

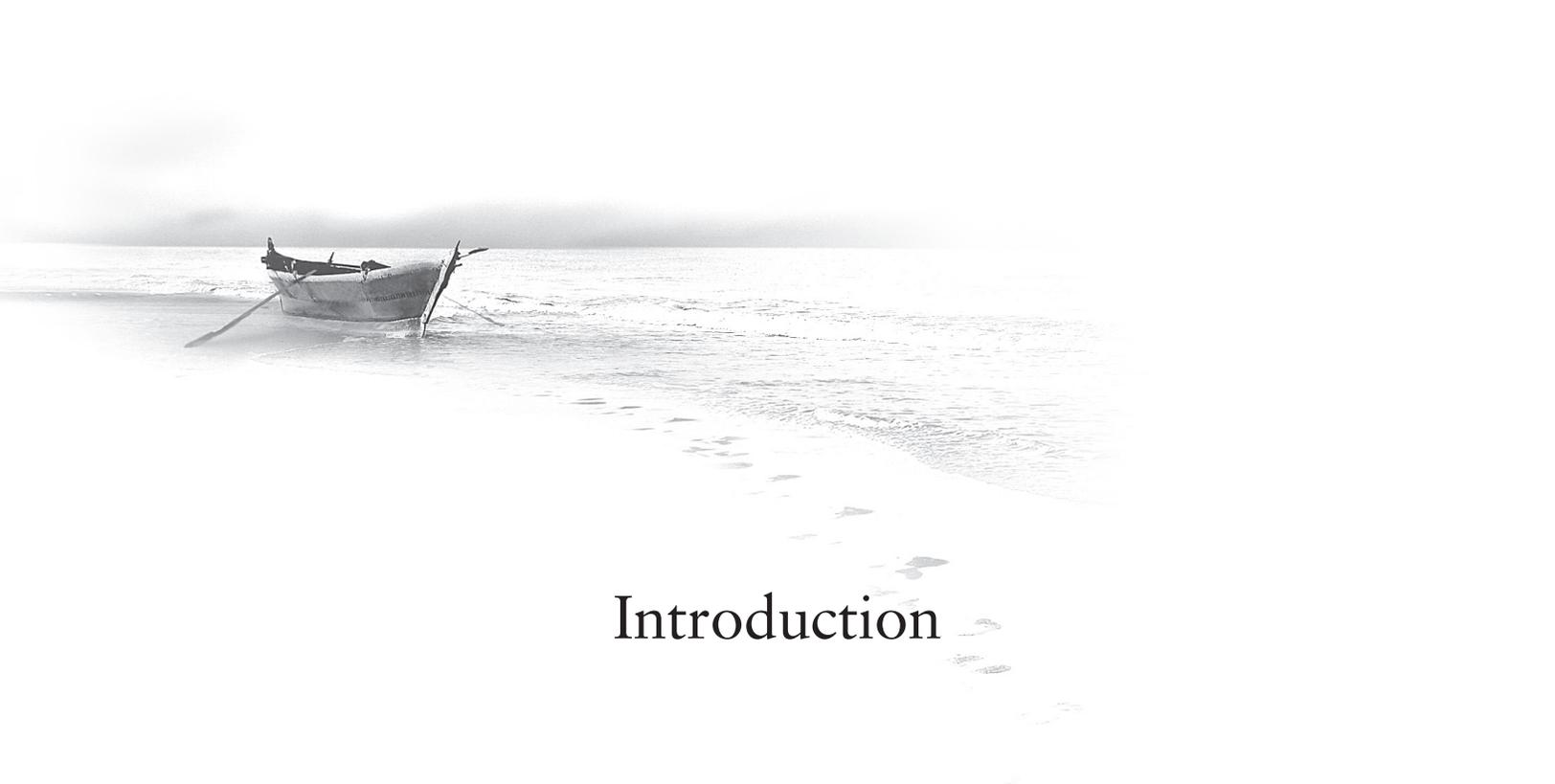


## Discussion Guide for *Being Christian*

Welcome to the *Being Christian* discussion guide. We have divided it into six sections: the introduction to the book, and each of the five chapters.

The book *Being Christian* naturally lends itself to group discussion. We suggest that you and a friend (or a group of friends) gather for times of discussion as you read the book. If you're not part of a small group, the discussion guide can be used for individual study and reflection.

Go over the questions in a section of this guide, after reading the corresponding part of the book, and write out your answers for discussion in your group. Some may prefer to think about their answers and then discuss them in the group before writing down their conclusions in a notebook.



# Introduction

1. Steve and John describe a faith continuum, from “curious about Christianity” to “committed and seeking reinvigoration.” Where do you see yourself along this line? What brought you to the place you are on this journey? Describe the events or circumstances that prompt you to answer as you do.



2. Which of the four spiritual needs—for answers, guidance, confirmation, and inspiration—is most pressing for you? Write out or talk to others in your group about the needs you identified.

3. Look through the Contents pages of *Being Christian* and highlight or jot down four or five questions covered in the book that you think are most likely to help you with the needs you have identified above. If you and others in your group highlighted the same or similar questions, you’ll want to include them in your discussion times.



## Chapter One: God and You

1. Read the Nicene Creed aloud. Does it echo your beliefs about God the Father, Jesus his son, and the Holy Spirit completely, partially, or not at all? If you answered *partially* or *not at all*, which statements do not represent your beliefs? If you answered *completely*, what are the sections that resonate most powerfully with you? Why?
2. God loves you as an individual. What does that mean to you? Have you experienced God's love personally? Can you describe the ways? If you answered *no*, what makes it difficult for you to believe God loves you or to experience his love?
3. If you're at a place in life where you want to deepen your relationship with God, which of the four steps (pages 36–39) will you work on this week?
4. What statements or ideas stand out to you in the section on prayer (pages 41–53)? How will these affect the way you pray or the way you understand prayer?
5. What do you think about the authors' statement that God allows evil to exist because he allows *people* to exist? (page 56). Which of the Scripture passages in this section gives you the most hope or comfort when you think about evil or tragedy in the world?
6. After reading and discussing the questions in chapter one, how has your understanding of God changed? Are there additional questions you would like answered either from this chapter or from your own experience?



## CHAPTER TWO:

# God, You, and Others

1. The authors say that to fulfill the Great Commandment “you must get alone, take some time, and really, *really* love God.” Is that easy to do? hard to do? What do *you* do to love God with your heart? your mind? your strength? your soul? If getting alone with God is new for you, what first steps will you take to start this practice?

2. Talk with others in your group about your experience in telling someone about Jesus and what he means in your life. Or maybe you would like some pointers from others in the group on how to bring spiritual matters into conversation. How would *you* tell someone why or how Christianity works for *you*? Try to distill your story into one hundred words or less. (Remember, Steve and John recommend that you do *not* tell someone, “This is why Christianity will work for *you*.”)

3. Whether you’re a longtime Christian or recently have become Christian, what are the challenges you face with family members or close friends who do not share your faith? In terms of humility, love, and patience, what steps could you take to improve your most difficult relationship? How do the Scripture verses on page 77 apply to your situation?

4. Praying for our enemies isn’t something that comes easily for any of us. Neither is acting toward others with more kindness than we feel. In the answers to the questions on pages 94–100, what is most helpful to you in thinking about these difficult areas? If you have a personal example of praying for an enemy or showing kindness in a difficult situation, tell your group about it.

5. After reading and discussing the questions in chapter two, how has your understanding of your relationship with God and others changed? Are there additional questions you would like answered either from this chapter or from your own experience?



### CHAPTER THREE:

## Everyone: Sin, the Human Constant

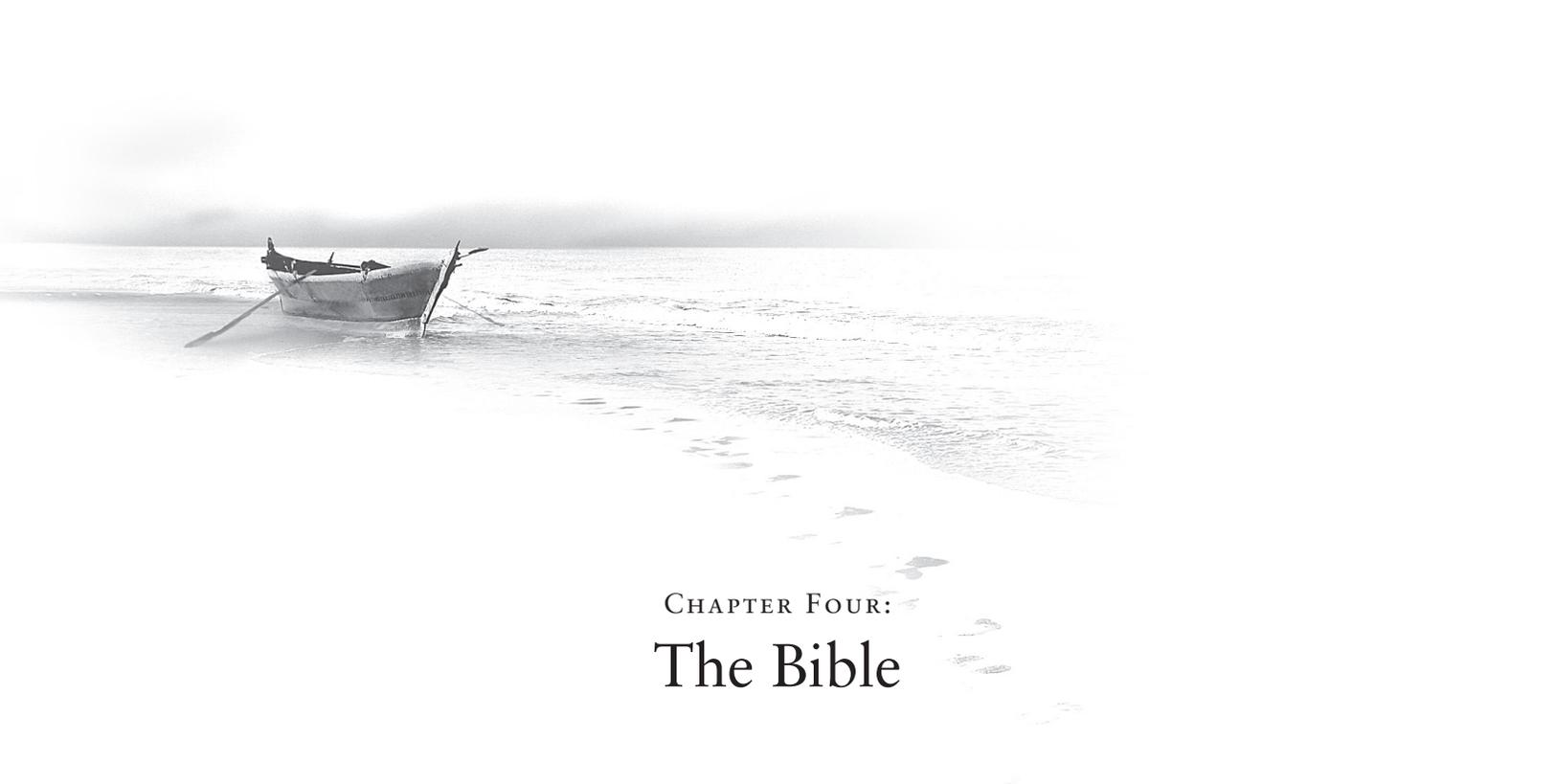
1. “Some folks kind of think that when they become a Christian, the world should function for them just like it did in that botanical wonderland [the Garden of Eden]. Keep in mind that you are not back there; you are, instead, here. And because of the realities of here, it’s going to be tough. You are going to be tempted; in one way or another, you are going to fall short; you are going to miss the mark, and sin” (page 115). Does this reality comfort you or scare you? Why?

2. Steve and John say a life of repentance means doing “the next right thing that’s immediately before you. Then do the next right thing after that...” (page 121). In practical terms, what would that mean in your life? Discuss how the Christian life is a series of right choices.

3. “If Christ’s resurrection was real, then Christianity is real. It’s exactly that simple, that startling, and that glorious” (page 128). Why do you think it’s difficult for some to believe and accept both Christ’s death for our sins and his resurrection? If you believe these foundational truths of Christianity, share what brought you to that point. Why are they foundational to our faith?

4. How does your relationship with Christ affect your behavior?

5. After reading and discussing the questions in chapter three, how has your understanding of sin, repentance, and Christ’s death and resurrection changed? Are there additional questions you would like answered either from this chapter or from your own experience?



CHAPTER FOUR:  
**The Bible**

1. How have you found the Bible to be “a reliable guide to and ongoing revelation of how God’s will continues to work itself out in [your] heart and mind” (page 152)? If you’re not sure or haven’t experienced the Bible as a reliable guide in your own life, talk with your small group about your questions.

2. The authors suggest reasons we should care about the Old Testament (page 157). Which of these reasons stands out for you? Why? How has your view of the Old Testament changed after reading this chapter?

3. Jesus’ miraculous feeding of the 5,000 is told in each of the four Gospels.

Matthew 14:15–21

Mark 6:35–44

Luke 9:12–17

John 6:5–13

Read the four accounts and note the similarities and differences among them. How does reading different versions of the same story increase your understanding of it? Give some examples.

4. In your group, read aloud John 1:1–12 from three different Bible translations (perhaps the NIV, The Message, and the New Living Translation.) You’ll find the text of many Bible translations on the Web. See, for example, [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). What are some of the differences and some of the similarities you notice between the translations? How might using more than one translation when you study the Bible be of help to you?

5. After reading and discussing the questions in chapter four, how has your understanding of the Bible and its importance to Christians changed? Are there additional questions you would like answered either from this chapter or from your own experience?



CHAPTER FIVE:

## The Church

1. Why do you attend a weekly worship service—or why do you not attend? Why did you choose to join your particular church—or are there reasons why you chose not to join a particular church?

2. Did you have any idea that there were so many Christian denominations and varieties of churches? Do you think this is a good thing? Why or why not?

3. If your group is all part of the same church, invite the pastor or someone else in leadership to discuss what your church believes about baptism, speaking in tongues, worship style, or other topics in this chapter. If your group members attend a variety of churches or no church, what foundational tenets of Christianity and its traditions do you share? What traditions are different among you?

4. If you're discussing this book in a group, you're probably already part of a small group. As this book study ends, what is next for your group? Is there a particular topic or book or Bible study that you want to pursue? The most helpful groups are organic, formed around a common need or interest. It's possible that this group will end. If so, celebrate what you've learned together and encourage each other as you form new small groups.

5. Look back at the Introduction to *Being Christian*. Where are you today on the faith continuum in comparison to where you were when you began this study? How have your spiritual needs been met? What questions do you now have about living as a Christian that you didn't have earlier?