

CHAPTER 1

THE BACKSTORY | UNDERSTANDING OUTSIDERS

1. Do you know any “outsiders”? Would you consider them to be friends? What do you think their perceptions are of Christianity?
2. Young people don’t like to join things that seem easy, mainstream, or normal. What does that mean for Christianity today? How can we help people grasp that Christianity was never meant to be safe?
3. When a young Christian interacts with the world, they are much more likely to live within a truly pluralistic generation...that is, many of his or her friends are not likely to be Christian. What should change, if anything, in the way we prepare young Christians to live in a pluralistic, diverse world?
4. How does the Bible teach Christians to behave toward outsiders? If the Bible describes your life as an “open letter” (2 Cor. 3:2), what does it say about the God you serve?

CHAPTER 2

DISCOVERING UNCHRISTIAN FAITH

1. One outsider in the research made the following comment (p. 26): “... Christian means conservative, entrenched in their thinking, antigay, anti-choice, angry, violent, illogical, empire builders; they want to convert everyone, and they generally cannot live peacefully with anyone who doesn’t believe what they believe” What is your reaction to this comment? Why do people come to these conclusions?
2. When Christians talk about being persecuted by today’s American culture, do you think they are accurate or not? How does Jesus teaching about being persecuted line up with what people experience today? What is the biblical response to being “hated” by the world? What does this mean for the way you live the Christian life?
3. What are some examples of ways Christians have become known for what they oppose? What is your church known for? Why does it have that reputation?
4. Do outsiders’ views matter to you? From the Perceptions of Christianity chart on page 28, discuss the unfavorable and favorable perceptions of Christianity and how they compare with your experiences engaging outsiders.
5. The book describes a movement of young Christians who are reluctant to admit they are Christians. They are not simply trying to be cool or popular, but they are concerned that the current way Christianity is expressed toward outsiders actually makes it more difficult to express what Jesus was about. Are you encouraged or troubled by this trend? In what situations are you more or less likely to say you are a Christian?
6. In what ways can your life help to redeem the term Christian? How can you be a Christian, rather than simply telling people you are one? What does a Christian who represents both truth and grace look and act like?

CHAPTER 3 HYPOCRITICAL

1. What do you think the true definition of hypocrisy should be? Do you think it means saying one thing and doing another? What are examples of hypocrisy in your life that you should be more transparent about?
2. Young Christians are increasingly accepting morally questionable lifestyles. How does the protect-your-image-at-any-cost mindset contradict basic Christian principles? What is the remedy for this?
3. Read Matthew 23. Discuss the implications of Jesus' words regarding hypocrites. In what ways does your life seem more like Pharisees than like people who pursue their deep need for Jesus? (Be honest.)
4. The research describing "lifestyle gaps" (on pages 46-48) shows that born again Christians are often not very different from others in terms of lifestyle activities and choices. What are your reactions to this information? What contributes to this?
5. Why do you think Christians put such a high emphasis on "being good" rather than being real? Why are some key parts of the Christian faith so frequently ignored?

CHAPTER 4 GET SAVED!

1. Only 34% of young outsiders believe that Christians genuinely care about them. But among Christians, 64% said outsiders would perceive their efforts as genuine. Why do you believe there is such a huge gap?
2. Which of the myths regarding evangelism rang true with your experience? What myths were the most difficult for you to hear? How does this information affect your personal efforts to share Christ with others? How might it affect your church's ministry?
3. Read 2 Timothy 2:24-25. Discuss the role of the Christ follower and the part the Holy Spirit plays in someone choosing to follow Christ?
4. The Barna Group uses eight questions to determine if a person has a biblical worldview (page 75). How do you define a biblical worldview? Give examples of how you apply this worldview in your daily life. Can you think of Christians who do not operate on the basis of a biblical worldview? How can you help more young people develop such a perspective?
5. Chuck Colson comments that Christianity is about more than just a private transaction (page 87). He suggests avoiding the phrase "accept Christ". He believes Christianity is much more than that and incorporates an entire worldview and way of seeing everything in life. Do you agree or disagree with his opinion?

CHAPTER 5 ANTIHOMOSEXUAL

1. When you hear the word “homosexual” what are your first reactions? Discuss your opinions and try to assess the reasons behind them.
2. Christians often view homosexuality as more serious than divorce. Do you think homosexuality is singled out more than other sins in the Christian community? If so, why?
3. Discuss the following quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer as it applies to the homosexual discussion: “Nothing that we despise in the other [person] is entirely absent from ourselves. We must learn to regard people less in light of what they do or don’t do, and more in light of what they suffer.”
4. American Christians have often sought to confront the issues of homosexuality through preaching and politics. What are some alternative ways Christians should approach homosexuality?
5. Much of the fear and misunderstanding associated with homosexuality is due to Christians isolating themselves from gays and lesbians. How can your church, small group, or just you, yourself, make strides to become more engaged and compassionate?

CHAPTER 6 SHELTERED

1. If an outsider looked at your week’s activities, would they say you think you live in a Christian bubble? How can you ensure you don’t get trapped and insulated from the needs of the world?
2. When was the last time you spent time with outsiders in a casual environment? Did you feel out of place? Was it difficult to fit in?
3. Do you identify with the description of “Fractured Generations” (pages 126-128)? Do you know Mosaics and Busters these descriptions would apply to? How can you help solve or alleviate some of the problems?
4. How do you respond when you are confronted with the fallen world (sin, brokenness, addiction, divorce, gay lifestyles)? Are you offended and withdraw? Or are you provoked to confront and engage the situation?
5. How can you strike a balance of in the world, but not of the world? How can you live with purity while still being proximate to a broken world?

CHAPTER 7

TOO POLITICAL

1. Why do you think Christians are perceived as being too involved in politics? What is your own level of involvement in politics? How much or little involvement do you think Christians should pursue through politics?
2. Can you recall a time when you heard a Christian spokesperson misrepresent your view of a social or political issue? Describe what happened and why you felt miscast.
3. Many Christians view the political arena as a means to promote Christian morals within the culture. When does this work and when does it not work? Is this the most viable approach? What other ways can Christian values be infused into a community?
4. Do you think Christians should change the language and style of their approach to politics? Do you think we should avoid citing Scripture in explaining our position on different political issues? How can Christians pursue political goals while not sounding as though they are demonizing opponents? When ideologies clash how do people avoid being abrasive? Or is clashing just a fundamental part of the political process?
5. The book includes a wide variety of contributors who offer their perspectives about politics. What contributor was most significant to you in this section? What did they write that resonated with you?

CHAPTER 8

JUDGMENTAL

1. If judgmentalism means you marginalize someone, describe a time when you have been judgmental towards someone else. Compare that to a time when you were judged by another Christian who seemed wrongly motivated to find fault.
2. What is your reaction to 1 Corinthians 5, especially verse 12? Paul informs the Christian community that they have no responsibility to judge outsiders, but he says, "It certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning."
3. How can Christian communities learn the proper balance between what it means to be gracious and effective with "outsiders," while being very clear on not accepting sin among churchgoers? Keep in mind that its complex because many people who visit churches are actually "outsiders." How should church discipline function when the community is invited in every Sunday?
4. Have you ever heard the statement, "Hate the sin but love the sinner"? Have you ever used that phrase? Is that really possible? How does this approach help or hurt your ability to unconditionally accept outsiders?
5. Which of the four attitudes (wrong verdict, wrong timing, wrong motivation, playing favorites) have most influenced your judgmental attitudes toward outsiders?
6. Review the advice outsiders gave to Christians about establishing a mutually respectable, non-judgmental relationship on (pages 194-195). How possible is this for you to achieve in your friendships with outsiders? What are the parts of the advice that will be hardest for you to accept?

CHAPTER 9 FROM UNCHRISTIAN TO CHRISTIAN

1. Reflect on how you can engage criticism with the right perspective. Do you respond with anger and resentment? Or do you respond with understanding and compassion?
2. Cultivating deep relationships with fellow Christians and outsiders is a key element to turning the tide of negative perceptions. How much emphasis did Christ put on relationships in his own life? Discuss steps that will afford you opportunities to connect with outsiders.
3. Do you use clichés to express your faith? What clichés need to be shelved and what new phrases or statements can the Holy Spirit create in you?
4. How can your group or church begin to creatively express your faith in new and fresh ways?
5. Christ was an example of a true servant. How are you serving your fellow Christians and outsiders in your community?
6. Have someone in your group read aloud the Isaiah 58 passage. Discuss what it means to “spend yourself on behalf of the poor.”

AFTERWORD THE NEW PERCEPTIONS

1. Discuss Chuck Colson and Nancy Percy’s passage on page 223. How are Christians currently acting as agents of Christ’s common grace? What activities would enable more common grace to flow from the lives of believers?
2. What does it mean to be Christ-like in our ever-changing culture? How do we embrace Christlikeness in a “Christianized” culture, where it is easy to be a churchgoer but hard to be a true disciple?
3. There are many contributors who offer compelling visions for the future. Which of the leaders best reflected your thoughts and feelings?
4. Reflect on Brian McLaren’s vision list for Christianity in the next 30 years (page 246). What are the obstacles to Christians living in these ways? How will you influence the future by your current actions?
5. Part of what attracted people to Christians in the early church was a faith that was both counter-cultural and lovingly engaging. What does it mean to have an attractive faith? How can you begin to cultivate this kind of Christianity in your life and faith community?