



Bible Study – Dialogue 2

CAUSE & EFFECT

Based on Chapter One of *GOD Is the Issue*
Leader's Notes

“If there is no God, then everything is permitted”
 - Alexander Dostoevsky –

The Point:

- to help you to begin to see and think in terms of Cause & Effect from God's perspective.
 - to set the stage for helping you think in terms of real and lasting solutions, rather than reacting to the cultural symptoms that surround us.

- ***Group Leader's Notes are in bold italics***
- ***Additional questions the Group Leader may use for clarity or additional stimulation of dialogue are in bold.***
- ***The Check It Out and Think It Out segments are the most critical. Everything else reinforces these two segments. Keep this in mind as you budget your time.***
- ***Questions with a star ★ are the most critical. Questions without a star may be omitted if necessary.***

Warm Up

1. What were some of the responses you heard from people this last week when you asked them what they thought was the connection between their belief in God and their behavior? Share and talk about some of the responses you heard.
- ★ 2. Of all the controversial issues in America today, which one tends to affect you most deeply on the emotional level and why do you think this is? How do you think God feels about that issue and why?
3. Dr. Christopher Bader, one of the primary researchers of the Baylor University study on the four views of God in America, said:

“...you learn more about people's moral and political behavior if you know their image of God than almost any other measure.” (GOD Is the Issue, pg 32)

- What do you think are the most likely connections between a person's image of God and their *moral* and *political* behavior, and why? Is there a story from your own experience that might bear this out?
- What do you think is the connection between a culture's image of God and their *moral* and *political* behavior?

- ★ 4. Chapter 1 of *GOD Is the Issue* begins with the quote by Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky,

"If there is no God, then everything is permitted."

- What do you think Dostoevsky meant by this statement and explain why you either agree or disagree with him.

Check it Out

- ★ 1. Genesis 1:1 says, *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*
- Discuss the moral implications of Genesis 1:1 in relation to the often heard statement we are a product of "random chance plus time." What is the cause & effect relationship in each case?
 - **What requires or obligates us to be moral if God exists?**
 - **What requires or obligates us to be moral if God does not exist?**
- ★ 2. Read Matthew 22:35-40
- What do you think is the cause and effect relationship between these two commandments? Give an example from your own life if appropriate.
 - ***Note to leader: If we seek to love God with our whole heart we will also seek to love those around us (our neighbors) with our whole heart because God loves them.***
 - What do you think Jesus meant when he said that "all the Law and Prophets [civil, criminal and moral law] hang on these two commandments"?
 - What do you think would be different in America today if all *followers of Jesus* tried to live by these two commandments? Explain your answer.

3. Read Mark 7:1-23 (focus on 14-15, 20-23)
 - Discuss the difference between what the Pharisees thought made a person “unclean” and what Jesus thought made a person “unclean.”
 - Look deep into your own heart and answer the following question as honestly as you can: “Do I tend to judge other people by their outward behavior, or do I tend to view their behavior primarily as a symptom of a much deeper issue?”
- ★ 4. Read Matt 7:24-27
 - Explain what you think Jesus meant by this parable, clearly defining what you think Jesus meant by “rock” and by “sand”?
 - How can the principles of this parable be applied to your life?
 - **What does it mean to build your life on rock?**
 - **What does it mean to build your life on sand?**
 - How can the principles of this parable be applied to a nation?
 - **What does it mean for a nation to build on rock?**
 - **What does it mean for a nation to build on sand?**
 - In light of this, what needs to change first if we are to solve America's problems? Explain the connection.
 - **How does this relate to specific moral issues such as abortion, homosexual behavior and racism?**
 - **How does this relate to economic issues and dealing with financial corruption in business and politics?**

Think It Out

- ★ 1. In light of the foregoing, discuss A.W. Tozer's statement, “It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound...while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate.” Why do you think he used the word “impossible” and what implication does this have for Christians?

2. In Chapter 1 of *GOD Is the Issue*, Brad Bright makes the statement, “As a culture, our behavior will necessarily be determined by our view of God.” (*GOD Is the Issue*, pg 30)

➤ What do you think Brad meant by this and do you agree or disagree and why?

★ 3. What do you think would happen if we tried to cure America's moral cancer by simply trying to suppress or outlaw symptoms such as abortion, alcoholism, pornography, racism, greed, homosexual behavior or poverty without first addressing our underlying view of God?

★ 4. Where do you think should we focus the bulk of our energies if we want to bring about a long-term solution to America's problems and why?

Sort It Out

REAL LIFE SITUATION:

One day at work, one of Joe's co-workers confronted him out of the blue with the following words, “You're not one of those religious nuts are you?!”

If you were in Joe's situation, how could you respond shrewdly as Jesus did to his adversaries?

JOE'S ACTUAL RESPONSE:

Joe responded with dumbfounded silence. He was taken completely off guard. Fortunately, another co-worker came to his defense. Joe decided that day he would never be caught off guard again regarding his faith.

ONE POSSIBLE SHREWD RESPONSE:

“If you are asking, do I think that belief in God actually matters, my answer is a definite ‘Yes!’ because it is intellectual suicide to believe in right and wrong if God doesn't exist. (For instance, if God doesn't exist, then the statement ‘The Holocaust was wrong,’ is a meaningless statement. It's like saying, ‘I believe in the Tooth Fairy.’ Good for you.) It's a simple issue of Cause & Effect. If I believe in actual right and wrong, then there must be an actual source for right and wrong. But since you brought it up, let me ask you, do you believe in God, and have you thought about how belief in God impacts real life?”

ANOTHER POSSIBLE SHREWD RESPONSE:

“If you can show me beyond a ‘reasonable doubt’ using the legal/historical method of proof (which is the standard of proof we use in a court of law) that Jesus never rose from the dead I will walk away from my faith. (After all, accusing someone of being a ‘religious nut’ seems to imply that you think you have the real answer.) How ‘bout it? (Appropriate resource: More Than a Carpenter, by Josh McDowell)

Act It Out

Pair up with another person in your group. Choose one of the two possible responses shown above. One person play the role of Joe. One person play the role of Joe’s co-worker. Reverse roles back and forth a few times until you can respond with confidence.

Wrap Up

1. Read Chapter 2 of *GOD Is the Issue* in preparation for next week. As you read, ask yourself the following question: What would you say is the biggest obstacle in your life that hinders your ability to communicate God’s heart to the culture around you?
2. This week, ask three very different people how they think God feels about humanity, and why. As always, do not be argumentative. Try to really understand what they are saying. Be prepared to report your findings to the group next week.

Note to small group leader: Again, you may want to ask each person to write the names of three people on an index card that they would like to talk with this week about how God views humanity. It can be the same people as last week or a totally different group. The goal is to hear views from various types of people—not just people who all tend to think about God the same way.

3. Close in prayer asking God to provide each person in the group with three great opportunities this week to talk with people about how they think God views humanity.

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