

disclaimer

"Living the Questions" is a study for the countless people of faith who have suffered in silence as the voices of fear and false certitude claim to profess the unchanging truth of Christianity. Its purpose is to provide a resource for the discussion of what is already believed and practiced by many faithful people still holding on within institutional religion while harboring a conviction that what most churches teach isn't the whole story. It may even be helpful for those who Jack Spong calls "believers in exile" – those who have left the church because of its refusal to take their questions or life's situation seriously. It is not intended to spell out new doctrine or create new dogma but to serve as a catalyst to perhaps crack open the door to the future.

To make the implicit explicit, this study is *not* for:

- those whose personal faith requires them to believe that the Bible is the inerrant and inspired word of God.
- those who believe that the doctrines set forth by the early church are sacrosanct and not to be questioned.
- those whose eternal salvation depends on their unswerving commitment to the above.
- those who believe the reason the mainline churches in Europe, North America, and Australia/New Zealand have been losing members and influence for generations is because they haven't been teaching "orthodox" Christianity or preaching the true Gospel.

Please be aware that the issues and concepts discussed in the DVDs and written material will challenge many people's worldview and understanding of the divine. For some it will be radically new information. For others, it will be an affirmation of what they've known deep down for a long time. Both facilitators and participants will want to be prepared for anxiety, conflict, and the need to be patient with those who are struggling.

The theme of each session is a broad area of thought and is not designed to "prove" a point or make specific conclusions. Although each session has a "focus" which is clearly stated at the beginning of each session's Participant Guide, the nature of the material covered is "non-linear"—more inductive than deductive. The video segments and questions are intended to expose people to ideas and concepts that either

- don't have answers or
- are in a transitional stage and are merely pointing toward something new.

Participants who are expecting to leave each session with clear and concise answers will be disappointed. The purpose of this time together will be to raise questions and "stir the pot", not provide answers. Everyone participating should resist the urge to try to provide answers for those troubled by the ambiguity of some of the conclusions.

"Living the Questions" seeks not to provide easy answers, but to be a resource for people who are in the midst of a life-long conversation about the mysteries of faith and life.

The producers of this series are not professional scholars but local church pastors responding to a need in their congregations. "Living the Questions" does not intend to offer a "systematic theology". It is a thematic overview borne of day-to-day conversation and questions raised in the local church. The major themes are presented as a "survey" of thoughts and ideas being discussed in theological circles.

It is hoped that exposure to these ideas and perspectives will generate continued dialogue among the participants and beyond into their circles of influence. "Living the Questions" is not intended to provide answers but to become a part of the ongoing reformation of Christianity in the 21st century. It is a tool to help open conversation, give progressively-minded Christians an opportunity to network and, perhaps most importantly, give them the assurance that they are not alone in their beliefs.

