

**NEW
EDITION**

So Many Questions



How to answer
common questions
about Christianity

So Many Questions

How to answer
common questions
about Christianity

by Simon Roberts



matthiasmedia

So Many Questions (revised edition)

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About this course

Welcome to *So Many Questions*, a DVD-based training course on how to answer common questions about Christianity. By using this workbook and the accompanying DVD, you will learn some general principles for answering people's questions, as well as the specifics of how to answer 13 of the most frequently asked questions.

The course is divided into four main sections:

- a. Introduction: This is comprised of four units which cover the general approach to answering people's questions.
- b. Knowing: Some questions presume that the best answer is the one with the best evidence. To answer these types of questions, we need to present the evidence (either historical, scientific or philosophical) that supports our conclusion. This section answers four such questions.
- c. Meaning: Other questions presume that either there is no such thing as 'the truth' or that we cannot know for sure what 'the truth' about God is. This section answers four questions that are based on the assumption that we can't know the truth.
- d. Living: Finally, there are many questions concerned with how we ought to live. These questions seek to either understand or challenge the Bible's teaching on moral issues. The five questions in this section illustrate how these sorts of questions can be answered.

In total, there are 17 units to this course (4 introductory units and 13 answers to questions). The basic format of each unit is simple:

- a. There are some starter questions which help you to start thinking about the main topic the unit will address.
- b. You then watch the relevant segment of the DVD, taking notes in the space provided.
- c. There are further questions to help you think about the topic in more depth and summarize the main points you would use in formulating an answer.

For each of the 13 questions, there are summaries along with suggestions for extra reading in Appendix 1. These can also be used as the basis for further discussion if you would like to explore a particular topic in more detail.

Different ways to use the course

As each unit is quite brief, there is considerable flexibility in how the course might be used. Here are some suggestions:

- An individual or couple could work through one unit per week as part of their personal Christian growth (say each Friday night or Sunday afternoon).
- A small Bible study group could do one unit each week during their regular meeting together (taking just 15-20 minutes each week).
- The units could be grouped together to yield more intensive courses of different lengths—for example, a nine-week course (two units per session = 40 minutes) or even a six-week course (three units per session = 60 minutes).
- Group leaders/coordinators could also choose not to cover all the questions. For example, you could choose the eight most common or relevant questions for the members of your group, and put them together in whatever combination you think is best.
- The course could also be run as a series of two or three Saturday morning seminars where six or nine units are completed at a time.

Contributors

We're very grateful to the following people, who gave of their time so generously in the filming of the DVD:

Chris Braga is the senior minister at Summer Hill Anglican Church.

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Al Stewart is the Anglican Bishop of the Wollongong region in Sydney.

In producing this course, our goal has been to equip Christians like you to answer people's questions wisely, graciously and compellingly. Our hope and prayer is that, as you do so, you will give glory to Christ by pointing people to him, and that, in his time and through his grace, many more might come to know him as their Lord.

Simon Roberts
January 2008

Introduction

Being prepared to give an account

There are two basic reasons why we need to know the answers to the various curly questions that are dealt with in this course.

Firstly, as Christians, these questions can bother us. Is the Bible really a reliable source of information? What about all the advances in science? Don't they somehow render our belief in God old-fashioned? And if God is so loving, why is there so much suffering in the world? At one time or another, these sorts of questions have passed through our minds as Christian believers. It is important that we know the answers to them. God is not afraid of the truth. By asking, researching and answering the questions that arise in our minds, we can only come to grasp his truth more fully.

Secondly, we, of course, need to know how to answer people who raise these questions with us. As both Peter and Paul remind us, being able to answer graciously and gently when we are called upon to do so is an important part of every Christian's relationship with 'outsiders' (as Paul calls them in Colossians 4:5-6; see also 1 Peter 3:15-16). In fact, answering questions is often the way we get into conversations with people about Christ and the gospel. As questions are raised (whether privately or around the lunch table at work), the way we react will either adorn the gospel and point the person towards Christ, or discredit Christ and reinforce people's prejudices against Christianity. It is important to be ready to answer well.

In the opening four units of this course, we'll discuss some general principles for answering questions about the Christian faith, before working through 13 very common questions which are asked about God and Christianity.

Think & discuss

Look through the list of common questions and challenges.

a. Tick the ones that have bothered you at some stage:

- How do I know God exists in the first place?
- Did Jesus really come back from the dead?
- Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
- You can't trust what the Bible says—it's been changed too much over the years!
- No-one can claim to have 'the truth'—everyone's opinion is valid.
- Wasn't Jesus just another great religious teacher?
- Discussing religion just divides people and causes problems!
- If the Bible is so clear, why can't Christians agree on what it says?
- Why is the Bible anti-gay?
- If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
- Can't we just be good enough to please God?
- Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites!
- Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?

b. Which ones have been you been asked by someone else? How would you rate the answer you gave?

- How do I know God exists in the first place?
- Did Jesus really come back from the dead?
- Hasn't science disproved Christianity?
- You can't trust what the Bible says—it's been changed too much over the years!
- No-one can claim to have 'the truth'—everyone's opinion is valid.
- Wasn't Jesus just another great religious teacher?
- Discussing religion just divides people and causes problems!
- If the Bible is so clear, why can't Christians agree on what it says?
- Why is the Bible anti-gay?
- If God is good, why is there so much suffering in the world?
- Can't we just be good enough to please God?
- Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites!
- Do you have to go to church to be a Christian?

Investigate

What do these passages tell us about why we ought to be ready to answer people when they ask us questions? What do they tell us about how we should answer questions?

Proverbs 15:14

1 Peter 3:14-16

Colossians 4:2-6

2 Timothy 2:22-26



Watch & write: *Being prepared to give an account*

Now play the first introductory segment on the DVD, and take notes below. (NB. Throughout this course, space has been provided for you to take notes during the video segments. We strongly recommend that you do take notes, not just so that you can refer back to the material easily, but to aid your listening and recall. Taking notes is ‘active listening’; it is harder work than ‘passive listening’, but much more effective.)

Pray

Conclude by praying for:

- a strong desire to be prepared to answer questions well, and the courage and confidence to take hold of opportunities when they arise
- people you know whose questions you may have to answer
- your own growth in knowledge and skills during this course.



Matthias Media is a ministry team of like-minded, evangelical Christians working together to achieve a particular goal, as summarized in our mission statement:

To serve our Lord Jesus Christ, and the growth of his gospel in the world, by producing and delivering high quality, Bible-based resources.

It was in 1988 that we first started pursuing this mission together, and in God's kindness we now have more than 250 different ministry resources being distributed all over the world. These resources range from Bible studies and books, through to training courses and audio sermons.

To find out more about our large range of very useful products, and to access samples and free downloads, visit our website:

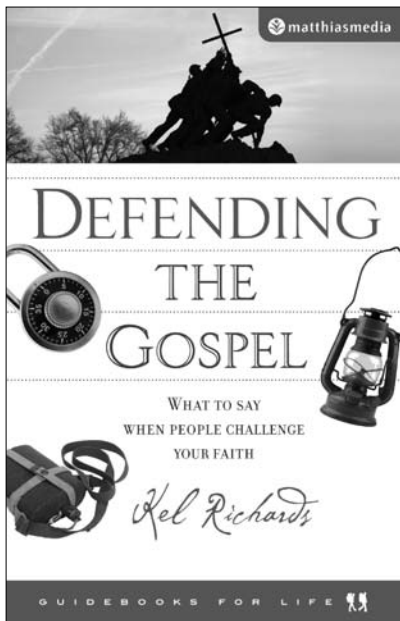
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-

Defending the Gospel

By Kel Richards



It can happen at a barbeque. It can happen on a beach. It can happen to anyone, anywhere. It's that moment when a friend, relative or colleague makes a comment about your Christian faith and you suddenly realize you haven't the faintest idea what to say in response. Your mind is a blank. You're frozen to the spot. Worse still, what you say is not very helpful at all.

In *Defending the Gospel*, ABC broadcaster and Christian evangelist Kel Richards shares how over the years he has improved his ability to answer questions that non-church friends have asked about what Christians believe. With warmth, humour and clarity, he demonstrates how

to anticipate gospel-related questions, how to construct the framework behind your response, and how to get a conversation going.

Written for every Christian, *Defending the Gospel* will better prepare you to give clear and helpful answers whenever people challenge your faith.

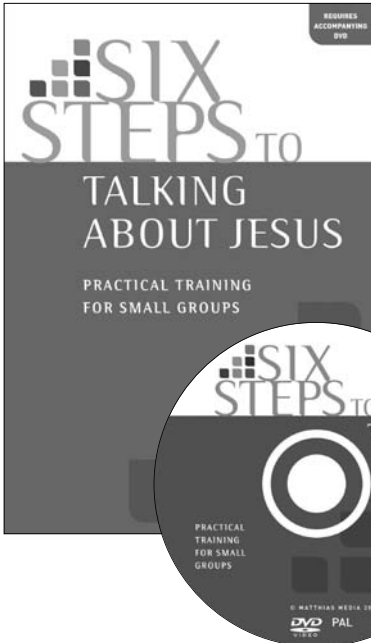
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Six Steps to Talking About Jesus

By Simon Roberts and Simon Manchester



Think of the people around you: your family, your workmates, the man at the newsagency, your neighbours. Is there a single one of them who doesn't need to be following Jesus?

Yet like so many Christians, do you feel uneasy about reaching out to people? Perhaps you feel unsure about where to start and what to say?

Six Steps to Talking about Jesus is a short course that goes back to square one, and helps you make a start. Over 6 interactive sessions you'll look at:

- the core motivation for reaching out to others
 - how to depend on God in prayer
 - how to invite people to read a book or come to an event
- how to tell your own story of what God has done for you in Christ
 - how to explain the gospel of Jesus in a simple way.

This is a course designed to be done in a small group context, and does not require an 'expert leader'. It is ideal preparation for a church mission.

To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person, which also contains notes for group leaders
- a DVD to use in the group.

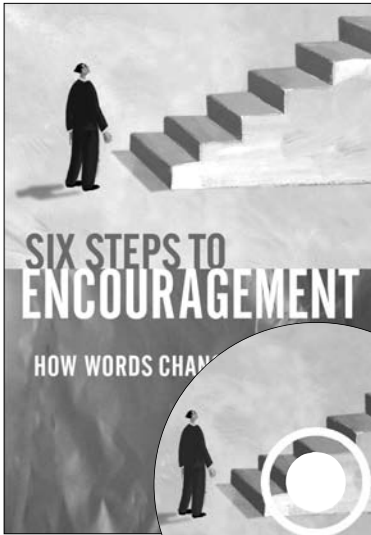
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Six Steps to Encouragement

By Gordon Cheng



God has given every Christian an enormous privilege and gift: the power to speak his life-changing word into the lives of other people. There's no reason at all for there to be 'passengers' in a church: every Christian can change the lives of those around them through knowing and telling the message of God's grace, whether in front of a group, in a

hand-written note, in a one-to-one conversation over morning tea, or in a thousand other ways. Every Christian can be a channel of encouragement.

In *Six Steps to Encouragement* you'll learn the why and how of personal encouragement. Through video input, Bible study, practical examples, discussions and hands-on

exercises, you'll discover how to bring life, hope and strength to those around you by bringing the powerful word of God to them. You'll also work through practical case studies such as welcoming newcomers, listening, rebuking, and dealing with suffering.

Six Steps to Encouragement is a 6-session course, best undertaken in a small group (of 6-10 people). To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person, which also contains notes for group leaders
- a DVD to use in the group.

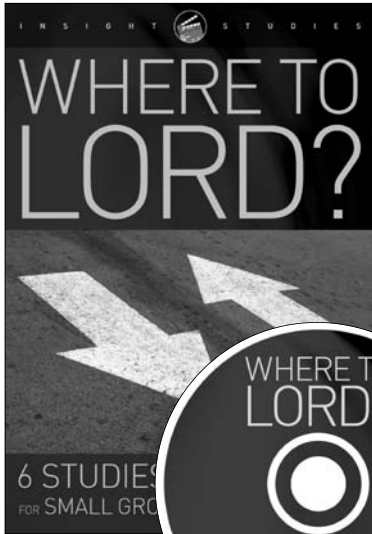
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Where to, Lord?

6 studies on guidance for small groups and individuals



Guidance can be one of the most frustrating issues for Christians. We know that Jesus has died, and that heaven lies in the future. But we remain unsure about everything in between. We have many questions about guidance, such as:

- How does God guide his people today?
- What does God want me to do with my life?
- Where does he want me to work?
- Who does he want me to marry?
- How can I know God's will for my life?
- Am I missing out on God's personal guidance?
- How do I hear his voice?

These 6 studies on guidance will help you plot a course through these difficult issues.

Where to, Lord? is part of our Insight Studies series, which uses a mix of Bible investigation, group discussion and video input to help you interact with God's word. Perfect for groups looking for a refreshing change, the studies and DVD format are specifically designed to work together to enable any group to put together the pieces on difficult topics such as guidance and holiness.

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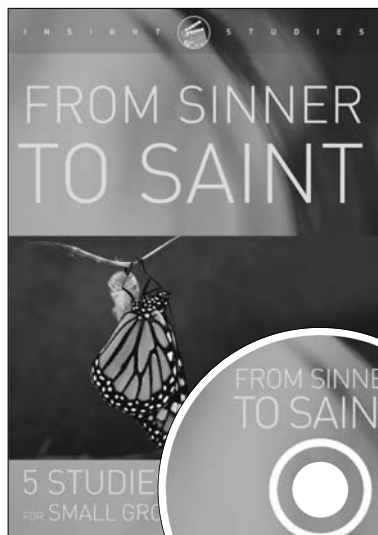
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Also from Matthias Media

From Sinner to Saint

5 studies on holiness for small groups and individuals



From Sinner to Saint is the second in an exciting new series of topical Bible studies. Using a mix of Bible investigation, group discussion and video input, *From Sinner to Saint* will help your group interact with what God is saying about holiness.

God has a plan. He is transforming every Christian from being a sinner into a saint.

That is, God's plan is to make Christians holy, just as he is holy.

Over these 5 studies you will explore what holiness is, how it is possible and how God is going to bring it about in your life. You will be challenged to persevere on the path to holiness and warned of the distractions you may encounter along the way. Finally, you'll be encouraged by the grandeur of God's plan for you in his new creation.

This workbook gives you the road map for each study, with Bible passages to investigate and questions to think through. The DVD which accompanies these studies gives you extra input from well-known Bible teacher John Chapman and will help you tie together the various strands of the Bible's teaching.

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