

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Another Gospel?

Six Sessions on the Search

for Truth in Response to the Claims

of Progressive Christianity

Alisa Childers

WITH NANCY TAYLOR

Another Gospel? Participant's Guide

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Another Gospel? Participant's Guide: Six Sessions on the Search for Truth in Response to the Claims of Progressive Christianity

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A Note from Alisa Childers

You know that feeling when you're scrolling through Facebook and read a blog post that seems off—but you can't quite articulate why? Do you feel confused by what *seems* like a loving and inclusive message coming from progressive Christians? Are you concerned about the progressive movement and looking for a concise resource to help you identify and respond to its claims and practices (plus have a handy guide to give to your less-concerned friends)?

I'm so thrilled you have chosen to come on this journey with me! I once was thrown into a faith crisis that I had absolutely no idea how to navigate. As a lifelong believer in Jesus, I never doubted what I believed until I met a clever skeptic who also happened to be a pastor. More specifically, he was a progressive Christian pastor. Suddenly, I was left with more questions than answers, and my faith was hanging by a thread. *Another Gospel?* is the story of my journey through doubt and deconstruction, and ultimately to a firm and intellectually informed faith.

This participant's guide and the *Another Gospel? DVD*

Experience have been created as companions to my book. Over the course of the next six weeks, you will walk with me via video and utilize this wonderful resource that Nancy Taylor and the team at Tyndale put together and adapted from *Another Gospel?* My prayer is that you will come out on the other side with a stronger faith and a deeper confidence as you minister to those in your life who may be caught up in progressive Christianity.

Introduction

There's a storm coming. At some point you'll be caught in a deluge you didn't see on the horizon. The winds will whip around you, the floodwaters will surge beneath your feet, and you'll cry out in alarm, wondering if anyone hears you or is able to help. I'm not talking about a literal storm, although that might be part of your story. I'm talking about a crisis of faith that makes you doubt everything you thought you knew about God. It may be life circumstances that throw you off-balance, leading you to question what you thought you knew about God. Or perhaps it will be the winds of culture and false doctrine that buffet you, making you realize that your belief system is built on sand and won't be able to withstand the tempest you're in. Whatever the nature of your storm, it may leave you disoriented and confused about core issues of the Christian faith that you thought you had settled.

The truth is, we all have questions and doubts about God and his ways. The storms of life just bring them to the forefront of our minds and make them impossible to ignore.

Thankfully, there are real answers to our existential questions that make logical sense, and God wants to help us discover them.

Sometimes we might think that if we keep on nagging God about our doubts, he will get tired of us. We might think he's more pleased with us if we just keep going through the motions of the Christian life and ignore the questions that pop into our minds. We might think that faith is the opposite of doubt. But nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus promised, "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). God wants us to be persistent in coming to him over and over, and he wants us to search for answers until we find the truth.

Likewise, the apostle James said, "If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind" (James 1:5-6). God is the source of wisdom, and when we ask him to give it to us, he lavishes it on us. But that second part of James's teaching is important. If we want to be settled and stable through the storms of life, we have to be secure in what we believe. Our faith needs to be in God alone, the Rock of Ages.

That's what the book *Another Gospel?* is all about. Our

churches and neighborhoods are full of people who are asking big questions: Who is the God of the Bible? What about heaven and hell—are those just metaphors? If they're real, what does that say about what God is like? Can the Bible even be trusted? What does an ancient faith have to do with my life today? These are important questions to consider, and by answering them with the truth we can build a sure foundation for our faith.

That's what we all want, in the final analysis. We want something to cling to when we are facing death and disaster. We want something certain when everything around us seems to be shifting and unstable. And we want something worth building our lives around. Paul said this type of structurally sound faith that can withstand life's storms is the goal of the Christian life: "Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church" (Ephesians 4:14-15).

The problem isn't that we're distressed by the storms that come into our lives or that we are asking questions about the faith. After all, even the disciples thought a storm was going to wipe them out, and many writers of Scripture asked God questions and sometimes even argued with him! The problem is that all too often people are looking for answers in the wrong places, and sometimes for the wrong reasons.

Looking for Answers in All the Right Places

Where are we going to go with these doubts, questions, and debates? Will we let God answer through the evidence we can observe in nature and in his Word, or will we instead listen to the answers culture is providing? Are we going to wallow in disbelief, or will we bring our honest doubts to God and seek the truth? Are we willing to take the risk of getting to the bedrock issues of faith? And once we get there, will we submit our lives to God? Do we want to have answers to our questions even if it means our lives will be more difficult?

This study guide will lead you on a journey of discovery. We'll look at the big questions people are asking—which may be questions you are asking yourself, or maybe you're encountering them in your church, from a family member, or on social media, or maybe you haven't even thought of them yet. No question is too big or too small, and nothing is off-limits. If we want answers, we have to be willing to ask the questions.

Then we'll point out the so-called answers that progressive Christianity provides. Those answers often satisfy our "itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3). They appeal to our desire for love and acceptance, and that's why so many are lured in by them. But there are significant problems with the basic structure of reality presented by progressive Christianity, and those logical fallacies need to be pointed out. Their answers are sometimes incomplete and sometimes altogether false, and in the end leave us hopeless and helpless. That's why this book will bring you straight to the source of all wisdom and

truth: God himself, and the revelation he has provided in the Bible and in his creation.

This study is designed to be done in community, alongside other travelers who are searching for truth. When we listen to others, we gain perspective on both the questions that need to be asked and the contrasting answers provided by culture and God's Word. To continue the analogy of navigating the storms of life, we can read the map together and help each other find the best place to drop anchor. Best of all, by studying in community we will realize that we're not alone—other people are there to share our struggles along the way and celebrate when we arrive at the destination.

Tips for Participants

One word of advice: As with anything in life, you'll get out of this study what you put in. If you go to each meeting to watch the video and have a discussion with your group, you'll learn a little something. Your time will have been well spent. But you won't have gotten everything out of the experience that you could have. If, on the other hand, you prepare ahead of time by reading the recommended chapters in *Another Gospel?* and then answering the reflection questions after your meeting, you'll gain far more understanding, insight, and tools for the next steps in your faith walk. If this is worth doing, it's worth doing well.

To gain the most from this study you should set aside two or three hours per week to prepare. After each week's meeting, you can either answer the reflection questions and then read

the next session's chapters from the book in one sitting, or break it up into two or three blocks of time. Does that sound like a lot? It's not as much as you might think. Just replace one night of mindlessly binge-watching Netflix with some reflection and reading time. Or take two lunch hours per week to read the book instead of scrolling Instagram. Better yet, head to your local coffee shop on a Saturday morning with your book in hand, along with a pen for underlining and writing in the margins. The time you put into this study will pay dividends in your own faith journey as well as your relationships with fellow believers who may ask you questions related to their own faith. For the reading portions, you can even listen to the audiobook, which frees you up to do other things while you learn, like drive to work, clean your house, or work out.

Once you're in the group, come ready to share. Your group will succeed or fail based on how open people are willing to be. Come with your honest questions, come ready to listen with an open mind and heart, and be vulnerable with fellow group members. If you have a question or concern, probably someone else in the group does too. Your listening ear and gracious responses to one another will create an atmosphere where faith can grow and flourish.

But don't overshare. Your group needs to be a safe place for everyone, and that means you need to hold confidences that have been spoken. Don't gossip or slander people. It's enough to share broad strokes of things you've seen or experienced—people don't need to know all your concerns about your wayward child or the church across town your brother-in-law's

aunt heard something about. And while we're on the topic of oversharing, remember to leave time and space for the introverts in your midst to speak up.

General good group manners also say that you should arrive on time and attend every week that you possibly can. It's a way of respecting others. When one person is late or missing, the whole group suffers.

How This Study Works

There are six sessions in this study, corresponding with chapters from *Another Gospel?* by Alisa Childers and enhanced by her video teaching. Each session has the following sections:

- A few introductory paragraphs to set the stage for what the session is all about.
- **Leader's Note:** This brief introductory section suggests goals for the discussion time with group facilitators.
- **Read:** These are the chapters from *Another Gospel?* that participants should read before the meeting.
- **Watch:** This section spells out the points you should be listening for in the video teaching session.
- **Discuss:** These thirteen to fourteen questions will aid group discussion. They are designed to go along with the chapters you read, but even participants who haven't

read the chapters ahead of time should be able to join a meaningful discussion around them. The last several questions are based on passages from the New Living Translation of the Bible, which we've printed for you right in the book. All you really need to bring each week is this study guide and your copy of *Another Gospel?* But if you want to bring a Bible or read from a different translation, that's fine too.

- **Key quotes:** Taken directly from *Another Gospel?*, these quotes are interspersed throughout the text to remind you of what you've read. You may want to read some of them aloud during your small group time to add richness and depth to the discussion.
- **Pray:** Both suggestions for prayer time and a written prayer are offered, so you can use either to close if you wish. Ideally you'll leave some time to share prayer requests so your group members can be supported in prayer as you journey together through this study.
- **Reflect:** These questions will help you reflect on what you discussed and what it means for you personally. Don't skip over these sections; they will help you process your faith journey in relation to the important doctrines of the Christian faith. We study not just to gain knowledge; we want to respond to what we've learned so that our lives are transformed.

- **Prepare:** Think about these questions as you read the assigned chapters for your next session. They will help you know where you're going next so you don't get lost along the way.

Tips for Leaders

If you're reading this section, it's likely that you've either signed up to lead a group through the *Another Gospel? DVD Experience* or you're thinking about doing so. That's great! Your willingness to serve and lead in this way will help others in their search for truth and will also grow your own faith.

We've done everything we can to make your job as easy as possible. As long as you are willing to spend a few hours reading through the chapters ahead of time, affirm the basic message of the study, can press Play on the video, and are able to keep the discussion moving through the questions, you're perfectly qualified to be a leader. Here are a few tips and tricks:

1. **Come prepared.** It probably goes without saying, but you need to set the example in spending the time to read and underline pertinent points in the chapters of *Another Gospel?* so you can lead a meaningful discussion. You should be the most prepared person in the room, able to point out pages in the book that are relevant to what's being discussed and to answer a question if the group gets stuck. It would be best if you

read the entire book before the first meeting and then reread the assigned chapters for each week along with the rest of your group. In addition, take some time before each meeting to study the Scriptures listed at the end of the session. Your time in God's Word will help enhance the group's study and yield additional insights that everyone can benefit from.

2. **Be honest.** If you're not willing to be vulnerable in answering questions, chances are good that no one else will be either. There is no shame in having doubts or questions—that's how we mature in our faith. Your honest grappling with your faith will encourage others to interact deeply with these important issues.
3. **You don't need to be an expert.** Some of these issues are complex, and no one expects you to be a Bible scholar. If you don't know something, maybe someone else in the group will. But it's okay—and a sign of good leadership—to say, "I don't know; let me find out for next week." Or even better, "Let's all see if we can find the answer to that for next week." There are many resources available to help you answer any questions your group may have.
4. **Keep the discussion on track.** There is nothing more frustrating for members than to waste group time by running down a rabbit trail. And the topics covered in *Another Gospel?* offer a lot of opportunity for

tangential discussions. Have some sentences ready for these moments: “That’s a great point, and I’d love to keep discussing it, but let’s table that until after the meeting so we can get through all these questions.”

5. Don’t let one person dominate the discussion. As we all know, the world is made up of introverts and extroverts, and both types of people have wise words to offer in a discussion. However, extroverts don’t always notice when they’re talking too much, and introverts sometimes wait for a long silence before they are ready to speak. Make space for all personalities to be comfortable sharing, and don’t force people to share beyond their comfort level.

6. Pray. This is the best thing you can do for your group. Pray before the meeting, bringing each group member before the Lord and asking him to reveal himself to them. Pray at the end of the meeting, reminding people that ultimately the best place to go with our questions is to the throne of God. And be sure to ask for prayer requests and pray for one another throughout the week so your group can really bond.

A faint, grayscale background image of a large crowd of people, possibly at a religious gathering or a public event, with many individuals visible in the distance.

Session 1

Is Your Faith Ready for the Storm?

Sometimes we're warned about a coming storm in advance. Meteorologists see the signs and tell us to buy enough food to last a few days and hunker down in a safe place. Occasionally they're wrong, and all we end up with are empty grocery shelves, a few clouds, and a quarter inch of rain. We're thankful for good weather and glad we don't have to go to the store for a few days.

Other times a storm seems to come out of nowhere, and we find ourselves drenched and disoriented, with no shelter in sight. Maybe we come out with nothing more than wet jeans and soggy shoes, or maybe we barely escape with our lives. Either way, we wish we had been more prepared for

bad weather, and we promise ourselves that we will bring a poncho next time we go hiking.

Assaults on our faith sometimes come with a warning siren—we know this or that Bible teacher has a reputation for weird theology. We read a post from our favorite social media influencer and can immediately tell that they have gone off the spiritual deep end. We don't want to be seen as close-minded or judgmental, so we don't say anything, but we secretly decide to store up theological knowledge and study our Bible so we know what we believe and why.

Other times we are blindsided by a beloved pastor who starts sharing his doubts or offering ideas that sound a little “off,” but we aren't sure what's wrong with what he's saying. We didn't expect to have to defend the Bible or our faith in church, of all places. Yet that's where progressive theology is flourishing. It's in our pews and pulpits, in bestselling Christian self-help books, and on our Instagram feed. One day it will likely come to your dinner table—your daughter will pick it up at her Christian college or your best friend will carry it in along with the salad.

Whenever and however your faith storm comes, you need to be ready for it. That's where the book *Another Gospel?* and this accompanying small group guide come in. In the next six weeks you'll walk alongside other small group members as you explore the tenets of the Christian faith and discover the firm foundation they stand on. You'll learn to spot the warning signs of a coming faith storm and find the right Bible passages to shelter you from flawed arguments and false teachings. You'll identify the vulnerable spots in your belief

system and rebuild the areas that weren't built quite right the first time around. And in the end, you'll emerge from the storm knowing what you believe and why.

Your guide in this journey is Alisa Childers, who faced her own faith storm and came out stronger. This book is intended to be a lifeboat for people just like you, whether you're simply looking for vocabulary to tuck away and have handy for your discussions with other believers or are already feeling adrift in a sea of doubt and about to be pulled under.

You don't need to come to this study with an extensive theological background. You don't *need* to have a lot of questions or doubts. You don't even have to know why you were invited to this small group in the first place. All you need is a desire to learn—to learn what Christianity is really about and the threats to people's faith. And hopefully, a desire to learn more about yourself and the God of the Bible.

Leader's Note

Since this is your first session together, your main goal is to get everyone comfortable sharing with the group. The secondary goal is to help group members think about where they are in their own faith journey and to be motivated to prepare for a storm.

Some people won't have read the chapters before your meeting and that's okay—we'll catch them up in the video and they can still respond to the questions. But do encourage everyone to read the suggested chapters from the book before

your next meeting because they will get so much more out of your time together if they come prepared.

The progressive wave that slammed me against the Rock of Ages had broken apart my deeply ingrained assumptions about Jesus, God, and the Bible. But that same Rock of Ages slowly but surely began to rearrange the pieces, discarding a few and putting the right ones back where they belonged.

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Read

Chapters 1 and 2 (“Crisis of Faith” and “The Rocks in My Shoes”) in *Another Gospel?*

Watch Video Session 1

Listen for answers to the following questions, and jot down a few notes to help you remember what you heard.

- What factors led to Alisa’s faith storm?

IS YOUR FAITH READY FOR THE STORM?

- What life experiences have influenced your faith?
Where are you in your faith journey?

Discuss

Work through the following questions with your group. Make sure to leave enough time to really dig into questions 8 through 13 (those are the ones that include Scripture) and to spend a few minutes in prayer.

1. Share with the group an experience you've had in the church (camps and retreats count too) that you would consider a "spiritual high." Did that experience have lasting effects, or did it turn out to not have much substance?
2. Alisa describes growing up in the church but having a faith that was "intellectually weak and untested" with "no frame of reference or toolbox to draw from when every belief I had been so sure of was called into question" (pages 5–6). Meanwhile, her pastor calls

himself a “hopeful agnostic” (page 6). How would you describe your faith? What doctrines of Christian faith are a little confusing to you or have you not fully thought through?

If “my truth” says pork is the new kale, the consequences of that idea will bear out in reality—despite how strongly I may feel about it. My feelings about bacon won’t change what it’s doing to my heart, my blood pressure, and my thighs. This is why “my truth” is a myth. There is no such thing. Bacon is either good for me or it’s not (or it’s somewhere in between, please God!). And what I believe about it can have life or death consequences.

Likewise, as I navigated through my faith crisis, I realized that it’s not enough to simply know the facts anymore . . . we have to learn how to think them through—to assess information and come to reasonable conclusions after engaging religious ideas logically and intellectually. We can’t allow truth to be sacrificed on the altar of our feelings. We can’t allow our fear of offending others to prevent us from warning them that they’re about to step in front of a bus. Truth matters for bacon eaters, and truth matters for Christians.

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3. In what ways is “the Christian worldview . . . the only one that can sufficiently explain reality” (page 10)?

4. “Deconstruction is the process of systematically dissecting and often rejecting the beliefs you grew up with. Sometimes the Christian will deconstruct all the way into atheism. Some remain there, but others experience a reconstruction. But the type of faith they end up embracing almost never resembles the Christianity they formerly knew” (page 24). Where have you seen faith deconstruction happen? Perhaps you’ve witnessed it in someone you know personally (don’t share names or details you haven’t been given permission to share, but you can describe the situation in broad terms) or a celebrity. What were some of the early warning signs? How did you feel when you heard their story?

I wanted to progress in my faith . . . in my understanding of God's Word, my ability to live it out, and my relationship with Jesus. But I didn't want to progress beyond truth. Once I was put through my own type of deconstruction, I wanted to reconstruct my faith by planting my flag on the firm bedrock of truth.

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5. Alisa makes a distinction between *growing in our faith* and *growing beyond our faith*. How can you distinguish between the two?

The Christian life is never a straight trajectory of growth. We experience ups and downs on our faith journey, and as we walk forward we pick up some “rocks in our shoes”—things that lurk around the edges of our consciousness and bother us but don't seem big enough to bother taking the time and energy to dig them out of our shoes. We hope they'll just go away, and usually we can ignore them for a while. But eventually there are just too many of them, and we can't take another step until we deal with the little things that, when taken as a whole, become big things.

6. What are the rocks in your shoes? What little things bother you or make you have just a little bit of doubt or disillusionment?

7. One of the struggles Alisa describes is trying to figure out whether she is just being judgmental and close-minded or whether she is struggling against false teaching. How do you discern between those in your own life?

There is a tension between faith and doubt, between the truth we believe (or want to believe) and the experiences of life that so often don't match up to the promises of God. The fact is, the Bible tells us that our life experience isn't the way it's supposed to be—we should be disappointed by life because we were made to worship a holy God in a perfect world, and instead we find ourselves struggling against sin in a broken one.

If you're wondering if it's okay to express disappointment in God or doubt about what he says, you don't have to look further than the Bible to discover that such feelings are universal to human experience and even a necessary part of the Christian journey. A surprising number of passages in the Bible express doubt, disillusionment, and despair.

Read Psalm 77:1-15 aloud:

I cry out to God; yes, I shout.

Oh, that God would listen to me!

When I was in deep trouble,

I searched for the Lord.

All night long I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven,

but my soul was not comforted.

I think of God, and I moan,

overwhelmed with longing for his help.

You don't let me sleep.

I am too distressed even to pray!

I think of the good old days,

long since ended,

when my nights were filled with joyful songs.

I search my soul and ponder the difference now.

Has the Lord rejected me forever?

Will he never again be kind to me?

Is his unfailing love gone forever?

Have his promises permanently failed?

Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has he slammed the door on his compassion?

And I said, "This is my fate;

the Most High has turned his hand against me."

But then I recall all you have done, O LORD;

I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago.

They are constantly in my thoughts.

I cannot stop thinking about your mighty works.

IS YOUR FAITH READY FOR THE STORM?

O God, your ways are holy.

Is there any god as mighty as you?

You are the God of great wonders!

You demonstrate your awesome power among the
nations.

By your strong arm, you redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

8. Which of the psalmist's emotions and experiences can you relate to? Describe the circumstances surrounding those feelings in your life. Which feelings expressed in this psalm have not been part of your faith journey yet?
9. The turning point in this psalm comes in verse 11:
"But then I recall . . ." What changes for the psalmist?
10. How can you apply what the psalmist learned about dealing with and eventually overcoming doubt to your own life?

Read Hebrews 10:19-25 aloud:

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

11. These words were written to believers who were struggling against assaults on their faith from within the church and also enduring great personal suffering. In other words, they had good reason to struggle with doubt. What Christian practices or disciplines does the passage list that can help us hold on to the hope we have in Christ?

IS YOUR FAITH READY FOR THE STORM?

12. Which of these actions have helped you most? Which ones do you want to make use of more often?

13. What practical action will you take in the next week to “hold tightly without wavering to the hope [you] affirm”?

Pray

Close your time together in prayer. If time allows, take prayer requests or break into smaller groups of two to three people to pray for one another. Otherwise, simply close with a simple prayer like the one below:

Dear heavenly Father,

We acknowledge that life on earth is full of experiences that can easily make us doubt your goodness and your love—and sometimes even your very existence. We want to believe, so we ask that in the next six weeks you will remove the scales from our eyes and enable us to see the truth. Help our unbelief and draw us closer to yourself. We want to know the truth, and we want to know you.

Amen.

[Christianity is] deeply rooted in history. In fact, it is the only religious system I can think of that depends on a historical event (the resurrection of Jesus) being real—not fake—news.

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Reflect

Before the next group meeting, spend some time reflecting on what you have learned about your faith.

- What do you hope to get out of your study of *Another Gospel*?
- What are some new ideas or questions that the first session has brought to mind for you—things you haven't considered before and now would like to find answers to?

- What things make you doubt God or doubt what he reveals about himself in the Bible? Pray that the Lord will reveal the truth about these things in the coming weeks.

Fill out a Belief Inventory:

Answer the following questions about what you believe about key Christian doctrines. Be honest with yourself. The answers are just for you, and this exercise will be valuable and helpful only if you are willing to face the truth about what you believe. At the end of the six-week study, you'll look back at this inventory and see if any of your answers have changed.

On a scale from 1 to 10, how equipped are you to deal with assaults on core Christian doctrines?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1—I think I'm a Christian, but please don't ask me any questions.

5—I know the answers to some things but not to others.

7—I enjoy conversations about faith. Even if I don't have all the answers, I love to be challenged to learn more.

10—I love it when people ask questions and debate because I think I have good answers.

Which of these statements best describes what you believe about Christianity?

- ☐ I don't doubt any of the core tenets of the Christian faith. This book study isn't really something I personally need; it's just something I'm interested in to equip me to help others.
- ☐ I'm a Christian, but sometimes I have questions and doubts about core issues. I hope this study can answer some of my questions.
- ☐ My beliefs are a hodgepodge; I no longer believe a lot of what most Christians believe.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about the Bible?

- ☐ It's the inerrant Word of God, the basis for everything I believe about God and live by.
- ☐ It documents what ancient Jews and Christians believed about God; some parts are outdated or don't apply anymore.
- ☐ It's a human book, edifying but not authoritative or inspired.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about Creation?

- ☐ Everything was created by God with a word.
- ☐ I'm open to believing that God used macroevolution to create the world.
- ☐ Scientific evidence says that everything evolved over a long period of time without divine assistance; the biblical account is an ancient way of explaining things biblical writers couldn't understand, and it shouldn't be taken literally.
- ☐ I don't know what I believe.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about sin?

- ☐ I prefer terms like *brokenness* or *weakness* that don't sound so harsh.
- ☐ There isn't really a one-size-fits-all definition of sin; what is wrong for you might not be wrong for me.
- ☐ Sin is an offense against God that causes separation from him and is thus the biggest problem humans have, the source of all suffering.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about absolute truth?

- ☐ The Bible is the standard for absolute truth.
- ☐ The Bible contains some truths, but isn't *the* objective standard for truth.
- ☐ The Bible is helpful, but there are no "sacred cows."
- ☐ It is arrogant to claim that any particular belief is better or worse than any other.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about miracles?

- ☐ God can do anything, and the miracles recorded in the Bible truly happened as they are recorded.
- ☐ God can do anything, but many of the miracles recorded in the Bible didn't necessarily happen.
- ☐ The miracles recorded in the Bible were invented to make people believe the Jewish/Christian faith.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about Jesus?

- ☐ He was a great religious leader.

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- ☐ He is the Son of God, the Messiah promised throughout Scripture who delivers us from sin.
- ☐ I'm not sure who he was or why it matters.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about the cross of Christ?

- ☐ It is a historical event that makes it possible for anyone who believes in Jesus to be saved for all eternity from sin and death; Jesus' death on the cross in my place makes me righteous in God's sight.
- ☐ It is a historical event, but it was only the death of a religious figure due to the powerful leaders of the day. It is a good example of forgiveness but doesn't have any significance beyond that.
- ☐ It doesn't matter if it really happened or not.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about the resurrection of Christ?

- ☐ It was the completion of Christ's work that saves me and the foretaste of the resurrection that all believers will one day experience through him.
- ☐ It didn't happen; the disciples made it up because they couldn't face the fact that he had died.

- ☐ It doesn't matter whether it was a physical or merely a spiritual resurrection. It's what we learn from the story that matters.
- ☐ I don't know if it happened or not.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about the Christian faith?

- ☐ It is a primitive set of beliefs developed by primitive people.
- ☐ It's time to move beyond the ancient ideas, taking the best of Christianity and getting rid of what is outdated.
- ☐ It summarizes the truth about the creation of the world, the fall of humankind, salvation through Christ, and the way to eternal life.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about judgment?

- ☐ When Jesus returns, he will judge every person; Christians will be declared righteous, and evil will be punished.
- ☐ It is something Christians made up to motivate people to behave better.
- ☐ It is evidence that God is petty and vindictive.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about yourself?

- ☐ I don't believe there will be a Judgment Day.
- ☐ I'm a pretty good person, so I'm not too worried about Judgment Day.
- ☐ I'm a very bad person, so I'm very worried about what will happen to me on Judgment Day.
- ☐ I'm a sinner, but I'm saved by God's grace and have nothing to fear on Judgment Day.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about hell?

- ☐ It's a real place, and people who don't believe in Jesus for salvation will spend eternity there.
- ☐ It's really just a metaphor for separation from God.
- ☐ It is nothing more than the consequences we experience now for the bad choices we make here on earth.
- ☐ A good God couldn't create hell, so therefore it doesn't exist.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about faith?

- ☐ It is a blind leap in the dark.
- ☐ Faith is 100 percent certainty about something.
- ☐ Faith is trust based on reasonable evidence.

Which of these statements best fits what you believe about doubt?

- ☐ It is a great thing—a mark of intelligence and something we should strive to exhibit.
- ☐ It is sinful.
- ☐ It arises in the context of faith and, if dealt with appropriately, can lead to growth and greater understanding.

Prepare

If you weren't able to read chapters 1 and 2 in *Another Gospel?* before this week's meeting, read those this week. They set the stage for the entire book and thus provide an important foundation you won't want to miss.

Session 2 covers chapters 3 and 4, "Creeds, Cobbler, and Walter Bauer" and "Fixing What Isn't Broken." Read those

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chapters in preparation for your next meeting. As you read, think about these questions:

- What things do most Christians agree about?
- What are the most frequently cited issues for why people struggle with or even leave the church?