

LIFEGROUP STUDY
REAL GOOD QUESTIONS:
AREN'T WE BETTER OFF WITHOUT RELIGION?
20210409

PARTICIPANT NOTES

OVERVIEW

Welcome to our series, Real Good Questions. Over the weeks of this series, we'll explore six common challenges to Christianity and how Christ followers can respond. This series is a great opportunity for you to understand Christianity's position on these challenges, to become better equipped in your faith and to speak to the doubts and challenges you or those close to you may have. For today's study, your LifeGroup will review 5 reasons why our world is not better off without Christianity. Then, we'll focus in on the truth that we are better off when we follow the teachings of the Bible. Christianity has brought blessings into our world that come from the teachings and example of Jesus.

ICEBREAKER I Wish I'd Kept It!

When I was a kid, my parents sold (for cheap) a beautiful antique pump organ we had in our basement. Over the years my dad has recounted how he wishes he wouldn't have sold it – especially not for so little! Is there something you threw away, or practically gave away, that you wish you could have back? Share your story with the group!

STUDY

In his teaching on Sunday, Ken said we aren't better off without religion because . . .

1. We Have Tried It And It Has Failed Miserably.
 2. We Have Bigger Problems Than Religion
 3. Blaming Religion For Our Problems Is Naïve And Simplistic
 4. Christianity Has Brought Us Many Great Blessings
 5. The Problem Isn't Religion The Problem Is People
- **Look back at these reasons. Can your group can give a short explanation of each one?**
 - **Which of these reasons do you find most compelling? Why?**

Let's hone in on reason # 4 - Christianity has brought us many great blessings. These 7 principles, taught and modelled by Jesus, bring great blessings to those who live by them.

We are actually better off when we follow the instructions in the Bible. The teachings are good for us. This is a powerful reason why it is not true that we are better off without religion.

Note: The following principles and some of the quotations are from chapter 1 of Rebecca McLaughlin's book, Confronting Christianity.

I. **It really is more blessed to give than to receive.**

READ: Acts 20:32-35

³² "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

1. Paul writes that an important reason to give is "we must help the weak". **What might that look like in our day?**

READ Luke 6:48

³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

2. **Why is the act of giving such an important part of our faith?**

“Surveys have long shown that religious believers in the United States are happier, healthier, longer-lived, and more generous to charity and to each other than are secular people ... Religious believers give more money than secular folk to secular charities, and to their neighbours. They give more of their time too and of their blood.” Jonathan Haidt

3. **What do you think of Jonathan Haidt’s conclusion about religion being a motivator for giving? Do you think the same holds true in Canada?**

4. **How has God used the habit of giving to grow your faith?**

II. Love of money disappoints

READ: 1 Timothy 6:6-10

5. **What does Paul say true wealth is? (see vs. 6)**

6. **How does contentment help us have a right perspective on money?**

7. **Why does the love of money ultimately disappoint us?**

“Income per capita has more than doubled since 1972 while happiness (or subjective well-being) has remained roughly unchanged or has even declined.”

Jeffrey Sachs – World Happiness Report

8. **How does this World Happiness Report confirm what we read in Scripture about the love of money ultimately disappointing us?**

III. Work works when it's a calling

READ: Colossians 3:23-24

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

9. **How do these verses speak to you about how your work and your walk with God are tied together?**

“Three bricklayers are asked, ‘What are you doing?’ The first says, ‘I am laying bricks.’ The second says, ‘I am building a church.’ The third says, ‘I am building the house of God.’ The first bricklayer has a job. The second has a career. The third has a calling.”

Angela Duckworth

10. **What do you think of this idea that “work works if it's a calling?”**

IV. We really can be happy in all circumstances.

READ: Philippians 4:12-13

“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength.”

11. Think about Paul's statement, “I have learned the secret of being content ...” **What did he mean by that?**

12. **Where have you seen someone who is “happy” in spite of less than ideal circumstances? How has their example helped you understand what happiness is?**

V. Gratitude is good for us

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

13. What does it mean to “give thanks in all circumstances”? Is this possible?

14. What has helped you to have a regular habit of being thankful?

“For the Christian, thankfulness is not just a positivity technique: it is a deep disposition toward a life-giving and life-saving God.” Rebecca McLaughlin

15. How have you seen gratitude shape your faith in a good way?

VI. Self-Control and perseverance help us thrive

READ: 2 Peter 1:5-7 and Hebrews 12:1-2

16. Using these two passages, how would you define self-control? How would you define perseverance?

Angela Duckworth suggests that the quality of *grit*, which she defines as “passion and perseverance for very long-term goals,” can be more predictive of a person’s success than social intelligence, good looks, health or IQ.

17. **How have you seen your perseverance strengthened by your faith in God?**

VII. **Forgiveness is foundational**

READ: Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 11:4

18. Forgiveness is not linked to the actions of the offender, but to the character of God.
How do you see this principle in these passages?

“Forgiveness is God’s invention for coming to terms with a world in which, despite their best intentions, people are unfair to each other and hurt each other deeply. He began by forgiving us. And he invites us all to forgive each other.”
Lewis B. Smedes

19. **How has God’s forgiveness encouraged you to forgive others who have offended you?**

20. **Of the seven principles we’ve looked at, which do you find to be the most compelling argument that Christianity brings good to our world?**

PRAYER

This week, let’s pray for our technical support ministries at Creekside. This ministry area includes the audio visual of our Sunday services as well as other events at Creekside requiring technical support.

- Please pray for more tech volunteers to become involved. Ask God to prompt people with audio visual skills and/or the willingness to learn, to connect with us to let us know.
- Pray that as tech support people serve, that they would be drawn closer to God, that they would feel His pleasure at the good work they are doing for Him.