

# Questions for Reflection and Discussion

## CHAPTER 1: BELIEVING

1. In this chapter the author explores the questions that often lead to believing in the divine, and the ways of knowing that contribute to our beliefs about God. “Two aspects of human life,” he writes, “seem to be especially involved in this kind of knowledge: an awareness of our failures, and our sense of wonder” (p. 7). What experiences of awe and wonder have shaped your beliefs about God? What experiences of failure or limitation have contributed to your understanding of God?

2. Of the five traditional arguments for the existence of God described in this chapter, which ones are most convincing to you? Why?

## CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLE

1. When it comes to the Bible, the author writes, people have to discover what authority it has for them “by reading

the Bible and reflecting on it and deciding whether it helps them to understand the meaning and purpose of life” (p. 20). What authority does the Bible have in your life? How does it inform your understanding of God?

2. What stories or passages in the Bible have been most meaningful and helpful to you? Which do you find confusing or even distasteful? How do you deal with those parts of the Bible that contradict or call into question the cultural values of your own family, town, or country?

### CHAPTER 3: GOD

1. In this chapter the author describes a number of the images and analogies that have been used to talk about God over the centuries. Which ones do you find most helpful? Why?

2. If you were to write a creed about what you believe to be true about God, what words or images would you choose? How would you describe the creative being of God? the redeeming action of God? the presence of God in the world?

### CHAPTER 4: JESUS

1. In this chapter the author writes, “To ask who Jesus is for us, we need to ask who we are and what our needs and expectations are, and to consider how these have been shaped by our upbringing and experience” (p. 48). How would you respond to the question, “Who is Jesus for you?” What aspects of your background and personality have been particularly relevant in shaping your experience and understanding of Jesus?

2. What aspects of Jesus’ life, teachings, and ministry as they are described in the gospel accounts do you find most

meaningful? What do you find difficult to understand? How do you interpret the stories of healing and other miraculous events? What do they tell you about who Jesus is? about who God is?

#### CHAPTER 5: THE TRINITY

1. What analogies or images of God have helped you to understand the doctrine of the Trinity? Are some traditional words or images more helpful than others? What are their limitations and dangers when we use them?
2. The author believes that “all human beings have some sense of this multipersoned God” who is “a very personal God to whom we can respond in a personal way” (p. 73). How have you experienced God in your life as a personal, multipersoned God? Where do you see God at work in the world in a personal (as opposed to impersonal) way?

#### CHAPTER 6: SIN AND SALVATION

1. In this chapter the author asks a fundamental question people have asked for centuries: “If God is good, why do bad things happen?” (p. 77). What are some of the ways the Bible answers this question? How have you answered this question when bad things have happened to you or your family or friends?
2. The author writes that “sin separates us from God, but God in Christ has overcome that separation and Jesus’ death on the cross plays a vital part in the process of reconciliation.” He goes on to note that Christians have had a number of ideas about how that reconciliation takes place. How would you answer his question, “Why was it necessary that Jesus die for us?” (pp. 82–83).

## CHAPTER 7: WORSHIP

1. The author writes that “worship is God-centered” and consists “in considering the beauty of God, and in rejoicing that he has such beauty” (p. 97). Where and when have you encountered worship that was “God-centered”? What have been the most significant forms of worship in your life? What made them meaningful?
2. How does your congregation balance the “spiritual” and “sacramental” dimensions of worship? Which aspects or modes of worship are you most easily drawn to? Which make you uncomfortable, or are difficult to understand? Why? What dimensions of worship are missing in your life now?

## CHAPTER 8: THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1. The author notes that while Christians must “adapt themselves to their culture in order to speak more effectively to that culture,” the ways we adapt are always controversial and the source of division. “The unity of the church,” he writes, “requires a willingness to be patient and listen to other voices, but that is not always easy to do on emotional issues” (pp. 106–107). What issues have caused controversy or division in your congregation? In what areas do you find it hard to “listen to other voices”? How do you think the church should deal with dissent?
2. “The church that gathers for worship,” writes the author in this chapter, “must also go out to serve” (p. 113). What do you think of when you hear the word “mission”? Where have you seen the mission of the church operating most effectively? In what ways have you participated in the mission of the church, such as in working for social change or the equitable distribution of resources?

CHAPTER 9: BEING A CHRISTIAN

1. What difference does your faith make in your life? How does your belief in God affect the way you live, the decisions you make, the relationships you have with others? What aspects of your life do you keep separate from your faith? Why?

2. How do you practice your faith and encourage it to grow? Where could you learn more about the Bible? theology? church history and tradition? prayer and worship? ethics? What concrete steps would you like to take in the coming weeks to nurture your relationship with God?