


Study Guides for Faith & Science Integration

Spring 2018

What Can We Learn from Atheists? (Leader's Guide and Participant's Guide)

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A guide to

What Can We Learn From Atheists?

A study of Larry Tauton's *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist*

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How to Use This Material?

This study of *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens* by Larry Tauton is composed of a set of *Pre-Reading* questions, a set of *Reading Questions*, and *Discussion Questions* that you yourself write before the book club session. The *Pre-Reading Questions* aim to help you begin thinking about the themes addressed in the book and in the *Reading Questions*, and they provide you with a space to record some of the assumptions or impressions you have before reading the book. The second set, *Reading Questions*, are designed to help you reflect on what you are reading while you go through the book. (An important note: these are reflection questions, not “skim through the book looking for a key word from the question so you can write down your answer and get it over with” questions. If you don’t get all the questions done before your book club meets, don’t worry about it. This isn’t school—you won’t be marked off for incomplete work. Do whatever you need to do in order to have a fruitful discussion.) The third set of questions, *Discussion Questions*, are ones that you write. Is there an idea or anecdote that you want to discuss with your group members? Make a note of it in this section, and bring it up in your discussion.

This study is intended for **informal, small group** discussion, such as that of a Bible study, small group, or family reunion. The study is also aimed toward **high school students, college students, and post-college adults** with an interest in how atheists and Christians can interact constructively.

As you read, it is our hope that you will come across (and come up with) questions which challenge you. In these questions, you will have the opportunity to grow through asking and answering these questions in a healthy setting.

Pre-Reading Questions

What do you know of Christopher Hitchens? Have you heard any of his debates or read any of his books? What is your impression of him?

Are you familiar with Larry Taunton? Have you heard him speak or read any of his writing? What is your impression of him?

Have you ever met an atheist? If so, how would you describe them (i.e. their character, the way that they interacted with you, their ideology)?

Who are some of today's most prominent atheists? What is your opinion of them?

What can we learn from atheists?

How do you (or would you) interact with an atheist? How should Christians interact with atheists?

Reading and Reflection Questions

What do you think of the idea that a person such as Hitchens lives life by “two books,” living one reality in public and another in private? Is this sort of behaviour unusual? Is it more common with figures as publicly renown as Hitchens? Is it a moral way to live?

Why would someone become an atheist? Why might someone remain an atheist throughout his or her life? What are some differences between an atheist’s worldview and a Christian’s worldview (besides “one doesn’t believe in God and one does”)?

Do (or can) Christians and atheists find common ground?

In Taunton’s estimation, what does Hitchens dislike about Christians such as Rev. Sharpton? What do you think of that?

How should Christians respond to hypocrisy among fellow Christians? Is it appropriate to judge the genuineness of a person's faith and accordingly hold them accountable? How can we be humble while holding others accountable?

What role do atheists' critiques of religion and the religious play in holding religions and the religious accountable? Can atheists help us identify shortcomings in ourselves and our institutions? How should we respond to atheists' critiques?

After reading this book, what is your impression of Hitchens and of Taunton? What would you have done if you were in Taunton's place? Would you be ready to debate and discuss with an atheist as forceful as Hitchens?

Do any of your friends or acquaintances hold opinions that are dramatically different from yours?
How can people who disagree about the most significant things in life still be friends?

How important is it for Christians to be friends to people such as Hitchens? How does (or should) this influence the way that you live your life?

What was Tauton's goal in writing this book, do you think?

Would you answer the question "what can we learn from atheists" any differently, now that you have read an intimate account of one atheist's "restless soul"?

Discussion Questions

1.

2.

Bibliography

Tauton, Larry. *The Faith of Christopher Hitchens: The Restless Soul of the World's Most Notorious Atheist*. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2016. Print.