

OFFICIAL MOVIE STUDY GUIDE

JESUS CHRIST:  
TRUTH OR  
HOAX?

THE  
HOLY  
BIBLE

TIME  
THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE  
Is  
God  
Dead?

Cons

Tribune  
Cross

Pros

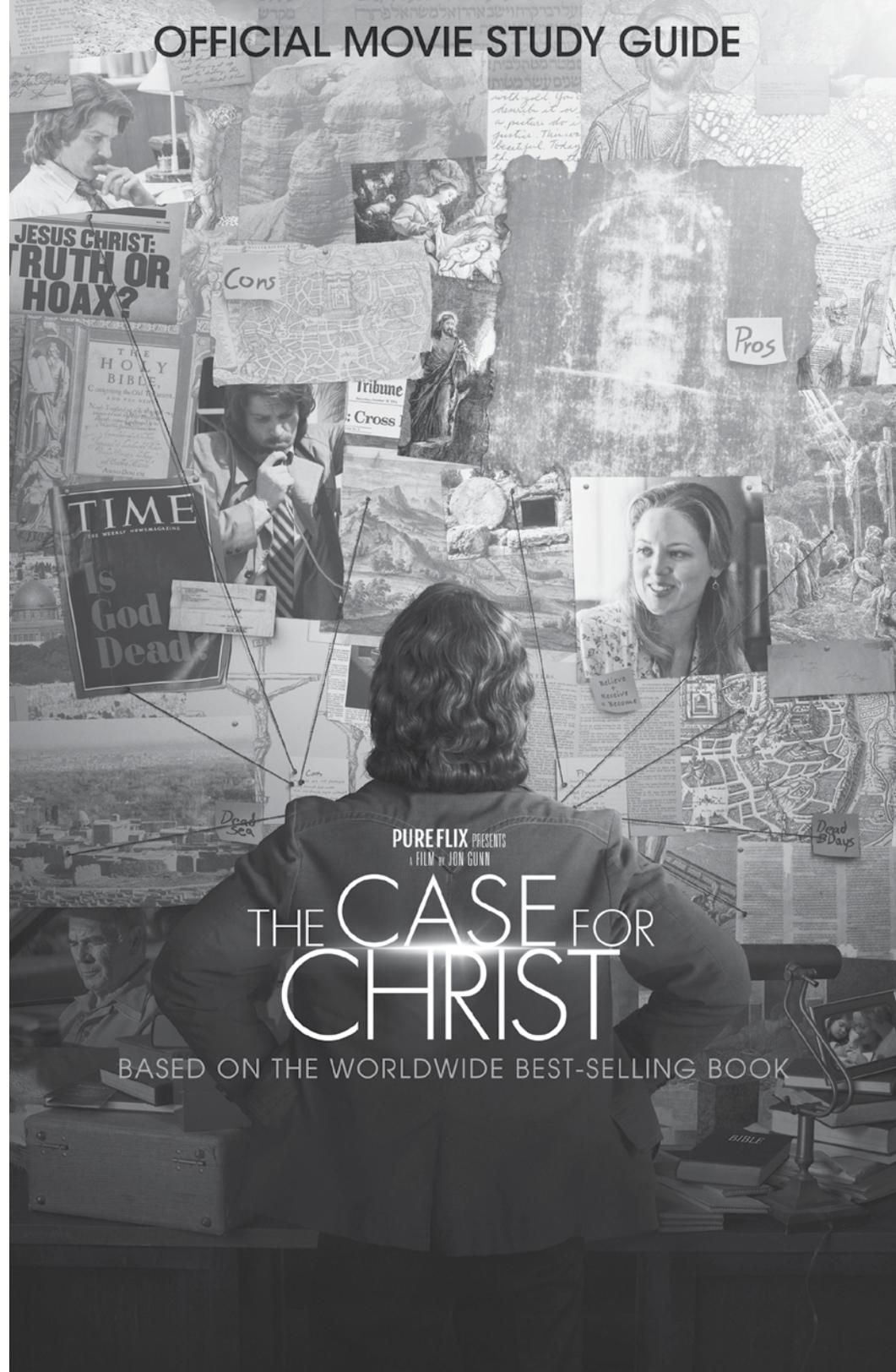
BALLOON  
RESOLVE  
RESCUE

Dead  
Days

PUREFLIX PRESENTS  
A FILM BY JON GUINN

# THE CASE FOR CHRIST

BASED ON THE WORLDWIDE BEST-SELLING BOOK





*The Case for Christ Study Guide*  
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# FOREWORD

*The Case for Christ* is much more than just a book, a movie, or a series at a church. To my wife, Leslie, and me, it represents the information God used to revolutionize our lives, our marriage, our family, and our eternity.

That's why I'm so excited that you and your group will be gathering for four weeks to use this guide and talk about the important topics covered in the pages that follow. Regardless of where you're at in your spiritual journey, I believe the truths you'll discuss will point you to the God who loves you; bolster your confidence in the facts surrounding the ministry, death, and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus; motivate you to trust in him for his forgiveness and leadership in your life; and encourage you to spread his Good News to others.

If you're new to exploring spiritual matters, let me encourage you with the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:7–8: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” What a great promise! If you seriously pursue God, Jesus says, you will certainly find him.

And if you've been a Christian for some time, these

discussions will help you heed the words of the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” This study will aid you in knowing what you believe, why it makes sense, and how you can share it with others.

Ultimately, I believe God wants all of us to experience what Jesus described in John 8:32: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

To that end, you have my wholehearted prayers and encouragement!

LEE STROBEL

Author of *The Case for Christ*

## INTRODUCTION

In 1980, Lee Strobel's award-winning investigative reporting earned him a promotion to legal editor at the *Chicago Tribune*. Things at home weren't going nearly as well. His wife Leslie's newfound faith in Christ compelled Lee to utilize his journalistic and legal training to disprove the claims of Christianity—pitting his resolute atheism against her growing faith.

Based on Strobel's best-selling book of the same name, *The Case for Christ* movie is a dramatic and heartfelt telling of Lee and Leslie's compelling journey. This book, *The Case for Christ Study Guide*, is a four-week study based on that movie. It will help the members of your group dig deeper into the evidence Lee Strobel uncovered and apply it to their own lives. Whether you're someone who is seeking spiritual truth, you're a new Christian, or you've been a believer for some time, this study provides an opportunity for you to find answers to the questions blocking your spiritual progress and growth.

It's been said that Jesus did not come into this world to make bad people good; he came into this world to make dead people alive. Over the next four weeks, may you find a new or renewed spiritual flame within yourself as you dig into *The Case for Christ Study Guide*.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This four-week study is designed to be interactive and accessible to individuals, small groups, and classes. Inspired by clips from *The Case for Christ* movie and rooted in Scripture, this study guide will help you take the next steps together in your journey with Christ. The four lessons cover these topics:

1. Investigating the Case for Christ
2. Exploring the Evidence for Christ
3. Embracing the Truth of Christ
4. Explaining the Good News of Christ

Small group leaders can refer to *The Case for Christ Leader's Guide* for specific instructions, available resources, and additional support on leading a small group. Each of the lessons has the following sections.

## GET STARTED

**Big Idea:** A quick overview highlights the main theme of the lesson.

**Icebreaker:** A fun activity gets your group interacting, building relationships with one another while also tapping into the theme of the lesson.

## WATCH

**Video Clip:** Each lesson connects to a relevant scene from the movie *The Case for Christ*.

**Setup:** A short description sets the stage for the scene and offers a bit of background info and a brief overview. This can be helpful to read before watching the video clip.

**Recap:** This section can help focus on the key themes or serve as a summary even if an individual or group isn't able to view the video at the time. It may be helpful to watch the video clip together before recapping here—or to revisit this description after viewing.

## DISCUSS

The main course of the study, this section connects key lesson points and supporting Scripture with group discussion and personal reflection. Short examples and themes are interspersed with discussion questions to allow for an interactive time of group learning and discovery.

## APPLY

**Takeaway:** A synopsis of the core lesson gives you a key truth to carry through your week.

**Insights:** This section provides a place to process and record personal thoughts and applications from the lesson.

**Action:** A challenge helps you apply throughout the week what was presented in the lesson. It's a reminder of insights gained and an opportunity to integrate God's work in and through your life.

## Q&A WITH LEE STROBEL

At the end of each session is one question and answer session with Lee Strobel that relates to the theme of that week's lesson.



## GET STARTED

**Big Idea:** Connecting with God starts with seeking and exploring spiritual truth.

### **Icebreaker: Two Truths and a Lie**

Go around the room, and have each group member tell three things about himself or herself. Two of the facts should be true, and one should be made up. After each person presents his or her three pieces of information, the group gets to vote on which ones were true and which one was fiction. Once everyone has taken a turn, talk about what made it easy or hard to determine the truth.

Which stories fooled everyone? Which truths were obvious? Why?

As we seek God and spiritual truth, there can be obstacles to our investigation, but the truth is always worth seeking.

## WATCH

**Video 1:** Investigating the Case for Christ [DVD]

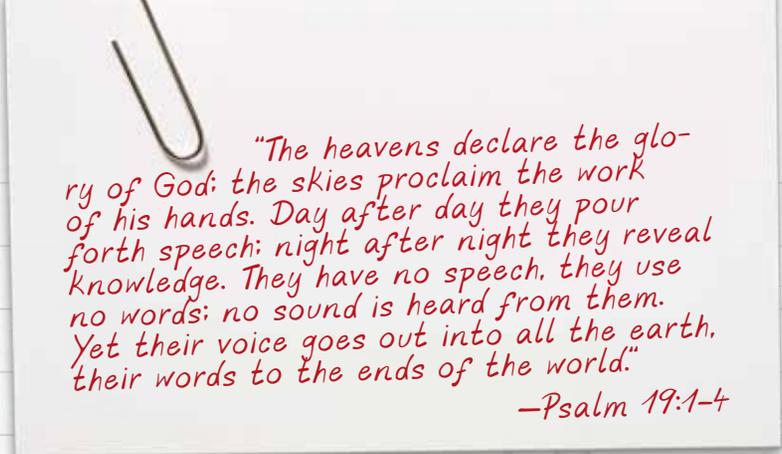
**Setup:** A young Lee Strobel sits at his desk in the newsroom. Tired and bleary-eyed, he is surrounded by books and notepads. Strobel has been engaged in a long, in-depth investigation to try to disprove Christianity and to liberate his wife, Leslie, from her newfound faith in Christ. He has read, researched, and talked to numerous experts, all in the age before the Internet. But he does not like the evidence he has uncovered or the answers it has continually

No. 651

# Reporter's Note Book

LESSON 1  
Investigating the  
Case for Christ

NOTES FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_



*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."*

*—Psalm 19:1-4*

pointed him toward. Strobel's coworker Kenny London, the *Chicago Tribune's* religion editor, knows what this is all about. London realizes that this is more than a journalistic endeavor for Strobel—this investigation is personal.

**Recap:** It doesn't take long in this scene for London to sense that something is wrong with Strobel. When he asks, Strobel doesn't hold back from channeling all his frustration at London, peppering him with phrases like "you people and your God . . ." London has had enough. He stands up to Strobel, calling him out for his arrogance and his resistance to the facts he's uncovering. He challenges him to use his investigative skills to compare the evidence once and for all and make his call about the truth. "Stop blaming me and the church and God, and do your job," London blurts out. "Stack up the evidence, follow the facts, and write the story—win or lose!"

## DISCUSS

Who do you identify with most in this scene: Lee Strobel or Kenny London? Why?

Kenny London paraphrases C. S. Lewis, saying, "If Christianity is false, it's of zero importance. But if it's true, there is nothing more important in the entire universe." How did that statement apply to Strobel's life? How does it apply to yours?

Read through each of the following lesson points and discuss the questions together.

### 1. Investigating Truth Is Worth It

Investigating spiritual truth and seeking reasons for what we believe are hard work. It can seem safer to rest on the beliefs of others or to paper over our doubts with shallow answers. Have you been there in your own life? Are you there now? The problem is that when we

don't seek spiritual truth for ourselves, our faith can't flourish. When we fail to pursue truth and investigate what we believe and the evidence that supports it, our relationship with God and our faith in him have little or no foundation.

The good news is that the Bible is full of promises for those who seek spiritual truth. Even when it is difficult, the pursuit is worth it. Read these passages and discuss what they mean for you as you investigate Christ or seek a deeper faith in him:

*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7–8)*

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)*

What does it look like to believe and act upon these verses?

When have you seen these promises fulfilled in your own life, in your own pursuit of truth?

How are you asking, seeking, knocking, and waiting?  
What is your process, and how is it going?

## **2. Ask Hard Questions**

As we've seen, God promises to meet us as we search for truth. But it's not always easy or comfortable, is it? In fact, as Christians we don't always put a lot of emphasis on the intellectual pursuit of truth. But Mark 12:30 tells us to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Somehow, we often skip over the *mind* aspect of that verse. But it's key to investigating truth. And while it may seem counterintuitive, asking hard questions is often the start of loving God with our minds.

How do you usually dig deeper into something you want to know more about?

How can you apply that to your investigation of the truth about Christ?

What sources of information give you the most assurance of God's truth and existence?

A good investigator explores all the angles, and there are many ways to investigate God's truth. The Bible is a great place to start as it directly tells the story of God's love and salvation. History and science are other areas we should seek and encounter truth. These were vital parts

of Lee Strobel's journey toward faith.

For some, the beauty, order, and wonder of nature serve as the strongest evidence of God's truth (Psalm 19:1-4). For others, the testimonies of changed lives are the strongest proof.

Some people need more tangible evidence. Remember Jesus' disciple Thomas? He was one of the Twelve. He had been close to Jesus and had been taught truth straight from the Source. Yet, Thomas still struggled with doubt. After the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples, but Thomas wasn't there. So he didn't believe it. Thomas needed to see the risen Lord with his own eyes. And guess what? Jesus gave him what he needed—Jesus appeared to Thomas and told him to touch the scars on his hands and his side, to stop doubting, and to believe (John 20:27).

Do you ever feel like Thomas—the testimony of others is great, but you need to see the truth for yourself?

*"Stop blaming me and the church and God, and do your job. Stack up the evidence, follow the facts, and write the story—win or lose!"*

*—Kenny London,  
The Case for Christ movie*

Is it okay to ask God for evidence or for personal experience? Why or why not?

How should we balance that desire with Jesus' words to Thomas: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29)?

Our challenge is to pursue all the avenues we can in order to discover spiritual truth, realizing that God's truth is not limited to the sources we prefer.

As you ask hard questions, patience must permeate your investigation. There will be times when the answers aren't obvious, when the truth is hard to discern, when your unanswered questions cause pain and doubt. But you can trust that God is there in the midst of your search.

When you struggle with these matters, you can pray the "doubter's prayer" like the father who took his son to Jesus to be healed in Mark 9:14–27. Honestly say, as he did, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (verse



*"One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important."*

*—C. S. Lewis, God in the Dock<sup>1</sup>*

24). Jesus answered the prayer and helped that man, and he'll help you as well.

Does belief mean the absence of all doubt? Definitely not. But as London challenged Strobel, we can't use our doubts or fears as smoke screens to hide behind. We must face them and move forward. And as we pursue truth, we must engage our toughest questions and deepest doubts and allow God to strengthen our beliefs through them.

### **3. Embark on Your Journey**

What is standing in the way of you believing in Christ? Or what's blocking you from engaging with him on a deeper level?

There are many obstacles that get in our way. Maybe you feel you can't believe without more information. Or maybe you just don't want to believe because you know it will interfere with your lifestyle. Perhaps you don't know fully what to believe—or you believe but wonder what's next. Or, probably for most of us, we do believe but feel the need to go deeper in our understanding, both for our own faith and for the sake of helping others. Wherever

you are today, you can embark on a journey to investigate the Case for Christ.

## Four Spiritual Sticking Points

Sticking Point	How to Get Unstuck
I <i>can't</i> believe.	Wholeheartedly seek God and the evidence for the claims of Christ.
I don't <i>want</i> to believe.	Weigh what you're hanging onto versus what you could gain by following Christ.
I don't know <i>what</i> to believe.	Read the Bible with an open mind, seeking to understand its central gospel message.
I do believe; isn't that <i>enough</i> ?	Believing is the important first step. Now you need to receive the forgiveness and leadership of Christ.

As you investigate truth, you'll find that at some point you will face a decision. Just like Strobel was challenged by London in today's movie clip, we all reach a point where we have to face the truth we've learned and decide what we'll do about it.

When the evidence is in, will you act? Coming to the point of believing in God is good, but the journey doesn't

"Most people think that doubt is the opposite of faith, but it isn't. The opposite of faith is unbelief, which is a willful refusal to believe or a deliberate decision to disobey God."

-Lee Strobel,  
The Case for Faith  
Student Edition<sup>2</sup>

stop there. A general intellectual agreement isn't enough. You can't learn to ride a bicycle simply by believing a bike exists. You must grab hold of the handlebars and take your feet off the ground as you learn to ride.

John 1:12 says, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (NASB). This verse spells it out simply and clearly: Believe + Receive = Become.

Pursuing truth until we believe in God is the beginning, but to become God's children, we must receive Jesus' offer of forgiveness, salvation, and leadership in our lives.

Are you ready to climb on the bike and ride?

## APPLY

Continue this section together as time allows, or dig deeper on your own throughout the week.

**Takeaway:** God's truth is worth seeking with all your heart, no matter the obstacles.

**Insights:** What were you most encouraged or challenged by in this lesson? Use the space below to write down some personal reflections.

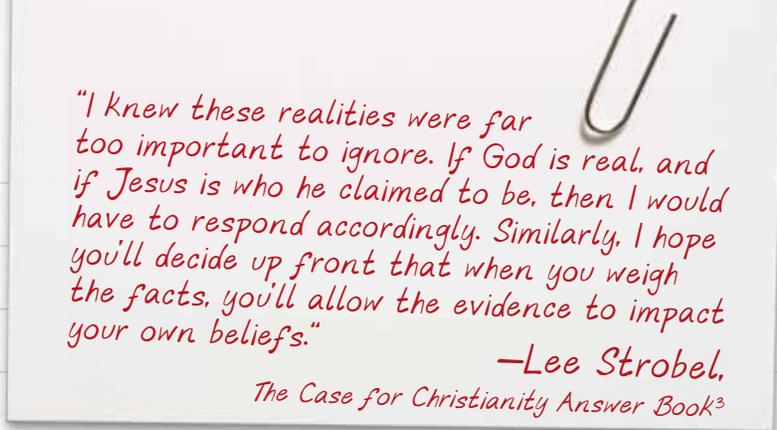
**Action:** On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your current relationship to God. One means "I don't believe God exists." Five means "I just received Jesus' gift of forgiveness and leadership." Ten means "I'm completely secure in God's truth and understand what and why I believe concerning the Case for Christ." Or you might be somewhere between those options.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I don't believe God exists.

I just received Jesus' gift of forgiveness and leadership.

I'm completely secure in God's truth and understand what and why I believe concerning the Case for Christ.



Mark your answer and explain why you chose it. Also write down your biggest questions and the obstacles that get in the way of your search for answers.

Take some time to talk to God. If you're below 5 on the 1 to 10 scale, ask him to reveal himself to you and to lead you to the information and help you'll need to put your trust in him. If you're right on the cusp of taking that #5 step, then tell him you *believe* but now want to *receive* his forgiveness and leadership in your life so you can *become* his child (and be sure to tell your group leader you took this step!). And if you're on the upper end of the 1 to 10 scale, then ask him to keep deepening your understanding and faith so you can more confidently share it with others.

## Q&A WITH LEE STROBEL, FROM THE CASE FOR CHRIST ANSWER BOOKLET<sup>4</sup>

**I have so many questions—and a few doubts—about the Christian faith. What should I do with them?**

You are doing precisely what you need to do—you're being honest with yourself and open with your questions. That's the first step toward finding answers. If you do the opposite—bottling up your concerns in the hopes they'll go away—then they'll just fester and infect your entire spiritual life.

Instead, let me urge you to follow the wisdom of Scripture. Jesus said, “Everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:8). This echoes a principle in the Old Testament: “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

I've struggled with spiritual questions for most of my life, and in some ways I still do. It's an ongoing process to find answers that satisfy my heart and soul. But even bouts of doubt can show we're thinking and growing, rather than simply clinging to what we've been told.

As I described in *The Case for Christ*, my greatest season of spiritual introspection came after my wife, Leslie, announced that she had become a Christian. That was hard news for a skeptical journalist to hear! But it set in motion my own journey of asking tough questions—and discovering unexpected answers. In the end, I concluded that it would take more faith for me to maintain my atheism than it would to become a Christian!

After almost two years of searching, I got on my knees and asked Jesus to forgive my sins and lead my life. It was a decision that changed everything; in fact, it was the pivotal moment of my life.

That decision, mixed with the research I did then and in the time since then, led me to a sense of confidence that there are satisfying answers to even our hardest questions.

*Jesus stayed behind . . . sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. (Luke 2:43, 46–47)*