



Discussion Questions

THE SURPRISING REBIRTH OF BELIEF IN GOD

by Justin Brierley

Chapter 7: The Surprising Rebirth of Belief in God

1. Brierley says we're all made to worship, whether we're taken in by "glamorous" things like the pursuit of money, sex, and power, or less obvious idols like career, family, fitness, social causes, the environment, or politics, etc. (p. 197) Have you ever found yourself venerating something other than God? What changed?
2. Paul Kingsnorth's journey took him from agnosticism to environmental activism, to Zen Buddhism, and to Wicca before encountering Christ. But all along, Kingsnorth says, "I had really been looking for God" (p. 200) and Brierley says, "all stories ultimately point to the story of Christianity." (p. 201) What do you think it was in those stops along his journey that reflected something true and beautiful of the truth?
 - Note: If you haven't read Paul Kingsnorth's essay about his conversion, entitled "The Cross and the Machine," we highly recommend it! <https://www.paulkingsnorth.net/cross>
3. What is your reaction when you hear stories like those about Amelie Wen Zhao and Kosoko Jackson? (pp. 206-7) How might we respond to stories like these we see in the public square in a way that highlights the truth and beauty of Christianity?
4. Brierley writes that, "the most fruitful way we can introduce people to the Christian story is through the realm of the imagination rather than the intellect. We do that by making people *want* Christianity to be true in the first place, by showing how it meets our deepest instincts about what matters most." (p. 213) What kinds of things might make people today might *want* Christianity to be true?

5. In his work as a professor of literature at Oxford University, CS Lewis had encountered motifs of dying-and-rising gods in pagan cultures. (p. 214) Have you ever encountered the argument that the story of Jesus is just a copy of mythological dying-and-rising gods from ancient mythology? How would you respond to this charge?
6. Brierley talks about the “long list of notable ministry leaders who have fallen from grace after allegations of sexual abuse or bullying behavior, leaving a trail of brokenness in their wake.” (p. 217) Have you or someone you know been personally shaken by the scandal of any leaders, and if so, how did you/they deal with it? How would you respond to unbelievers who point to this hypocrisy as evidence against faith?
7. Brierley says one of the gifts of New Atheism was that it led to a resurgence of interest in apologetics. (p. 220) What are some of your favorite apologetics ministries, and why?
8. Brierley says that as people emerge from the meaning crisis, churches need to be “ready to embrace the walking wounded” and be “places where people can ask awkward questions without being shouted down.” (p. 226) How well do you think your church fares in these areas? What could it do differently?
9. Several of the people Brierley mentions in this book came to Christ and then joined the Catholic or Orthodox Churches. How would you respond if someone you knew came to faith and did the same?