

## Insights and Questions for Home Group Discussion

Remember, the manuscripts of our pastor's Sunday talks are available for you to read, on our VN website. Pick and choose from the material below to lead your home group in a Bible-based discussion.

1. In every journey in life, our steps are sequential. In other words, I can't take a second step until I've taken the first step; I can't take the fourth step until I've taken a third step. In his talk this Sunday, Pastor Ray was describing the fourth step in our faith journey—making Jesus the center of my life.

**Insight:** Once we take a step in our faith journey, we take that step with us into the future. For instance, even at step four or five, we're still exploring Jesus-brand spirituality, learning more and more about Jesus. Even at step five or six, we're still deciding to trust and follow Jesus and continually inviting him into our struggles and secrets. **BUT, WE CAN'T SKIP STEPS IN THE JOURNEY. NO ONE CAN MEANINGFULLY STEP INTO MATURITY BY MAKING JESUS THE CENTER OF HIS OR HER LIFE, IF HE OR SHE IS STILL STUCK IN ADOLESCENCE, REFUSING TO INVITE JESUS INTO PERSONAL STRUGGLES AND SECRETS.**

**Leaders:** do you know where your home group members are at in their faith journeys? Have you asked them? If not, you go first—be honest and tell them where you're at! Then ask them: *Using the categories our pastors have described, where to you think you're at right now in your faith journey? What have you heard God saying to you through our pastors' teaching over the past several weeks?*

2. Review this week's key Bible verse—I Peter 3:15. ***“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have”.*** The Apostle Peter's first letter is full of challenges for us to grow up and to grow strong in our faith (and to stay in sync with one another as we travel along). Even the preceding verses in chapter 3 (vv. 8-14) challenge us to keep growing even if people pressure us or persecute us for our decisions. Peter wants us to make the decision to grow in our faith, and to keep making the decision to grow, for the right reason. It's not about earning God's favor or forgiveness. It's not about looking good at church or avoiding rejection. It's not about earning God's blessing or getting rich. We make the decision to take the next step and the next and the next in our spiritual journey . . . because we so deeply trust and respect Jesus—his teaching and his example. We revere him as Lord. We serve him as our Master. We obey him as our King.
3. *Is there anything about Jesus' teaching or example (that you know from the Gospels) that, at this point in your life, you're not sure you can trust?*

**Leaders:** when one person in your group expresses a doubt (about trusting Jesus with money, sex, relationships, honesty, forgiving those who have hurt us, sharing generously with the poor, focusing on heavenly reward, and so on), ask the rest of the group if anyone else has shared that doubt at one time in their life and, if so, how they've learned to trust and follow Jesus in this same area.

4. *Have you ever faced a situation in your life in which someone dear to you has challenged you or even mocked you for making a Jesus-centered decision?* Let's be honest, sometimes even husbands and wives and good friends mock each other if one believes the other is getting toooooo passionate about Jesus, his church, or his mission! *Tell us about an experience in which your Jesus-centered decision was challenged. What did you learn from that experience?*
5. Pastor Ray asked us to count the cost of a decision to make Jesus the center of our lives. (a) standing up against our narcissistic culture, (b) getting clear about our reasons for this big decision— (Ray's reasons) Jesus is the Creator-Sustainer of world and our lives; Jesus is the only Savior-Redeemer in the universe of religions, and Ray wants to be someone's heroes, and all his heroes were Jesus-centered men. (c) developing some personal disciplines that support our decision. The challenge to count the cost, comes from Jesus himself (Luke 14:25-33). *What part of the cost of making Jesus the center of your life seems most daunting to you? How can we pray for you right now.*