



GODCONNECTS™

A COURSE IN CHRISTIANITY



LHM.ORG/GODCONNECTS

DISCUSSION GUIDE - SESSION 4

USING THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible so it will fit both group and personal use. It includes links, which provide extra information on Internet sites where you can browse and dig as deep as you want.

A PDF discussion guide containing all 12 sessions, as well as single session guides, are available at www.lhm.org/godconnects.

To find the discussion guide on the DVD, load it into your computer (not your DVD player). You can right click the menu. Push "Open" instead of "Play" and you will pull up a list of files, which includes the discussion guide.



ABOUT US

God Connects is a ministry of Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM). As a Christian outreach ministry, LHM supports churches worldwide, producing Christian radio and TV programming for broadcast, Internet and print communications, dramas, music, and outreach materials—all designed to reach unchurched people in the United States and more than 30 countries around the world. Lutheran Hour Ministries' flagship program, **The Lutheran Hour**, airs weekly on more than 1,400 stations and the American Forces Network. To learn more about this long-running Gospel program and LHM's other ministry resources, go to www.lhm.org.

CONTACT US

We would love to connect to you. Call us at **1-855-JOHN316 (1-855-564-6316)** E-mail to lhmresponse@lhm.org.

INTRODUCTION

GodConnects: In a difficult and confusing world, God is connecting to you!

God, are You there?

Everyone, at some point, asks this question. It can come at moments of sterile reflection or in times of deep despair. "God, if You are there, why don't You show Yourself to me?" In this confusing world where authenticity is so elusive, it seems like we cannot connect to God.

We could not connect to God, but the good news is that God connects with us. He has been doing this from the beginning in amazing ways. The most direct way God connected to us is when He became one of us in Jesus Christ. When Jesus was on this earth, He was the very revelation of God as He taught and healed and loved.

Then to restore our connection to God which had been shattered because of sin, on the cross, Jesus willingly paid the penalty for our sins—in His own death! This is the most authentic, startling and determined love the world could have ever imagined.

Now God connects to us by revealing Himself in the Bible. This God-given book has an amazing story. It tells of God's constant and compassionate work to restore our relationship with Him.

GodConnects wants to share that story with you. *GodConnects* is a course that tells this unique, unequalled story. Whether you do not believe in Christ as Savior or want to deepen your faith in Him, as you delve into *GodConnects* you will explore what the Bible says about this remarkably loving God, and how this love gives direction and meaning to your life today and forever.

On this website, you can explore these questions of faith. You will find videos and other up-to-date media that take advantage of today's technology.

So let's get started

NATURE OF GOD

Session 4: A Course on Christianity

Opening Prayer: Holy God, from Your Ten Commandments I know I'm a sinner who deserves Your eternal punishment. My only hope is that You are a merciful and loving God. I seek forgiveness in Jesus, and ask You to reveal Yourself to me. I pray this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

4.1. WHO IS GOD?

This question is one that has intrigued people for thousands of years. This is not surprising; after all, it's only natural we would be curious about our Creator. People have come up with numerous conceptions of who they think God is (or, in some cases, what they think God is). Some of these depictions show God as [powerful](#), [majestic](#), or even as a simple human in either a [white suit](#) or a flannel shirt. Of course, Hollywood's portrayals aren't the most accurate sources for learning about God, so maybe we should begin by looking elsewhere for our answers.

4.2. WHAT IS GOD?

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

A being that is purely spirit—such as God or His angels—does not have a physical, material body. He is imperceptible to our five senses.

However, the Bible also reveals many other attributes or characteristics of our God.

4.3. WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD?

God is a spirit who has existed for all eternity. He is all-knowing (see [John 21:17](#)), all-powerful (see [Matthew 19:26](#)), and is present everywhere at all times (see [Jeremiah 23:24](#)). God is unchanging (see [James 1:17](#)), God is faithful (see [2 Timothy 2:13](#)). He is holy and without sin (see [Leviticus 19:2](#)), forgiving and merciful (see [Psalm 86:15](#)). His ways are perfect and just (see [Deuteronomy 32:4](#)), gracious, merciful and above all else, God is love (see [1 John 4:16](#)).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Which of these attributes are the most frightening or intimidating?
- Discuss the attributes you find most comforting.

4.4. HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GOD REALLY EXISTS?

God has chosen to reveal Himself to us both in the nature of the world He created, and in His special revelation, the Bible.

1.) The Bible tells us God wrote the requirements of His Law on our hearts.

They show that the work of the Law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them. (Romans 2:15)

Most nations never received the Ten Commandments, yet they enact laws reflecting them. Our sense of morality and our conscience reveal that our Creator is a moral Being who holds His creatures accountable for their lives. Though we are sinners, God does not want us to be unaware that the Day of Judgment is coming for all people living or dead.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How has your sensitivity to your conscience changed over your lifetime?

DIGGING DEEPER

- *Your Place in God's Plan*- booklet: (<http://www.lhm.org/godconnects/diggingdeeper.asp#4.4>)

2.) A second way God reveals Himself to us is by creation itself

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

An author leaves elements of his personality in his characters. A photographer shares images of the world that reveals her perspective. Likewise, God's fingerprints can be seen throughout His creation.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Which things in nature show you God's fingerprints the most clearly?
- Since this creation is shattered by sin, it no longer gives a complete reflection of the God who created it. What things could give people the impression that God is cruel and vindictive?
- Why is it dangerous to judge our standing with God by the circumstances in our lives?

3.) God most clearly reveals Himself to us through the His Word in the Bible, particularly the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Because of God's great love for us, He makes Himself known to us so we receive forgiveness of our sins, and give Him our heartfelt praise and worship. He has created us, and makes it possible for us to be able to grow in our faith until we are united with Him for eternity in Heaven. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What are some situations in life where it would be important to look outside our feelings and impressions and learn about God from His Bible?

4.5. WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

One of the most important things we should learn about God is that He is triune, meaning there are three separate and distinct Persons who make up our one and only God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. (Deuteronomy 6:4)

(Jesus said) "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

The [Trinity](#) is a mystery no human can ever fully understand. We simply must confine ourselves to the things God has revealed about Himself in the Bible and live with those things that are unknowable. The Christian church spent centuries struggling to find the most biblically accurate way to speak about it. We call the three formulas they ultimately agreed upon the Creeds.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What are some ways you have heard people try to explain the Trinity?
- Why do these descriptions always fall short?

4.6. WHAT ARE THE CREEDS?

To help provide clarification and weed out errors within the church, the early church developed belief statements called, "creeds." Three creeds still in use by Christians today include the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds summarize who God is and what He has done for us through each of the Godhead's three Persons.

4.7. WHO ARE THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY?

1. The Father: In the Bible, God the Father is most readily connected to the work of creating the universe (see Genesis 1:1). Though God has set natural law in place to govern His creation, He is continually sustaining and caring for His creation.

These all look to You, to give them their food in due season. When You give it to them, they gather it up; when You open Your hand, they are filled with good things. When You hide Your face, they are dismayed; when You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When You send forth Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:27-30)

2. Jesus Christ: God the Son, also known as [Jesus Christ](#), is our Savior. His perfect life, death and resurrection saved all people from their sins. He paid the price for our sins and saved the world from eternal separation from God.

And He (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. (Colossians 1:18-20)

3. Holy Spirit: Finally, God the [Holy Spirit](#) is active in our world today, making it possible for us to know God and to create and sustain our faith in Him. It is the Spirit of the Lord who performs the work of sanctification, which means to bless, or make holy.

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

A great demonstration of the existence of the Trinity comes in the account of [Jesus' Baptism](#).

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22)

In those verses, we see each of the three unique Persons of the Trinity in the same place at the same time.

4.8. DID GOD REALLY CREATE THE UNIVERSE IN SIX DAYS?

The Genesis 1 account of the creation of the heavens and the earth depicts God's actual methods and timeframe for creation. When God gave the Third Commandment on Mount Sinai, He reinforced the six-day creation.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:11)

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Out of Nothing" - (<http://www.lhm.org/men/studydetail.asp?id=11634>)

4.9. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CREATE?

To create something means to bring into existence that which had not existed before. So when we say God created the universe, we are saying God made all things out of nothing but the spoken words of His mouth. There were no pre-existing materials used in the construction of the universe; instead, He created both the object and also the materials from which the object was made. This is significant because it makes God the one and only Creator, solely responsible for the artistry and craftsmanship of His design.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What is the hardest thing about accepting the Bible's account of creation?
- Why do people prefer to think the world came into existence by chance rather than at the word of an all-powerful Creator?

4.10. HOW DOES BIBLICAL CREATION AND EVOLUTION FIT TOGETHER?

Simply put, they do not fit together. The theory of evolution is based upon the premise that the building blocks for life were formed at the time of the Big Bang. Over time, this matter changed itself, growing and transforming into the life forms and systems we now see throughout our world. The Bible is clear when it describes God as the sole Creator of all things. God didn't use pre-existing materials because He didn't need them. Since God is by nature all-powerful, He didn't need to rely upon other things to create the universe.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why do you think some Christians feel the need to fit creation and evolution together?

4.11. WHAT DID GOD CREATE ON EACH OF THE SIX DAYS?

According to the Bible account beginning in Genesis chapter 1, God created the universe in the following order:

Day 1: God created the heavens and the earth, including the water which covered the earth. God also separated light from darkness.

Day 2: God created the sky, separating the upper waters from the water which rested on the surface of the earth.

Day 3: God established where the water on earth would be kept, providing places where dry land would be formed. On land, God created all varieties of plants, trees and vegetation.

Day 4: God created the sun, the moon, and all of the stars.

Day 5: God created all the fish in the sea and the birds of the air.

Day 6: God created all the animals that would live on the land, including the special creation of mankind.

Day 7: God rested from His work of creation. This serves as the model for us to take time each week to rest from our work and worship God (the Sabbath).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Consider the systematic order God used for creation. How does God's work on day one provide the groundwork for His work on day four? Day two for day five? Day three for day six?
- Discuss the marvelous way God designed the earth to be able to provide the needs of all animals and plants.

4.12. HOW WAS THE CREATION OF MAN DIFFERENT THAN THE REST OF UNIVERSE?

Mankind was created on the sixth day as the crown of God's creation. We were created in the "image" of God with an immortal soul and responsibilities to rule over God's creation.

There are several distinct differences that set mankind apart from the rest of God's creation. First, before He created man, God the Father spoke with the other two Persons of the Trinity (the Son and the Holy Spirit) regarding this special creation. The humans God intended to create would be uniquely created in God's own image; they would be like Him in wisdom, righteousness and holiness. Next, though God formed all animals from the dust of the ground (see Genesis 2:19), He did something special after forming man's body from dust—He breathed into the man's nostrils and gave him life (see Genesis 2:7). This unique act of creation sets man apart from the animals and plants, man alone has within him a living soul. God created man with a specific responsibility as well as the talents and abilities to be able to rule over the rest of creation (see Genesis 1:28). Finally, God fashioned a companion for the man He created by taking a rib out of him to create a woman, who was also made in His image and possessing a soul (see Genesis 2:21-22).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why do we need to point out the special place humanity has in God's world?
- What are some ways we have abused our God-given authority over creation?

4.13. WHAT DID GOD DO AFTER HE FINISHED CREATING ALL THINGS?

God created the universe in six days, but the work of the Father didn't end there. Throughout the Bible, we read stories of how God continued to actively care for us and the world He created.

After Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, God was there to immediately promise a Savior who would save his people from their sinfulness. In fact, God has instructed us in the words of 1 Peter 5:7 to "cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you." God took care of Noah and his family during the flood (see Genesis 9). God cared for Israel while they were in the wilderness (see Deuteronomy 8). God provided for Elijah, the widow and her son (see 1 Kings 17). God took care of Joseph, Mary and Jesus by alerting him to flee to Egypt (see Matthew 2). These are only a few of the many examples of how God showed love and care for His people, tending to their needs and insuring their safety.

To this day, God the Father continues to actively care for His creation. Our food, home, clothing, shelter, money and all other provisions are gifts given to us out of love by God.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (James 1:17)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How often do you find yourself worrying about your earthly needs?
- What is a good way to learn to trust God to provide them?

4.14. WHAT ARE ANGELS?

Angels are spirit beings God created during the six days of creation. They are many and powerful. The holy angels serve God by obeying His command, protecting mankind, especially children (see Matthew 18:10), and bringing special messages from God (see Luke 1:26-27).

When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of hand chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)

DIGGING DEEPER

- *The Truth about Angels*, <http://lhm.org/godconnects/diggingdeeper.asp#4.14> is a booklet to answer your questions on these mysterious beings.
- "Yes, Virginia. There are Angels", <http://blogs.lcms.org/2010/yes-virginia-there-are-angels-12-2010> provides more information on the topic.

Angels and humans are two very different creatures. Humans do not become angels when they die.

4.15. WHAT IS THE DEVIL?

God created all angels holy, but some rebelled against Him. The leading angel was Satan, also known as the devil. He assumed the form of a serpent and tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3). Later he tempted Jesus in the Wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11). God limits Satan's works (see Job 1:6-12). On Judgment Day Jesus will cast Satan into hell forever (see Revelation 20:10).

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why is it important for Christians to be aware of Satan's schemes?
- Why must we also remember that God is infinitely stronger and wiser than the devil?

DIGGING DEEPER

- *The Great Deceiver*: (<http://www.lhm.org/men/studydetail.asp?id=23755>)
- *Satan: The Great Deceiver* - booklet: (<http://www.lhm.org/godconnects/diggingdeeper.asp#4.15>)

4.16. IF GOD IS ACTIVE IN OUR WORLD TODAY, WHY DO BAD THINGS STILL HAPPEN?

When God first created the world, He created it to be perfect and without sin. However, once Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world, evil and suffering came with it. Our sins have tainted God's creation and are now a part of life we must all endure. Pain, suffering, hardships, disease, accidents and tragedies are unfortunate but common experiences in our sin-filled world.

In spite of our failure to follow God's will, He has not abandoned us. In fact, it is because of God's grace and mercy that He has provided us the path to salvation through Christ.

Romans 8:28 gives us a clear reminder of the active love that God shows us in the face of the world's struggle. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose." So while we will continue to deal with difficulties, we do so knowing we have a God who is there with us to guide everything that happens and make it turn out for our good—just as He brought our salvation out of the murder of His own Son Jesus.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What good have you seen God bring out of bad things that have happened in your life?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, Holy Lord God, thank You for giving me life, providing for all my needs, and defending me from all danger. Thanks most of all for sending Your Son to be my Savior. I pray in His Holy Name. Amen.