



Bible Study – Dialogue 3

COMMUNICATING GOD'S HEART

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

“For God so loved the world that he gave....”
 - Jesus (John 3:16) -

The Point:

- to help you better understand and embrace God's heart so you may more effectively represent Him wherever you go.

- *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. Talk about the answers you heard this past week to the question of how other people think God feels about humanity and why, and then contrast their answers to how you think God views humanity.
- ★ 2. In Chapter 2 of *GOD Is the Issue*, Brad Bright talks about two pastors (pgs. 39-40, 42-43). What was the main difference between them? Which one do you think best demonstrated God's heart toward people? Why? (If you do not have the book you can view it online at www.discovergod.com. Click on the GOD IS THE ISSUE tab.)

Note to leader: If most people did not read Chapter 2, have someone read the two stories aloud to the group.

3. At the end of chapter 2, in *GOD Is the Issue*, Brad Bright said, “It is time for many of us to exchange our sword for a fishing pole.” (page 49)

When you look around at our culture would you sum up your internal heart reaction as wanting to use your emotional “fishing pole” or your emotional “sword”? Why? How do you think this compares to God’s heart?

- **How does this relate to Jesus’ words to be as shrewd as a snake but as innocent as a dove?**

Check It Out

1. Read John 3:16-18
 - Explain how these three verses balance perfect justice and perfect love without compromising either one even slightly?
 - **Describe perfection.**
 - **In light of that, describe perfect justice and then perfect love.**
 - **How does this verse maintain God’s perfection, without compromise, across the board?**
 - How would you view God’s love if he deliberately sent his Son to die a hideous death if there was any other way to rescue us from His perfect justice?
- ★ 2. Read 1 Corinthians 13
 - From God’s perspective how important is love compared to great faith, theological purity, or even a willingness to die as a martyr for truth? Why do you think this is?
 - What do you think God is trying to tell us about His heart?
- ★ 3. Read Matthew 9:9-13 and Luke 19:1-10
 - How were tax collectors viewed by the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day as opposed to how Jesus view them?
 - Who are the “tax collectors” of modern American society and how do you view them? How do you think Jesus views them and why?

4. Read John 8:3-11
 - What was Jesus' view of adultery? Explain.
 - What was His view of the woman caught in adultery?
 - How do you reconcile the two responses in light of God's heart?
5. Read Matthew 9:35-38
 - What was Jesus' attitude towards the masses? Why?
 - (*compassion*)
 - What was Jesus' proposed remedy motivated by His compassion?
 - (*to pray that God would send laborers for the harvest*)
 - What potential implications do you think Jesus' response has for your beliefs, attitudes and actions? Explain.
- ★ 6. Read Matthew 4:18-19
 - Based on Jesus' words in this passage, what should we see happening in our lives if we are following Jesus? How does this reflect God's heart?
 - In light of this passage, if I never have any desire or willingness to "fish", what are the three possible explanations?
 - *Jesus was wrong, which means He was not really God.*
 - *Jesus was lying, which means God is a liar.*
 - *Jesus was right, which means I am not following Jesus.*

Think It Out

1. What impact does your view of God have on your words, actions and attitudes? Give an example from your own experience.
- ★ 2. If you were more focused on God's *heart* and less focused on yourself, what do you think might be one of the first things to change in your life (either an attitude or behavior)? Why?

- ★ 3. Do you think the key to seeing real change in your life is to work harder to live a life pleasing to God, or to work harder to get to know who God *really* is? Why?
- **If I really, really, really believe God is all-powerful, how might that affect the decisions I make today?**
 - **If I really, really, really believe God loves me passionately and unconditionally, how might that affect the decisions I make today?**
 - **If I really, really, really believe God will never, never, never leave me, how might that affect the decisions I make today?**
 - **If I really, really, really believe God is perfectly holy and I have a deep grasp of what that means, how might that affect the decisions I make today?**
 - **If anyone in your group wants to gain a greater understanding of who God is and how that affects their life, two of the best books available are *Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer, and *GOD: Discover His Character* by Bill Bright (I admit my bias).**

Sort It Out

REAL LIFE SITUATION:

Kim, a mother of two elementary school students, was sitting in Chick-fil-A one day reading her Bible. The window washer, a local college student, saw her open Bible and came over and stated how his history professors had explained that many of the stories in the Bible came from other religious traditions

If you were Kim what do you think would be a shrewd response that would also reflect God's heart?

KIM'S ACTUAL RESPONSE:

Kim responded by answering his question with another question: How do you know the stories in the Bible came from other religious traditions. How do you know the stories in the Bible weren't actually the original stories that all the other ones came from?

A POSSIBLE SHREWD RESPONSE:

Kim responded very well by taking control of the conversation as Jesus always did through asking a question of her own. It was a very good start.

However, if it were me, before I even reframed the question, I would preface it with something like, “That’s a good question. I think it is important to be willing to ask honest questions, but....” By complementing the questioner it leaves open the possibility of further conversation, which is important if we want to win a person (which is God’s heart), not just an argument.

In addition, I would probably take the conversation one step further by saying, “Even if your professors are right, it doesn’t disprove Christianity. If you really want to disprove Christianity you must first show how the resurrection of Jesus is historically invalid. If you cannot historically disprove the resurrection, you can’t refute Christianity. If you’d like to talk further after you’re done I would love it. I don’t know if I can answer all your questions, but I can always go do some research and get back to you.

(Appropriate resource: More Than a Carpenter, by Josh McDowell)

Act It Out

Pair up with another person in your group. One person play the role of Kim. One person play the role of the college student. Reverse roles back and forth a few times until you can respond with confidence.

Wrap Up

1. Read Chapter 3 of *GOD Is the Issue*. As you read, ask yourself, “If I want to get my message across, why is it more effective to reframe than react?”
2. This week, ask at least three people from varied backgrounds to give you two or three words to describe how they view Christianity. Then ask them to explain their word choices. Do not be argumentative. Try to really understand what they are saying. Listen and learn. Be prepared to report your findings to the group next week.

Note to small group leader: 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 their view of God and their behavior. This will greatly increase the chances of the conversations actually occurring. 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 the connection between their view of God and their behavior.

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