

SKEPTICS

W A N T E D



Skeptics Wanted
Skeptic 201
Shane Philip
April 23, 2017

Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

We are starting a new series this week called Skeptics Wanted. This series is for anyone who has ever had questions about God. Maybe you haven't been in an environment where you could ask questions about faith or maybe you have friends who are skeptical about Christianity and you just don't know what to say to them. Over the next few weeks we are going to try to begin the discussion.

SCRIPTURE¹

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts revere 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.

OBSERVATION

The purpose for this week's discussion is not to answer all of our questions or to be able to convince our co-workers that God exists. The goal is to help begin the discussion and to prompt us toward taking our next step. There are many stories about people who have walked away from Christianity. Usually these stories are based upon misconceptions about God and they have in common barriers to faith.

Question: Who is the person in your life who is experiencing a barrier to faith? What are you doing, in a gentle and respectful way, to encourage him/her to turn to God?

APPLICATION

Intellectual barriers exist when people believe that, if something can't be experienced by the five senses – if they can't touch, smell, see, hear, or taste it – then it doesn't exist. Therefore, for them, there is no concrete evidence for the existence of God. But if our faith can't stand up to the microscope of science, then what good is it to us? Science should be a tool to help us understand faith, and faith should be a tool to help us understand science, because truth is truth!

Question: Is there an intellectual barrier in your life? What is it and what are you doing about it?

Emotional barriers occur when people can't understand why there is so much suffering in the world; or when Christians behave like hypocrites; or when hell doesn't make sense. It seems that those who have been most deeply hurt in life have the most trouble with emotional barriers.

Question: Is there a terrible hurt in your past that has raised up an emotional barrier in your life? What is it and how do you plan to get beyond it?

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise noted.

SKEPTICS WANTED



Lifestyle barriers, or moral barriers, rise up when people want to hold on to their behaviors which are contrary to Biblical teachings. They find it easier to walk away from God than to change their lifestyles. So the barriers to faith have nothing to do with Christianity. Yet, these barriers get in the way of God.

Question: Is there a lifestyle that is inhibiting your faith because you don't want to give it up? What would it take for you to change your mind?

The cornerstone of faith is God Himself. It's all about God – He is the main character. In the beginning, He created the heavens and the earth and He did it from nothing! When we create something we use elements that already exist, so we obviously aren't God! If we were, we would need to start with our own dirt!

Question: If there is no Creator God, how do you explain the complexity of our solar system with the mathematical intricacies that keep it together; or the relationships between flowers and bees as pollination occurs; or how birds migrate to the same place every year? If you believe, how can you use these examples to speak to unbelievers about God?

God spoke light into existence. He created the galaxies with billions of stars and He turned their lights on from billions of light years away to shine upon the earth immediately. And so "the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands." He created man in "his image" and gave each of us a measure of faith. We have the potential within us to believe that He did all of these things. Here is the bottom line: we can't move away from something without moving toward something else. We determine our final destination.

Question: If you are moving away from that measure of faith, then what are you moving toward? How could it possibly be better?

Question: What is it about the theory of evolution that causes you to believe in it? What is it about the perfection of nature that hasn't touched your heart yet? If you don't believe in evolution, what convinced you to change your mind?

We can remove those awful barriers by moving back toward God through prayer and attending church regularly. When we have been so distant from God, we need to change direction because He will renew our minds, hearts and faith if we ask Him. And if friends have barriers of faith, we can encourage them to turn back to God, especially if we tell them about our own experience and do it with gentleness and respect as St. Paul encourages us to do. We know that God wants a relationship with us and that He has a purpose for our lives. He is the one who knows and loves us and has proven it through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus.

Question: Are you prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you about your faith? What are you doing to prepare yourself for this responsibility?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we so wish to strengthen our own faith and to encourage others to turn back to their faith in You. We only need to look around us at Your creation of earth and stars, to know You exist, but our barriers cause us to continue to question. Help us to renew our minds and hearts and encourage others to change direction and humbly submit to you. In Jesus' name. Amen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our next ALPHA session begins this coming Tuesday evening, April 25th, at 6:30 p.m. in the Kid's Crossing. Come and ask your questions there in a casual and respectful atmosphere. Registration is available online at thecrossinglv.com.