

explore  
God™

**GROWTH GROUP STUDY GUIDE**



# WEEK ONE

## Does Life Have a Purpose?

### Getting Started

1. Are you surprised to learn that 85 percent of people are clear about the meaning and purpose of their life (64 percent strongly agree and 21 percent somewhat agree)? Why or why not?

### Going Deeper

2. In the weekly video, Lysa observed, “If I could just discover the right thing, a better job, financial blessing, the right person to love me, the right kids with the right accolades, then I’d feel satisfied.” In what things have you sought satisfaction? Did they satisfy?
3. Can you share both a time when life seemed like a random series of events and a time when it seemed like there was an intentional plan unfolding?

4. In what ways might someone's view of eternity affect their sense of meaning and purpose?

### **Taking it Home**

5. If you believe we all have a purpose, what role does God play in that—if any?"

# WEEK TWO

## Is There a God?

### Getting Started

1. To what do you attribute the 11 percent decline in the belief in God over the past twenty years?

### Going Deeper

2. What makes it easy to believe in God? What makes it hard to believe in God?
  
3. What role—if any—did God play in your family when you were growing up? How does your upbringing impact your beliefs now?

4. In the video, Andy shares that he's convinced God exists because of "cosmological constants" and their impact on life. What has convinced you that God either does or does not exist?

## **Taking it Home**

5. If Most of us "hope there's something else out there." And the thoughts people have about God are as diverse as the people who've thought them. Most have attributed their life to some form of god or Supreme Being. As we saw and discussed, there is ample evidence supporting this. Yet, it seems, for us to be confident that there is a God, he/she/it must "reveal himself to us in a way that makes sense." Psalm 19:1 states, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." In other words, if there is a God, all people have experienced him, though they might not have known it or attributed that experience to God. This week, keep an open mind and consider how the creation around you might speak of God and his plans.

# WEEK THREE

## Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?

### Getting Started

1. Was it surprising to learn that the top question people would ask God is, “Why is there pain and suffering in the world?” What would be some of the questions you’d ask God?

### Going Deeper

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you to reconcile the existence of both suffering and God (1 = easy; 10 = impossible)? Why?
3. In the video, one of the speakers noted, “Some of the best lessons I’ve learned in life . . . came from very painful times.” In what ways might good come from bad? Do you have any experience with this?

4. If there's a God, why do you think he allows evil in the world?

### **Taking it Home**

5. Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." In this passage, the Apostle Paul suggests that something good always comes of something bad. Indeed, a few verses later he affirms that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." Scripture proposes that, despite the painful circumstances in which we often find ourselves, God can somehow use them for his and our good. What are your thoughts about pain and suffering after reading these verses?

# WEEK FOUR

## Is Christianity Too Narrow?

### Getting Started

1. What do you think about the statistic that “nearly half of all US adults believe it doesn’t matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons”?

### Going Deeper

2. In the video, Corey suggests, “When people say that all religions are the same, that sounds really humble and tolerant.” Why does he go on to say that those claims are actually exclusive?
  
3. How have people used religion for good? For bad?



4. What are some examples of situations in which most people believe that narrow ideas are good?

### **Taking it Home**

5. In Jeremiah 29:4-11, God calls his people to be present in their city in a way that enables it to flourish, while remaining focused on God. “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7). In other words, the God of the Bible commands his people to be gracious and charitable toward all people—including those who do not share the same faith. Is it possible to have an honest yet graceful dialog about important matters like faith?

# WEEK FIVE

## Is Jesus Really God?

### Getting Started

1. Does it seem consistent with your experience that “67 percent of US adults . . . have a personal relationship with Jesus”? Why or why not?

### Going Deeper

2. What did Leonce mean when he said, “Religion says ‘I do, therefore I’m loved.’ Jesus says, ‘You’re loved, therefore you do’”?
3. Christians believe that sin separates humanity from God. Yet Jesus, through his death, bridges that gap. Why do you think Jesus had to die in order to accomplish this?

4. In the video, Bryan says “[Jesus] was resurrected—rose up from the dead—with over five hundred witnesses. They saw him and, based on that encounter, were willing to die in order to testify as to what they saw.” What do you think about his claim? What do you think about Jesus’ claim to be God?

### **Taking it Home**

5. It’s fashionable to suggest that Jesus was a good teacher, a man with an important message of love, and that’s all. He wasn’t God; that’s impossible. However, the problem with that perspective is that he claimed to be God. (In John 10:30, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.”) Consequently, in C. S. Lewis’s words, Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. Furthermore, assuming that he lived, he also predicted his death and resurrection. Then hundreds of witnesses claimed he fulfilled that prediction and indeed rose from the dead. What do we do with that?

# WEEK SIX

## Is the Bible reliable?

### Getting Started

1. What does it mean that “80 percent of Americans identify the Bible as sacred literature yet only 43 percent of Christians firmly believe the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches”?

### Going Deeper

2. Do you think it's possible that a book could be inspired by God? Why or why not?
  
3. As quoted in the film, how might it be possible that the Bible is “the true human story that underlies our experience and our existence”?

4. How relevant is the Bible to your everyday life? What might make you inclined to rely on the Bible as a source of truth or guidance in your life?

### **Taking it Home**

5. Isaiah 40:8 says, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” In other words, this writer seems to think that there is something special about this book—that it will outlast nature. Another passage states unequivocally that the Bible is “God-breathed.” If any of this is true, then clearly the Bible is worth our sincere consideration.

# WEEK SEVEN

## Can I Know God Personally

### Getting Started

1. Is it surprising that 75 percent of adults desire a close relationship with God? Why or why not?

### Going Deeper

2. Why might someone resist knowing God personally?
  
3. In the video, Pete said, “[Jesus] made it possible for our sins to be removed because his blood was spotless; he was a perfect sacrifice for us.” How could Jesus be perfect? What are the implications of that?

4. In Matthew 7:7, the Bible says that if we seek, we will find; if we knock, the door will be opened. What might this mean? How might one develop a personal relationship with God?

## **Taking it Home**

5. The relational nature of humans points to the creator's desire to be in relationship with us. Yet most people recognize a flaw, some sense of brokenness in our relationship with God. "The problem is not that we're bad; it's that we're dead!" one speaker noted. So what gives? Scripture describes a God who passionately pursues the people he created and makes it possible to fix our broken relationship. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." In other words, God takes us, in all our brokenness, and offers to make us whole forever.



1251 Windham Parkway  
Romeoville, Illinois  
**[cometothesanctuary.org](http://cometothesanctuary.org)**

**Services:** 9:30 & 11 AM Sundays