



# Discussion Guide

Episodes 1-3

*Drive-Thru History Discussion Guide, Episodes 1-3*

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# How to Use the Video

The *Drive-Thru History* series is a fast, fun way to learn the facts about how our civilization came to be. You'll discover how Christianity and other world views have shaped cultures and countries—and your life. Here are some ways to watch Dave Stotts' goofy globe-trotting—and get the most from it.

- *By yourself.* View the video. Then ponder the questions in this guide.
- *As a family activity.* Watch with your middle school kids and older, one episode at a time. Choose the questions you think will best engage your family, and discuss them together.
- *With a youth group.* Most middle school and high school students, as well as college students, are introduced to historical figures and events in their classes—but aren't getting the whole story. Show the video when they get together, following up with questions from this guide.
- *As a homeschool project.* Supplement your curriculum by viewing the video and adapting the questions to fit the ages of your children. The presentation is recommended for students in sixth grade and above.
- *With a group of adults.* Let the video and study guide stimulate discussion in your small group, class, or neighborhood gathering.

Ready to hit the accelerator? It's time for *Drive-Thru History*!



# EPIISODE ONE

## FunFacts

- ◉ “All roads lead to Rome” is an old (make that ancient) saying. Why? Because the Roman Empire boasted 50,000 miles of roads linking all its provinces. And Dave Stotts hadn’t even gotten his driver’s license yet.
- ◉ What did people use for toilet paper in ancient Rome? In public restrooms, it was a sponge soaked in salt water, on the end of a stick. For the wealthy, it was wool and rosewater. Maybe they weren’t so advanced after all.
- ◉ Ever heard the phrase “dog days”? It comes from the ancient Romans, who believed Sirius, the Dog Star, made things hotter between July 3 and August 11. They called this time *dies caniculares*—“days of the dog.”
- ◉ Think it’s hard to do your homework on paper? Consider the plight of ancient Rome’s schoolkids, who did their assignments on wax tablets. Their backpacks must have been a melty mess, especially during those “dog days” of summer!

# To Think and Talk About

1. Imagine you're a Roman from the first or second century. You're transported in a time machine to the North America or Europe of today. What parts of the culture might you find familiar in the following categories?
  - a. Entertainment
  - b. Politics
  - c. Sports
  - d. Architecture
  - e. Religion

What might be considered a modern-day "forum"? Why?

Do you think the similarities between ancient Rome and the Western world of today are a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

2. Why was Palatine Hill a popular place for wealthy Romans to build homes?
  - a. It was ocean front property
  - b. It was inexpensive
  - c. It was famous for its very large sunflowers
  - d. Location, location, location

What impression did Palatine Hill give Rome's citizens about its rulers? How does this compare with the impression your country's leaders try to give?

3. From the following list, choose at least two things that are true of Roman emperors.
  - a. They were revered as gods
  - b. They had to shave their heads when crowned emperor
  - c. They were allowed to rule for only eight years
  - d. They were the most powerful men in the country

What do you think the emperors would have thought of the following Bible passage? "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be

your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

4. Octavian encouraged spirituality during his reign as emperor, but as a result the people considered him a god. Which of the following reasons might explain why they did that?
  - a. They were searching for a Savior
  - b. They were quick to name anything and anyone a god
  - c. Both of the above
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Romans worshiped many gods. Why would this be a problem for Christians? (See Isaiah 45:22; Exodus 20:3; Ephesians 4:3-6.)

Consider your own country. Could some people there be said to worship pagan gods? Explain.

If worship means spending most of your time, money, and energy on someone or something, what do you think most people in your culture “worship” today?

How were religion and government connected in ancient Rome? How does that compare with the role religion plays in your government?

6. While imprisoned in Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Philippi and closed with the message, “All the saints [Christian believers] send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household” (Philippians 4:22). What do you think it would have been like to be a Christian working in Caesar’s household?

Do you think you would have felt comfortable telling others you were a Christian? Why or why not?

7. Caesar Augustus (formerly Octavian) brought Rome many changes that influence the world today. Which two of the following do you think are most important? Why?
  - a. Calendar
  - b. Free trade

- c. Public welfare system
- d. Architecture

Can you name one change enforced by Caesar Augustus that played a role in the arrival of Christ? Read Luke 2. What was Caesar Augustus' role in the Christmas story?

8. The carvings on what structure tell the story of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem?
- a. *Arc de Triomphe*
  - b. Arch of Titus
  - c. Gateway Arch in St. Louis
  - c. Golden arches of McDonald's
9. Which of the following best describes the relationship between Rome and the Jews during the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian?
- a. Excellent; the Romans and the Jews worked together to build peace
  - b. Nightmare; Rome persecuted the Jews for many years
  - c. Boring; they basically ignored each other

Which of the following cities suffered greatly due to Rome's wrath toward the Jews?

- a. Cairo
- b. Paris
- c. Jerusalem
- d. Baghdad

The Jewish people have suffered greatly at the hands of various governments—even at the hands of some who called themselves Christians. What can those who take part in such persecution learn from the following Bible passages?

- a. Esther 8
- b. Matthew 27:11
- c. John 4:21-22
- d. Romans 15:26-27

10. Which of the following statements is closest to the main point you learned through this video?
- a. Dave Stotts is a pretty strange guy
  - b. The Romans weren't all that different from people today
  - c. The Romans made many contributions that still affect our world
  - d. God let Rome play an important role in the birth of Christ
  - e. Despite Rome's accomplishments, not knowing the one true God was its greatest weakness
  - f. Other \_\_\_\_\_







# EPISODE TWO

## FunFacts

- ◉ Emperor Nero may not have fiddled while Rome burned. But it's widely believed that he was in the habit of playing the bagpipes. It's unlikely, though, that he wore a kilt or watched that *Highlander* TV series.
- ◉ Want to make ancient Roman *ova sfongia ex lacte* (pancakes with milk)? Here's the recipe. You'll need 8 eggs, 600 milliliters of milk, 100 milliliters of oil, a little bit of honey, and a little ground pepper. Mix eggs, milk, and oil. Fry in a pan; serve with the honey and pepper on top. Sounds more like an omelette to us, but what do we know?
- ◉ When the ancient Romans weren't scarfing those pancakes, you might catch them eating asparagus. It was a very popular food in that culture, though nobody knows why.
- ◉ Ever seen a toga? These sheet-like outfits were popular in early Rome, but not for long. They weren't warm enough. Eventually tunics—sort of like long T-shirts—took over the ancient fashion world. They, in turn, were replaced by turtlenecks, Nehru jackets, and leisure suits.

# To Think and Talk About

1. Which of the following do you find most impressive? Why?
  - a. The way the Romans built the Pantheon
  - b. The way the Christians sacrificed for their faith
  - c. The way Dave Stotts drives that little car

2. In ten words or less, how would you describe the emperor Nero?

If he were running your country today, how might your life be different?

Which of the following do you think Nero would agree with? Why?

- a. "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely."
  - b. "Look out for Number One."
  - c. "It's not my fault."
  - d. "[God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:20-21).
3. If you were a Christian living in first or second century Rome, which of the following would be the biggest challenge for you? Why?
    - a. Hiding your faith
    - b. Sharing your faith
    - c. Holding on to your faith

If you were a Christian in that place and time, what might each of the following Bible passages mean to you? Which do you think would be your favorite?

- a. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).
- b. "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

c. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

4. What myths about Christians and Christianity did the Romans believe?
  - a. That Christians were cannibals
  - b. That Christians weren't religious enough
  - c. That Christians were going to overthrow the government
  - d. All of the above

What are some mistaken ideas people have about Christians today?

How have these myths affected your life at school, at home, or in friendships?

5. What advice would you have given the Christians in Rome?

How does that compare to this advice from Paul? "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted . . ." (Romans 13:1-2)

6. In which of the following situations might you "rebel against the authority" of your government? Why?
  - a. If it commanded me to go to war
  - b. If it told me to give up my faith
  - c. If it prohibited sharing my faith
  - d. If it put members of minority groups in concentration camps
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Look at Romans 13:1-2 again. Then look at Acts 5:29. When, if ever, would it be right to not submit to the government—and on what would you base your decision?

7. Which of the following do you think might last as long as the Pantheon? Why?
  - a. The Leaning Tower of Pisa
  - b. The Taj Mahal

- c. The Washington Monument
- d. Disney World

What does the survival of the Pantheon tell you about the people who designed and built it? Are newer things always better than older ones? Why or why not?

8. If a "pantheon" representing the most popular "gods" of your culture were built today, who and what might be represented inside?

How do you suppose God would feel about such a pantheon?

How do you think He feels about the one in Rome?

9. What do you think might have happened to Christianity if Rome hadn't persecuted the early believers?

What do you think might happen to your faith if it never "costs" you anything? Why?

10. Which of the following best sums up your reaction to this episode of the video?
- a. "I'm glad I wasn't alive then."
  - b. "How could those ancient Romans be so smart and so dumb?"
  - c. "I'd like to know more about that historical stuff."
  - d. "Why does Dave Stotts sweat so much?"
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_





# EPISODE THREE

## FunFacts

- ◉ The Phoenicians are sometimes called “the Purple People.” That’s because their purple dye, made from little sea snails, was known throughout the ancient world. Today they’re mostly famous for having a name that’s really hard to spell.
- ◉ In ancient Rome, you had to be careful about holding hands in public. It was a sign that you’d agreed to get married. Some people got married as young as age 14!
- ◉ Speaking of marriage . . . know how guests “toast” the bride and groom at a wedding reception by lifting a glass in their honor? You can thank the Romans for that. They would drop a piece of toasted bread into a wine glass. The “toast” came to mean a wish of good health. Contrary to popular opinion, however, the Romans did not invent Pop-Tarts®.
- ◉ Another thing the Romans *did* invent was concrete. That was fortunate, as all those famous buildings like the Coliseum and the Pantheon might otherwise have been constructed of mud. In that case, the ruins wouldn’t be nearly as impressive today.

# To Think and Talk About

1. The Phoenicians came up with a written language, purple dye, and sailing ships—pretty technologically advanced for their time. Yet they were devoted to the false religion of Baal worship. Do you know of any people or societies today that are “smart” when it comes to science or money, but wrong when it comes to faith or morals? Why doesn’t “smartness” always lead to “rightness”?
2. Hannibal was raised to hate Rome, and became obsessed with defeating it. What happens when people in one culture or country are raised to hate another? Can you think of examples in today’s world?

How could Christians be part of a solution to this problem? If people obeyed instructions like those in Matthew 5:38-48, what might happen?

3. Which of the following would have made the biggest difference in helping Hannibal defeat Rome during the Punic wars? Why?
  - a. More elephants
  - b. More peanuts
  - c. More soldiers
  - d. More friends back home in Carthage

How did Hannibal’s experience show the truth of these sayings from the Book of Proverbs?

- a. “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD” (21:31).
  - b. “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails” (19:21).
  - c. “A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good” (16:29).
4. Do you think you would have been attracted to events at the Coliseum? Why or why not?

How are violent video games and movies similar to the Coliseum events? How are they different?

Which of the following effects do you think the Coliseum had on the typical Roman?

- a. Becoming more insensitive to the suffering of others
- b. Growing less interested in "boring" things like poetry and art
- c. Thinking of human life as cheap
- d. Being more likely to "go along with the crowd"
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Do you see anything in your culture that tends to influence people in those ways? If so, what are they? Which do they influence more, kids or adults?

5. Although historians don't agree on what caused the fall of the Roman Empire, many blame it on Rome's internal moral decay. How would you rank the importance of the following factors in Rome's fall?
- a. Slavery
  - b. Gladiatorial games
  - c. Power-hungry Caesars
  - d. Wrong sexual practices
  - e. Believing in many gods
  - f. The rise of Christianity
  - g. Trying to rule the world

Which of the following Bible passages might help to explain the fall of Rome? Why?

- a. "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf" (Proverbs 11:28).
- b. "Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: 'Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall'" (Luke 11:17).
- c. "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure" (Proverbs 11:14).
- d. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Do you think your country is in danger of "falling"? Why or why not?

6. Read Acts 28:30-31. This happened while the apostle Paul awaited trial in Rome. Why do you think he chose to interact with the Romans in this way? What would

you have done in his situation? What effect do you think he may have had on the Roman Empire?

7. According to the video, how did Telemachus the monk react to the games in the Coliseum? What happened to him as a result? What, in turn, happened to the games?

Can you name any other individuals who influenced the course of history by taking a controversial or dangerous stand?

Has there been a time when you took a stand against the majority because of your beliefs? What happened?

8. What effect did the Coliseum games have on the animal population? How do you think Christians should treat animals? Why?
9. The video points out that Roman culture didn't put a high value on all human life, as shown in the gladiatorial games. This was also demonstrated in the Roman practice of "infant exposure," which allowed parents to abandon unwanted babies outdoors; the infants, if not picked up by others, would die. How would you explain to an ancient Roman why this was wrong? If you were a Christian living in that time and place, what would you do about this practice?
10. Which of the following responses to this *Drive-Thru History* episode is most like your own? Why?
  - a. I'm like that man who went to the Coliseum and found his mind "contaminated" by what he saw; I need to be more careful about what I watch and listen to
  - b. I wish I had the courage to die for my faith like the early Christians did, but I'm not sure I do
  - c. The Romans did some amazing things; we should give them more credit, not put them down
  - d. I want to go to Italy as soon as possible
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

