

WEEK 4: WHAT ABOUT ALL THE BAD THINGS CHRISTIANS HAVE DONE?

ABOUT THIS SERIES

As we start the new year, join St. Mark on Sunday mornings for conversations on faith and doubt in our series *Reason for God*. Together, we'll take on some of the common questions people have about faith and Christianity.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray for your group | <input type="checkbox"/> Read through the Discussion Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments (optional) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean meeting area | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean bathroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Crack front door |

OPENING (5 MIN)

After a general welcome, say: Okay, friends, we're all busy people so to get started, let's ask—

ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10, HOW WELL DID YOU DO AT FINISHING ALL THE THINGS YOU NEED TO DO THIS WEEK?

After a brief discussion, say: It's one thing to talk about how well we did at our tasks around the house or at work, it's quite another to talk about how well we did at representing Jesus to others this week. But as we hear in Colossians 4:5, "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."

That's why, this week, as we continue our series *The Reason for God*, we're going to dig into the question, "What about all the bad things Christians have done?" But first, let's pray.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

Host, lead the group in prayer.

HIDING CHRIST (15 MIN)

After a prayer, say: In the book *The Reason for God*, author Tim Keller talks about how Christians who are un-Christlike are either hypocrites and fanatics. Let's take them one at a time.

CAN SOMEONE READ JESUS' WORDS IN MATTHEW 23:23-28 ALOUD FOR THE GROUP?

After the reading, say: This is just a snippet of a longer speech about hypocrisy. But you can see that Jesus is really, really angered by it.

WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS IS SO OPPOSED TO HYPOCRISY? WHAT'S AT STAKE?

WHY IS HYPOCRISY SO APPEALING TO (OR EASY FOR) CHRISTIANS?

After a discussion, say: The other side of this is fanaticism or legalism. The love of law more than loving people.

CAN SOMEONE READ ALOUD COLOSSIANS 2:20-23 FOR US?

WHAT ARE SOME FORMS OF LEGALISM THAT YOU SEE IN MODERN CHRISTIANITY?

WHY IS LEGALISM SO APPEALING TO (OR EASY FOR) CHRISTIANS?

SHOWING CHRIST (15-20 MIN)

After a discussion, say: It's easy to see the hypocrisy and legalism in others, what's hard is seeing it in ourselves. The truth is, any time we sin, we are engaging in hypocrisy or legalism, even when we don't want to!

LET'S ALL TURN TO ROMANS 7:14-20 AND CAN SOMEONE READ ALOUD FOR US? (IT'S A BIT OF A TONGUE-TWISTER, SO GO SLOWLY WHEN IT GETS WORDY!)

WHAT'S YOUR REACTION TO THESE WORDS?

DO THESE WORDS MOTIVATE YOU TO CARE LESS OR MORE ABOUT YOUR SIN?

After a discussion, say: Let's see where Paul is going with all of this.

CAN SOMEONE READ ROMANS 7:21-25 ALOUD FOR US?

After the reading, ask: Paul ends with a remarkable thought on Jesus—not only did he take on a cross for our sins, he took on our flesh and never sinned! As we heard on Sunday, this should change the way we respond to criticism. Instead of defensiveness or abdication, we should be quick to confess our sin and unafraid to own it.

LET'S PRACTICE. IF SOMEONE CRITICIZED YOU FOR YOUR HYPOCRISY OR LEGALISM, GIVE A RESPONSE THAT TALKS ABOUT JESUS INSTEAD OF BEING DEFENSIVE.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT AND PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Before we get to our prayers, two announcements.

One, Prosper the City is going to be coming up after Easter, so just prepare your calendars now for some more Small Group meetings in late April and May.

Two, every Small Group is going to sponsor one of the prayerwalks this summer. We'll help plan routes, plan Scripture, and bring refreshments for our particular week. So be looking at which of your Wednesday evenings this summer would be good for that.

Let's close things out with prayer—

ARE THERE ANY PRAYER REQUESTS TODAY?

Host, begin with a prayer asking God to help us lead with the resurrection. Then, pray for the prayer requests.