

# I'M FINE WITH GOD...IT'S CHRISTIANS I CAN'T STAND

## Study Questions

### Chapter 1: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Impose Their Morality on Others

1. Do you agree with the list of words that best describe the reputation Christians have? Are there any words you would add or subtract? What are they? If you have added some descriptive words, do these come from personal experience? Explain.
2. Why is hypocritical behavior more devastating to Christians and their reputation than it is to other groups (such as lawyers or politicians)? Is it fair that Christians are held to a higher standard of truth and integrity? Why or why not?
3. Give three examples of behavior by Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that remind you of the Pharisees in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
4. Explain what it means to be legalistic. When is legalism good? When is it not so good?
5. Describe how attitudes of Christians and the church have changed in the last generation concerning these topics:
  - Divorce
  - Alcohol
  - Movies
  - Sex

Why has this shift happened? In what ways has this shift either strengthened or weakened the moral authority of Christianity?

6. Jesus accused the Pharisees of ignoring justice, mercy and faith. Give examples of where Christians have dropped the ball in these three areas.
7. What does it mean for you to interact with the culture?
8. Give an example of how you can be a “salty” Christian in the culture around you.
9. Give an example of how you can be a light in a dark world.

## Chapter 2: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Are Paranoid

1. What are the benefits of Christians doing business with other Christians? What are the drawbacks?
2. What kind of signal do we send out to our non-Christian friends and neighbors when we live in a Christian "bubble"?
3. Talk about the delicate line that exists between the sacred and the secular in these nationally recognized days of observance:
  - Easter
  - Halloween
  - Thanksgiving
  - Christmas
4. Make a list of words or phrases Christians routinely use that can potentially leave non-Christians scratching their heads. (Example: "Saved by the blood of Jesus.")
5. In your opinion, what are the top three reasons why the Christian voice no longer matters (or matters very little) to a significant percentage of the population? How did this happen?
6. What can and should we do to change the perception that Christianity and a biblical worldview still matter in the culture at large?
7. What's the difference between something that our culture *allows* people to do that is contrary to a biblical worldview, and something that our culture *requires* people to do that is contrary to a biblical worldview? Is there a difference in the way a Christian should respond to what culture allows and what it requires?
8. What does it mean to be truly transformed by God every day? What can you be doing daily that opens your life to spiritual transformation?

### **Chapter 3: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Think They Are Correctly Right and Everyone Else is Wrongly Left**

1. What does the term “culture” mean to you? Why do you think so many Christians—including many Christian leaders—believe we are in a culture war? Is this a good way to view the culture? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever been upset or frustrated with something a national Christian leader said in response to something that happened in the culture? Describe what was said and what you thought at the time.
3. Rick Warren recently made the following statement: “I believe in the separation of church and state, but I don't believe in the separation of faith and politics.”

Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

4. Why has the “middle ground” disappeared in the discussion between people with opposing views—whether the topic is politics, sports, or religion? Do you think it's important to have a middle ground? If you do, do you think it's possible to get it back? How?
5. Would you say that the red state people or the blue state people started the current “war between the states”? Explain your answer.
6. What are the dangers of the religious right seizing the moral high ground in the political process?
7. Why do Christians typically become so offended when other people call them names or make fun of them? Why does this send out the wrong signal to those who are doing the offending and name calling? In what way does our taking offense demonstrate spiritual immaturity?
8. Describe what it means for a Christian to have dual citizenship. How does knowing this change the way you act in the culture?
9. Do you agree with the conclusion that Jesus and Paul specifically warned against judging those who are not citizens of God's kingdom? Why or why not?
10. What does it mean for you to be a “resident alien”?

## Chapter 4: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stan Christians Who Think Science is the Enemy

1. Give a few examples of spiritual stumbling blocks that Christians are guilty of putting in the paths of unbelievers. How do these compare to the stumbling blocks that God puts in the paths of unbelievers?
2. Explain why science and faith are complementary rather than contradictory. Why do some Christians insist that science and most scientists are opposed to faith?
3. In what ways does a strict belief in a literal six-day creation stifle conversation with people who don't agree with this view, whether or not they believe in God as Creator?
4. Review the "bad assumptions" that come from the scientific creationism view. In what ways do these assumptions hamper a Christian's ability to participate in the faith and science conversation?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the statement that Christians who are hung up on the *when* of creation have set up a "straw man" that isn't even in the Bible? Why?
6. Why is the *who* of creation of utmost importance?
7. What are the two definitive conclusions we can come to about *how* God created the universe? Do these conclusions contradict science in any way? Why or why not?
8. Why do you think many Christians are so preoccupied with the *when* question when it comes to creation? What does this fixation do to a correct view of God as an infinite Being not bound by time and space?
9. Reflect on the statement made by Dan Stone: "Both the Bible and the universe must be interpreted in a manner which does not contradict any of the actual facts contained in the combined whole."

In what ways does this change the way you view faith and science?

## **Chapter 5: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Are Convinced God Wants Them Rich**

1. Have you ever been outraged by “religious con men”? What effect did it have on you? What effect does religious hucksterism have on unbelievers?
2. Why do you think many preachers—especially the ones on television—teach that God wants His followers to be rich? Why do more than 60 percent of Christians buy into this message in one way or another? What damage do you think this message has done to the church worldwide?
3. What's the “catch” in the “God wants you rich” message of the prosperity gospel? Why don't more people catch on to the catch?
4. How important is it for you to trust any organization you would consider supporting financially? What factors should enter into that trust?
5. What do you think of this statement: “The primary proof that the prosperity gospel works is the riches being accumulated by the prosperity gospel preachers”?
6. Why do you think the preachers of the prosperity gospel don't seem to get it that so many of history's most influential Christians weren't rich?
7. Summarize God's attitude towards money and success. What does “divine dependence” mean to you?
8. Read Matthew 6:25-33 again. What does Jesus mean when He says, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need”?
9. When it comes to money, the prosperity gospel has a cycle: You give to God first, and then God will give more back to you. What is God's financial cycle?

## Chapter 6: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Fixate on the End of the World

1. Do you think there is more talk about the end of the world these days than there was 13 years ago when the first of the *Left Behind* books was published? Why or why not?
2. Ronald Aronson writes, "Living without God means turning toward something." What kinds of things do you see atheists and agnostics turning toward? Are they flourishing?
3. Why is predicting a date for the end of the world contrary to Scripture? Why is it dangerous to the gospel message?
4. Take a look at the list of "bad stuff" on page 109. Going point by point, explain why each of these will always be part of our world.
5. In what ways do Christians unwittingly separate themselves from the culture, whether or not they are fixated on the end of the world? What kind of message does this send?
6. Do you think there are any truly prophetic voices speaking today? Who might they be and what is their message? How are they being perceived by the Christian community?
7. Why does God care so much about truth, justice, and love? What are some practical things you can do to be God's spokesperson in each of these areas?
8. According to Jesus, what are the conditions or criteria for God's judgment?

## Chapter 7: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Make Lousy Movies

1. Why have Christians been content to settle for “less than the best” when it comes to the arts?
2. What happens when we condemn Hollywood’s attempt to portray Christ or Christianity because we think they didn’t get it right? How should we productively respond to movies like *The DaVinci Code*, even if we disagree with the premise?
3. Respond to this statement: “Society used to find its principles in the Bible, but it now looks to the entertainment industry for truth.”
4. Should Christians support a bad film even if it has been christened as Christian? Why or why not?
5. Read Scott Derrickson’s quote at the top of page 128. Do you agree that the “creative process” that starts with an agenda to promote a Christian worldview is destined to thwart creativity? Why or why not?
6. From one perspective, there has been a backlash in Hollywood against artists who openly profess faith in Christ. Why do you think this has happened?
7. Despite this climate of negativity—or perhaps because of it—why do you think Michael Gonzales believes that it’s easier to be a Christian in Hollywood right now?
8. Using three or four bullet points, outline an approach to the arts that Christians can take that might please God rather than embarrass Him. How can non-artists get involved?

## **Chapter 8: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Don't Know What They Believe**

1. Look at the broad description of an evangelical on page 137. Is there anything you would add to this list? Is there anything you would take away? Explain.
2. How is it possible for someone who claims to be a Christian to “fly under the radar”? What would such a person need to do? What would such a person need to avoid doing?
3. Why are so many Christians more concerned with doing the right things than they are with being the right kind of person? How is it possible to know about God but not truly know God?
4. Explain what it means to be the following:
  - A cultural Christian
  - A fundamental Christian
  - An intellectual Christian
  - An illiterate Christian

Talk about some times in your life when you slipped into one or more of these modes (be honest). If you are still stuck in one of these now, what can you do about it?

5. What are two of the best ways to find out what God thinks about this topic? Why do you think Christians often fail to connect with God in these ways?
6. Explain what it means to be the following:
  - A countercultural Christian
  - A gracious Christian
  - A transformed Christian
  - A disciple of Jesus

What can you be doing each day to improve in each of these areas?

## **Chapter 9: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Think They Have a Monopoly on Truth**

1. Do you remember a time when Protestantism and Catholicism were the two dominant religions in America? If you do, when did you come to the realization that your neighborhood and city also included Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and more?
2. What are some inappropriate ways to respond to beliefs and ideologies that compete with Christianity? What are some appropriate ways?
3. What's the difference between these two statements:
  - All truth is God's truth.
  - All religions are true.

Why is one statement true and the other false?

4. Why do you think most of the questions about God have shifted from doctrinal to moral in nature? How does this shift relate to the fact that people today are looking for more than an explanation for God than they are information about God?
5. Explain what John Stott means when he says the greatest threat to the Christian church is not from without but from within. Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. Where and in what ways is God moving around the globe? Have you become involved in any type of global movement? If you have, share your experience. If you haven't, what can you do to enlarge your global perspective?
7. List the four reasons why God is on the move around the world.
8. The Bible tells us to "make the most of every opportunity." What can you begin doing right now to obey this command in these areas?
  - Find out what you have in common with people of other faiths.
  - Know the differences between what you believe about God and what others believe.
  - Share your faith by both showing and telling.

## **Chapter 10: I'm Fine With God...but I Can't Stand Christians Who Give Christ a Bad Name**

1. It's easy to find examples of others who have given Christ a bad name. What's not so easy is to find and disclose times when you've given Christ a bad name. Do any come to mind?
2. What happens when Christians try to be overly hip and cool in the following areas?
  - Marketing
  - Music
  - Writing
  - Worship

How do we say relevant without getting carried away?

3. Give some examples of how Christianity and the church have misrepresented Christ for the sake of increasing membership?
4. Why do Christians sometimes feel compelled to be hostile toward the rest of society? Are we following Christ when we do this? What does Jesus want us to do?
5. Who are some people or organizations who exhibit Christlike characteristics? How can you get behind them? What can you do personally to exhibit Christlike characteristics?
6. Why is 1 Peter 3:16 essential to properly interpreting 1 Peter 3:15? What happens when we obey verse 15 without incorporating verse 16?
7. Make a list of things you can begin doing that will draw others to Christ?