

Small Group Lesson: Introduction – Week of September 26th

1 Peter 3:15 is our focus memory verse for this study. I hope you will make an effort to meditate, memorize and obey this verse.

1 Peter 3:15 says, “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.”

Introduction Small Group Discussion:

1. To begin this study, read 1 Peter 3:15 and share why you think it is important to be prepared to give an answer.

Ask people to share their thoughts as you begin this study.

For me, I really hope to see the body of Christ begin built up strong in their faith so that we will be a more bold witness for Christ. I don't want anyone to be ashamed of the gospel. Paul said, “Do not be ashamed to testify about our LORD.” The world wants us to be afraid to say anything for fear we are wrong or intolerant. But we have been entrusted with the Gospel Truth and we have a responsibility and a calling to share that with a hurting world.

2. Hebrews 11:1 says our hope comes by faith. Yet 1 Peter 3:15 says we should be prepared to give an answer for our faith. How do these two verses work together or do they contradict one another?

Ask people to share.

Some may assume that since it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in a person that anyone comes to faith in Jesus Christ that being prepared seems to contradict having faith. Others may feel that since we are called to live by faith then we shouldn't need to study and prepare ourselves to give an answer for our hope in Jesus Christ. Those people might feel that faith alone is sufficient to witness. Well the truth is, both those opinions are true. Only the working of the Holy Spirit can bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. And it is true, we believe and have hope by faith alone and not by sight. And faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we cannot see. But I also will add this, God wants to see your faith increase. By understanding and learning more our faith can increase. We become more certain of what we believe. If you believe more strongly and more certainly in the hope you have in Jesus then you will also be more likely to share that faith with others and you will choose to cling to it when life gets really tuff. That also will become your witness to the world.

3. Ravi Zacharias said, “God has put enough into the world to make faith in him a most reasonable thing and he has left enough out to make it impossible to live by sheer reason or observation alone.” Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

Ask people to share opinions (which is what this statement is) on Ravi's quote.

For me this says it all. I cannot prove God, the Bible, or my beliefs to anyone. But I must have faith. And yet, God has given us much evidence. Many people will try to ignore the evidence but it is still there. Almost daily science and history are uncovering questions that make a case for Christ, the Bible, and everything it claims. Even this week I heard about

concerns being expressed by the science world about DNA and how the very fact that every persons DNA is unique in some way flies in the face of evolution. Of course Darwin didn't have the information in his time but we do now and it points us back to intelligent design to our Creator.

For Next Week:

Tell your group to read and reflect on the first lesson – Is The Bible Reliable Part #1 sometime this week before your next meeting. (Pages 3 – 6)

Also on page 6 refer them to the daily reading plan for the week. You will find the daily reading plan for each week on the last page of the weeks lesson with the small group questions for the week.

PICK UP A COPY OF THE BOOK THIS WEEKEND!

I am attaching an electronic copy of the study in case you need it. Just a warning, it is 60 pages if you plan to print it yourself.

Small Group Leader Tip

We were designed by God to be in an intimate relationship community. To belong! When you read Acts 2:42-47 you see how the early church had that. We all hunger and thirst for the kind of deep, authentic relationships the early church experienced. Yet often we try to connect into the church but still fail to find those types of relationships. Instead, everything becomes somewhat distant and non-personal to many people. Church becomes someplace we go rather than a place we belong. But God has created us to belong and be used by Him.

Small Group is the best way I know for the Church to create that type of relationship with others. Honesty and transparency is vital to the health of a small group.

As the group leader you are challenged with finding a way to make the group a safe, comfortable and trustworthy environment. One thing that can be helpful is to have the entire group pray together and then sign a covenant of confidentiality, openness, honesty, transparency, and trust. When your group gets into Bible study, facilitate conversation by asking them to share their heart and open up to what they are discovering and learning from God. Try to avoid becoming the expert teacher and focus on being the shepherd who leads and cares for them.

The group must affirm one another: Hebrews 10:24-25