

Wasted Faith Discussion Guide

Chapter 4

Faith Without Reason

1. Read chapter 4 in **Wasted Faith** aloud: “Faith Without Reason,” (pp. 23-25).
2. Read the story below aloud and discuss the questions that follow:

A student finds himself in a college setting where the claims of Christ are not accepted. His professors believe a teacher named Jesus lived in history and said many wise things, but they do not believe He died as a sin-bearer or rose from the grave. They see these teachings as myths drummed up by overly enthusiastic followers wishing to memorialize their leader. The student basically agrees. Some time later he finds himself in deep trouble concerning his finances and relationships. He is distraught and often expresses his emotion in bouts of private depression and tears. Late one night he experiences something unusual. In his intense emotion a great sense of peace comes upon him. He senses that he is in the presence of an unseen person. His fears and concerns seem to vanish in the warmth of this experience. He concludes that the mystical Christ has revealed himself to him. He would not say that he met the *historical* Christ, but that he experienced the *spiritual* Christ. What matters to him is not exactly what to call this revelation, but rather that it did something wonderful for him. From that time on he is convinced that someone is looking after him, and that he is not alone. He is now at peace. He believes that he is now trusting the Christ who was “revealed” to him. When asked if he knows Christ, he is quick to say *yes*, though he never mentions the circumstances of his mystical experience. He even reads the Bible sometimes, and feels good doing so. His skepticism about the historical facts (the death and resurrection of Christ) has not changed. Yet he feels that nothing could take away from him that experience of encountering “divinity.”

- a. If you had opportunity to speak seriously and privately with this young man, what would you say?
 - b. Read aloud 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. What is the gospel according to this passage? What relationship does the young man’s experience have with the gospel?
4. Read aloud 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, and 13-15. How would you know if some of the professing Christians you know have received another spirit, believed in another gospel, or accepted another Jesus?
 5. Consider the following statements and discuss the fallacies of each:

- a. “I have faith. I have full confidence in the knowledge that God will look at my life when I die and will make the judgment concerning my future state according to the way I’ve loved Him and tried to relate to Him with my heart during my life.”
- b. “I feel very close to the Lord. I have many questions as to whether Christ said and did all the things the Bible says He did, but whether or not He actually said and did them is of little importance to me. I am trusting in the basic spiritual feelings which underlie all religions.”
- c. “I am very warm toward religion. I grew up in the church. Whenever I feel down or discouraged, I recall my roots. In fact, I sometimes return to the old church and those confidences return very strongly to me. I can feel God there. I am secure.”
- d. “I have had many experiences with God. He has been so good to me, even delivering me from tragedy. The recent car accident is one example. I was spared because of Christ. I felt Him in the car with me. I wasn’t afraid, therefore I must be a Christian.”

6. How can one know he is “a disciple *indeed*” according to Christ’s words in John 8:31-32? Enlarge your answer by explaining what Christ meant by the key phrases in the passage.
7. Jesus goes on in chapter 8 to prove that the people who had some kind of “belief” in Him (see verses 30-31) were not truly His disciples at all. In verses 31-32, which you just read, He makes statements concerning their relationship to His word. Now read verse 37 and then verses 42-47. Remember that Jesus is speaking here to the same people who claimed earlier to believe in Him. Are Jesus’ statements in verses 43-44 true of *all* people who do not understand the gospel? Think carefully and explain your answer.
8. A professor of religion may be able to articulate the beliefs of genuine Christianity. He may teach entire courses on the subject. Yet in the final analysis he rejects the message. He says, “I could never believe such fantasy.” Does this man understand the gospel? Explain your answer.
9. If time permits, read chapter 5 in **Wasted Faith**, “Faith Without Repentance” (pp. 27-32). Conclude with a meaningful prayer time.

Before the next meeting: Read chapter 5 in **Wasted Faith**, “Faith Without Repentance” (pp. 27-32).