

DINNER WITH A PERFECT STRANGER

FOUR-WEEK GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

(version 1)

WEEK ONE: CHAPTERS 1–4

1. What was your initial reaction to the premise of the book? If you received an invitation like Nick received, what would be your reaction and response?
2. What about Nick’s character can you relate to?
3. Do you ever wish you could have some sit-down-and-talk time with God? Why? If you could sit down one-on-one with Jesus, what are two questions you would like to ask him?
4. What is your reaction to Nick’s statement ending chapter 3? Why?
5. Is there such a thing as actual reality? Why is it important for our belief system to correspond to reality? What difference does it make if it does not? What’s wrong with saying about someone’s belief system that “It’s true for them”?
6. What would you say is the most convincing evidence that there is a Creator? Why?
7. How does the Christian concept of God differ from the Islamic concept of God? Why does this matter in regard to humanity’s deepest longings? How does your experience relate to this?
8. What is unique about Jesus compared to the founders of other world religions?
9. On page 28, Jesus makes the statement, “You don’t want what you’re ultimately trusting to be wrong.” What are you ultimately trusting concerning your eternal destiny?

WEEK TWO: CHAPTERS 5 & 6

1. Why in the book does Jesus say there is no path to God? What is the distinction he draws between “path” and “way”? What is the way?
2. Why isn’t God interested in having people try to perform for him? What is the implication of this for your own life? Why do people so easily believe that their efforts at being good will gain acceptance for them with God?
3. What do you think are the primary indicators that humanity is in rebellion against God? To what degree have you participated in the “daily sins of the heart” that is the cancer of God’s universe?

4. Are there rips in the fabric of your life that only God is big enough to fix?
5. Why is it important that God be perfectly holy and perfectly just?
6. Where would you place yourself on the Mother-Teresa-to-Hitler scale? Where does that put you in relation to God's perfect standard? Why?
7. How would you answer the question that Jesus poses on page 53: "On what basis are you going to stand before a perfectly holy God and say that you've been good enough?"
8. How can God be both perfectly just and forgiving at the same time (see Romans 3:23-26)?
9. How would you answer the question Jesus poses to Nick on page 56: "Don't you think God loves you at least as much as you love Sara?"
10. Discuss the parable Jesus tells of the two schoolboys. How would describe the character of the friend with the better grades? How is God like this friend, only more so? Why?
11. What should be the impact on your life of knowing that God longs to have you with him, both in eternity and in your daily life now? If God's business is restoring relationships, what does he want your response to be toward him?
12. If you have not received the free gift from God that Jesus explains on page 58, what is keeping you from doing so now?

WEEK THREE: CHAPTER 7 & 8

1. How is belief in God not a blind leap of faith? How is belief in Jesus as God in the flesh not a blind leap of faith?
2. Did any of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah on page 63 surprise you? Which ones? Which of the prophecies is most important to you personally? Why?
3. How do the gospel accounts make it clear that Jesus was not simply a good religious teacher?
4. In what ways does the disciples' behavior in the weeks, months, and years after Jesus' crucifixion support the claim that Jesus rose from the dead? If Jesus did not rise from the dead, how would you account for the disciples' lives and teaching as indicated on pages 67 and 68?
5. What happens to someone on the inside when they place their trust in Jesus Christ?
6. If Jesus came to restore us to our original design, is God living in us part of how we were designed to live? What are the implications of this for your own life?

7. Jesus said that he came to reveal the Father. Based on what you know about Jesus, how would you describe God the Father?
8. Why does God offer eternal life only as a gift instead of something you can earn?
9. Why does Jesus say to Nick on page 77, “But that’s not the real issue, is it?” What is the real issue in you placing your faith in Christ?
10. Most of the New Testament teaching on hell comes from Jesus himself. How does knowing this affect your view of hell?
11. What are the implications of the fact that God chose to suffer more than his creation suffered?
12. Are there hurts in your life that it seems God doesn’t care about? If you are willing to share, what is one of them? What do these chapters have to say about whether God actually cares or not?

WEEK FOUR: CHAPTERS 9 & 10

1. Explain how eternal life and heaven are not the same thing. Based on what Jesus says, how would you describe eternal life?
2. From the characterization in the book, how would you describe Jesus? What kind of person is he? What qualities of his stand out to you the most?
3. What aspects of God seem mysterious to you? Can other members of the group shed some light on these mysteries? Will some aspects of God always be a mystery to us?
4. In what way is “God living in you” the best part of the message of Jesus? What difference should it make if God lives in us?
5. Have you lost the spark or adventure in life? How would/should being joined to the Creator of the universe change that?
6. Would God design life with him in eternity to be boring, or to be the fulfilling enjoyment of all you were designed to be? What makes you say so? What are the implications of your answer for you?
7. Which of the following aspects of the good news of Jesus Christ appeals to you the most:
 - getting your sins forgiven
 - being with God in eternity
 - have a real relationship with God now
 - receiving a changed heart with new desires from God
 - God living in you now and forever

8. What would you expect to happen in Nick's life now?
9. What was the most important aspect of the book to you personally?
10. What questions remain in your mind concerning any of the issues the book raised? Is getting an answer to these questions important to you? How are you going to go about getting your answers?
11. What is the personal application for you of Revelation 3:20, the Bible verse that the book closes with?