

# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS | WEEK 1—JAN. 7/8, 2012 (BOB MERRITT)

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a world that's full of differences. It's important for us to know what differences matter. This weekend we're kicking off a series called, "What's the Difference?" and addressing the main differences between two of the most popular groups within Christianity—Catholics and Protestants. Over the next few weeks we will be looking at major differences between Christianity and other world religions. Below are questions and scripture that will help guide you through discussing this week's message on Catholics and Protestants.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of people who have the same goals as you but have a very different approach to attaining them? How do you deal with them? How should you deal with them? Do you ever get annoyed with them? How can you gain the wisdom to understand what differences really matter and what differences really don't matter? Explain.
2. When talking about Catholics and Protestants it's important to note that both are Christian. They agree on many core issues that really matter and they both have a desperate longing to connect with God. But one major difference is authority. What do you consider your authority? Is it church tradition or, as Martin Luther would say, sola scriptura (scripture alone)? Would you consider yourself more versed in church tradition or the Bible? In your view, what's more important? Why?
3. What's your church background? Considering your background, what's your view of salvation? Is it in faith alone—the Jesus-Plus-Nothing plan, or faith plus church tradition—the Jesus-Plus-Something plan? Do you support your view based on what scripture tells you or what church tradition tells you? **Read Romans 3:20-21, 28** and **Ephesians 2:8-9**. What do these verses say about salvation?
4. Many people rely more on a religion than a personal relationship with Jesus. If you were to reflect on that statement, what camp would you fall into? What does your heart desire more? Do you view Christianity as a religious list of things to do or an intimate relationship with the God who loves you—a relationship that brings freedom and joy?
5. Do you believe that you can talk directly to God? **Read Hebrews 7:24**. What is this verse saying? Who do you view as your priest? Do you think it's biblical to pray to something or somebody other than God? If so, how did you come to that conclusion?

## THINK ABOUT IT

At the end of the day, it's not about whether you are Catholic or Protestant. It's not about what church you attend or certain theologies or traditions. It's really about stepping into a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

## COMMIT TO MEMORY

"For it's by grace you are saved through faith, it is a gift of God—not of works can anyone boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." Ephesians 2:8-9

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