

# ***DINNER WITH A PERFECT STRANGER***

## **EIGHT-WEEK GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

### **WEEK ONE: CHAPTERS 1–3**

1. What was your initial reaction to the premise of the book? Does this say anything about where you are at this time in your life?
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?
4. If you received an invitation like Nick received, what would be your reaction and response?
5. If you could sit down one-on-one with Jesus, what are two questions you would like to ask him?
6. Why do you think Jesus refused to turn the wine into water at the end of chapter 2? What does this say about having a faith relationship with God?
7. What is your reaction to Nick's statement ending chapter 3? Why?

### **WEEK TWO: CHAPTER 4**

1. 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?
2. What's wrong with saying about someone's belief system that "It's true for them"?
3. How is Christianity distinct from the other primary world views, such as Islam, Hinduism, and atheistic naturalism (the material world is all there is)?
4. What would you say is the most convincing evidence that there is a Creator? Why?
5. 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?
6. What is unique about Jesus compared to the founders of other world religions?
7. 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?
8. What are you trusting in the day to day aspects of your life, to live life to the fullest?

### **WEEK THREE: CHAPTER 5**

1. What aspect of the good news of Jesus Christ is emphasized in this chapter?
2. 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?
3. Why isn’t God interested in having people try to perform for him? What is the implication of this for your own life?
4. Why do people so easily believe that their efforts at being good will gain acceptance for them with God?
5. How can there be benefit in obeying God if it won’t get you into heaven?
6. If God’s business is restoring relationships, what does he want your response to be toward him? Toward others?
7. What do you think are the primary indicators that humanity is in rebellion against God?
8. Are there rips in the fabric of your life that only God is big enough to fix? Do you go to him with these things? How do you think he wants to use those rips for good purpose in your life (Romans 8:28-29)? How can you cooperate with God in his fixing process?

### **WEEK FOUR: CHAPTER 6**

1. Why is it important that God be perfectly holy and perfectly just?
2. 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?
3. To what degree have you participated in the “daily sins of the heart” that is the cancer of God’s universe?
4. 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?”
5. How does Islam water down God’s perfect holiness and justice?
6. How can God be both perfectly just and forgiving at the same time (see Romans 3:23-26)?
7. 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?”

8. Discuss the parable Jesus tells of the two schoolboys (pages 57 and 57). How would describe the character of the friend with the better grades? How is God like this friend, only moreso? Why?
9. 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?
10. 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 FIVE: CHAPTER 7**

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 way does all of Christianity rest upon Jesus's rising from the dead? What good news did Jesus have to offer if he did not rise from the dead?
5. 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?
6. What happens to someone on the inside when they place their trust in Jesus Christ?
7. In what sense is New Age religion a counterfeit of what God truly offers? Why do people find the counterfeit appealing?
8. 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 you own life?
9. What aspects of your life would you like to change, but you don't seem to have the strength to do so? How does God want to be the one to do them through you?
10. In what sense is marriage "not about rules"? Why can God's relationship with us be described the same way?

### **WEEK SIX: CHAPTER 8**

1. What does it mean to you personally that God became human?

2. Why is trusting God a matter of the heart, not a matter of what the eyes do or do not see? Explain.
3. Why does God offer eternal life only as a gift instead of something you can earn?
4. Jesus said that he came to reveal the Father. Based on what you know about Jesus, how would you describe God the Father?
5. 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, either for your eternal destiny or your daily life?
6. Most of the New Testament teaching on hell comes from Jesus himself. How does knowing this affect your view of hell?
7. Why do you think anyone would choose continued separation from God?
8. How would you explain God’s purpose for the present time? In what sense will one day everything be made right?
9. What are the implications of the fact that God chose to suffer more than his creation suffered?
10. 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 does this chapter have to say about whether God actually cares or not?
11. How does God use personal pain in His plan of restoring his relationship with people? Have there been wounds in your heart that have driven you to God? What were/are they? How did they drive you to Him?

## **WEEK SEVEN: CHAPTER 9**

1. Are you stuck on a performance basis with God, trying to please Him through your own efforts? How does He want you to depend on Him living through you instead?
2. Explain how eternal life and heaven are not the same thing. Based on what Jesus says, how would you describe eternal life?
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 should being joined to the Creator of the universe change that?

6. In what sense is your life still like the child making mud pies by the curb? What would it take for you to choose to go to Disney World instead?
7. 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?
8. If God lives in you, is it possible to love those whom you don't have a positive emotional response to, at least at times? How does this happen in a practical sense?
9. Read the gospel of Luke, chapter 15. If you have placed your trust in Jesus as your Savior, is God "doing back flips" over you? What is the implication of that for you?

### **WEEK EIGHT: CHAPTER 10**

1. What would you expect to happen in Nick's life now?
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. Which of the following aspects of the good news of Jesus Christ is most important to you:
  - 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
4. What is the personal application for you of Revelation 3:20, the Bible verse that the book closes with?
5. How can we dine with Jesus daily?
6. What was the most important aspect of the book to you personally?
7. 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?
8. What action step(s) you would like to take concerning yourself as a result of reading this book?
9. What action step(s) you would like to take concerning someone else as a result of reading this book?