

life groups' sermon guide

who is Jesus?



Small groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the CORE 4 elements of Worship, Grow, Serve, and Share.

In today's sermon, John helped us gain a better perspective of 'Who Jesus Is' and in our discussion today, I would like to go in a little different direction.

We, as Christians, accept that the Bible is God-breathed truth and we trust what it has to say about Jesus, because we believe that it is the very Word of God. But how do you defend your faith in Jesus to someone who isn't convinced that the accounts and claims of Jesus are reliable?

Author and journalist, Lee Strobel tackled this question in his book "The Case for Christ". In this book you will find well documented evidence presented by many of today's foremost experts on the matter. I would like to spend our time together today discussing a few of the assertions that this book makes about Jesus and how we can rely upon the Biblical assertions about and claims of Jesus.

Can the biographies of Jesus (the gospels) be trusted?

"Craig Blomberg, one of the country's foremost authorities on the topic, built a convincing case that they reflect eyewitness testimony and bear the unmistakable earmarks of accuracy. So early are these biographies that they cannot be explained away as legendary invention. In fact, the fundamental beliefs in Jesus' miracles, resurrection, and deity go way back to the very dawning of the Christian movement."

Q: How have your opinions been influenced by someone's eyewitness account of an event?

Q: What are some of the factors you routinely use to evaluate whether someone's story is honest and accurate?

Q: How do you think the gospels would stand up to that kind of scrutiny?

Was Jesus crazy when he claimed to be the Son of God?

We have often heard it said that Jesus was either who he claimed to be or he was crazy.

"Well known psychologist Gary Collins said Jesus exhibited no inappropriate emotions, was in contact with reality, was brilliant and had amazing insights into human nature, and enjoyed deep and abiding relationships. "I just don't see signs that Jesus was suffering from any known mental illness," he concluded. In addition, Jesus backed up his claim to being God through miraculous feats of healing, astounding demonstrations of power over nature, unrivaled teaching, divine understanding of people, and with his own resurrection, which was the final authentication of his identity."

Q: What are some of the differences between a patient in a mental hospital claiming to be God and Jesus making the same assertion about himself?

Read Matthew 5:1-12

Q: What observations can you make about Jesus' intellect, eloquence, compassion, insight into human nature, ability to teach profound truths, and overall psychological health?

Did Jesus – and Jesus alone – match the identity of the Messiah?

“Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, or the Anointed One, who would redeem God's people. In effect, dozens of Old Testament prophecies created a fingerprint that only the true Messiah could fit. This gave Israel a way to rule out imposters and validate the credentials of the authentic Messiah. Against astronomical odds – one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion – Jesus, and only Jesus throughout history, matched this prophetic fingerprint. This confirms Jesus' identity to an incredible degree of certainty.”

Was Jesus' death a sham and His resurrection a hoax?

“By analyzing the medical and historical data, Dr. Alexander Metherell concluded Jesus could not have survived the gruesome rigors of crucifixion, much less the gaping wound that pierced his lung and heart. The idea that he somehow swooned on the cross and pretended to be dead lacks any evidential basis. Roman executioners were grimly efficient, knowing that they themselves would face death if any of their victims were to come down from the cross alive.”

Q: Would you be willing to suffer for the sake of another person? For whom and why?

Q: What would it take to motivate you to endure torture in the place of someone else?

Q: How would you react to the soldiers if they were abusing, humiliating, and torturing you, as they did Jesus? What could possibly account for Jesus' reaction, which was to utter in the midst of his agony, “Father, forgive them”?

Are there any supporting facts that point to the resurrection?

“J.P. Moreland presents circumstantial evidence that adds final documentation for the Resurrection. First, the disciples were in a unique position to know whether the Resurrection happened, and they went to their deaths proclaiming it was true. Nobody knowingly and willingly dies for a lie. Second, apart from the Resurrection, there's no good reason why skeptics like Paul and James would have been converted and would have died for their faith. Third, within weeks of the Crucifixion, thousands of Jews began abandoning key social practices that had critical sociological and religious importance for centuries. They believed they risked damnation if they were wrong. Fourth, the early sacraments of Communion and baptism affirmed Jesus' resurrection and deity. And fifth, the miraculous emergence of the church in the face of brutal Roman persecution ‘rips a great hole in history, a hole the size and shape of Resurrection,’”

Q: Can you think of anyone in history who has knowingly and willingly died for a lie?

Q: What degree of certainty would you need before you would be willing to lay down your life for a belief?

Q: What are you most cherished beliefs? What would it take for you to abandon or radically rethink those treasured opinions – especially if you truly believed you were risking the damnation of your soul if you were wrong?

Q: How does your answer relate to the historical fact that thousands of Jews suddenly abandoned key social and religious structures shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus?

Application

We, as Christians in a skeptical world that grows more skeptical every day; will be challenged with ever increasing frequency, to give an account for why we believe what we believe. In addition, if we hope to fulfill our mission to reach and save the lost, we should be prepared to do battle with skepticism.

My challenge to you is to examine the evidence, whether it be by reading Lee Strobel's book or any of the many others like it, so that you can be prepared to answer some of the arguments you will undoubtedly hear for unbelief. Are you ready to give a reason for the hope you have? Can you defend it?