

# ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY DISCUSSION GUIDE



## 1: ANNOUNCEMENT

- How would you have defined the gospel before reading this chapter?
- How does Greear define the gospel? Which part of this definition surprises you most?
- Why does the Apostle Paul's idea of "essential" Christianity matter 2,000 years later?
- What are you hoping to get from this book?

## 2: UNDENIABLE

- Which of the four "fingerprints"—cosmological, teleological, moral, desire—do you find most compelling? Why?
- How do you anticipate an atheist responding to these fingerprints?
- Why might someone not want God to exist?
- How would you answer the man in Waffle House's question: "How are we supposed to know which belief about God is right?"

## 3: REFUSAL

- What are some of the most common answers to the question, "What's wrong with the world?"
- How is the Christian answer different?
- Why is it kind of God, rather than "selfish," to insist on being the center of our universe?
- Which of the fruits of rebellion—denial, distortion, disobedience—has been most operative in your life?

## 4: RELIGION

- In your own words, what is the different between "religion" and "gospel"?
- Why is religion unable to lead us to reconciliation with God?
- If religious laws are so problematic, why does God give them?
- In your experience, have you encountered Christianity more as religion or gospel?

### **Time Out! Who Is Jesus?**

- What would you say the common perception of Jesus is? How does this chapter re-cast that image?
- Which of the various analogies for Jesus' identity—Word, radiance, imprint—was newest to you?
- What is your heart's response to the idea that Jesus, the God-man, lived and died to release you from the curse of sin?

## 5: RESCUE

- How would you describe the difference between justification, redemption, and propitiation?
- Why does forgiveness require a sacrifice? Why can't God just "forgive and forget"?
- Why is "saved" still a word that Christians should hang on to?
- How might "Jesus in my place" give you confidence and peace?

## 6: FAITH

- Based on this chapter, how would you define faith?
- What counsel would you give to someone who is unsure if they have enough faith?
- What is the difference between “all-in faith” and “hedging our bets”?
- What is your answer to the question Greear raised, “Why should God let you into heaven?”

### **Time Out! But Is It True?**

- What two pieces of evidence point toward the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection?
- What non-Christian explanations for belief in Jesus’ resurrection have you heard most?  
How does this chapter address those explanations?
- What would be different about your life today if you truly believed Jesus was alive?

## 7: INCLUSION

- What makes the claim, “All religions are essentially the same” ironically exclusive?
- What makes the gospel’s exclusive claims more gracious and inclusive than others?
- Describe the different paths to unity—that of Rome and that of Jesus.
- Where do you need to turn away from your own exclusive pride and boasting?

## 8: STRUGGLE

- How does the gospel transform our struggle with sin from a battle we can’t win into a battle we can’t lose?
- Greear writes, “In Christianity, believing is the way to becoming.” What are we to believe? And what does that lead us to become?
- Why does God allow believers to continue struggling with sin?
- In what area of your life do you need to “reckon” yourself dead to sin?

### **Time Out! What about Homosexuality?**

- How have you seen the church handle issues of sexuality well? Poorly?
- Which of the three myths in this chapter are you most susceptible to?
- Do you find Paul and Jesus’ teaching on sexuality offensive, comforting, or something else altogether?

## 9: SPIRIT

- How did this chapter change (or confirm) your understanding of the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean for the Spirit to “shed abroad” Christ’s love in our hearts?
- How might you pray differently, knowing the Spirit also prays for you?
- Which of the four ways of walking with the Spirit—confession, saturation, surrender, memorization—do you want to grow in?

## 10: THEREFORE

- Which root idol—approval, power, control, pleasure—have you experienced God attempting to uproot?
- Describe the difference between mechanical change and organic change (i.e. gospel change)?
- How would you describe Jesus now? What about the gospel?
- What one step of obedience do you need to take now that you’ve finished this book?