



In AD 150, a letter to Diognetus claims that Christians deny the Greek gods, live in poverty, remain faithful in marriage, and welcome persecution. They respond to abuse with love. This is the church before the watching world. Or is it?

These questions are intended to deepen your experience of the message. Use them for your personal or family study time, or with an open Bible as you share the good news with your neighbor.

Group Ice-Breaker questions:

(1) What do you “see” when you look at the world?

(2) What do you think the world “sees” when they watch Christians?

**THE ROMANS SET-UP.** Read Romans 1:16-31. Paul describes daily life during what some have called the “midnight” of the first-century: Roman culture under Nero. Their “gospel” (or salvation story) involved animals elevated to mythical status, gods acting like humans, and humans calling themselves gods. Their leaders excelled in pride, greed, lust, and power. How does this resonate with our culture today? **Follow-up:** Read Romans 1:29-2:1. Paul now turns the tables. He condemns his readers who practice such things and applaud those who do. He claims those passing judgment are guilty. Discuss what this means.

**NO OTHER GODS.** Read Deut 4:32-40; 1 Cor 8:4-6, 1 Tim 1:17. Christians were called “atheists” for denying the gods of Greece and Rome. We affirm there is nothing on the same plane as Yahweh (the source of all things). What does it mean to believe there is only one God? **Follow up:** Read Deut 5:7; 6:14; 1 Pet 4:3; 1 John 5:21. The Bible warns believers not to turn to other “gods” or idols. These are things that entice us, things we fear, things we trust, and things we need (Christopher J. H. Wright). See 1 Jn 2:16.

### THREE GODS.

**Mammon** (money, greed, stuff) which is the lust of the eye. Read Matt 6:24; Luke 12:15; Eph 5:5; Col 3:5. We let money have the most important say in the most important areas of life. Discuss.

**Eros** (sex, passion, lust) which is the lust of the flesh. Read Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:3; Heb 13:4. We have treated sex, love, marriage, fidelity, and family in selfish ways. Discuss.

**Pride** (demon hybris, god Narcissus and god Nemesis) which is the pride of life. Read Rom 12:12-21; 2 Tim 3:2; James 4:6; 1 Pet 3:9; 5:5. An “us vs. them” mentality fails to appreciate our sinfulness. A desire to judge and destroy drowns out God’s desire to redeem. Discuss.

**GET RIGHT CHURCH.** Read Titus 2:11-14. The church is called to radiate the light of the world. Before we seek to change our world, let us cleanse our hearts and confess our sins to Almighty God. Discuss ways the church—you and I—need to reject the gods of money, sex, and pride. Confess to God. If you feel comfortable, confess to one another (James 5:16).