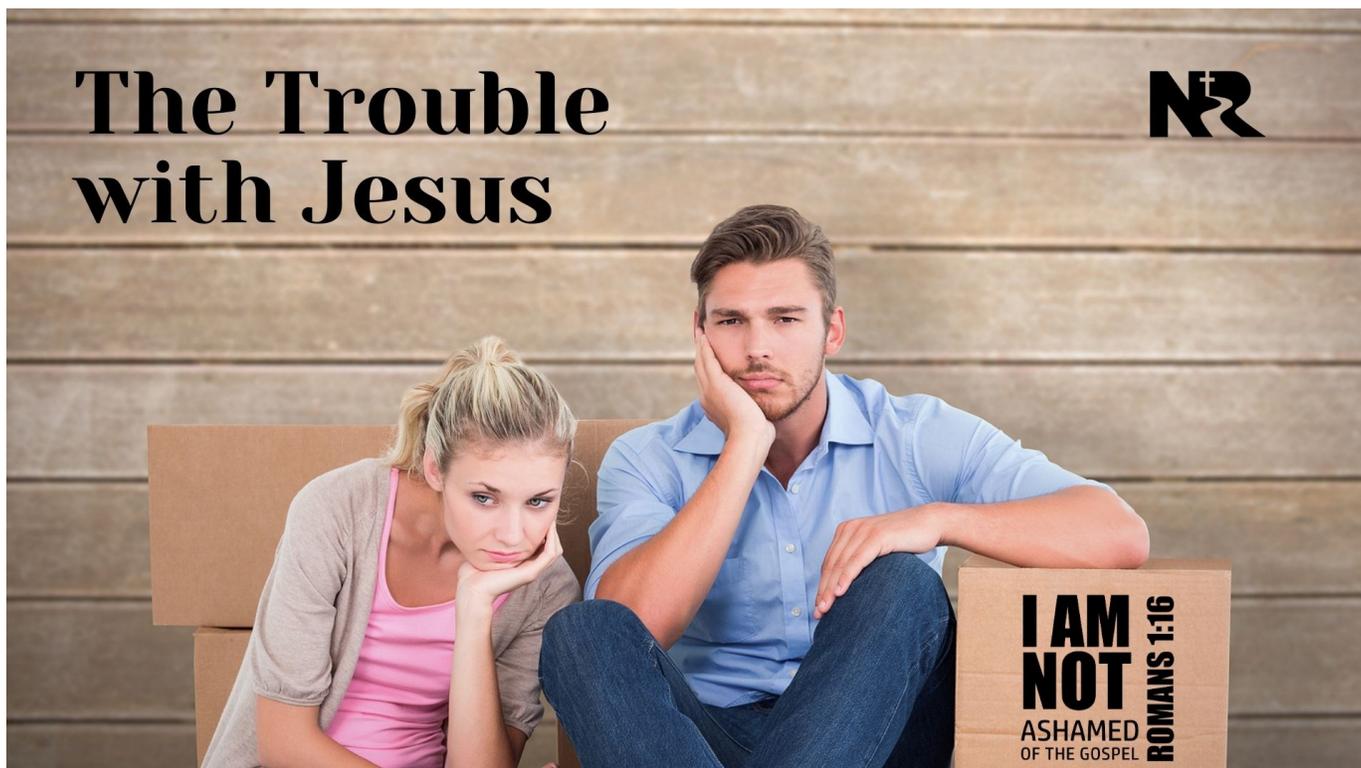


# The Trouble with Jesus



## Small Group Study Guide

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Thank you for being willing to lead and care for people in your Small Group! This is not an easy task, but it is an important one. You are leading a group of people to help them engage in community, and encounter God together. This doesn't mean you have to be serious and solemn when you lead, it means that you get to help a group of people learn more of who God is, what He is about, and how we can follow God more fully in our life. This can be a fun and exhilarating adventure!

Below are some things that will help you in your role as the leader:

**Focus of the Series:** The trouble with Jesus is that he doesn't neatly fit or easily stay in the boxes that we and our society at large try to put him in. So it is essential that we constantly do our best to understand Jesus as the Bible presents him and that we wrestle with the ways that modern historians, church movements, political causes and popular culture try to shape and package Jesus to fit their agendas. This series will look at some key ways in which our culture tries to do that.

**Structure of the Study:** The format of the study is broken down into three sections (Share, Study, Symbolize), progressing from easy-conversational questions, exploring the Bible passages, to personal reflection and thought. There are plenty of questions from which to choose from. Do not feel pressured to have to get through every single question in the study. The study was specifically designed in order that you can pick and choose the questions that will be most effective in navigating the discussion. The ultimate goal is for the group to engage in discussion to better understand God's grace together. If there is good dialogue happening, and you only get through a few questions, that's great! If you need more questions to help move the group along, then feel free to use whatever you need.

Some Tips For Leading The Study:

Your role is to be a facilitator. You do not need to be the in-house expert of the Bible, you simply need to lead the group in good discussion. This means speaking less yourself, and giving as many people in your group as possible a chance to share their thoughts and insights.

Silence is OK! Don't get nervous if no one answers the question right away. If too much time goes by (say, 45 second), ask if you need to repeat the question, or if the question was clear.

It's OK if you or the group does not have an answer to a question. If someone asks a difficult question, and the group is unsure of the answer, it's ok to table the question for a week in order to research the answer. Some of Apostle Paul's letters were responses to questions and problems in the church, and they waited months for an answer!

**Expect God to Show Up:** Most of your prep-time should be prayer-time. Ask God to be present in your group. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your group. Ask God to show you where He is working in your group. Pray for the challenging dynamics in the group. Allow God to lead your group's discussion by being open to what is coming to the surface in the discussion. Shepherd the group to engage with what God is doing. Pray that group members don't leave the same way they came!

**Honor Start/Stop Times.** Your group should agree together on when the group should start and end. Honor those times by beginning on-time, and manage the time so you don't go over.

## **The Trouble With Jesus: Terms Of Engagement**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:13-16**

### **Share**

1. What is it about darkness that frightens people?
2. Why do people commit crimes and evil acts under cover of darkness?
3. What are the top five moral problems our country is facing?

### **Study**

1. According to the passage, how are we like light?
2. According to Jesus, how exactly are Christians to be like lamps?
3. What kind of behavior should other people see Christians exhibiting?
4. If believers live as they are supposed to live, how will others respond toward God?
5. What did Jesus mean when He called His followers salt?
6. What sort of effect does salt have on food?
7. How do salty things affect us?
8. How can a Christian lose his or her saltiness?
9. What does it mean to "let your light shine"?
10. How might a believer hide his or her light?
11. What is the effect of bright light in a dark place?
12. What does light reveal?
13. What specific behaviors mark the life-style of a salty, shining Christian?
14. In light of your gifts, abilities, and interests, what specific problem in our world can you counteract as a representative of Christ?

### **Symbolize**

1. What phone calls or letters would you be willing to make or write this week in order to be salt and light in a dark world?
2. To whom in your neighborhood, family, or workplace can you be salt and light this week?
3. How can you be salt and light to the people God has placed in your life?