

LEADER GUIDE



UNTANGLING FAITH

Reclaiming Hope in the
Questions Jesus Asked

AMBERLY NEESE



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Week 1

*Can I
Trust God?*

Leader Notes for the Week



Leader Prep (Before the Session)

Overview

This week we looked closely at the word *trust* and, specifically, our trust in God. We considered questions regarding God's trustworthiness as we explored the nature of God through these five characteristics:

Day 1: God Is a Loving Parent

Day 2: God Is Good

Day 3: God Is Faithful

Day 4: God Is My Safe Place

Day 5: God Desires to Help Us See Clearly

Memory Verse

*The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.*

*My heart leaps for joy,
and with my song I praise him.*

(Psalm 28:7)

Daily Questions

Day 1

Jesus's Question: "Which father among you would give a snake to your child if the child asked for a fish?" (Luke 11:11)

The Question We Ask: Does God care about me and my struggle?

Day 2

Jesus's Question: "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand?" (Matthew 16:8-9a)

The Question We Ask: Is everything going to be OK?

Day 3

Jesus's Question: "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?" (Matthew 6:27)

The Question We Ask: What's going to happen?

Day 4

Jesus's Question: "Don't you know me . . . ?" (John 14:9)

The Question We Ask: Will God keep me safe?

Day 5

Jesus's Question: "Do you see anything?" (Mark 8:23)

The Question We Ask: Will God complete the work He has begun in me?

What You Will Need

- *Untangling* DVD and DVD player, or equipment to stream the video online
- Bible and *Untangling Faith* participant workbook for reference
- markerboard or chart paper and markers (optional)
- stick-on name tags and markers (optional)
- iPod, smartphone, or tablet and portable speaker (optional)

Session Outline

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5–10 minutes, depending on session length)

In order to create a warm, welcoming environment as the women are gathering before the session begins, consider either lighting one or more candles, providing coffee or other refreshments, or playing worship music, or all of these. (Bring an iPod, smartphone, or tablet and a portable speaker if desired.) Be sure to provide name tags if the women do not know one another or you have new participants in your group. Then, when you are ready to begin, open the group in prayer.

If meeting online, welcome each participant as she joins and encourage the women to talk informally until you are ready to open the group in prayer.



Icebreaker (5 minutes)

Invite the women to share short responses to the following question:

- When was a time you had doubts and needed reassurance about something?

Video (20 minutes)

Play the Week 1 video segment. Invite participants to complete the Video Viewer Guide for Week 1 in the participant workbook as they watch (page 44).

Group Discussion (25–35 minutes, depending on session length)

Note: More material is provided than you will have time to include. Before the session, select what you want to cover.

VIDEO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Amberly focuses on Power, Protection, Process, and Praise as we unpack our memory verse, Psalm 28:7. Which of these speaks most to you and your needs as you look back on the week's reading and reflection?
- How does the portion of the verse, "My heart leaps for joy and with my song, I praise him" make you feel today?
- Have there been times this week when you felt like the psalmist, downcast and uncertain?
- The video this week ends with the Permission Slip, the Permission to Doubt. What does permission to doubt and question mean for you? In what other areas of your spiritual life do you need permission to grow.

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Our lives are filled with questions. Why is my phone not working? What are we going to have for dinner? Where are my keys? We also ask many questions in our faith journeys. During this study we will normalize asking questions and explore how they can help us to untangle our faith and deepen our intimacy with God as we come to know who God is. Our beginning point is considering that God is a loving Parent who responds to our needs as a loving parent would.
 - Why are we sometimes afraid to ask God questions? How can our questions draw us closer to God?

- Read aloud Luke 11:9-13. Think about your parents or loving adults who nurtured and guided you well. What characteristics did they exhibit? Name ways God is a Loving Parent.
 - Reflect upon your ordinary day-to-day living. Now think of a time when there was a tragedy or a setback in your life. How did the questions you asked God change as you went from ordinary to extraordinary times?
 - After praying the Lord's Prayer this week, how are you able to answer this question: does God care about me and my struggles? Name the ways.
2. We often use the word *good* as our answer to questions. How was your day in school? *Good*. How was your lunch today? *Good*. But God proves Himself to be *truly good* in the witness of Scripture and our own lives. Even through heartache, loss, disappointment, and fear, God proves Himself faithful to us. And if we will recall the faithfulness He has shown us in the past, even when we cannot see it clearly in the present, we will be strengthened and reassured.
- We read several Scripture passages concerning the goodness of God. What other divine characteristics named in scripture did you add to describe God's goodness? (Refer to page 19.)
 - When have you answered a question recently with the word *good*? Now say aloud the phrase *God is good*. How does the nuance of the meaning of the word *good* change when we say the phrase *God is good*?
 - In Matthew 16:8-12, we discover questions that Jesus asked of his followers— questions that communicated the disciples should not worry about the provision of their needs but should recall the faithfulness of God. Think about all the times we focus on our next need instead of reflecting on the goodness of God. What are some ways we can focus on our past blessings instead of worrying about our next needs?
 - Share your responses to the phrase "If I truly understood how good God is and how much He loves me, I would/would not _____." (Refer to page 24.)
3. God is faithful. Many times, we jump to conclusions and worry instead of remembering the faithfulness of God. When we face uncertainties, questions can help us process what we are going through, but only when the questions are grounded in the truth of God and His character can they transition us from panicked questioning to peace.

- How confident are you that God will be with you no matter what? That He will be faithful to take care of all that concerns you? What are your doubts or questions related to God's faithfulness?
 - Ask someone to read aloud Matthew 6:25-27. How do these verses reassure us that God is faithful?
 - How do you see evidence of the faithfulness of God in your life and in the world? (Refer to page 29.)
 - Did you complete the exercise of making a "worry list" and writing beside each worry a statement of God's faithful love and provision (as suggested in "A Practical Next Step" on page 29)? If so, how did this exercise encourage you? How can thanking God for how He is going to meet our needs help to reduce our worry?
4. God is our refuge, especially when things are falling apart. Like a warm blanket covering us in security, God is our refuge in the midst of life's storms and the One who redeems our stories. Even when life doesn't feel safe, we can find security in knowing we are safe in the arms of God.
- Even though God is our safe place and protector, there are times when a literal refuge is also needed. Where is your safe place? (Refer to page 32.)
 - Reflect on John 14:5-14. Many people dismiss doubting Thomas because of his questions. How can this story encourage us? When was a time you doubted God but later experienced God's protection and hope?
 - What does it mean for you to make God your "safe place"? (Refer to page 34.)
 - Ask someone to read aloud Jeremiah 29:13. Name your feelings after hearing this verse. How does this verse bring you hope and comfort? Discuss what it looks like practically speaking to know, see, believe, and act. (Refer to pages 34–35.)
 - Why is practicing thankfulness for all God has done for us a way to experience refuge? When has thankfulness helped you to remember God's faithfulness and experience God's refuge?
5. God desires to help us see clearly. Our perceptions of God and truth become increasingly clear as we grow in our faith and trust God to heal our spiritual vision. Sometimes healing can be a slow process, yet we can be confident that God is patient and never stops working on our behalf.
- Read aloud Mark 8:22-26. How are we sometimes like the blind man in this story? What does this story teach us about God? How does it give us hope for our own spiritual blindness?

- Are you trusting God to heal your spiritual blind spots? Do you have the desire to see God more clearly, even if it means letting go of your preconceived notions of Him? Why or why not? (Refer to page 40.)
- Waiting for healing from God is difficult. What are some ways our waiting can be more active than passive?
- The memory verse for week 1 is Psalm 28:7. Ask someone to read aloud this verse. How did God speak to you through this verse this week? How is God inviting you to respond? (Refer to page 43.)

Deeper Conversation (15 minutes)

Divide into smaller groups of two to three for deeper conversation. (Encourage the women to break into different groups each week.) If you'd like, before the session, write on a markerboard or chart paper the questions below. You also could also do this in the form of a handout.

- Where did you see God at work in your life this week?
- Are there areas of your life where trusting God is still an issue? Why?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close the session by taking personal prayer requests from group members and leading the group in prayer. As you progress to later weeks in the study, you might encourage members to participate in the Closing Prayer by praying out loud for one another and the requests given.

Your Questions Can Lead to a Deeper Faith and Trust in God

Sometimes we're afraid to ask God questions but the truth is that questions can be holy guides leading us to truth and intimacy with God. This Leader Guide offers full session plans for six Bible study sessions based on *Untangling Faith*. In this six-week study, explore six common questions:

Can I trust God?
How can I grow in my faith?
Why should I pray?
What must I do to be healed?
How can I know God's will?
What does it mean to follow God?



Also available: Participant workbook (978-1-7910-2874-9) and DVD (978-1-7910-2873-2)

In *Untangling Faith*, Amberly Neese explores questions—the ones Jesus asked in the Gospels and the ones we ask in the secret places of our hearts. With witty storytelling from her own life experiences, she leads us through Scripture so that we can wrestle through our questions and come out on the other side with a deeper faith. Gather your friends and embark on this six-week Bible study as soon as possible! —**Melissa Spoelstra**, Bible study author and teacher

In her new book, *Untangling Faith*, Amberly Neese looks at the questions that Jesus asked his followers and is still asking us today. Your answers to Jesus's questions will make *Untangling Faith* a game-changer in your life! —**Bob Tiede**, blogger at LeadingWithQuestions.com and author of five books, including *Great Leaders ASK Questions* and *Now That's a Great Question*

If you enjoy good humor, poignant stories, and aren't threatened by questions or curiosity, this book is for you. It's been said, telling creates resistance, asking creates relationships. Amberly creates a safe, communal guide to exploring the questions of Jesus while connecting with others on a deeply empathetic journey. —**Mark P. Fisher**, Chief Encourager for Inspiring Growth



Amberly Neese is a speaker, humorist, and encourager. As a featured speaker for the Aspire Women's Events and Marriage Date Night, two popular Christian events that tour nationally, she enjoys touching the hearts and minds and funny bones of people all over the country. With a master's degree from Biola University, Amberly is an adjunct professor at Grand Canyon University and the Master Connector for Inspiring Growth, equipping and encouraging growth in leaders and businesses. She is the author of two Bible studies, *Common Ground* and *The Belonging Project*, and one devotional, *The Friendship Initiative*. She and her husband, Scott, have two teenagers and live in Prescott, Arizona, where they enjoy the great outdoors, the Food Network, and all things *Star Wars*.

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