

Believing Is Seeing Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. As a child, did you believe in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, or any other imaginary beings? Explain.
2. When you were growing up, did your family have any strong loyalties to a team, a brand, a tradition, or something similar?

Read the following passage: Luke 1:1-4.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What does Luke’s introduction indicate about the type of work he is writing? What is Luke’s purpose in writing his Gospel?
2. A recent study performed by the American Bible Society and the Barna Group indicated that, in Philadelphia, 36% of non-churchgoers consider the Bible to be “just a book of stories and advice.” How would you respond to someone who believed that the Gospels are just mythical accounts that shouldn’t be taken too literally?
3. What are some of the major influences on an individual’s own personal beliefs and worldview? What do you think have been the major influences on your own personal beliefs?

Modern West	Ancient Near East
Promote independence	Promote interdependence
Urge uniqueness	Urge conformity
Primary responsibility to self and individual potential	Primary obligation to others and the development of the group
Behavior is governed by rights and duties specified by one’s personal goals	Behavior is dictated by the group’s mores and sanctions or the leader’s authority
Individual worth is based on individual achievements or individual possessions	Individual worth is rooted in familial status, social position, class, or caste
Assert one’s own rights	Submit personal rights to the group
Equality is a key value	Hierarchy is the key value
The individual self is viewed as an entity separate from the physical world and from other persons	The individual self is viewed as organically connected with the physical world and with other persons

4. Consider the above comparison between a modern western worldview and an ancient near eastern worldview (adapted from a similar table in *Genesis*, by John Walton). Which aspects of the modern western worldview stick out to you? How have you seen some of these paradigms manifested in your own life?
5. To what extent do you feel that your beliefs in the following areas have been strongly shaped by biblical teaching? Explain.
 - The existence, nature, and character of God
 - Your life purpose
 - Your personal identity
 - Sex, romantic relationships, and marriage
 - Your personal morality
 - How you spend your money
 - How you spend your time
 - How you interact with people who are different than you
6. What is one area in which you feel that you need to take a closer look at what you believe?
7. What can you practically do to incorporate the teachings of Scripture into your personal beliefs and daily life?

Pray