

God's Book

'Wise answers to challenging questions.
Hugely helpful!' **Bear Grylls**

An Honest Look at the
Bible's 7 Toughest Topics

ANDREW OLLERTON



Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 1 - Making Sense of Tough Topics

Icebreaker

Name one book (any kind, not necessarily Christian) that surprised you when you learned more about its background or context.

1. In the video, Andrew describes the Bible as a single unfolding story. How does seeing that storyline develop over time help you make better sense of passages that seem puzzling on their own?
2. In John 6:66–68, many of Jesus' disciples turn back after a difficult teaching, but Peter stays, even though he does not fully understand, saying, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' What do you think keeps someone committed to Jesus and to Scripture when parts of it feel difficult, unsettling, or hard to accept?
3. Knowing something about the culture or background behind a passage can often bring clarity. Have you ever had a light-bulb moment that helped you see a verse differently? In addition to God's Book, are there any particular books, podcasts, preachers, or teachers that you've found help bring that context to light?
4. The Bible's story shows ideas like justice and equality developing over time. How does noticing that progression help you read earlier laws or practices that feel strange today? Think about, for example, how the story moves from all people being made in God's image, to God freeing slaves in Exodus, to Jesus forming a new humanity where all are equal.
5. Is there any part of the Bible that you find particularly hard to understand or any teaching that you find hard to accept?
6. Andrew says that mystery is a normal part of faith. How can meeting in a group like this help us wrestle honestly with difficult parts of Scripture?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 2 - Science & Creation

Icebreaker

If you could ask God one 'how does this work?' question about creation, what would it be?

1. When you read Genesis today, where do you feel tension, if any, between the biblical account of creation and scientific explanations? Andrew frames Genesis as addressing deeper questions of meaning rather than process. How does that framing shape the way you sit with those tensions?
2. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). Before the Bible says anything about humanity, morality, or salvation, it begins with this claim about God and the world. Why do you think that matters, and what kind of story does it set us up to read?
3. Ancient cultures told creation stories full of competing gods. How does Genesis' ordered, peaceful creation narrative challenge or deepen your understanding of what God is like?
4. 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands' (Psalm 19:1). How do you respond to the idea that scientific explanations can sit alongside a biblical belief that creation points beyond itself to a Creator?
5. Andrew suggests that Genesis is not just explaining origins but forming our vision of the world, presenting humans as image-bearers entrusted with the stewardship of creation. In a culture that is constantly training us to see the world in certain ways, how does Genesis invite us to see differently, and where do you notice that difference most clearly?
6. What questions about creation, origins, or Genesis still linger for you after today's conversation, or feel worth returning to rather than simply moving on from?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 3 - Exodus & the Law

Icebreaker

Did you ever break a small rule as a kid and look back on it with a smile now?
What happened?

1. When Thomas the Tank Engine leaves the tracks, he feels free but quickly becomes stuck. Where do you see similar patterns unfolding in the way our culture talks about freedom, limits, or self-expression today?
2. The Ten Commandments begin with a reminder, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery' (Exodus 20:2). How does starting with grace and rescue, rather than command or demand, reshape the way we read both the law itself and our relationship with God?
3. Israel received these laws as a newly formed people. How does that help you see the law as part of God's unfolding movement toward justice rather than a complete or ultimate expression of his intentions?
4. When you encounter Old Testament laws that feel morally troubling or offensive, what is your first instinct? Do you dismiss them, defend them, or distance yourself from them? What do you think that instinct reveals about how you're approaching the Bible?
5. Many Old Testament laws regulate areas like work, family life, rest, and social responsibility. When you see these laws within Israel's covenant with God, what kinds of rhythms of life do they shape in worship, relationships, and life together — and are there any of those rhythms you think we've lost, neglected, or might want to recover today?
6. Jesus taught that the heart of the law is love: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul... [And] love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12:30–31). How does reading the law as moving toward love, rather than being only about rule-keeping, change the way you hold its more difficult parts?
7. What's one thing from today's conversation that has shifted, clarified, or enriched the way you think about the Old Testament law?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 4 - Conquest & Violence

Icebreaker

Have you ever visited a place where the history changed how you saw it? What stood out to you?

1. Andrew says that the Bible opens and ends with scenes of peace (Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22). How does starting and ending the biblical story with peace shape the way you approach the violent passages in between?
2. When you read the conquest narratives, what do you find most troubling or hardest to understand? Andrew suggests that ancient battle accounts often used hyperbole and that cities functioned more like military garrisons. Does that historical context help at all, and if so, how?
3. Israel were former slaves who needed a land to live in, yet entering Canaan involved real conflict. How does holding those two realities together — a people receiving God's promise of land and the unsettling violence involved — shape the way you understand this moment in God's unfolding story?
4. When you come across violent Old Testament passages, what helps you stay engaged with them honestly rather than avoiding them? Isaiah imagines a future where nations 'beat their swords into ploughshares' (Isaiah 2:4). How does holding that long-term vision affect the way you sit with these difficult texts?
5. At the cross, Jesus does not retaliate but instead willingly allows violence to be done to him, calling his followers to love their enemies. How does this moment shape the way you think about biblical violence, divine justice, and the direction the whole story of Scripture is moving?
6. Looking at the whole sweep of Scripture, from conquest to cross, what's one thing from today's conversation that has helped you see God's heart more clearly?
7. What's one thing from today's conversation that has shifted, clarified, or enriched the way you think about the Old Testament law?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 5 - Exile & Suffering

Icebreaker

If you could magically erase one everyday annoyance from the world (traffic jams, lost keys, etc.), what would you choose?

1. Andrew says exile is one of the Bible's key images for life in a broken world. How does seeing your own story within the Bible's larger story of creation, fall, redemption, and future hope help you approach life's struggles — not just by trying to understand them, but by learning to trust God in the midst of them?
2. Lamentations includes the cry, 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed... great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22–23). How, and where, do you think lament has a place in the life of the church and in the lives of individual believers?
3. Andrew highlights the tension in Jeremiah 29. God has "plans to prosper you", yet the people are told their exile will last seventy years. How does that mixture of promise and waiting help you think about seasons where relief doesn't come quickly?
4. Scripture suggests that some suffering comes from human brokenness, some remains mysterious, and some is used by God in ways we don't fully see. How do these different perspectives shape the posture you take, both when you are suffering and when you are alongside someone else who is?
5. Habakkuk says, 'Though the fig tree does not bud... yet I will rejoice in the Lord' (Habakkuk 3:17–18). What do you notice about the kind of trust Habakkuk expresses here, and in what ways, if any, does this passage speak into your own walk with God?
6. The Christian story claims that in Christ, God enters human suffering rather than standing at a distance. How does Jesus' willingness to carry pain and injustice on himself shape the way you view God in the midst of suffering?
7. Looking back over today's session, from lament to long-term trust to hope, what's one insight that has stayed with you and helped you see suffering differently?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 6 - Gospels & Miracles

Icebreaker

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 7 - Letters & Sex

Icebreaker

What's a funny or unusual nickname you've had, and what's the story behind it?

1. Andrew places sex within the wider story of creation, redemption, and hope. Before thinking about right or wrong, how would you describe the messages about sex and intimacy that most people in our culture are surrounded by today, and what do those messages tend to promise?

2. In the creation story, sexual intimacy is framed as covenantal and committed: 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). In a Western culture that has become increasingly sexualised, with technology opening up new forms of 'intimacy', where do you notice tension between that vision and the messages people absorb today?

3. Paul wrote into a world where people were often used rather than cherished. Against that background, he reminds believers, 'You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies' (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). As you sit with that, what questions, tensions, or fresh perspectives does this raise for you as you read Paul's teaching on sex?

4. Andrew contrasts 'Do you love?' with 'Will you love?' Scripture frames love not just as feeling but as commitment and faithfulness. If relationships were shaped more by promise than by emotion, what do you think would look different – in how people enter relationships, stay in them, or leave them?

5. The Bible presents sex as a good gift, but not an ultimate one, pointing beyond itself to deeper fulfilment. Jesus speaks of a future where human longing is finally fulfilled in God's presence (Matthew 22:30). Where do you see pressure today to treat sex as ultimate, and what do you think that pressure does to people over time?

6. Christians don't always agree on how to apply the Bible's teaching on sex, even though they share a love for God and a commitment to following Christ. What do you think it looks like to disagree well on these issues, with truth, humility, and love, within the church?

7. Given how personal and sensitive these issues are, Peter's instruction to speak with 'gentleness and respect' (1 Peter 3:15) feels especially relevant. What might that look like in practice when Christians talk about sex with people outside the church who do not share our beliefs?

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Questions for Discussion or Reflection

Session 8 - Revelation & Judgment

Icebreaker

What's the best or worst ending to a film or TV series you've ever watched, and why?

1. Revelation often feels like one of the most difficult books of the Bible to understand. The opening verse describes it as an unveiling: 'The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place' (Revelation 1:1). How does seeing Revelation as something meant to reveal, rather than obscure, shape the way you approach its strange or unsettling imagery?
2. Revelation uses vivid imagery — beasts, Babylon and dragons — to communicate deep truths about God, evil, and hope. How do these images help you engage with the message of the book, rather than getting stuck on the details?
3. In Revelation, 'Babylon' symbolises recurring patterns in human history — systems and cultures built on pride, violence, and the misuse of power. How does recognising these repeating patterns across different times and places help Revelation speak not just about the future, but about the world throughout history and today?
4. Revelation places the vision of the great white throne alongside the promise of new creation. 'Then I saw a great white throne... and the dead were judged according to what they had done' (Revelation 20:11–12), and later, 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain' (Revelation 21:4). How does Revelation invite us to hold together the conviction that God is loving with the reality that there is still judgment, and where do you find that tension hardest or most important to sit with?
5. Revelation describes Jesus as 'a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne' (Revelation 5:6). How does this image of the risen Jesus still bearing the marks of sacrifice shape the way you think about judgment, power, and authority?
6. The final chapters of Revelation picture not an escape from the world, but a renewed earth where God makes his home with humanity. 'God's dwelling place is now among the people' (Revelation 21:3). As you hear that promise, how does this vision offer you hope, now and for the future?
7. As we reach the end of this series, the Bible's story closes with hope, renewal, and God making all things new. Looking back over this series, how has this final vision shaped the way you now approach the Bible, especially its tougher, more challenging passages?