

Questions of Faith II Study Guide

VHS #2390; DVD #2399

**QUESTIONS OF FAITH
STUDY GUIDE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SUGGESTIONS	4
THE PROGRAMS	6
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES	7
OUTLINE AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	
WHO IS JESUS?	11
WHAT'S THE USE OF THE BIBLE?	13
WHO'S GOT THE TRUTH?	15
HOW DO WE RIGHT THE WRONG?	17
WHAT GIVES YOU FAITH?	19
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?	20

Certain basic questions of belief and meaning come to us over and over in our lives. Sometimes we think we've got them answered. Other times we think we've gone beyond them. But the world and the circumstances of our lives change. And so, as in every generation, we struggle to find new meaning that fits what we now know. In this series, a variety of contemporary thinkers reflect on such issues. We hope that what they say will provoke responses in you and will help in your struggle with the questions.

-- From the opening narration

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

What the Series Is Like

Each of 27 contemporary American Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish thinkers (a complete list with brief biographical information appears on page 7 of the guide) was asked to respond, on camera, to a series of questions. The responses were then edited to create a montage of reflections on that question.

How This Guide Is Organized

This guide is arranged so that you can copy parts of it for handouts:

A. For Handing Out Before Viewing

On pages 6 the programs are listed, with the questions to which participants responded.

On pages 7-10 are brief biographical sketches of the people who appear in this series. Viewers may find that having a bit of information about the participants in advance is helpful.

B. For Handing Out After Viewing

Pages 11-21 contain material to aid in discussion. It is strongly suggested that these pages be distributed only after the group has viewed the program in question, so as not to limit viewer reaction. For each program, there is an outline to assist in recalling what was said.

A Suggested Procedure for the Sessions

1. View the tape all the way through.
2. View the tape again, stopping for discussion or reflection when the responses show the question has changed. If there isn't time for a second showing, simply proceed with discussion. Either way, you may want, after the program has been viewed, to hand out the outline for the program you have just viewed. Many groups have used the Questions of Faith series very effectively and their experience may be useful. Groups who could take time for a second viewing found it very helpful. Some groups even spent their next session on a second viewing and further discussion.
 - a. The outline is provided to help in recalling what was said by whom.
 - b. The questions to stimulate reflection or discussion are suggestions only. Use them if they're helpful. People discovered while using the first Questions of Faith series that they didn't need a half-dozen questions to stimulate discussion. They also discovered that a very helpful way to begin is simply to ask members to share what spoke to them the most.
3. At the end of each session, you might want to give a brief preview of the next program, suggesting that members of the group prepare by reviewing and thinking about their own responses to the specific questions to which participants are dealing. (This information, for all six programs, appears on page 6 of this guide and is suggested as hand out material.)

A Word About Equipment

For a smooth and effective showing, you'll want to consider these steps:

1. Preview each program.
2. Check out the equipment in advance.
3. Adjust the VCR and the TV set for sharp picture and clear sound in advance.
4. Cue up the tape in advance so the opening titles appear when you turn on the machine.
5. Adjust the room light for comfortable viewing.

THE PROGRAMS

NOTE: This page may be copied and distributed in advance to help in preparation for viewing.

To get at aspects of the title question, additional questions were asked. These questions are not heard, but the responses generally reveal which question has been asked. They'll give you a quick preview of the content of each session. Before viewing, you may want to reflect on your own responses to the questions.

WHO IS JESUS?

Who is Jesus for you? What does one have to believe about Jesus to be a Christian?

WHAT'S THE USE OF THE BIBLE?

What kind of authority does the Bible have for you? What role does the Bible play in your faith?

WHO'S GOT THE TRUTH?

What is the source of religious truth for you? If you really believe you are right, how do you deal with people who believe very differently?

HOW DO WE RIGHT THE WRONG?

What are the most pressing social issues of our times? How does your faith affect the way you view those issues? What should religious institutions be doing about them?

WHAT GIVES YOU FAITH?

What experiences contributed to your faith? How have they affected its development? How do you share your faith?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

How do you think about death? What does immortality or life after death mean to you? If you've lost someone you love in death, how do you think about them?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Peter Berger, Sociologist (Lutheran)

Peter Berger has directed the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University since 1985. Widely respected as a sociologist of religion, he is the author of eleven books, including The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.

Daniel Berrigan, Priest/Activist

Fr. Berrigan is best known for his anti-war activities of the 1960's. His concern for social justice had made him a role model for those pursuing justice through non-violent methods. He presently writes (poetry and non-fiction) and ministers to AIDS patients in New York City.

Robert McAfee Brown, Theologian (Presbyterian)

The author of over 20 books on theology and sociology, and active in many justice efforts, Dr. Brown is recognized as the foremost interpreter of liberation theology in the United States.

Will Campbell, Writer/Farmer/Preacher (Baptist)

Rumored to be the inspiration behind the cartoon character, the Rev. Will B. Dunn, he is known for his work in the civil rights movement. Today he's a best-selling writer and "preacher-at-large."

Hyung Kyung Chung, Theologian (Presbyterian)

Cited as a rising star in feminist theology, Chung brings an Asian perspective to Christian thought. Hyung Kyung is Professor of Theology at Ewha Woman's University in Korea.

James Carroll, Writer

Describing his decision to leave the Catholic priesthood in 1976 as "a leap into the unknown," Carroll continues his exploration of faith in his writings. The author of seven novels (as well as plays, poetry and essays), he is best known for his novel, Prince of Peace.

Harvey Cox, Theologian (Baptist)

Harvey Cox is Professor of Theology at Harvard Divinity School. He is known as the author of The Secular City and for his popular course, "Jesus and the Moral Life." His recent studies in Hinduism and Buddhism have established him as a leader in interfaith dialogues.

Dayton Edmunds, Native American Activist

Born into a Native American tribe, Edmunds was 13 when his father had a vision and became a Methodist minister. He is an advocate for Native American rights. He is known for his storytelling skills which bring together Native American spirituality and Christian thought.

James Forbes, Pastor (Baptist)

Recently called to be the Senior Pastor at Riverside Church in New York, Dr. Forbes is known as one of the most forceful and inspirational preachers in the country. He was Professor of Preaching at Union Theological Seminary before taking his post at Riverside.

Carmen Guerrero, Episcopal Priest

As Vicar of an Episcopal church in San Antonio, Texas, Carmen Guerrero has helped transform it from near abandonment to a thriving congregation. She attributes her success to drawing upon the experiences of the Latin American base communities.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Theologian

Born and educated in Cuba, Isasi-Diaz, Program Director for Church Women United, is recognized as a theologian who is bridging Catholic, feminist and liberation theologies. She is a co-author of God's Fierce Whimsey, a collective theology written by seven women.

Harold Kushner, Rabbi/Writer

Rabbi Harold Kushner is the author of the best-selling book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People.

Kushner's own wrestling with the nature of good and evil, due to the loss of a son, brought comfort to others and established him as a "pastor-at-large".

Madeleine L'Engle, Writer (Episcopalian)

Madeleine L'Engle is the author of over 25 books, including the prize winning, A Wrinkle in Time. Her latest book, Marriage: A Two Part Invention, is an account of her relationship with her husband, actor Hugh Franklin, and his subsequent illness and death.

Clarice Martin

Clarice Martin is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. Her research and teaching specialties include Luke-Acts, the synoptic gospels, and the social origins of early Christianity. An ordained Presbyterian minister, Dr. Martin is active in the life of the national church.

Martin Marty, Church Historian (Lutheran)

Martin Marty is recognized as the premier interpreter of religion in American life. The author of over 30 books, Dr. Marty won the National Book Award for The Righteous Empire.

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Professor/Writer

Raised and educated within a strict Christian fundamentalist community, Dr. Mollenkott entered into a new understanding of Christian freedom through her encounter with feminist literature. As a professor of literature and as author, Mollenkott celebrates that freedom by uncovering new insights about God's nature from the Biblical text.

Robert Raines, Professor/Writer (United Methodist)

Robert Raines is the Director of Kirkridge, a retreat center in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania. From the quiet post in the hills, Dr. Raines has authored popular books of Christian meditation including the best-selling classic, A Faithing Oak.

Rosemary Radford Ruether, Theologian (Catholic)

Rosemary Radford Ruether is recognized worldwide as pioneering a feminist perspective of theology. Through her writings, she has challenged a whole generation of theologians to break through the patriarchal mind set of the Bible to discover new Christian symbols of universal meaning.

Roy Sano, United Methodist Bishop

Roy Sano's parents transformed the WW II internment camp experience into lessons of God's grace. Today, Bishop Sano is known for the sensitivity he brings to interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue.

Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, Theologian (Catholic)

Schussler-Fiorenza has established herself as the premier feminist scholar in New Testament studies. In her major work, In Memory of Her, she reconstructs the origins of Christianity from a feminist perspective. She is Professor of New Testament at Harvard Divinity School.

Bernie Siegel, Physician/Writer (Jewish)

Dr. Bernie Siegel is the author of Love, Medicine and Miracles, the best-selling book which points to the healing power of love. While challenging the medical profession to look beyond drugs as the only treatment for terminal illness. "Dr. Love" has encouraged thousand of patients and their families by gently prodding them to view their afflictions as opportunities for re-direction and healing.

John Spong, Episcopal Bishop

John Shelby Spong is the Bishop of the Diocese of Newark. He is best known in the Anglican community for his fearless leadership in working for the recognition and empowerment of the homosexual community within the church. His views on sexuality and evangelism have challenged the Church to look beyond tradition and doctrine.

Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop

Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Capetown and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, is known for his work in the struggle to dismantle apartheid. He is, in his own words, a “Christian traditionalist” who believes in the power of scripture to change human lives.

Jim Wallis, Community Leader/Writer

Jim Wallis is the founder of the Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C. A long-time advocate of the poor, Jim and his community take a “hands-on” approach to the oppressed by living among them. He is also the editor of Sojourners, a magazine for Christian social action.

Dan Wakefield, Writer (Unitarian)

Dan Wakefield is the author of Starting Over, a national best seller that became a hit movie. His recent work, Returning, A Spiritual Journey, is an autobiographical odyssey of his journey from alcohol addiction to the restoration of his Christian faith.

Delores Williams, Theologian (Presbyterian)

Delores William is Assistant Professor of Theology at Drew Theological Seminary. She has taught at Union Theological Seminary, Boston University School of Theology, Fisk University and Muhlenberg College. Her major interests are reflected in her forthcoming book, Hagar’s Children: New Directions for Black Theology and Feminist Theology.

Walter Wink, Theologian (United Methodist)

Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary, Walter Wink is best known for developing a Socratic approach to teaching the Bible. His book, Transforming Bible Study, has become a classic in how to teach the Bible by allowing people to discover truth and meaning for themselves.

WHO IS JESUS?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

Forbes	...Jesus is my friend. I think Jesus was a very together person.
Wakefield	I think of the man, historically, and Christ, the spirit...
Ruether	Jesus was a first century Jew...many of our definitions try to deny that.
Brown	Imagine a religious leader today taking somebody from the Internal Revenue Service on his team...
Kushner	...He becomes first the instrument through which my God—the God of the Hebrew Bible—becomes the universal God...
Mollenkott	Jesus is the one who never forgot that he and the sacred source were one.
Marty	...the human Jesus is the exalted lord.
Carroll	Jesus is the one with the intimate relationship with Abba.
Isasi-Diaz	What he was able to do was become the best Jesus he could become...
Wink	I don't think of Jesus as perfect...I think of Jesus as whole...
Siegel	...well he's a teacher...to teach us we don't have to be crucified more than once...
Spong	...every religious tradition has a point...where the divine and the human come together...
Sano	...what attracts me to Jesus is his capacity to relate to people that are different that he is.
Cox	I see Jesus as that figure who prevents my falling into despair about the possibilities of the human...
Berrigan	...my translation of Jesus is an AIDS patient or a homeless person.
Guerrero	...that's how I see Jesus—as someone who loves me so much that he would die for me and did.
Tutu	Jesus is for real...he does not give up on anyone...least of all on me.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. Who is Jesus for you?

WHAT'S THE USE OF THE BIBLE?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

- Campbell ...no one believes the Bible literally...
- Wallis I think our problem is we don't take it [the Bible] seriously enough...
- Spong I think it's been ruined for most religious people by the kind of superstition we have placed upon it.
- Kushner ...I take it very seriously as the record of God's revelation...
- Ruether ...Jews don't accept the New Testament and Christians...in fact, they don't accept much of the Old Testament.
- Isasi-Diaz ...being Roman Catholic, of course, we hardly know the Bible...
- Wink ...people have been bullied by clergy into thinking they're not capable of interpreting scripture.
- Mollenkott ...then I realized that I had been reading through an interpretative grid as everyone does...
- Spong ...if we don't rescue the truth from those cultural norms, we are going to lose the Bible...
- Chung ...the norm to interpret Bible is – is that life giving for us or is this death giving for us?
- Shussler-
Fiorenza ...the authority of the Bible is given in the people struggling to live the Christian vision...
- Martin ...slave injunctions. At a point...church...decided they shouldn't be binding.
- Carroll ...it's important to have in mind that the Bible isn't God any more than that the church is God...
- L'Engle Not one of great protagonists in the Old and New Testaments is qualified to do what God is asking them to do.
- Kushner ...Jewish scholars have read the Torah not as a novel to see how it ends; they've read it as a love letter.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. What comment touched you most deeply?
2. What role does the Bible play in your faith?

WHO'S GOT THE TRUTH?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

Forbes	...from where I stand, this is the way I see it...
Marty	...the fanatic...knows he's doing exactly what the Lord would do if the Lord were in possession of the facts...
Spong	...because they don't really believe...they believe in believing...that's a big difference.
Guerrero	...one of the things we can do is respect...not have to be so insistent on everybody being like us.
Cox	I even have been accused by some of my friends of seeking out people who are different from me...
Berrigan	...we could at least stand there and utter a common outcry...
Campbell	...right to life...death penalty...abortion...nuclear proliferation...at least kissin' cousins...
Sano	...better to keep talking to each other rather than about each other or at each other...
Chung	...I think religious solidarity is more important than religious dialogue...only when people of other faiths hurt my people do I have to challenge their belief system...
Williams	...God has made whatever God wanted to make manifest in a variety of cultures...
Cox	..."Now that we've had this preliminary chit-chat [say Hindus and Buddhists], what about Jesus?"
Spong	...thing...missing in the Hindu tradition...is the willingness to judge other people as inadequate...
Marty	...but if I have a word processor I really like, I tell a lot of people about it...
Kushner	...try and persuade people of the righteousness of my perspective...by modeling...
Spong	I want us to take the tradition seriously but be willing to walk away from it in wonderful new directions.

Tutu ...truth has a self-authenticating quality...

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Which comment touched you most deeply?
2. How do you deal with people who believe very differently?

HOW DO WE RIGHT THE WRONG?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

NOTE: In the introductory section of this program ten people identify what they feel is a pressing social issue. Then, beginning with Harold Kushner, participants respond to the question, "What do you think religious institutions should be doing about these issues?"

Kushner	...religion...gives people a vision of how the world would look if it were truly God's world...
Forbes	...many churches have become primarily comfort stations...
Isasi-Diaz	...cannot any more do the band-aid kind of solutions that we used to do.
Campbell	...institutional church really stands precisely where the rich young ruler stood.
Brown	It isn't that we're taking sides...we're changing sides...
Williams	...we don't get those people and say, "Come into the body of Christ and sit beside me."
Mollenkott	It is the church's book that tells us about loving the neighbor as we love ourselves.
Berrigan	...would have invaded Nicaragua...if it hadn't been for the American church...
Berger	...church is typically incompetent to make very intelligent contributions to discussions [of social issues]...
Raines	The church doesn't have any special information, but it does have a special value system...
Marty	I see politics as a rather modest human art that prevents the worst things from happening.
Campbell	...politics is the enemy. Always, power does corrupt...
Brown	...one the great heresies of our time to say that religion and politics just don't mix...
Ruether	...religion...that masks itself as being spiritual and unpolitical, but it's not unpolitical at all.

Wallis ...ideas that you would care about somebody's prayer life and not about whether they got enough food to eat...

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Which comment touched you most deeply?
2. What do you think the church should be doing?

WHAT GIVES YOU FAITH?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

Marty	...billions of particulars...life of 51-49.
Ruether	...I think I had a very good role model. Particularly my mother...
L'Engle	...nobody to take me to Sunday school...thought I might enjoy the Bible because it had good stories in it.
Mollenkott	...everytime you tell somebody else that God loves them you believe it a little more yourself.
Wakefield	...you come not to some...new discovery, but you come to yourself...
Berrigan	I don't know if there is any easy way, but mine wasn't easy.
Chung	...in order to be Christian in my culture, you have to deny your culture...
Tutu	...had tuberculosis as a child..."going to die"...felt an extraordinary kind of calm...
Sano	...seeing...that people could live with dignity in the face of abuse...
Wink	...during the 60's death of God debate, I kept thinking I should really try to doubt God...
Wakefield	"...if you mention God more than once at a dinner party..."
Sano	...let my life become too churchianified...no each word...
Berrigan	What I'm trying to do as a religious person is be with him in that awesome passage that he's making.
Ruether	...for me faith is a way of living justly and lovingly; it's a total life style...
Mollenkott	...this grade is not for you...for a piece of work you turned in...I think you are made in image of God...

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Which comment touched you most deeply?
2. What experiences have most contributed to your faith?

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

(To be handed out after the group has viewed this program.)

OUTLINE

As a discussion aid, listed below are the persons who speak in this program, in order of appearance, with a few key words to assist in recalling their thoughts.

Tutu	...We're all going to die but somehow we pretend that is not one of the most fundamental things about us.
Isasi-Diaz	...I need to believe that there is something beyond death that is going to continue...relationship with God...and others...
Kushner	...I have to believe that, in the world of good and evil, there is a law of conversation of spiritual energy...
Schussler-Fiorenza	People can have died but still be very present...
Siegel	If you want to be immortal, love somebody. Your love stays...
Carroll	...we're all on this escalator going up...well I don't know what's at the top...
Berrigan	We're not promised immortality; we're promised resurrection...
Sano	I'm very uncomfortable in this society because we want to move too quickly to resurrection.
Siegel	...you show your true beauty...you get tired of hanging on to the tree of life and you let go...
Cox	I'm not one of those people who's able to say that death is a part of life...
Wink	...there's nothing lost. God gathers up everything somehow into her breast...
Tutu	...a kind of suffering that does need a redressing that I don't think can happen this side of life...
Chung	...if they had a good life, they go to paradise and they visit us life vacation...
Guerrero	...when my mother and father died...communion of saints took on a totally different meaning...
Forbes	...I get the feeling that there is a connection for which my earthly language is inadequate...
Siegel	...I've dealt with thousands of people who are dead. And I feel like they're always around my shoulders...

L'Engle When my husband was dying, the church was wonderful. When he died, they had nothing to say.

Spong ...not interested in the place or rewards...don't like righteous people...

Edmonds ...don't stand at my grave and weep...I am not there...

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Which comment touched you most deeply?
2. Do you think about death? How?