



2. Answering questions with questions

Discussion guide – Series III

HOOK:

- Has anyone been in a group where you had a strong opinion on something, but decided to stay silent? What were you silent about, and why?
- Has anyone ever been part of a group in which your own views were the minority, and you felt pressured into silence as a result? What happened?

BOOK: Matthew 22:15-22 – Taxes to Caesar

- Why was this question a trap?
- How did they seek to lull Jesus into a false sense of security through flattery?
- What things are clever about the way Jesus replied?

LOOK:

- What might a similar 'no win' (trap) question be for us today?
- Should we ever deny the truth to keep the peace?
 - Is saying nothing the same as denying the truth? (Consider Jesus' example).
- Why is giving opinions on some things so 'toxic' for us as Christians? (Put differently, what are others wrongly assuming about us when we state a belief that is different to their belief?)
- Regarding the topic of tolerance, consider these questions:
 - Is it intolerant to disagree with someone's beliefs or actions?
 - If it isn't intolerant to disagree, what then is intolerance? (It is when we judge a person's character or treat them differently because of what they believe).
 - Is all intolerance wrong?
 - (Would you tolerate child abuse or violence?)
 - Where then does the standard come from that determines what we should or should not tolerate?
 - So (1) is a Christian being intolerant when they say they believe a certain thing is morally wrong, because they believe the Bible?
 - (2) Is a non-Christian intolerant when they accuse a Christian of being intolerant for believing something different to themselves? (Yes – they are judging our character. Tolerance is not about agreeing. It is about how we treat people *irrespective of how much we disagree*).*
 - Do you think many of the public and also in our public media (our journalists and their bosses) generally understand or consider this simple distinction between disagreement and intolerance? If not, what is the implication for us?***



TOOK:

- **Activity:** Look again at the list of 'toxic topics' you created last week.
 - How could you reply a question about each topic with a question, to avoid giving any personal answer, while potentially opening up a meaningful conversation?
- **Activity:** Break into pairs and have some fun taking turns at asking each other various awkward or fun questions, or making strange statements for them to respond to.
 - The goal in each case is for the person who is replying to avoid making any immediate statement in reply, or even a sense of disagreement – but instead to (1) somehow compliment the person, while (2) asking a question to better-understand what or why they have asked the question.
- Has this discussion been useful? What have you got out of it?

Pray:

- ...for growing wisdom in conversations.
- ...for those you would love to see consider and come to faith in Christ.
- ...for the preservation of our freedoms of information, conscience, speech and religion.***

* Sometimes non-believers assume a Christian is judging others when stating a view. They are presuming Christians aren't able to tolerate and treat the other person equally if there is disagreement. Their error is to confuse tolerance with agreeing. Tolerance is not about agreeing. It is about how we treat people *despite the things we disagree on!*

** We are wise not to directly state some things – but instead to ask questions in the hope of discussing the 'topic behind the topic'. We will come back to this in greater detail in a coming video and discussion.

*** For the discussion leader's reflection: (1) **Freedom of information** = access to information. This requires journalism with integrity, that presents both sides of a thing in a fair manner despite personal prejudices. Without this, the public don't have the information needed to make an informed choice. This makes the 'freedom of conscience and thought' irrelevant. (2) **Freedom of conscience** = the freedom of individuals to draw their own conclusions, based upon the information they have. (3) **Freedom of speech** = the freedom of those individuals to state their opinion without being unduly criminalised or unduly victimised for it. (4) **Freedom of religion** = freedom for individuals to hold their own religious views without being unduly criminalised or victimised.