

# CLARITY

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH



## WEEK 1: ARE SCIENCE AND FAITH COMPATIBLE?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- On a scale of 1-10 how much did you enjoy your science classes in school? (1=It was nap time for me, 10=It was the best part of my day!)
- What do you think leads people to hold the view that science and faith are not compatible?
- What is the most difficult issue for you when it comes to science and faith?
- How much do you personally struggle with the compatibility of science and faith?
- Who do you know that this issue is a major obstacle to his or her faith?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS--Sermon from Sunday, September 10, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)--Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

### DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION

Stephen Hawking (renowned atheist scientist) said, "Science may solve the problem of how the universe began, but it cannot answer the question: Why does the universe bother to exist?"

- Instead of viewing science and scripture as contradicting each other, how helpful is it for you to realize that they merely answer different questions? (Science: How? And When? Theology: Why? And Who?)

Read Romans 1:20-25

Good science gives us a front row seat to the glory of God. Nicky Gumbel (Christian Author) said, "Science is the study of God's general revelation in creation. Biblical theology is the study of God's "special" revelation in Jesus and the Scriptures."

- From these statements and v. 20, how do you see science and the Bible complementing each other?

- Why then do people tend to worship the creation rather than the Creator (vs. 21-23, 25)? How do you see this played out in the way people view science and faith?

Read Isaiah 40:12-14; 21-26

- What is the intended message of these rhetorical questions and comparisons (creation, enlightenment, knowledge)? How does God measure up?

- How do these truths help you with science and faith questions?

Isaiah 40:8; 28-31

- How might the truths of this chapter help restore strength to you in your faith?

### **LIVE IT OUT**

Read 1 Peter 3:15

- What truths from this week's sermon and study can help you to "give the reason for the hope that you have"?

- Who is someone in your oikos that you feel led to share something from this discussion?

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See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week's topic

Stealing from God: Chapter 6--Science Doesn't Say Anything, Scientists Do

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist: Chapters 3-6

77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

A New Kind of Apologist: Chapter 25--The Scientific Naturalist Juggernaut

The Reason for God: Chapter 6--Science Has Disproved Christianity

God's Crime Scene: Chapters 1-5

# CLARITY

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## WEEK 2: IS THE BIBLE RELIABLE?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- When your mind wanders, what do you tend to mull over in your mind?
- On a scale of 1-10 how much did you enjoy your literature classes in school?  
(1=It was nap time for me, 10=It was the best part of my day!)
- How would your friends and family who are not committed Christ followers describe the Bible?
- What is the most difficult issue for you when it comes to the reliability of the Bible?
- Who do you know that this issue is a major obstacle to his or her faith?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS--Sermon from Sunday, September 17, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)--Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

There is no other book like the Bible. Written over 1500 years, by 40 authors, covering 40 generations, 3 continents, in 3 languages with ONE story, theme, solution and plan of redemption.

- How does this bolster your confidence in the reliability of the Bible?

### **Read Luke 3:1**

In just this one verse there are 15 different verifiable historical and archaeological references. Jack Cottrell writes, "Through the wealth of data uncovered by historical and archeological research, we are able to measure the Bible's historical accuracy. In every case where its claims can be thus tested, the Bible proves to be accurate and reliable."

- How does this bolster your confidence in the Bible?

## **DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION**

### **Hebrews 4:12-13**

- From these verses what does the author of Hebrews want us to most understand about God and His Word?

What evidence do you have in your life that the Word of God:

- is alive and active?
- penetrates to the depth of your soul and spirit?
- is able to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart?

### **Read Psalm 119:97-104**

- What do the enemies, teachers and elders have in common (vs. 98-100)? What is at the heart of the author's boast?
- What are some of the descriptions of the lasting or life changing impact of God's Word?
- Describe a way that you have experienced one of these?
- How do you tell the difference between "right" and "wrong" paths? What role does the Bible play?

## **LIVE IT OUT**

### **Read Psalm 119:105**

- What are the functions of a lamp or light in our physical lives? How do they help us find direction?
- What are some specific ways the Bible has been a "lamp" or "light" to provide direction in your life? What is one thing you could do this week to allow the Bible to better light your path?

### **Read 1 Peter 3:15**

- What truths from this week's sermon and study can help you to "give the reason for the hope that you have"?
  - Who is someone in your oikos that you feel led to share something from this discussion?
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**See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)**

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week's topic

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist: Chapters 9, 10, \*11, & 14

The Case For Christ: Chapters 1-6

77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

A New Kind of Apologist: Chapter 18--How to Question the Bible in a Post-Christian Culture

The Reason for God: Chapter 7--You Can't Take the Bible Literally

Cold Case Christianity: Chapters 11-14

77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

A New Kind of Apologist: Chapter 25--The Scientific Naturalist Juggernaut

The Reason for God: Chapter 6--Science Has Disproved Christianity

God's Crime Scene: Chapters 1-5

# CLARITY

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## WEEK 3: IF GOD IS ALL-POWERFUL WHY IS THERE SUFFERING?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- -What is the saddest story you've heard in the news recently?
- "When it rains it pours"--to what scenario in your life might that saying apply to?
- What personal tragedy do you fear the most?

Epicurus, an Ancient Greek philosopher described it this way:

*Either God wants to abolish evil, and cannot; or he can, but does not want to; or he cannot and does not want to. If he can, and does not want to, he is wicked. But, if God both can and wants to abolish evil, then how come there is evil in the world?*

- Respond to this quote. What is most difficult for you when it comes to the problem of evil and suffering?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS--Sermon from Sunday, September 24, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)--Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

### DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION

The story of Job is one of the oldest in the Bible. Job was a devout believer in God and was greatly blessed. His fortune did not last, however. Satan was allowed to test Job's faith by a series of tragedies. Incredibly, Job reacts with praising God instead of cursing him. Then Satan afflicts Job even more.

### **Read Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10**

- If you lost everything and everyone in a day, how would you react? What would be your biggest question?
- How can you relate to this story most at this time in your life?
- What does this story demonstrate about Satan?
- What in Job's response strikes you as most extraordinary?
- How could Job make such strong statements of faith (Job 1:21, 2:10) after being struck by such tragedies?
- If no evil can happen to man apart from God's tacit permission, what problems does that raise for you?

### **Read Genesis 3:1-10**

Is it more loving for God to create a world where love is possible or for him to create a world where love is impossible? A loving God would create a world where love is possible... But in that world there must also be the possibility of rejecting His love.

J. Warner Wallace

- How does this passage help answer this week's question?
- When, how, and why did suffering enter the story of the world?

### **Hebrews 12:2-3**

- What practical teaching do we get in these verses to help in dealing with suffering?

### **LIVE IT OUT**

- What is the most difficult thing you are going through right now in your life?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18**

- How is it that Paul can call the struggles "light and momentary"?
  - How do these verses help you cope with your present struggles?
  - How can God use this in your life?
  - How can the group support you and pray for you?
  - Who is someone in your oikos that you feel led to share something from this discussion?
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### **See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)**

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week's topic

Stealing from God: Chapter 5--Does Evil Disprove Atheism?

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist: Appendix 1:If God, Why Evil?

The Case For Faith: Objection #1--Since Evil and Suffering Exist, a Loving God Cannot

77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

The Reason for God: Chapter 2--How Could a Good God Allow Suffering?eri

Walking With God Through Pain & Suffering

# CLARITY

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## WEEK 4: ARE MIRACLES POSSIBLE?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- Have you ever witnessed a miracle? If so describe what happened?
- Why do you think so many people today don't believe in miracles?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS—Sermon from Sunday, October 1, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)—Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

Norman Geisler & Frank Turek, in *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, give this definition of miracles (pg. 201):

*A miracle is a special act of God that interrupts the normal course of events. Atheist Antony Flew put it well: "A miracle is something which would never have happened had nature, as it were, been left to its own devices." So we might say that natural laws describe what happens regularly, by natural causes; miracles, if they occur at all, describe what happens rarely, by supernatural causes.*

- How is this definition helpful for you in discussions about miracles?

Seminary Professor Ronald Nash gave this illustration to atheists who did not believe in miracles (page 202 of *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*):

Nash began by showing them two small boxes. One was opened, and one was closed. *"Here is the difference between your worldview and mine," he began. Pointing to the closed box, he said, "You believe that the physical universe is closed; that the universe is all that exists, and there's nothing outside it."*

*Shifting to the open box he continued, "I believe that the physical universe exists as well; but I also believe the universe is open--that there's something outside the universe we call God." Nash added, "And God created the box!"*

*He then reached into the box and said, "Just like I can reach into the box to manipulate its contents, God can reach into our universe and perform what we call miracles."*

- How can this illustration be helpful to open people's eyes to the idea of miracles?

## **DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION**

Read Exodus 7:8-13

- Why would Pharaoh want a miracle performed?
- How do you think the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate Moses' and Aaron's miracles?
- What is the meaning of Aaron's snake swallowing up theirs?
- How can we determine if a miracle is from God or some other source?

Read Exodus 7:20-23; 8:6-7; 8:16-19

- What is different about the plague of gnats?
- What does "finger of God" imply (see also Luke 11:20)?
- How come "Pharaoh's heart was hard this time"?
- Describe a time when you hardened your heart in response to God revealing himself to you or working in your life?

The Bible mentions about 250 miracles and most of them are clustered around three distinct time periods: Moses & Joshua, Elijah & Elisha, and Jesus & the Apostles?

- Why do we see more miracles performed during these times?
- How can this be helpful in answering the question: "Why don't we see miracles happening today to the same extent as described in the Bible?"

## **LIVE IT OUT**

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17**

- What is the miracle described in this verse? What is some evidence of miracles in your own "old has gone, new has come" experience with Jesus?

### **Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

- Paul asked for a miracle three times but he did not receive one? How did he respond?
  - Have you prayed for God to intervene with a miracle in your life? What happened? How has this affected your attitude toward God?
  - What can you apply to your life from these verses?
  - What kind of miracle are you praying for God to do in your life or the life of those around you?
- Who is someone in your oikos that you feel led to share something from this discussion?

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**See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)**

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week's topic

I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist: Chapter 8—Miracles: Signs of God or Gullibility?

The Case For Faith: Objection #2—Since Miracles Contradict Science They Cannot Be True  
77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

A New Kind of Apologist—The Scientific Naturalist Juggernaut and What to do About it  
Miracles by Eric Metaxas

# CLARITY

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## WEEK 5: WHAT ABOUT HELL?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- What picture of Hell did you grow up with as a child and where did it come from?
- Share a “Peak and a Pit” from the last week. What was a high point and low point for you in the last week?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS—Sermon from Sunday, October 1, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)—Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

### C.S. Lewis said:

*The doctrine of hell is one of the chief grounds on which Christianity is attacked as barbarous and the goodness of God impugned.*

- How have you found this to be true or untrue in your experience?
- How has the doctrine of hell been a stumbling block to you or someone in your oikos?

### HERE ARE FOUR COMMON OBJECTIONS TO WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT HELL:

- Read through the four objections together (without the verses).
- Then go around and share which of these is the biggest struggle for you or those in your oikos.
- Then take time to read the scriptures listed (and add to them) for the ones that your group most struggle with:

### **1. How can God send children to hell?**

Matthew 18:3, Matthew 19:14, 2 Samuel 12:23

### **2. Why doesn't God just force everyone to go to heaven?**

Joshua 24:14-15, Luke 9:23-24

### **3. Why doesn't God give people a second chance (purgatory)?**

2 Peter 3:8-9, Hebrews 2:1-3

### **4. What about people who have never heard about Jesus?**

Romans 1:18-20, Jeremiah 29:13, Acts 10:30-35

- What is another objection about hell that you struggle with yourself or hear a lot from others? What did you learn from the sermon or this study that can help to answer this objection?

## **DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION**

### **Read Mark 9:47-48 and Matthew 22:13**

- One of these verses describes hell with fire and the other with darkness. How do these contradict and how can it help us to understand that the descriptions of hell are not literal but rather word pictures of the indescribable nature of hell?

### **Read 2 Thessalonians 1:9**

- Hell is best understood by what is not there. What do we learn about this from this verse?

### **Author Tim Keller said:**

*Even in this life we can see the kind of soul disintegration that self-centeredness creates. We know how selfishness and self-absorption leads to bitterness, envy, anxiety, paranoid thoughts, and the mental denials and distortions that accompany them. Now ask the question: "What if when we die we don't end, but spiritually our life extends into eternity?" Hell, then is the trajectory of a soul, living a self-absorbed, self-centered life, going on and on forever.*

### **Read Luke 9:24-25**

- What do you learn from this quote and these verses about the connection between choosing a self-centered life and hell?

### **Read Genesis 18:25 Ephesians 2:8-9**

- What stands out to you in what these verses teach us about judgement, hell, salvation and our trust in God?

## LIVE IT OUT

### **Read Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:9, Romans 1:16, 1 Peter 3:15**

- What stands out to you about God's heart and what our response should be to the reality of hell?
- Who is someone in your oikos that you feel led to share something from this discussion?

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### **See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)**

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week's topic

The Case For Faith: Objection #6--A Loving God Would Never Torture People in Hell

77 FAQ's About God and The Bible

The Reason for God-Chapter 5--How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?

Erasing Hell: What God Said about Eternity, by Francis Chan

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CLARIFYING QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH



## WEEK 6: DOES PRAYER EVER CHANGE GOD'S MIND?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- When you were a child, what is something big you asked for on your gift wish list? Did you receive it?
- Did you have a prayer you recited as a child?
- What is the funniest prayer you've heard a child say?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS—Sermon from Sunday, October 1, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)—Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

### DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION

#### Read Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 13:8

- If you only read these verses, what would you conclude about whether prayer changes God's mind?

#### Read Exodus 32:14; Numbers 14:12-20; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 21:22

- If you only read these verses, what would you conclude about whether prayer changes God's mind?

From the sermon and these passages how do we reconcile the truths that God doesn't change but Prayer can "change God's mind"?

### **Read Luke 11:1-13**

- What do the disciples ask of Jesus (v. 1)? What special importance does that put on the rest of this passage?
- What does Jesus pray in His model prayer (v. 2) what is the focus of prayer before getting to personal requests (v. 3)? What do these verses teach us about “changing God’s mind in prayer”?
- How do forgiveness and prayer relate (v. 4)?
- What does the parable in verses 5-8 teach about prayer?
- How do verses 9-10 relate to the parable?
- What do verses 11-13 reveal to us about the heart of God and prayer?

### **LIVE IT OUT**

- What stands out to you in this teaching on prayer?
- What is one specific way you feel led to apply this teaching to your prayer life?

### **Read Philippians 4:6**

- What is one thing you have been anxious about, that you want to instead present to God in prayer?

**Suggestion:** Plan extra time in prayer during this session or, next week when there is a one week break from the Sermon series, plan to have an extended time of prayer. If you would like resources or materials for an extended prayer time please contact us at [groups@purposechurch.com](mailto:groups@purposechurch.com)

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### **See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)**

Here are some chapters from these resources that focus on this week’s topic

See the Suggested Resources found at [purposechurch.com/clarity](http://purposechurch.com/clarity)  
Here are some additional books that focus on this week’s topic:

Fervant by Priscilla Shirer

Prayer by Richard Foster

# CLARITY

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS ABOUT FAITH



## WEEK 7: If Life Is Good, Why Do I Need Jesus?

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### OPENING QUESTIONS

(Choose the one(s) that will best get your group talking on this topic)

- As you look at your life to date, in earthly terms, which season has been the easiest to say--"Life is going really good right now"? Why?
- How does your life right now compare to what you dreamed your life would be like at this stage?
- Which board game did you enjoy more growing up? The Game of Life or Monopoly? Why?

### SERMON REFLECTIONS—Sermon from Sunday, October 29, 2017

(Audio and video available at [purposechurch.com](http://purposechurch.com)—Suggestion: bring copies of the sermon outline to look at when you discuss)

- What was most helpful to you?
- What challenged you?
- What encouraged you?

### DIGGING INTO DISCUSSION

#### Read John 10:10

- How do Jesus' words speak to this question of why we need Jesus no matter our situation in life?
- How have you seen, or do you see, this verse playing out in each of the seasons/quarters of your life?
  - 1st Quarter--Teens and 20's
  - 2nd Quarter--30's and 40's
  - 3rd Quarter--50's and 60's
  - 4th Quarter--70's plus

### **Read Joshua 1:1-9**

- What has just happened that is the setting of these verses?
- What does this mean for Joshua? What types of feelings do you think he had at this point?
- What promises are given to him?
- Which ones ask him to look back and remember what God has done in the past?
- Which ones ask him to look ahead and believe God for future blessing?
- What commands accompany these promises?
- What is necessary for success and prosperity?
- What do you think God means by “success and prosperity”?
- Which command given to Joshua would be the toughest for you to obey?
- Which of his promises would be most helpful to you? Looking back? Looking forward?
- What challenge lies before you now? What would “success” look like for you?
- What do you fear might hinder you?
- How can this group help you to follow God fully through this season?

### **Read Acts 13:36**

- David had all kinds of success, prosperity and a good life. But that is not what is mentioned as what he would be remembered for. Our perspective on the importance of “success”, “prosperity” and “a good life” compared to serving God’s purpose faithfully can change drastically during the course of our lives.
- How do you think our perspectives will change as we look back on the seasons of our lives?

## **LIVE IT OUT**

### **Read Matthew 7:24-27**

- What does the rock represent in this passage?
- What is Jesus promising those who are willing to live by his words?
- What kind of life “storms” have you seen resulting in spiritual casualties in your own life or the lives of others?
- If you took an honest look at how you live your daily life, what other foundations do you tend to “build your life on” besides Jesus?

### **Read Hebrews 6:19**

- How firm is your foundation right now? In the past year would you say it has gotten weaker or stronger?
- What can you do to more firmly establish your house upon “the rock”?
- How can the group pray for you in regards to this now and in the days ahead

### **Closing:**

- Decide if you want to do one more session and look back over all the seven studies to talk about how God has spoken to you and what difference it is making in your life. You could make it a celebration with a meal or time of communion.
- Or you can spend some time at the end of this session looking back.
- Be sure to talk about plans for your next study!