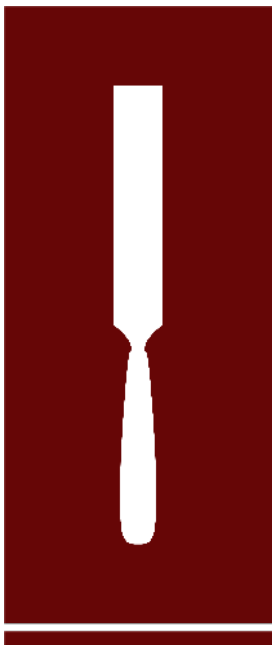
Josh McDowell
A CRU MINISTRY



More Than a Carpenter

Facilitator's Guide for Group Discussion

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This book, *More Than A Carpenter*, is in the hands of close to 27 million people around the world. Many have shared how they came to faith in Christ through reading this book. Many others have shared how they, as believers, had their faith reinforced to the point they felt more confident in sharing their faith with others through reading and studying this book. We feel that a discussion group guide for the book will enhance opportunities for young and old to discuss the topics addressed in the book.

This simple discussion group guide is designed to help you as a facilitator or discussion group leader to guide a small group of 4 to 10 people in discussing the chapters in *More Than a Carpenter*. Our objectives for this guide are as follows:

1. For believers, we want the content and discussions to help people to (1) know what they believe, (2) know why they believe what they believe and (3) know what and why they believe in a way that causes them to walk closer to Christ.
2. For non-believers, we want the content and discussions to lead to an honest consideration and evaluation as to who Jesus Christ was and is. Ideally, we want to see some of those who have participated to come into a personal relationship with Christ.
3. For everyone, we would hope new relationships would be established as a result of having fun and honest open discussions in the group sessions.

The guide is designed to discuss one to two chapters of the book per session. Since most of the chapters are short, it is reasonable to discuss two chapters in each group session if desired. We recommend discussing two chapters at a time except for chapters five and six which are longer. If the group takes one chapter at a time, it will take approximately 30 minutes for the "warm-up" and discussion. If the group takes two chapters at a time, it should take about an hour. The warm-up/ice breaker is optional, but is important especially if people don't know each other. The content is the core of the discussion, but being able to laugh and have fun with the study makes receptivity easier. It is also important to be sensitive to those you suspect may not know Christ. Make efforts not to put them on the spot or to let "arguments" develop in the discussions. Show respect even when beliefs are out of line. Perhaps, try to get with those who have questions individually for lunch or at a time that would not be threatening for them.

Everyone should be encouraged to read the chapter(s) to be discussed prior to the group meeting. It is also helpful if the group participants will underline questions or material in the chapter to be discussed prior to the group. As the facilitator/leader, it is not your role to sermonize or preach but to share and simply keep the discussion moving. Remember God is the One responsible for change in a person's life. Your role should be to provide a warm, friendly environment (greenhouse) for God's Spirit to work.

A few simple ground rules to help facilitate the study.

- Set a friendly, warm environment so that regardless of background, people feel welcome and safe.
- Seek to start and end on time. Respect the time commitment people make to the group.
- Don't show displeasure when someone give answers to discussion questions that are different from what you had hoped for. Don't embarrass anyone.
- Ask everyone in the group to read the chapters to be discussed prior to the group meetings. As a group, you can decide if you want to complete the discussion questions prior to or during each group session.
- Seek for balanced participation. Don't dominate the discussion. Seek to help those who don't talk as much as others by addressing some questions to them.
- The extra facilitator/leader notes are in red. They are not meant to be comprehensive but to help you prepare for each group session.
- Have fun! Perhaps plan a *More Than A Carpenter* celebration party for the last session!

Chapter 1: My Story

Warm Up: (12 Minutes)

Ask everyone to introduce themselves and tell where they are from. Ask each person to share what his or her spiritual experience has been to this point in life. (Be sensitive here to those who may not want to share or who have had a bad experience with spiritual issues- don't force them to share.)

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. Josh McDowell's quest for *"happiness and fulfillment"* ended with him describing his life as *"lost, meaningless, lousy, no direction or control"* and literally *"hell" (*pp. 1–3). Can you identify with any of these words?
2. What caused Josh to consider Christianity? (A relationship with a small group of people who accepted him and his questions… and their challenge to investigate the Bible.)
3. Josh stated, *"I'm fed up with religion. I'm fed up with the church. I'm fed up with the Bible."* (p 5). In what sense is Christianity not a religion? Does this affect your view of Christianity? (Christianity is a relationship with the person of Christ.)
4. How did Josh plan to strike a deathblow to Christianity (p. 6.)? (He wanted to prove the Bible unreliable.)
5. Like Josh, how can someone go from believing that Christians are *"walking idiots"* to the place where he confessed that *"to remain intellectually honest, I had to admit that the Old and New Testament documents were the most reliable writings in all of antiquity."* (p. 7)? (By an intellectually honest evaluation of the objective evidence.)

Chapter 2: What Makes Jesus So Different?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Ask everyone to share something about themselves that is unique or different from most other people they know.

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. Why can people talk about God and not get upset, and yet when Jesus is mentioned, things can get tense?
2. How does the New Testament present Jesus as God 9pp. 10–12)? (Jesus is presented as God in several different ways – the names applied to Him, attributes that could only be true of God, the fact that He received honor and worship, He forgave sins, His own declaration in verses like John 10:30, the Jews accused Him of blasphemy, etc.)
3. For what crime was Jesus Christ on trial and why was his trial unique (p. 24)? (Jesus was on trial for His identity-who He was—not for what He had done.)
4. Is it clear in your mind that Jesus claimed to be God? Why or why not (Hebrews 1:8, Titus 2:13)?

Chapter 3: Lord, Liar Or Lunatic?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Ask everyone to share who his or her "hero" in life has been and what makes that person admirable.

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. C.S. Lewis comments, "*. . . A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is , the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.*" (p. 28).

   What would you say to a statement that says Jesus Christ was a great moral teacher and certainly a great leader, but nothing more? (John 10:30–33) (By His claims Jesus has not left that option open to us.)

2. What other alternatives do we have to Jesus being either a liar, a lunatic or Lord? (None)

3. Does it make any sense for Jesus to have been a liar or just someone who was sincerely wrong about who he was? Why or why not (Schaff quote on pp. 31–32)? (If He had been that deceived about who He was, He would have been mentally unstable—a lunatic.)

4. Why would someone not be able to accept Jesus as Lord if they clearly believe he was neither a liar or lunatic? (Issues of the will, not the mind.)

Chapter 4: What About Science?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Ask for volunteers in the group to share the dumbest thing they ever did and the smartest thing they ever did. (Seek to make this fun, not embarrassing—you may want to take the lead here and share something "dumb" you have done.)

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. What may be the true motive of skeptics who ask for scientific proof for the claims of Christianity (p. 41)? (Since science can't prove Christianity, they use it as an excuse not to accept its claims.)
2. Why is "*scientific proof*" not the only way to determine if something is true or not (pp. 42–43)? (Scientific proof is based on being able to repeat an event or experiment—you can't repeat historical events.)
3. What is "*legal-historical proof*" and can you give an example (p. 43). (Showing something is a fact beyond reasonable doubt by weight of evidence.)

Chapter 5: The Challenge of the New Atheism

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Briefly share a recent situation when you were challenged by someone who believed differently from you.

Discussion Questions: (30 Minutes)

1. Is atheism a new perspective (p. 45)? (No, about 1,000 years before the coming of Christ, King David described a person who says in his heart *"There is no God",* Psalm 14:1.)

2. Have you read any oft the following books: Sam Harris' *Letter to a Christian Nation*, Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* or Christopher Hitchens' *God Is Not Great?* How have these "New Atheists" differed in their views from past atheists such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Bertrand Russell? (The older atheists mourned the death of God, but the "New Atheists" celebrate the death of God, pp. 46–48.)

3. How have you been influenced by their views? (We have been influenced on many levels especially in our educational system.)

4. Is science at war with religion (p. 61)? (Sean McDowell says, *"The more we descend into the inter-workings of the cell or ascend to the depths of the universe, the more we can see the fingerprint of God."* Psalm 91:1–2 says, *"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display His craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make Him known."* God can be known through His creation!)

5. At the end of chapter 5 on page 62, Josh McDowell quotes Matthew 22:37 and then makes a comment about our minds. (*"Jesus replied, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and* all your mind,*'*– emphasis mine."). Then Josh says, *"We've been given minds enabled by the Holy Spirit to know God, as well as hearts to love Him and wills to choose Him. We need to function in all three areas to have a full relationship with God and to glorify Him."*) How has this realization changed your life?

Chapter 6: Are The Bible Records Reliable?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Who is the most reliable person you have met? What about them made them reliable or trustworthy?

Discussion Questions: (30 Minutes)

1. What surprised you most in this chapter about the reliability of the New Testament?
2. Why do you think our culture is so quick to believe the false "facts" given to them (by professors, scientists, intellectuals, media, etc.) that the Bible isn't a reliable document? (Sometimes we are quick to assume those in positions of influence have been intellectually honest in their research and are not being ruled by their presuppositions and/or prejudices.)
3. Do you think the same objective standard of testing the validity of literature should be applied to secular and biblical literature? Why or why not?
4. Describe how the Bibliographical Test (p. 70), the Internal Evidence Test (p. 77) and the External Evidence Test (p. 84) differ. Why is it unreasonable for the New Testament to be a collection of myths and legends? What was the approximate period of time between the New Testament events and the existing copies of the New Testament (pp. 65–66)? (The Bibliographical Test shows how reliable the manuscripts copies we have are. Do the copies show that what we have is what was originally recorded? The Internal Evidence Test helps determine the credibility of the original writings- to what extent they are credible. The External Evidence Test shows whether other historical material confirms or denies the testimony of the documents. 20–50 years.)
5. Why is it important that the New Testament accounts of Jesus were recorded by men who had been either eyewitnesses of events or who related others' eyewitness accounts (Luke 1:1–4)? (The New Testament accounts of Christ were being circulated within the lifetimes of others who witnessed or heard of the events. These people could confirm or deny the accuracy of the accounts.)
6. Regarding writings of antiquity, the time between an historical event and the earliest existing copy of that event is on average a 1000 year span. Caesar's Gallic War, written about 50 B.C., and its first copy around 900 A.D leaves almost a thousand year span. The latest events of the New Testament between 80–90 A.D. and its first copy in 125 A.D. leaves about a 35 year span. How does this one fact affect your view of the credibility of the New Testament?

Chapter 7: Who Would Die For A Lie?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Think of someone you know who changed radically either for better or for worse. Share what you think it was that caused change in that person. Describe one specific way you have changed in the last five years.

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. How do we account for the radical change in the lives of the disciples from cowards in hiding to bold proclaimers of Christ within a few weeks? (They were convinced He was alive because they saw Him and talked with Him.)
2. How did most of the disciples die? Looking back at the page (p. 90) that describes the methods of death of the apostles, which one would you choose (other than John) as a way to die?
3. Have you ever known anyone who would die for a lie if he/she knew it was a lie?
4. Did the disciples have to be convinced that Jesus was who He said He was? What helped most in convincing them (I Corinthians 15:4–7)? (Yes—the resurrection) How was Paul convinced himself (1 Corinthians 15:8)?
5. Why do you suppose no historian, no eyewitness or no antagonist has recorded having seen the body of Christ after his death? (There was no body to be found.)

Chapter 8: What Good Is A Dead Messiah?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Share with each other what the world is looking for in terms of a leader. (Don't let this become a political discussion but a discussion of characteristics of a good leader.)

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. What was the national attitude in Israel about the Messiah during the time of Christ? Would the attitude of the disciples before the death of Christ been different from the people around them (Mark 10:35–38)? (No, both the disciples and the people were looking for a political Messiah.)

2. Jesus warned His disciples that he would suffer many things and die (Mark 10:32–35). Based on their response after His crucifixion, do you think they were prepared for His death? (They scattered and hid. Their vision was crushed.)

3. Can you describe the vision the disciples had for the Messiah while Jesus walked with them in the flesh? Was their vision too big or too small? Explain. (Too small. They had a vision for the redemption of their nation from Rome. God's vision was to redeem mankind from the penalty of sin for all ages.)

4. Their national patriotism had led the disciples to look for a political Messiah for their nation and with His death their vision died. Speculate on what the disciples must have been thinking as Jesus revealed Himself alive over the next 40 days after His resurrection.

Chapter 9: Did You Hear What Happened To Saul?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Share your thoughts on what makes people so skeptical about seeing a dramatic life change in someone's life. What typifies a person whose life has been impacted by something or someone that radically changes how one lives his/her life? (One tends to have passion and convictions about what he/she believes and doesn't mind telling others about it.)

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. Why is it so amazing that Paul became such an influential leader of Christianity (pp. 114–115)?
2. Is there someone you know who you think, like Paul, would never place his/her faith in Christ? Why not?
3. How were the experiences for the disciples after Christ's resurrection similar to Paul's (p. 118 and 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8)?
4. How would you describe the difference between how Josh states that Paul proclaimed the gospel out of necessity and not choice (p. 118 and 1 Corinthians 9:16)? (They had to tell others what they now knew was true—Christ had risen and was who He claimed to be all along—God.)
5. Describe how Paul's life was changed after receiving Christ (pp.118–120)? (Paul's character was changed, his relationship with believers was changed, his message and his mission in life were changed.)

Chapter 10 Can You Keep A Good Man Down?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Considering your life in general, what have been a couple of the most difficult things for you to believe intellectually? Why were they difficult?

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. How important is the resurrection to the whole concept of Christianity (Josh's response on p. 125, also 1 Corinthians 15:14)? (Without the resurrection our faith is in vain.)
2. Describe the beating and death of Christ (pp.126–127)? (Absolutely brutal. You may want to read back over some of the physical details of the beatings and death.)
3. Of the alternative theories listed in opposition to the resurrection of Christ, are any them reasonable (pp. 130–136)? (Not to someone who is being intellectually honest.)
4. As you consider the objective evidence for the resurrection and the alternative theories presented, what takes more faith—"Christ rose from the dead," "someone stole the body," etc.? (Faith in any alternative theory is a blind faith—not based on evidence.)
5. Because of what Christ has accomplished through the resurrection, what ways can it bring about change in your life (p. 140.)? (The same power that raised Christ from the dead can gives us forgiveness, eternal life, and a transformed life of purpose and meaning.)

Chapter 11: Will The Real Messiah Please Stand Up?

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Share your addresses with each other. How many variables (name, country, state, zip code, street number, street name, etc.) in your address are needed to single you out from all the people of the world? How does this relate to identifying the Messiah the Bible predicted? (The idea here is that with only six or seven variables you or where you live can be singled out from over six billion people around the world. God gave far more variables—at least 60 major ones—to identify the Messiah.)

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. The Old Testament contains about 60 major prophecies concerning the Messiah and probably 270 additional references to Him. How many variables in your address does it take to single you out from everyone in the world (6 or 7)? Do you think God was making it crystal clear who His Chosen One was? If so, why would He want it clear (pp. 119–120 regarding Paul's "message" and p. 143)?

2. Share some of the "address" details that God gave us for the Messiah (pp. 145–146).

3. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. How can it show that the prophecies about the coming Messiah could not have been written down during or after the life of Christ (p. 143)? (It was translated 200 years prior to the birth of Christ.)

4. Some people claim Jesus deliberately attempted to fulfill the Jewish prophecies. Name several prophecies that were beyond the control of Christ to fulfill (p. 149). (His birthplace, the manner of His birth, the betrayal by Judas, the manner of His death, the reaction of people at His death, His lineage, etc.)

5. The greatest prophecy of all for those who will accept it is of new life through the Messiah. What do the verses Ezekiel 36:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:17 mean (p. 150)? (God will change people who accept Christ and make them new creatures and give them a sensitive heart.)

Chapter 12: Isn't There Some Other Way?

Warm Up: (5 Minutes)

Ask for a few volunteers to share what the most meaningful chapter has been for them thus far and why.

Discussion Questions: (20 Minutes)

1. How are the attributes of God different from the attributes you and I might adopt for ourselves (p. 152)? (The attributes of God are things that are true of God's very nature. His attributes have their source in who He is. With us, we acquire attributes like love and courage as we live, but they are not an intrinsic part of our nature.)
2. How would you describe what sin is (p. 152, also 1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10–18, 23; 6:23)? (Sin is active rebellion or passive indifference towards God. From an archery term that meant missing the mark or bull's-eye, sin is anything less than perfection.)
3. Because God is loving but also holy, righteous and just, sin cannot survive in His presence. What dilemma does this present to God and how did He solve it—satisfy His love —without sacrificing His justice (pp. 153 154, also John 1:14 and Philippians 2:6–7)?
4. Jesus lived a sinless life and yet was executed on a Roman cross 2000 years ago. God accepted Jesus' death as payment or satisfaction for our sins ("the wages of sin is death"–Romans 6:23). Why is it that Buddha, Mohammad, Confucius or any other religious or ethical leader could not have "paid" for our sins (p. 157)? (Jesus is the only sinless substitute that is qualified to pay the penalty for our sins.)
5. How does the "speeding illustration" relate to you spiritually? Have you had someone step down off their judgment seat and pay the penalty for your crime (sins)? What does it mean to "accept" their payment for you (p. 155–156)? (Ephesians 2:8–9 and John 1:12)

Chapter 13: He Changed My Life

Warm Up: (10 Minutes)

Ask for volunteers to share how they came to know Christ and the changes Christ has made in their life.

Discussion Questions: (25 Minutes)

1. What distinguishes Christianity from all world religions (p. 166)? (Christianity is not a religion, a code of ethics, a system to work yor way to heaven, or a psychological ploy, but a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ.)
2. Are there any questions or doubts you have had about the deity of Christ, the resurrection or the Bible that have been clarified for you in this book?
3. Why do you think it is so difficult for people to receive or accept help from others? Do you find this principle true in your own life? (Sometimes pride can keep us from letting others help us, especially in the spiritual area.)
4. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, *"Behold [look] I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in . . ."* Even though Josh knew intellectually that Christianity was true, what kept him from inviting (accepting) Christ into His life? Can you relate to this (pp. 159–160)? (Basically pleasure and pride kept Josh from accepting Christ as soon as he realized Christ was who He claimed to be.)
5. Once Josh accepted Christ, what were some of the changes Christ made in his life (pp. 162–166)?
6. Josh came to the realization that Christianity was not a myth, a fantasy or a hoax played on the simple-minded but rock solid truth. What is your thought process at this point concerning Christ? If you have accepted Him, how has this study affected your faith? If you have not accepted Christ, what is keeping you from doing so?