

Googling God



SERMON STUDY GUIDE

“Googling God”

For the sermon preached on
2/16/2020

“Can We Believe in God Without Jesus?”
John 1:1-14

How to use the Groups Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses “**Observation**” (what the reader can see from the text), “**Interpretation**” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “**Application**” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It’s recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the Group Life Team

[Note to Group Leaders: Similar to previous messages and study guides in this series, this one will also be a little different from our normal Inductive Bible Study method. The sermon Pastor Ruthie delivered used a few texts to give us a well-crafted answer perspective to the challenging question, “Can we believe in God without Jesus?” This study will focus on the profound and beautiful text John 1.]

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-14

The Gospel of John opens with one of the most theologically robust and beautiful passages in the entire Bible, but don’t let that intimidate you in finding its rich meaning. Like looking at natural wonder, we may not be able to comprehend all the elements of it but we can still marvel, learn, and love it. This being Scripture, we can rely on the Holy Spirit to live it. And so, let’s read it in your own Bible or device slowly, maybe even two or three times – what questions does this text raise and what excites you?

Why is the ‘W’ in “Word” capitalized? And if the text is about Jesus, why does John not simply use “Jesus” as opposed to the “Word?”

(Entire dissertations, books and sermons have been written on this very question but we’ll do our best to summarize. First, John has his Jewish audience in mind as he begins with the same beginning as Genesis 1:1 “In the Beginning ...” As the Gospel of John continues, the point will be made that Jesus is the chosen Messiah. One example is “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I AM!’” (John 8:58).

Second, John wants to explain that Jesus is not an ordinary man or even just an extraordinary man. Jesus is fully God, fully man, and the person and Messianic fulfillment of the Old Testament is revealed in Jesus. So by concept, Jesus is person and answer – flesh and truth –

supernatural and personal and John utilizes the idea of “Logos” a term that denotes “all truth” to capture all of this.)

In Pastor Ruthie’s sermon, the question to be answered was, “Can we believe in God without Jesus?” Before we unpack that question, let’s first appreciate the legitimacy of that question. Have you ever wondered this? Have you ever had someone ask you this, and how have you approached the question?

The central question is, ‘Can you believe in God without Jesus?’ Let’s consider the ramifications of that. What does one’s life look like if they believe in the existence of God but do not believe that Jesus is God? Second, what about someone who believes Jesus is a good, moral, human teacher, but does not believe that God exists? And lastly, why is the Christian claim that Jesus is the Son of God essential on both a theological level and also from personal practice?

Certainly, there are those from other faiths asking this question, but there are also those raised in Christian churches who are struggling with feeling disenfranchised by their experience in the church. How would you approach this question to both groups – those outside the church, and those who were raised within? How would your rationale be different? And thinking beyond the rhetoric, how would your tone or approach be different?

For us as Christ-followers, God becoming one of us has allowed us to recognize His love for all of humanity and to us personally. How has the person, love, and message of Jesus changed your life?

As we close tonight, who comes to mind that is asking this very question of believing in God without Jesus? Can we pray that God would work in their hearts and can we also pray that God would provide opportunity to share the hope of Jesus in love?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.

- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.