



s e r i e s   c o m p a n i o n

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## The shape of our 'answers' ...

When the apostle Paul visited the city of Athens (Acts 17) he saw a city that was 'very religious' — a city of people searching for answers for life's 'big questions' — a city with plenty of reasons to object to Christianity. He observed the behaviour and belief of those in the city carefully. He listened to others. He'd read the popular poets and philosophers. There were things about the Athenian approach to life and to these big questions that he was prepared to affirm because what they were doing was human. That the Athenians were seeking truth and so seeking God and that they were pursuing a 'good life' was something Paul resonated with, as he spoke to the Athenians about God. But there were some problems with the answers and lives the Athenians came up with — problems revealed by careful observation of the universe, problems from their own philosophical positions, Paul recognised these problems so while he resonated with many parts of their thinking and living, he dismantled with other parts, in order to present the Gospel as a better solution.

# Series overview

People identifying as Christian and attending church are on the decline in Australia. The census data shows this is a trend — we're 'losing our religion'. McCrindle Research says there are multiple factors behind this, including how Christians behave and some 'belief blockers' — or big objections — about what Christians believe. These objections sometimes present themselves as questions, and the reason they 'block' belief is that they are rationally and emotionally weighty. They're also often questions that we Christians grapple with — that we might feel we have to answer for ourselves in order to hold on to Jesus.

But what if there are answers to them that are intellectually plausible, and emotionally and experientially satisfying to those who are still in church most Sundays? What if Jesus makes surprising emotional and rational sense? In this series we're tackling the biggest questions people in our community have about what Christians believe.

When we're tackling the big questions our neighbours have about Christianity (and to be honest, the questions we have too) this posture of observation, thoughtfulness, and a desire to affirm what can be affirmed is a model for us. Australian evangelist and academic Dr. Sam Chan has suggested these three stages — resonate, dismantle, present the Gospel as a fuller answer— are a great way to get to the heart of the questions we all ask about God. His book *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News About Jesus More Believable* is a handy textbook for us in this series as we consider how to listen to and observe our culture the way Paul approached Athens.

These studies invite us into the exercise of doing our best to really understand the emotional and rational objections to Christianity behind the questions our neighbours have asked us; they invite us to consider some of the issues with these questions as 'belief blockers'; and they invite us to see how the Gospel of Jesus has us re-imagine our answer — both in what we say and how we live. The questions are designed

to promote discussion; in many cases there's not necessarily a 'right answer' that you have to find. Some questions have italicised follow ups to help you get into the discussion in ways that hopefully help the flow of the questions, and the discussion, make sense. If by the end of each week you feel better prepared to answer these questions and you can show how turning to Jesus changes our lives and gives us something to say, then the studies will have been a success.

There's a chance to spend some time coming up with your own version of the answer to the questions, not just your own version of the questions — to imagine sitting down with a friend genuinely asking these questions, over a coffee, and be able to give an answer. While it'd be fantastic to have your friends join us for this series, and you should invite them, we'd also love to help you answer the questions for yourself, and to equip you to be able to make the unbelievable good news about Jesus more believable in a world that is increasingly skeptical.

1

How do you  
know God  
exists?

*<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.<sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. - Acts 17:24-25*

Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *How does grappling with the existence of God — or believing God exists — make you feel? Did you ask it before you became a Christian?*
2. What do you think people who aren't Christians are thinking and feeling when they ask this question? *What might some 'questions behind this question' be? What might satisfy them?*

# Dismantle

3. What are some of the problems with this question from your experience, or understanding, of God?
4. How did this week's talk challenge the assumptions behind this question?

# The Gospel

Read Acts 17:16-34

5. How does seeing how the Bible describes God and his relationship to the world help you answer this question? *How could viewing God as wanting us to reach out and find him, but also as being the one 'in whom we live and breathe and have our being,' shape the way we talk about God and the world?*

Read John 1:1-4

6. John says Jesus is God. What are some stories from the life of Jesus that help you answer the question 'how do you know God exists'? What do these stories tell you about what God is like?

# Your Answer

*Each week we'll be asking you to jot down some ideas for how you might answer this question if it comes up with a friend over a meal, or a coffee (or perhaps online). How might you resonate with the thoughts and feelings behind the question, dismantle by showing why you're not sure the problems raised by the question make faith impossible, and then how would you re-tell the Gospel, or a story about how people trusting Jesus deal with this question in a way that helps you.*

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## How Do You Know God Exists?

### Big idea

Believing in God can be hard, but Jesus shows us the God who is worth believing in.

### Bible passage

Acts 17:16-34

### You will need

- A glass Bowl or clear container
- A drinking glass
- Piece of paper towel
- Water

### All ages activity

Pour water into a bowl. Stuff the paper towel into the bottom of the drinking glass. Turn the glass upside down and submerge it into the water.

See what happens – the paper towel does not get wet. You can check by lifting the glass straight out to find the paper towel dry. Ask the group if they know why it stayed dry. The air in the glass prevented the towel from getting wet.

Try the experiment again, but this time slightly tilt the glass to the side after putting it into the water. Do you see a bubble rise to the top of the water? This is the air coming out of the glass. And is the paper towel still dry or did it get wet?

### Discussion:

We cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste air but we don't doubt that it is there. We can see evidence of it in our experiment and in the world. We have no doubt that without air we cannot survive.

We cannot see, hear, touch, smell or taste God so we need to look for evidence of Him. One of the best pieces of evidence we have is the eye witness accounts of his son Jesus who demonstrated the power of God by controlling the weather, healing the sick and not dying after he was killed on the cross. Like air we need God to survive, it's through Jesus that we have the promise of eternal life.

### Prayer idea

Dear Lord, Thank you that you have made air for us to breath to keep us alive. Help us to be totally sure that you exist the way we know that air exists. Thank you that you have provided evidence for us of your work in the world, especially in the eye witness accounts in the Bible. Thank you that through Jesus we can be with you forever. Amen

# 2 Why should I trust the Bible?

*He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*

*Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. — Luke 24:44-45*



Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *How does grappling with the trustworthiness of the Bible, or how to read it, make you feel? Did you ask this question before you became a Christian? Do you still ask versions of it now?*
2. What are people who *aren't* Christians thinking and feeling when they ask this question? *What might some 'questions behind this question' be? What might some of the doubts about the Bible be?*

# Dismantle

3. What are some of the things that reassure you about the trustworthiness of the Bible as you read it?
4. What were some issues that were raised in this week's talk about this week's question that you found compelling?

# The Gospel

Read Luke 1:1-4, Luke 24:44-47

5. How does reading the Bible as one story, from start to finish, centred on Jesus, help you to answer this question?
6. What things about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus help you see the Bible as worth your trust?
7. What are some ways you can approach the Bible to reinforce your trust in it and demonstrate it to others?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## Why Should I Trust the Bible?

### Big idea

Lots of people will say that the bible isn't true, but if you read the bible, and ask God to help you understand it, He will show you that Jesus is true.

### Bible passage

Luke 24:44-47 and Luke 1:1-4

### You will need

- Access to the internet

## All ages activity

Part 1: Ask everyone in the group where they think the best place to get ice-cream is?

Part 2: Watch the video – “The Bible Explored: Can I trust the Bible?” From the Canadian Bible Society on YouTube.

### Discussion:

In your growth group, (of people who all live in the same century and the same city) did you all agree on the best place to get ice-cream?

It is usually very difficult to get humans to agree fully on anything. What then are the chances of 40 people who had never met each other and who lived in different cities and different centuries writing documents that agree with each other on issues as important as God's plan for the world?

Something very special happened for the bible to have been written with different books so perfectly in harmony with each other, with predictions that were accurate and with writings that all point to Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16 tells us the answer – it says that ‘All Scripture is God-breathed’.

When we read from the bible we can trust that it is a message to us from God.

### Prayer idea

Dear Lord

Thank you that you have given us a bible that teaches us about Jesus. Thank you that there is so much evidence of its accuracy and harmony that we can trust the words we read. Please take away our doubts and strengthen our faith so that we may be your children eternally.

In Jesus name we pray Amen

# 3

Why is there  
so much  
abuse in the  
church?

*“If anyone causes one of these little ones - those who believe in me - to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” — Matthew 18:6*

Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *How have you felt as the media, and then the Royal Commission, uncovered evil committed by people claiming to represent Jesus?*
2. What do you think people who aren't Christians are thinking and feeling when they see these stories and ask this question? *How do these stories appear to undermine the Gospel?*

# Dismantle

3. How have you been able to cling on to belief in the goodness of God, the truth of the Gospel, and the role of the church in the world, when confronted with church abuse?
4. How do you think God sees abuse?

# The Gospel

Read Matthew 18:1-14

5. What hope does Jesus offer?
6. How should following Jesus shape our approach to the issue of abuse in churches — so that we create safe and healing communities?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## What Does God Say About People Who Hurt Others?

### Big idea

People hurt each other in many different ways (words/action/inaction), even in the church. Jesus died to change the lives of people who are hurt AND those who are doing the hurting. Jesus calls us to love others the way he loves us.

### Bible passage

Matthew 18: 1-14

### You will need

- You may also wish to read the book "God made all of me" by Justin S. Holcomb & Lindsey A. Holcomb

## All ages activity

Think of a time when someone else hurt you (either emotionally or physically). Did you tell anyone about this? Why or why not?

It's important to talk to someone you trust and feel comfortable with if you're ever hurt by others. Who could you talk to and why would you choose them?

Do you know someone else who is being hurt? What could you do to help others being hurt?

Have you ever hurt anyone else? Think about what changes you might need to make if you are hurting others?

### Discussion:

If you are being hurt, remember that God still loves you and make sure to tell an adult you trust. If they are too busy to talk, keep asking for help from others until someone listens.

If you know someone else is being hurt, tell them that God still loves them and help them to tell an adult they trust.

If you are hurting others know that God still loves you, but wants you to stop.

### Prayer idea

Dear Lord, Thank you for making me and loving me no matter what. Please help me to ask an adult for help if someone is hurting me or others. If I hurt others please help me to realise this and stop. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

# 4

How can a  
good God allow  
so much evil  
& suffering?

*“And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly,  
and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to  
the ground.” — Luke 22:44*



Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *How do you hold what the Bible says about God being all loving and all powerful together with suffering and evil in this world?*
2. What do you think people who aren't Christians are thinking and feeling when they ask about suffering and evil? How might these questions be personal not simply abstract or rational?

# Dismantle

3. How has believing in God helped you, or people you know, through suffering?
4. How does trusting God help you respond to evil? Would your response be better without your faith?

# The Gospel

Read Luke 22:39-46

5. How do suffering and evil come together in this story and what does that reveal about how God treats suffering and evil?
6. How does this story equip you face the problems of suffering and evil emotionally and rationally?
7. How might the lives and actions of people who follow Jesus, especially in our response to suffering, help provide a better answer to this question?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## How Can A Good God Allow So Much Evil & Suffering?

### Big idea

Lots of bad stuff happens in the world because of sin. Jesus suffered and died, so we can have a future without sin and without suffering.

### You Will Need

In preparation for this week it would be good to have at one or more newspapers covering news and current events.

### Bible passage

Read Romans 8:18-25 together as a family or growth group.

### All Ages Activity

As a family or growth group flick through the newspapers and cut out any articles about bad stuff, brokenness, hurt, pain and suffering. As you do discuss how it makes you feel to live in a world where these sorts of things happen?

### Discussion

Discuss how Paul's description of a world groaning with sin matches up with what you've seen in the newspaper and in the world around you.

But Paul doesn't just focus on the hurt and suffering, he talks about hope of a better future. A better future that the Spirit gives us a taste of now.

What does it mean to you to have the offer of a better future in Christ?

What can you do to share the hope you have for a better future in Jesus, with your friends and family?

### All Ages Activity

Take the Newspaper clippings you collected and create a collage of the word 'HOPE'. Display the collage somewhere prominent in your home as a reminder of the hope Jesus offers when you're feeling down, and as a reminder to share the hope you have in Jesus with your friends and family.

### Prayer idea

Dear Lord, We're sorry for the things we do that contribute to the suffering in the world. Thank you for sending Jesus to suffer and die in our place so we can look forward to a future without suffering. Please help us to have the courage to share the hope with have with the people you've put in our lives. Amen.

# 5 How can a good God send people to Hell?

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. — Luke 23:34*

Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What is your version of this question? *How do you imagine hell (and where does that picture come from)?*
2. What are the people who are asking this question feeling and objecting to when they raise it? *How might this be a pastoral question not just a philosophical or theological one?*
3. How should the pastoral aspect of this question shape how we answer this question (consider tone, posture, etc)?

# Dismantle

4. What should justice/punishment look like for evil people who spend their whole lives hurting others and seem to prosper? How would you draw the line on who receives this justice?
5. What does the Bible say about the punishment for our decision to reject the living God and replace him with 'dead' idols (consider Genesis 2:17, Psalm 135, Romans 1:18-32, Revelation 21:6-8)? How might this be God giving us what we actually ask for?
6. If the Bible positions rejecting the sacrifice of Jesus as being complicit in his execution (eg John 1:11), what punishment do we deserve?

# The Gospel

Read Luke 23:26-43

(Pilate has just put Jesus on trial, then the whole crowd yelled 'crucify him' and asked for the murderer, Barabbas, to be released instead).

7. How does Jesus bring justice, judgment and mercy together? *If your place in this story is with the crowd, and then the thief who hurled insults — what do you deserve? How does Jesus put us back on the trajectory towards eternal life rather than eternal death, like he does for one thief next to him?*
8. If God's judgment is real and final, how should that motivate us to live with those who are facing judgment and death? *Hint: in the Old Testament book of Obadiah (1:8-15) God judges the nations who stood by and gloated while his judgment was poured out on Israel, see also 2 Corinthians 5:14-21).*

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## What happens when we die?

### Big idea

The bible tells us that because of our sin we deserve to be separated from God forever, but God sent Jesus so we can be with our loving God forever.

### You will need

- You need materials to make a tent or a blanket fort

### Bible passage

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

### All ages activity

Make a tent or a blanket fort. Read the Bible passage in the tent.

### Discussion

In the beginning when God made the world, death wasn't a part of it. But when people made their own choices and turned away from God, death came into the world. Every living thing in this world will die and then be judged. But there is hope. God tells us there is life beyond death. Jesus is the life and the resurrection.

Look at your tent you have made. It's comfortable, nice, could be OK to live in. But it is only temporary. You will have to pack it up. Look at your house you live in. It's good, it meets your needs. But it is only temporary. It will not last forever.

Our bodies are like a tent. They are temporary. One day our bodies will die. But if we have faith in Jesus, the living hope, we will live forever in our heavenly bodies.

### Prayer idea

Dear Lord & God,

Thank you God that you sent Jesus. Thank you for the power he has over death. We pray we can have faith in Jesus, beyond death. Thank you that we can live forever with you.

In Jesus name, and by the Holy Spirit,

Amen.

# 6

Why do Christians hate LGBTIQ+ people? Is God anti-gay?

*“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” — John 4:13-14*



Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *Can you think of examples where Christians have made it seem to you like God hates gay people, or that the church is anti LGBTQIA+?*
2. How do you think this question, and the perception behind it, affects the LGBTQIA+ community and how they see God, or his church? *Where have Christians failed to listen to and understand our LGBTQIA+ neighbours in ways that make us hateful or bigoted? How has this made Christians in general seem like bigots as we engage in conversations about sexuality and gender? Why would a vulnerable LGBTQIA+ person listen to someone, or some group, who they perceive as hateful?*

# Dismantle

3. Our world thinks the good life is about being true to our 'identity'; embracing our natural self-interest, desires, sexuality and our internal reality (when it comes to, for example, gender). Our society increasingly insists that to be loved is about our identity being recognised and affirmed. What dangers do you see from this approach to identity — for yourself, and for relationships between people who disagree with each other?
4. If your identity comes from prioritising different aspects of 'who you are' — how do you pick what to put at the centre, and what impact does that have on everything else in your life? *What happens if any of us put our sexuality in, or close to, the centre when it comes to understanding who we are and where meaning comes from?*

# The Gospel

Read John 4:7-26

5. What did Jesus offer this woman? How would taking up this offer change her identity (where she looked for value and dignity)?
6. How might being loved, recognised, welcomed, and given eternal life by Jesus be a better basis for identity — 'gooder news' — than alternative approaches to identity like the one described above (see question 3)? Has that been your experience?
7. How could we look at the example of Jesus and his interaction with this woman to re-shape our posture towards the LGBTQIA+ community, so that they might hear Jesus' invitation to receive 'living water'?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## What Does God Say About Different Relationships?

### Big idea

People have different types of relationships, and sometimes we're scared of people who are different. While there is God's best plan for relationships, Jesus still treated all people the same - as people needing God's forgiveness and a new life with him.

### Bible passage

John 4:1-30; 39-42

### Primary Activity

Search on YouTube for "The Woman at the Well (John 4)" by Saddleback Kids. Watch it.

## High School Activity

Read the Bible passage.

Search on YouTube for "Woman At The Well" by Reidland Tucker. Watch this modern interpretation of the story to get some insight into how this woman might have felt as she met Jesus that day.

## Discussion for both ages:

The woman in this story had made lots of mistakes with her relationships. God's best plan for relationships is one man and one woman. However this woman had had 5 husbands, and was now with another man who was not her husband. Because of all her mistakes she did not have any friends in her town. But Jesus comes and offers her living water. He sees past all of her mistakes and offers her "living water". Jesus knows her mistakes but was willing to love and forgive her so she could live forever with him.

In the same way we are often scared of people who are different, and have different relationships. But no matter what mistakes people make with their relationships, Jesus still loves them and wants them to live forever with him. We should lovingly invite all people into God's family through Jesus, no matter what mistakes they might have made with their relationships. Jesus treats everyone the same - as people needing God's forgiveness and a new life with him. Let us do the same.

## Prayer idea

Dear Lord, Thank you that you love everyone the same. No matter what mistakes we make with our relationships we are all the same to you. You see us as people who make mistakes, and need forgiveness. Thank you that you offer all of us living water - forgiveness and eternal life with you. Help us freely share that offer with everyone around us, even the people who are different to us. Amen

# 7 Hasn't science made God irrelevant?

*But these are written that you may believe that  
Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by  
believing you may have life in his name.  
— John 20:31*

Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? *Are there scientific discoveries that challenge your belief, or that you reject, because of your belief in God?*
2. Why is this idea so persistent? *What might some of the emotional and rational reasons be that people find the power of science so compelling?*

# Dismantle

3. How did the talk help you think through this question?
4. Science observes and measures repeatable 'phenomena' within the universe; what does the Bible say about God's relationship to the universe (think back to week 1 and consider what Acts 17:23-28 says about God)? *Can science give us access to God if he works through process we experience as natural?*
5. If the claim is that science has made God irrelevant, because it explains all we need to know about life, what other limits are there on what science can and can't explain for us?

# The Gospel

Read John 20:19-29

6. Jesus submits himself to something like a scientific process, an experiment. If Jesus was willing for people to see and touch his resurrected body, science, because it is based on observation and repeatability, is ill-equipped to make truth claims about an historical event like this. How else do we judge such claims?
7. If it's a category error for people to seek to make claims about God using science (that science disproves God), what dangers are there for us as Christians if we try to use science to prove our claims about God (including the life and resurrection of Jesus)?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## Do Science & God Work Together?

### Big idea

Science helps us understand how the world works, but not why. Jesus shows us why the world is the way it is and how to live in it.

### Bible passage

John 20:24-31

### You Will Need

- 1 glass jar with lid
- 50 ml boiled water from the kettle
- Aerosol spray can (e.g. hairspray)
- Ice cubes

## All Ages Activity

Search on the internet for “kidspot how to make a cloud in a jar”. Follow the steps in the online science experiment instructions and video to make a cloud in the glass bottle.

Read out the explanation about how a cloud was formed in this experiment and relate it to how clouds form in nature.

## Discussion

Through this science experiment it was fun to learn about how clouds are formed. But the science doesn't explain everything. Why did God create clouds? What good purpose does God have for them? Why are clouds also sometimes beautiful?

What other science facts do you know about how other parts of God's creation works? What purpose do you think God has for these things?

While the science experiments help us understand how things work in this world, they don't really explain why they are made this way. When we see God's plan for the world fulfilled in Jesus it helps us understand why things are the way they are. And then Jesus teaches us how to live for God in this broken world.

## Prayer idea

Dear Lord, Thank you for creating everything in our world and giving us science to explain how your creation works. Please help us to look to Jesus to learn how to live in the world you created. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

# 8

## Why isn't there gender equality in the church?

*“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:28*



Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. What's your version of this question? Is it one you grapple with? *Share your experiences, good and bad, around gender equality in both 'church culture' and in the structures of church community*
2. Why do you think people outside the church are concerned about what looks like an 'internal' issue? *How might this question be a barrier to believing that following Jesus is good news for women?*

# Dismantle

3. Is there gender equality outside the church? *Part of the curse the Bible describes in Genesis 3 is a breakdown of male-female relationships around power and equality (Genesis 3:16); this becomes a pattern in the story of the Bible and one we see in our world (consider violence against women, or 'social norms' that create inequality and benefit men).*
4. How might the church position itself as an alternative society to the cursed patterns of relationship in the world, while also seeking to make the world a more equal place? *How might this mean that Christian men use their strength in order to be a blessing, rather than a curse?*

# Your Answer

# The Gospel

In Luke 24, the women who followed Jesus are the first witnesses who proclaim the resurrection of Jesus. The curse began in a garden, and it begins unravelling in the garden where Jesus was raised. The women going out from a garden with good news for men to listen to is a reversal of the events of Genesis 2.

## Read 1 Timothy 2:1-15

5. This passage has different roles for men and women. Note the posture Paul invites men to take (1 Tim 2:8) — how does this represent a contrast to the curse, and to the use of strength in the world that creates inequality?
6. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul says that women can pray and prophecy in public. There seems to be a distinct activity (a sort of authoritative teaching) in view here (the word for authority isn't used anywhere else in the New Testament). How might these instructions to women (1 Tim 2:11-15) be good and related to the cursed world we live in which still operates under 'curse,' rather than oppressive rules designed to fuel inequality in the church?

## Read Galatians 3:26-29

7. Galatians 3 describes life beyond the pattern of the curse, within the church and the trajectory we are headed to in the New Creation. There's a tension between life as it should be and the world outside God's kingdom. If the Bible's approach to the issue of gender is about living lives that show blessing in a cursed world how can we re-imagine our application of the Bible's vision for life beyond the curse, where men and women are different and equal so that it is 'good news' for the world?
8. How might focusing on men and women listening to one another as witnesses to God's kingdom, rather than talking be part of living wisely in this tension?

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



Does God love boys and girls the same?

### Big idea

Men and women often fight with each other about who is better. God created people as male and female. We are different but neither is better than the other.

### Bible reading

Galatians 3:26-29

### Discussion

There are all sorts of different people in the world – old people, young people, boys, girls, people with red hair, people with brown eyes – God made everyone, and everyone is unique. Everyone has a unique set of gifts and abilities, and God loves us no matter who we are or what we can do. God does not say ‘you are just too young, you are just a boy, you are just a girl’. You are just the way God wanted you to be. You are a fearfully wonderfully made creation.

What are you good at? How do you shine for God? How do you add to the body of Christ?

You might like to draw a self-portrait and label all the things you are great at, or take a selfie and write/edit some text around it e.g. ‘All one in Christ Jesus’.

How does everyone work together at church, regardless of what they look like or their gender?

### Prayer idea

Thank you God that you made everyone, including us.

Help us see people like you do, and see the value in everybody.

Thank that as God’s family we are all one in Christ Jesus.

In Jesus name, Amen

# 9 Why are Christians such hypocrites?

*The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. — Luke 18:11*

Reflections from the Bible Talk

Reflections from Grow Daily

Questions this has  
raised for me

# Resonate

1. Have you experienced hypocrisy from Christians?
2. What are some examples of religious hypocrisy both in the public eye, and that your friends may have experienced, that lead to the perception that Christians are hypocrites?

# Dismantle

3. Do you know anybody who totally 'walks the talk' — practicing everything they preach? *Does that seem possible, especially if we tend towards aspiration in our talk, rather than humbly dwelling on our brokenness and mess?*
4. How did the talk help you in your approach to this question?

# The Gospel

Read Luke 18:9-14, 18-30

5. How might we position ourselves like the tax collector, rather than the Pharisee?
6. Jesus meets another potential hypocrite in the 'rich young ruler' (18:18-30). What are some things in this interaction that both protect us from thinking too highly of ourselves, and raise the bar beyond what we are capable of achieving? What does avoiding hypocrisy, by meeting God's standards, require?
7. The tax collector anticipates the way we should respond when instead of 'looking up to heaven' like the Pharisee, we imagine ourselves 'looking up' to see Jesus on the cross, practicing what he preached.. How does understanding the cross protect us from hypocrisy?

# Your Answer

Prayer for your group, your Cross Culture Connect Partner, and personal prayer

Prayer for unbelieving friends & family



## Why Don't Christians Always Act Like Jesus?

### Big idea

It's tempting to think we're better than others because it makes us feel good but really we're all sinful and need Jesus' forgiveness. Jesus tells us that how we live should reflect God's grace.

### Bible passage

Luke 18:9-14

## All Ages Activity

Everyone in the family or growth group get a piece of paper. Write on it the name of someone at their school or work who is naughtier or nastier than you.

Now search on YouTube for "The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector" by Saddleback Kids. Watch it.

## Discussion

Discuss with your family or growth group about times you are tempted to be like the Pharisee in this parable. When do you look down on others and think you are better than them?

Look back at the name you wrote down. Are you tempted to think you are better than that person?

We can all get too proud sometimes, and think we are better than others around us. Jesus wants us to be humble and remember that we are all sinners who need mercy from God. And once we realise that we can humbly get on with doing good things for God. Not so that we can be proud, but out of thankfulness to a loving God who has forgiven us for our sin. All because of Jesus!

## Prayer idea

Dear Lord, Have mercy on us. We are sinners.

Thank you for Jesus who paid the price for us sinners at the cross. Thank you that you have shown mercy and forgiven us. Help us get on with doing good things for God because we are so thankful for your love and mercy.

In the name of our Saviour Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen



People identifying as Christian and attending church are on the decline in Australia, and the research says one reason why is that people have big objections to how Christians act, or unanswered questions about what Christians believe. Lots of these questions and objections are emotionally weighty and seem rational — but what if there are answers to them that are intellectually plausible, and emotionally and experientially satisfying to those who are still in church most Sundays? What if Jesus makes surprising emotional and rational sense? In this series we're tackling the biggest questions people in our community have about what Christians believe.

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**Got Questions**

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