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discussion guide for september 24th

"How to Begin Believing"

Acts 17:16-34



"Yes, I try to find **common ground** with everyone." 1 Corinthians 9:22b NLT

➤ **Launch the Discussion** (11:00 am)

What does it mean to believe? Does the statement "I believe" have life consequences? Discuss each of the following possible statements of belief and how that position might affect a person's life and decisions.

- ✓ I believe this life is all there is.
- ✓ I believe only in what I can see, taste, or touch.
- ✓ I believe in a higher power, out there, somewhere.
- ✓ I believe in a spiritual dimension whatever title you might give it.
- ✓ I believe all religions have an element of the truth.
- Discuss the importance of "believing" in the right thing in life.

**"DSB" refers to the "Discovery Study Bibles" on the Table.

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- **Guide the Discussion (11:10 am)**

Pastor Tom mentioned 7 steps from skepticism to belief discovered in Acts 17:16-34, (*p. 1465-DSB**). A copy of this passage is provided to "mark up" as instructed.

1. INTEGRATION – Awareness of the spiritual dimension of life.
 - In Acts 17:16-34 circle phrases that indicate the spiritual awareness of the people of Athens.
 - Is there a spiritual "hunger" in our community and culture? How do people express it?
2. OPENNESS – A willingness to listen and consider the claims of Christianity.
 - In Acts 17:16-34 underline phrases that indicate spiritual openness.
 - How could you determine if a person was open to investigating Christianity?
3. HONESTY – Admitting unanswered questions.
 - In Acts 17:16-34 box in phrases that indicate spiritual honesty.
 - Why is honesty a necessary step on the road to belief? How does Lk.5: 31-32 relate? (*p. 1344-DSB**)
4. DISCOVERY – Finding why you were born.
 - In Acts 17:16-34 bracket phrases that indicate why you were created – why you exist on this earth.
 - "Why am I here?" is an age-old philosophical question. How does Christian belief answer that question?
5. DISCONTENT – Dissatisfaction with God substitutes.
 - In Acts 17:16-34 draw a wavy line under phrases that indicate a need to turn away from idols.
 - French mathematician Blaise Pascal said, we have a "God-shaped void" in our soul. List "God-substitutes" people use to try to fill that void.

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6. DIVISION—Turn toward a loving God as shown in Jesus.
- In Acts 17:16-34 shade-in phrases that indicate a need to choose Jesus.
 - How and why does a decision about Jesus naturally cause a division among people?

7. DECISION – Take action and decide to trust Jesus alone as the forgiver and leader of your life.
- In Acts 17:16-34 draw a broken line under phrases that indicate both inaction and action toward belief.
 - What does John 8:24 indicate about making a decision for Christ? (*p. 1407-DSB**).

Apply the Discussion (11:35 am)

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Have you traveled this 7-step road? Would you be willing to help another? Are you a believer, a skeptic, or something in between? Mark your position on the road to “I believe. . .”

1. INTEGRATION—Aware of the spiritual dimension of life.
2. OPENNESS—Willing to listen and consider Christianity.
3. HONESTY – Admitting unanswered questions.
4. DISCOVERY – Knowing why I exist.
5. DISCONTENT – Turning away from God substitutes.
6. DIVISION – Turning toward a loving God.
7. DECISION – Taking action to trust in Jesus alone.

Prayer Time: (11:45 am)

- Pray for those who share things God is leading them to do in response to this discussion.
- Pray for other shared needs from the group.
- Pray for absentees by name. (*Who will contact them this week and fill them in on group time?*)

Go Deeper: Use the “*Going Deeper*” section in your personal daily devotionals. It is a great way to strengthen and reinforce what you are learning and applying to your life.

➤ Going Deeper

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Last Sunday you examined a 7-step road from skepticism to “I believe” the first words of the Apostles creed. These verses should help clarify your understanding of this process.

Monday, September 25: Read John 12:42-48 (*p.1415-DSB**). Why are some afraid to investigate the truth of Christianity?

Tuesday, September 26: Read Rom. 10:8-11 (*p.1501-DSB**). What “steps” are necessary for salvation? What is “believing with your heart”?

Wednesday, September 27: Read Rom. 10:13-17 (*p.1501-DSB**). What “process” toward being a believer is indicated in these verses? How can you help others come to Christ?

Thursday, September 28: Read Mark 12:28-34 (*p.1322-DSB**). The scribe had passed several steps toward being a believer, and was “not far” from decision. How many of the 7 steps had he taken?

Friday, September 29: Read John 8:24-30 (*p.1407-DSB**). Jesus never “moderated” the requirement for salvation to be “inclusive.” What happened in vs. 30?

**“DSB” refers to the “Discovery Study Bibles” available in common ground.