

NANCY FITZGERALD

(UNANSWERED)
DISCUSSION GUIDE

SMOKE, MIRRORS, AND GOD

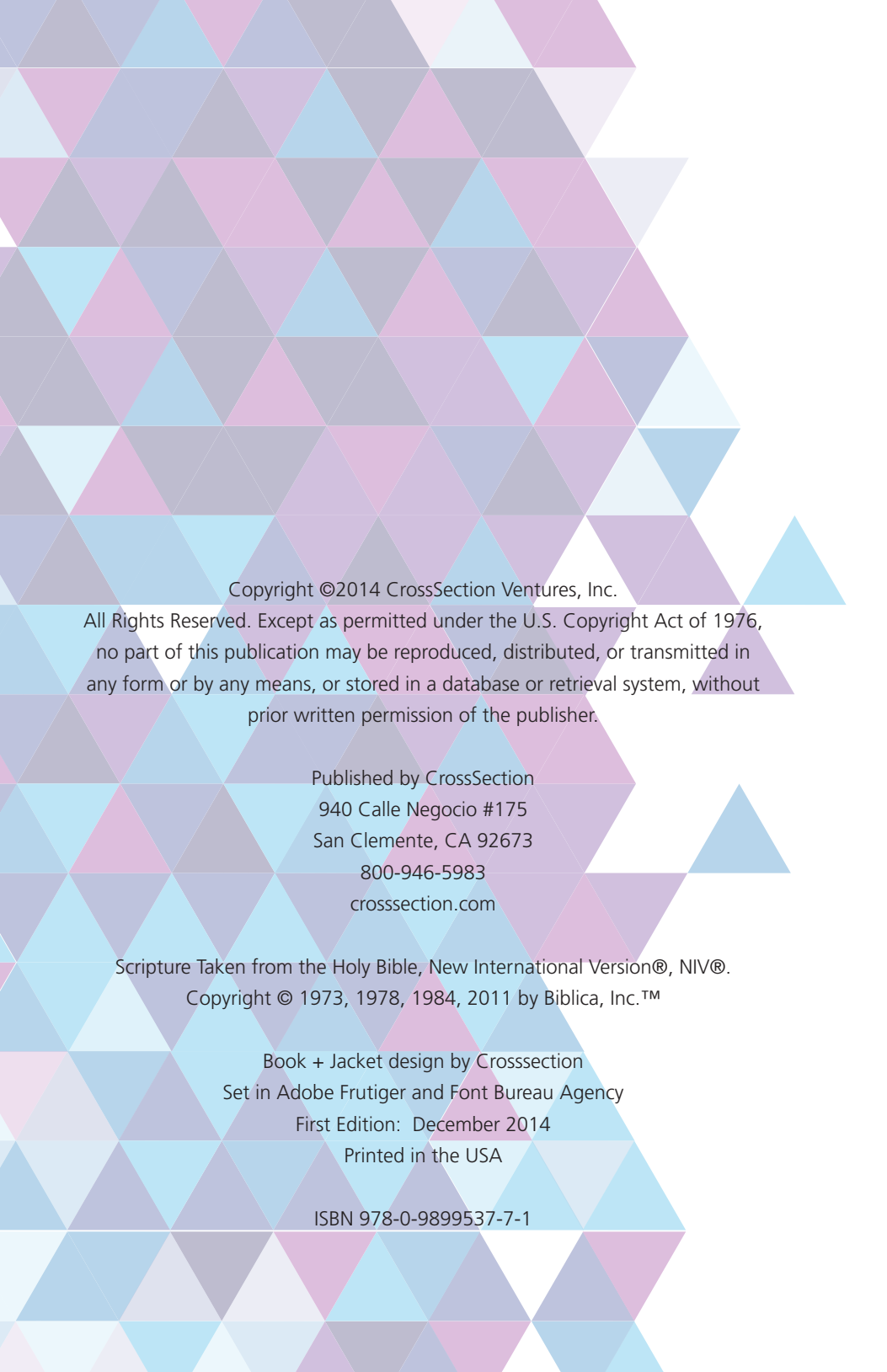
ANCHORSAWAY





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 **ANCHORS AWAY**



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LESSON 1 | THE LAKE

We all have our own stories of suffering and disappointment. Nancy's story embraces the harsh reality of living in a broken world that is often far from what we expect and is beyond our understanding. It is how we cope with the suffering and disappointment that matters. Because of her age and lack of anyone speaking truth into her about the drowning incident and her role in it, she was left to her own reasoning in trying to deal with life on this planet.

Nancy chose to walk away from God because He scared her, and she feared that He would kill her. Over time, she concluded that she had no other choice but to live for herself and try her hardest to fill a huge void in her life.

Nancy had worked hard to find her identity—she played golf, earned degrees, got married, had children and gathered material possessions. But her efforts turned up short when she realized she felt no closer to finding her purpose or understanding life. She became convinced that there must be something or someone outside of herself that would provide peace, purpose and hope in this world. This led to her lifelong search to find out who God is and who she is. Sadly, she saw her Christian acquaintances as hypocrites. Others she tried to engage in conversations about Christianity did not fully understand their own beliefs, let alone how to share them. They were little help in leading her to a faith in Jesus.

If she had met you, would you have been someone in whom she could have found a reason to believe in God?

It is often said that Christians who are living out their faith may be the closest that some people ever get to reading the Bible, stepping into a church, or seeing a reflection of God's compassionate heart. We can do this by knowing God and loving others, so that they too might meet the One who can give them life to the full!

Scripture tells us that we are all created in the image of God, meaning we all have the opportunity to have a personal, eternal relationship with Him. When we do not understand how much God loves us and wants us to choose to love and trust Him, we might get the impression that God is distant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even though we were born with a sin nature, which is the insatiable desire to do our own thing, we were also created with emptiness in our soul that can only be filled through a relationship with God.

Nancy experienced that void and realized that life without God does not work. The very things that she was trying to earn through performance, she found that God gives them freely when we believe in His Son. Things like love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, purpose and understanding are all ours when we learn to trust in God.

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Once we believe in God and become His child, we are enabled through the Holy Spirit to love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength as we radically love others. He wants us to love Him by spending time getting to know Him. One of the best ways to do that is by reading Scripture and talking with Him (praying). Spending time with other Christians encourages us and gives us a better understanding of what it means to live out our faith in all areas of life. Some say that their faith is personal, so they are not interested in being with other Christians or talking with others about God. But God wants to use broken people like us to reflect His light to our family, friends, co-workers and complete strangers—often times without words! Nowhere in Scripture are any of us exempt from living out our faith and letting our light shine for all to see. If our faith is genuine, it will be evident to others.

Thankfully, Nancy's search did not stop with the Christians who weren't prepared to give an answer. Her answers came when she met people who loved her exactly as she was and were eager to encourage her. Many mentored her, explaining the deeper things of God, and as a result, she became a believer of Jesus, a student of the Scriptures, a teacher and writer of the Christian worldview. Now, her goal in life is to be used by God to help others know what they believe, how to give answers to those who are searching and how to reflect God's love and grace toward the people they meet along life's journey.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If Nancy had come to you and asked, “How do you know that Christianity is not a hoax?”, would you have been able to give her a reasonable answer?
2. Have you ever had a time in your life where you questioned the goodness of God or even if there is a God during your time of suffering?
3. Why do you think that it is important to talk with others who have a strong faith in God as shown by the way they love others?
4. Would the people that you’re around every day say that your life generally reflects Jesus?
5. Is there duplicity in the way you live and love?



APPENDIX

Your Turn

Thank you for traveling on this journey with us. Our deepest desire is that you will start or continue living a culture changing life with a Christian worldview as your compass. Our hope is that your life will reflect what Christ has done, and is doing in you each and every day. We challenge you to always be ready to share the truth of Christ and the life that He offers, to anyone who asks.

Now that you have gone through the *Unanswered: Smoke, Mirrors, and God* study, you are in a great position to take what you have learned and teach juniors and seniors in high school with the Anchorsaway Christian worldview curriculum. This curriculum is designed to be taught by adults as a community study in a home setting. It is for anyone who is either questioning their faith or wants to deepen their faith with solid answers from history, science, the Bible and scholars who are experts in their respective fields. Not only will Anchorsaway students learn with clarity about the hope they have, but they will also be armed to answer questions about their faith with confidence in an unbelieving world!

The curriculum covers 21 major questions that are listed below. It can be taught by a trained teacher or through videos. If you are interested, please go to our website for more information. On our site, you can learn more about who we are and even sign up for an online teacher training class. Our website is anchorsaway.org.

Chapters offered in the Anchorsaway Curriculum:

1. What is the Christian Worldview?
2. What are the Five Major Worldviews?
3. Who is God?
4. Is the Bible Reliable?
5. Was Jesus Christ Resurrected? Why Does it Matter?
6. Is Jesus Christ God? What is the Trinity?
7. What is a Christian? Am I One?
8. Did Life Just Happen or Were We Created?
9. Who is the god of Islam?
10. What is the Big Picture of God's Redemption of Man?
11. Who is Satan and How Does He Work?
12. What is a Cult?
13. Why Don't the Jews Believe in Jesus?
14. How Does God View the Homosexual?
15. What are the Moral Implications of Bioethics?
16. What is the Christian Role in Cultural Reconciliation?
17. What are the Biblical Principles to Wise Financial Planning?
18. How can I become a Leader Who Influences Culture for Christ?
19. Why Does God allow Suffering?
20. How Do I Make Good Life choices?
21. What are the Keys to Building Healthy Relationships?

Have you ever dared wonder if there really is a God and if so, who and where he is? Does one religion have favor with GOD and some secret pathway to happiness and heaven? IF THERE IS ONE TRUE GOD... WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS each promising to have some unique inside track? If God is so good as some claim, why does He allow many of us to suffer while others prosper?

Sadly... questions about religion and God have gone unresolved. In *"Unanswered: Smoke, Mirrors, and God"*, we address and answer questions like these and many more. This journey is for any person who is curious to know if there is truth and if so, where it can be found. We ask tough questions and challenge you to take a serious look at what you believe to be true about spirituality and God. For many, the word God or Religion has left them with a bad taste. Far too often the actions and arrogance we see from those who seem to have religion all figured out are enough to hope we never meet the God that they promote. Yet when asked to explain why they believe in their particular brand of God...well ...the answers are as confusing and empty as the blank stare on their face. Again... we are left with more conjecture and confusion that add to our growing list of questions that have gone UNANSWERED.

Our hope is that as you read through the book and work through the study resources, that you will come to a place where most of your deepest inner thoughts and questions about God will no longer remain UNANSWERED. Our unique approach starts with the premise that WE have the questions as most do about God. It doesn't matter what religious system, culture or bias you may have...it is where we began as well. "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." —*Albert Einstein*

Join us as we take you on a journey where every question about Religion, Spirituality and God is met with openness, respect all without well intended self serving answers.

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