

What Is Truth? 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. What is something that confused you as a child but is clear to you now?
2. If you could interview one person who is alive today, whom would you choose?

Read the following passage: John 18:28-38.

Each of the parties associated with Jesus' crucifixion had desires that greatly impacted how they perceived and responded to the circumstances. Judas loved money. Peter wanted a conquering Messiah. The religious leaders wanted to protect Israel's religious traditions. Pilate wanted a political career. Our deepest commitments profoundly affect our relationship with truth. The mind justifies what the heart desires. So how do we find the truth? Jesus claimed that he was the solution: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

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

1. What are some ways you see your own desires affecting how you perceive reality? How can living in community help us?
2. How would you respond to the following claims?

"All religions basically teach the same thing. They're just different ways to God."

"There's no right or wrong way to be spiritual. You just have to do whatever works for you."

"Morality is nothing more than a cultural construct. No set of values is objectively true."

3. Do you think there is anything wrong with using crystals or getting a tarot reading? Explain.
4. What are some of the things Jesus said or did that caused the Jewish leadership to seek his execution?
5. How would you respond to the following statement? *"Jesus was nothing more than a good moral teacher."*
6. Consider the following quote from historian Larry Hurtado.

...ancient people could have a genuine sense of religious awe, gratitude, and devotion to their various gods, and individuals could feel a particular affection for

their favored deities. We do have references to this or that pagan deity as merciful or generous. But the notion that the gods love humanity with anything approaching [the] relational intensity ascribed to God rather ubiquitously in early Christian texts is, to put it mildly, hard to find in pagan texts of the Greek or Roman period....

Indeed, the emphasis on God's love and the appeal for an answering "love-ethic" characterizing Christian conduct comprise something distinctive. We simply do not know of any other Roman-era religious group in which love played this important role in discourse or behavioral teaching.

Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*

How and why did love become such a defining value in the early Christian community?

Pray