

SKEPTICS

W A N T E D



Skeptics Wanted
You Belong Here
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

We are concluding our series this week called Skeptics Wanted. This series is for anyone who has ever had questions about God. It's easy to put our trust in things like reason, progress, and emotion. But what about when those things come up short? Whether we already believe in God, or don't know what to think, we are in a place where we can learn together why we put our faith in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE¹

John 13:33 "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

John 13:34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:36 Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

John 13:37-38 Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"

Question: Peter had great intentions, but was unable to follow through with them when Jesus was arrested. When have you found yourself denying a friend in a similar situation? How were your feelings of guilt assuaged?

Question: How did Jesus help Peter deal with his guilt over denying Him? (John 21:15-17)

OBSERVATION

The disciples were bewildered by Jesus' words telling them that He was leaving and they would no longer be able to see or be with Him. After three years of traveling with Him, listening to Him, laughing and crying with Him, seeing His miracles, and hugging Him, they were losing Him. It just couldn't be possible! Peter was so distressed that he said he would be willing to die for Jesus, but what Jesus wanted was for him to love others as He had loved him.

Question: Where do you think the disciples thought Jesus was going? At what point did they fully realize what He was saying?

APPLICATION

Jesus was leaving them with a mission and His the Holy Spirit, to reach out to others, believers and unbelievers alike, to love others as He had loved them. There are so many people in our community who have no faith affiliation and we are needed to step forward and give them a Jesus experience. So how are we to respond to skeptics?

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise noted.

SKEPTICS WANTED



They may have an intellectual barrier because they have been told that science doesn't agree with the Bible. They may have an emotional barrier because they don't understand why God would allow suffering. Or they may have a moral barrier because they can't change a sinful habit. It seems their view of God is not accurate because our faith is not based on a book, but on one single event – the resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead then what He said in the Bible is true, living, active and can transform our thoughts and emotions.

Question: Did you have an intellectual, emotional or moral barrier before you accepted Christ? What did you do to overcome that barrier?

Skeptics can belong and not yet believe because Jesus invited people who did not yet believe to follow Him. Skeptics need not throw away a relationship with Jesus because they don't have all of the answers. They can serve at our church and/or join a small group of people who will love them. Jesus called us to love others as He loves us – with forgiveness, selflessly, without judgment and with endless commitment. He met every person at their place of need even if they were adulterers, or unclean, or tax collectors. That's how He demonstrated love and we need to do the same because Jesus is better experienced than explained. We need to live Him.

Question: Did you belong to a church community before you believed in Jesus. In what ways did that community bring you to the realization that He was in fact your Savior?

Question: Discuss the many people Jesus reached out to regardless of their level of belief. How can we model our acceptance of others after Him?

Harder than dying for our faith is loving so that skeptics will say, "I want to be part of that community" which is defined by unconditional, do anything, love. The trademark of followers of Jesus is how they love other people not our religiosity.

Question: What is your level of love for others? How are you measuring it? Are you satisfied with that position on the Bell curve? If not, what do you plan to do about it?

Andy Stanley gives us cues for inviting someone to come to church with us:

- 1) Things are not going well in their lives;
- 2) Life is giving them situations for which they are unprepared;
- 3) They are currently not in church;

Question: Who are the people in your life that fall into these categories? What plans do you have to invite them to The Crossing?

Question: Have you ever believed and then stopped? What caused the pause? What brought you back?

Question: Tell us about your mother. In what special ways did she love you as Jesus loved her?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, there are so many people who do not have faith in You and yet need you desperately. They are stressed by life, unprepared for what life has thrown at them, and they don't have time in their schedules for You. Help us to serve and love them as Jesus has loved us. And, Lord, we lift up all of the mothers in our community who fall in one or all of those categories. Help us to reach them for Jesus. We pray and thank you for all mothers and the sacrifices they make for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.