter 1:22-2:10.
- Think: What are some of the New Covenant realities described in this passage that might be seen as irreligious?
- Meditate: I am one of many living stones, making up the temple where God's Spirit dwells.

## CHAPTER 11

### Q & EH?

1. This chapter suggests that "what we call heaven is less of a place and more of a Person." What do you think about that?
2. The goal of the gospel is not the rejection of our bodies, but the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23), not a release from the physical but a resurrection to a renewed version of our physical selves, of which Jesus is the prototype. God values the physical! What are some implications of this for how we live our lives today?
3. The Bible uses two metaphors to talk about the way we become God's children and dearly loved members of his family: birth (John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:3-4) and adoption (Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:1-7). What are some unique and beautiful truths that each picture communicates?
4. Have you ever had your own "incubator of agape" experience? How could "church" do a better job of providing this for hurting people?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- Read: 1 Timothy 2:3-6.
- Think: God wants "all people" (verses 4 and 6) to come into his own love life. There is room in God for us. Jesus, the man, has led the way.
- Meditate: The love-life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is all around me and passing through me right now.