

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

THE CASE FOR Faith

*A Six-Session Investigation of the
Toughest Objections to Christianity*

LEE
STROBEL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

THE CASE FOR
Faith

—

STUDY GUIDE

Revised Edition

THE CASE FOR
Faith

—

*Investigating the
Toughest Objections to Christianity*

LEE
STROBEL

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

AND GARRY POOLE

Revised Edition

ZONDERVAN

The Case for Faith Study Guide Revised Edition
Copyright © 2008, 2013 by Lee Strobel and Garry Poole

This title is also available as a Zondervan ebook. Visit www.zondervan.com/ebooks.

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, *Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530*

ISBN 978-0-310-69880-7

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois. All rights reserved.

Any Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other – except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover design: Faceout Studio

Cover photography: Shutterstock®

Interior design: Beth Shagene

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Session 1	
<i>The Challenge of Faith</i>	7
Session 2	
<i>Dealing with Doubts</i>	19
Session 3	
<i>Evil and Suffering, Part 1</i>	33
Session 4	
<i>Evil and Suffering, Part 2</i>	47
Session 5	
<i>Why Is Jesus the Only Way to God?</i>	61
Session 6	
<i>The Power of Faith</i>	79
<i>Small Group Leader Helps</i>	93

SESSION 1

The Challenge of Faith

For me, having lived much of my life as an atheist, the last thing I want is a naive faith built on a paper-thin foundation of wishful thinking or make-believe. I need a faith that's consistent with reason, not contradictory to it; I want beliefs that are grounded in reality, not detached from it. I need to find out once and for all whether the Christian faith can stand up to scrutiny. It was time for me to talk face to face with Charles Templeton.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*

Read This!

If possible, read the introduction (“The Challenge of Faith”) and “On the Road to Answers” in *The Case for Faith* book in preparation for your group meeting. Otherwise, read it as follow-up.

Watch This!

Video Teaching Segment

Space is provided to take notes on anything that stands out to you.

Discuss This!

1. What are your greatest doubts in life? What spiritual doubts do you carry around with you?

“Reason and faith are opposites, two mutually exclusive terms: there is no reconciliation or common ground. Faith is belief without, or in spite of, reason.”

— Atheist George H. Smith

THINK ABOUT THIS!

“All of us want somebody to love us. Well, I want to tell you that God loves you. He loves you so much that he gave us his Son to die on the cross for our sins. And he loves you so much that he will come into your life and change the direction of your life and make you a new person, whoever you are.”

Billy Graham

“What is faith? There would have been no need to define it for these people listening to Billy Graham preach on that sultry June night. Faith was almost palpable to them. They reached out to God almost as if they were expecting to physically embrace him. Faith drained them of the guilt that had oppressed them. Faith replaced despondency with hope. Faith infused them with new direction and purpose. Faith unlocked heaven. Faith was like cool water soaking their parched soul.”

Lee Strobel

“But faith isn’t always that easy, even for people who desperately want it. Some people hunger for spiritual certainty, yet something hinders them from experiencing it. They wish they could taste that kind of freedom, but obstacles block their paths. Objections pester them. Doubts mock them. Their hearts want to soar to God; their intellects keep them securely tied down.”

Lee Strobel

"I had preached to hundreds of thousands of people the antithetical message, and then I found to my dismay that I could no longer believe it. To believe it would be to deny the brain I had been given. It became quite clear that I had been wrong."

Charles Templeton

2. How do you define doubt? Where do doubts come from? What effect do they have on people when they hit? What are the pros and cons of a healthy dose of doubt?

"Faith is a rational response to the evidence of God's self-revelation in nature, human history, the Scriptures and his resurrected Son."

— Christian educator W. Bingham Hunter

3. Briefly describe your faith journey. When have you been closest to God on your journey in life and at what points have you felt furthest away from him? Explain.

THINK ABOUT THIS!

"If a person has faith and it makes them a better individual, then I'm all for that — even if I think they're nuts. Having been a Christian, I know how important it is to people's lives — how it alters their decisions, how it helps them deal with difficult problems. For most people, it's a boon beyond description. But is it because there is a God? No, it's not."

Charles Templeton

"Is that what faith is all about — fooling yourself into becoming a better person? Convincing yourself there's a God so that you'll become motivated to ratchet up your morality a notch or two? Embracing a fairy tale so you'll sleep better at night? No thank you, I thought to myself. If that's faith, I wasn't interested."

Lee Strobel

4. To what extent are questions and doubts regarding spiritual matters inevitable? Why? Is faith a simple process of belief or does it require a certain degree of thought and struggle or a combination of both? Explain.

THINK ABOUT THIS!

"I had gone through a conversion experience as an incredibly green youth. I lacked the intellectual skills and the theological training needed to buttress my beliefs when — as was inevitable — questions and doubts began to plague me ... My reason had begun to challenge and sometimes to rebut the central beliefs of the Christian faith."

Charles Templeton

“Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word— by faith! I’m going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be Your inspired Word.”

Billy Graham

5. Why do you think Charles Templeton abandoned the faith that had once been the cornerstone of his life?

THINK ABOUT THIS!

“Christian theism must be rejected by any person with even a shred of respect for reason.”

George H. Smith, atheist

“Christian faith is not an irrational leap. Examined objectively, the claims of the Bible are rational propositions well supported by reason and evidence.”

Charles Colson, Christian

6. Does the process of asking tough spiritual questions ruin or strengthen one’s faith? Why? If you could ask God one question and you knew he would answer you right away, what would it be?

THINK ABOUT THIS!

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

Hebrews 11:1

We live by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 7:50

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that proven genuineness of your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:6–9

7. How does society define faith? According to the preceding Bible verses (see the "Think About This!" box), how does the Bible define it? Why does God place so much emphasis on faith?

THINK ABOUT THIS!

"The atheist says there is no God. The Christian and Jew say there is a God. The agnostic says, 'I cannot know.' Not 'do not know' but 'cannot know.' I never would presume to say flatly that there is no God. I don't know everything; I'm not the embodiment of wisdom. But it is not possible for me to believe in God.

"I have spent a lifetime thinking about it. If this were a simplistic conclusion reached on a whim, that would be different. But it's impossible for me — impossible — to believe that there is any thing or person or being that could be described as a loving God who could allow what happens in our world daily."

Charles Templeton

"Jesus was the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique. He was the intrinsically wisest person that I've ever encountered in my life or in my readings. His commitment was total and led to his own death, much to the detriment of the world. What could one say about him except that this was a form of greatness?

"In my view he is the most important human being who has ever existed. And if I may put it this way, I ... miss ... him!"

Charles Templeton

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for Those Investigating Christianity

- Describe the genesis of your doubt about God—how and why did it begin? Why does it sometimes seem so complicated or difficult to believe in God?
- What kinds of questions have challenged your ability to believe in the validity of the Bible, the deity of Jesus, or the existence of God?
- According to Lee’s interview, Templeton wasn’t looking for a response regarding his troubling issues so much as he wanted to be understood. To what degree do you just want your doubts to be understood?
- In Templeton’s case, the process of reasoning had chased away his faith. But are faith and intellect really incompatible? Is it possible to be a “thinker” and a follower of Jesus at the same time? Explain.
- Are Christian beliefs deleterious to individuals and to society as Charles Templeton has stated?
- Describe your stance regarding the existence of God. Do you consider yourself more of an agnostic, an atheist, a believer in God, or some other category?

Between Sessions

Personal Reflection

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

(Mark 10:13–15)

1. What is it about little children that makes them so absolutely trusting? How often do you long for the faith of a child when it comes to spiritual matters and life in general? Aren't things just simpler for those who believe things easily and never second-guess what they've been told?

2. Then again, isn't it those who trust easily who get taken advantage of? What is it about giving away trust that makes you vulnerable to disappointment, rejection, and hurt? How many times have you been let down by the very ones you thought would be there for you, the very ones who promised to take care of you? How many times have you said, "Never again"?

