

## Chapters 1-3

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, as we open our study of *Why Jesus?*, grant us new insight into the character of your Son, and how his life and teachings apply to us. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 1 - Vagabond**

- [2] Willimon says that anyone who wants to meet Jesus to understand or be with Jesus, must be willing to relocate.
  - Do you agree?
- [6] Willimon says that while friendship with Jesus is sweet, it's also demanding, and at times, even fearsome.
  - When have you seen this to be true in your life?
- [10] Willimon states, "Jesus is a journey."
  - In what way is that true?
  - In what way is that true in your own life?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- **Chapter 2 – Peacemaker**

- [13] Willimon says Jesus brings peace, but his peace often begins as disruption and despair before it is sensed as peace.
  - Is that true in your experience?
- [16] Willimon says patriotism, while perhaps a virtue, has never been regarded as a specifically Christian virtue.
  - Do you agree or disagree and why?
- [20] Willimon says Jesus appears to have no interest in one of the world's great abiding illusions—justice. And yet the Old Testament prophet Amos says, "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" [Amos 5:24]
  - What do you think about Willimon's characterization of justice?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- **Chapter 3 – Storyteller**

- [26] Willimon talks about parables and says that in parables, the joke is on us.
  - Take some of the parables discussed in this chapter and consider how the joke is "on us" in each (for a list of parables in scripture, see p. 36).
- [30] Willimon's third insight about why Jesus used parables is "Jesus is God with us, not God controlled, explained and tamed by us. Jesus not only spoke in parables; Jesus is a parable."
  - Do you agree?
  - Does it strengthen your faith or perhaps weaken it?
- [31] In Willimon's "Aside to Jesus," are you surprised by his assertion that The Kingdom of God is something God does rather than something we do?
  - If so, how do we hold that in balance with our call to the active life of being a Christian?
- [34] Willimon says that the most interesting character in the parable of the Prodigal Son is not the prodigal son or the older brother but the father.
  - Why do you think he says this and do you agree?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- [Why Jesus?](#)

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*Italics* imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

## Chapters 4-6

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, Jesus takes on so many different instructional roles in the Bible. Help us to reflect on those roles and how we might assume them in our own lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 4 – Party Person**

- [38] Willimon says that Jesus was fully God and fully human.
  - What difference does this make to you?
- [39] “Jesus’ own gregarious life made oxymoronic the term ‘solitary Christian.’”
  - Is this surprising to you?
  - Is it good news?
- When was the last time you had fun at church?
- [42] “The kingdom of heaven is a party with a bunch of losers whom you wouldn’t be caught dead with on a Saturday night.”
  - Do you think we do a good job of inviting the “losers” to the banquet?
- [43] In Willimon's aside to Jesus, he talks about why he gets “so few takers” when he invites people outside the church.
  - Do you think this is also an issue for us at our church? In other words, are we issuing the wrong invitation?
  - What should our invitation be?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- **Chapter 5 – Preacher**

- [46] Willimon reminds us that God created something out of nothing and says, “The prophets of Israel were poets who were preachers, preachers who were poets. They .... spoke something out of nothing...”
  - Why do you think the spoken word is so important in conveying faith?
  - Preaching is supposed to offer listeners the good news.
    - What is the most powerful sermon you can recall?
    - How was the good news preached?
- [50] Sometimes preachers preach sermons where the sermon is about us. Willimon says, “how can we better our lives...” But the primary subject of Scripture is not about us, but God.
  - How do you see that to be the case?
  - Should preaching always be “sweet music to our ears”?
  - What should be the purpose of preaching?
- [52] In Willimon’s “aside” box, he talks about how Jesus loved the truth so much that it got him the cross.
  - What does this say to us about the importance of truth?
- [53] Read the three statements about truth in paragraph 4.
  - How do these statements give you a new understanding of “truth”?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- **Chapter 6 – Magician**

- [57] Willimon says that the reason Jesus was killed for resuscitating a dead man was that “the authorities had a monopoly on who gets life and who doesn’t.”
  - Could this be why in some places in the world even today Christianity is considered a dangerous religion?
- [59] How do you see the difference between magic and medicine?
  - Do you agree that Jesus was a magician?
- [61] In Willimon’s aside, he asks why we are so scared of miracles.

- What do you think?
  - Have you ever experienced a miracle personally or known someone who has?
    - Did you have trouble convincing some people that it was a miracle?
  - [63] Willimon says that the feeding of the 5000 is the only miracle in all four gospels.
    - What is it that makes this miracle so important?
  - [66] “In miracles, God reserves God’s right to work in ways that disrupt our settled opinions of just what God can and cannot do.”
    - What limitations do you think we place on God?
  - [67] Willimon speaks of Christ’s resurrection: “In that ultimate sign and wonder is the turning point of history, the beginning of humanity’s great turn toward God, initiated in God’s grand turning toward us.”
    - What does this sentence say to you?
  - Other reflections on the chapter?
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## Chapters 7-12

- **Opening Prayer**

Dear Lord, we are thankful for this opportunity to share our thoughts on your Son, and ask that you shine new insight and inspiration in to those thoughts that we might grow closer to you. It is in the name of your precious Son that we pray. Amen.

- **Chapter 7 – Home Wrecker**

- [70] Willimon mentions Christmas greeting cards that feature smiling families on the slopes in Vail.
  - What do you think about that?
- What effect has believing in Jesus had on your family?
  - Do you know of any instances in which a person's faith has actually caused strife in their family?
- How seriously do you think our church takes caring for a child or youth when they are baptized or confirmed as a member of the family of God?
- [74] Willimon says that "when the Jesus movement got going as the church, baptism became the radical rite of Christian initiation."
  - In what way do you see baptism is a "radical" rite?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

- **Chapter 8 – Savior**

- [80] Read Willimon's "Aside to Jesus."
  - Who are the people that you are surprised God loves?
- [81] Willimon gives this definition: "...salvation is whenever Jesus intrudes into your space, whenever Jesus makes your sinful table the site of his salvation feast."
  - Do you agree with that definition of salvation?
  - How would you define salvation?
- [83] Jesus said, "I have sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them in also."
  - What do you think Jesus meant by this?
  - Are you surprised that Jesus said that if a person is not against us, he's for us?
- How do you believe Willimon would answer the question "Is it possible that even Hindus will be saved?"
  - How would you answer that question?
  - What do you think about Willimon's statement, "...note that salvation is God's business, not ours."

- **Chapter 9 – Sovereign**

- [88] Discuss what Willimon means about a "savior complex."
  - Have you ever seen a bit of the "savior complex" at work in any of the church folk you've been involved with?
- [90] How do you think of the kingdom of God ...do you think of it more as a spiritual possibility or a kingdom that is here and now?
- [95] What does it mean that Jesus' work was fully accomplished on the cross?
- [96] Willimon says that "A better righteousness is required, a righteousness that is not only based upon the commands of Jesus but also... the constant forgiveness of Jesus."
  - Would you agree that Christians are called to a "better righteousness"?
- [98] Willimon reminds us that Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is in you.
  - How do you understand this to be the case?

- **Chapter 10 – Lover**

- [104] Willimon says, "The cross signifies that a deep paradox is built into any accurate picture of Jesus, because we don't expect God to go to such lengths to get us."
  - What does the cross signify to you?
- The early church struggled to answer the question, "Was Jesus divine or human?" The church ultimately determined that he was both.

- Have you struggled with this same question?
- Are you more drawn to the divinity or humanity of Jesus?
- [107] Willimon says, “Jesus accomplished what he wanted to do through nonviolent, suffering love.”
  - What does the suffering of Jesus mean to you?
  - How have you suffered for someone else in your life in order to show them how much you love them?
- [110] Unpack Willimon’s statement: “... the cross is not what God demands of Jesus for our sin but rather what Jesus got for bringing the love of God so close to sinners like us.”
- Other reflections on the chapter?

*Note: This chapter begs for more reading about the theories of atonement. The internet isn’t always the best resource for information like this, but here’s a pretty balanced view that you can let interested folks know about:*

- [http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement\\_of\\_Christ](http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement_of_Christ)

### • Chapter 11 – Delegator

- [114] Do you see the dramatic story of Paul on the road to Damascus as more of a conversion story or a “call” story as Willimon proposes?
- [116] Willimon says “Jesus is not here to get what you want out of God; Jesus is God’s means of getting what God wants out of you.”
  - What’s the difference in those two statements and why is that important?
- [118] Read Matthew 25 aloud
  - Have you ever thought about the fact that the sheep that Jesus mentions are just as “dumb as the goats”!
  - Have you ever seen the face of Jesus in someone you cared for who was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, sick, or in prison ?
- [121] According to Willimon, Jesus’ last act of delegation was the Great Commission.
  - How do you feel our church is responding to Jesus’ Great Commission?
  - What do we need to do differently?
- Willimon defines a Christian as “...someone who has been surprised by Jesus.”
  - When was the last time you were surprised by Jesus?
- Other reflections on the chapter?

### • Chapter 12 – Body

- [124] Willimon refers to the Apostles’ Creed and its reference to the resurrection of the body.
    - What does this mean?
    - Have you thought about having a spiritual body?
  - [125] How hard is it for you to believe that “the church is the Son of God’s holy body”?
    - In what ways do we truly act like Christ’s Body?
    - In what ways do we fail to act as Christ’s Body?
  - [126] Willimon says, “Jesus is not how we sail away up to heaven... Jesus is God coming to us, here, now, heaven come to earth... Jesus makes us fully alive.”
    - Do you agree?
  - [130] Willimon reminds us that Jesus says, “I am with you until the close of the age.”
    - What comfort do you find in that promise?
    - Do you believe it?
  - [132] Willimon notes that Jesus’ resurrection tells us something definitive about God.
    - What would you say Jesus’ resurrection tells us about God?
  - [134] Willimon’s states “it’s hard to say that you love Jesus or that you believe in Jesus without obeying Jesus. And if you obey Jesus... you will be changed by Jesus.”
    - Do you agree?
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