



GODCONNECTS™

A COURSE IN CHRISTIANITY



LHM.ORG/GODCONNECTS

DISCUSSION GUIDE - SESSION 11

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

THE END OF TIME

Session 11: A Course on Christianity

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, Jesus promised that He will return again to judge the living and the dead. Teach me more about Judgment Day so I will be ready for His return. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

When He (Jesus) had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11)

Ever wondered what it will be like to be around when Jesus returns and this world comes to an end? Everyone seems to have some thought, idea or theory about the end of the world. There are even some groups that boldly predict precisely when the end of the world will occur, and have done so multiple times throughout history! We can be confident about one thing: any prediction is wrong.

(Jesus said) "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

So what can we know about Jesus' return?

11.1. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT CHRIST'S SECOND COMING?

Actually, a lot! For starters, we know Jesus will return in a similar manner as He left—that all will instantaneously see and know, and we are asked to be prepared for false teachings as the end of this world draws near.

(Jesus said) "False christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send out the angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." (Mark 13:22-27)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- In light of the false prophets and false christs God warns us against, why is it more important than ever to attend worship regularly and be active in Bible study and prayer?

11.2. WHAT WILL JESUS DO WHEN HE COMES AGAIN?

The Bible teaches that when Jesus comes again, He will do a number of things:

1.) He will bring the dead back to life:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

2.) He will judge all people:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

3.) He will end this world that is filled with problems and create new heavens and a new earth that will be perfect:

But according to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Discuss the comfort we can draw from God's promises that through all eternity we will be reunited together with loved ones who have died in faith.
- What problems of this present life do you most look forward to seeing Jesus remove when He returns?

11.3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE BELIEVERS WHEN JESUS RETURNS?

When Jesus comes again, He will instantly heal and transform the bodies of all living believers and make them immortal. He will bring back the spirits of those who have died in faith and reunite them with their perfect risen bodies. We will enjoy peace and happiness in never-ending bliss living together with God.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Why is this promised future so much better than living in this world forever?

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Judgment Day" for the believer (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7752PD.mp3>)
- "Are These the Last Days" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7610PD.mp3>)

11.4. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A BELIEVER DIES, EXACTLY?

One of the most famous passages of Scripture on this topic is when the thief on the cross next to Jesus confessed his guilt and prayed, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Jesus responded, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (see Luke 23:42-43). Through this promise, Jesus revealed that our souls will instantly be with Him the moment we die. This truth is an everlasting joy to embrace.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup over flows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalm 23:4-6)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What special comfort does Jesus' promise to a criminal who came to faith hours before his death offer someone who is struggling with guilt over the way he/she lived?

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Death, Then What?" (<http://www.lhm.org/men/studydetail.asp?id=19975>) is a video-based study with written study guide that examines this issue at length.
- *What Happens When I Die?* (booklet, <http://www.lhm.org/godconnects/diggingdeeper.asp#11.4>)
- "What Will Happen When I Die?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA8011PD.mp3>)
- "The State of the Soul After Death" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7444PD.mp3>)

11.5. ALL THIS TALK ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD AND FUTURE JUDGMENT SOUNDS SCARY. SHOULD I BE AFRAID?

That depends on your faith. If you regret your sins now, and trust in God's forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, there is no need to fear the end of the world. That day will be a day of great joy because our Savior Jesus returns to restore creation and all believers!

(Jesus said) "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He will place the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31-34)

By having faith in Christ there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by Jesus returning at the end of time. This is why Christians may be heard occasionally saying something like "Lord, come quickly." He will bring an end to all the pain, suffering and sin we must endure in this world, which gives way to an eternal life with God, with everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Should Christians Fear Judgment Day?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7629PD.mp3>)

11.6. WHAT HAPPENS TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR?

Those who reject Christ will receive eternal punishment in hell. This is why Christians feel so strongly about sharing the Good News of Jesus, so as many as possible can be spared from hell.

Then He (the King) will say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41)

Bodily death is a result of sin. The spirit of an unbeliever leaves the body at death and suffers the everlasting pain and torment of hell, as it awaits Jesus' return on Judgment Day, when the body will be resurrected and reunited with the soul to suffer in hell forever.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

It can be difficult to accept that a loving God would punish His creatures so horribly. But the Bible is absolutely straightforward about it; it leaves no room for doubt, or wishful thinking. God is absolutely holy and just. He demonstrated His grace and love by providing a Savior from that torment. But when a person for whom Christ died rejects the way of salvation, then God justly condemns him or her to the eternal punishment of hell.

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses (the Ten Commandments) dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:28-31)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- The temptation to dismiss God's warning about hell is eerily similar to the first sin of mankind. God sternly warned Adam about eating the forbidden fruit: "In the day you eat of it you shall surely die" (see Genesis 2:17). Satan directly contradicted God's warning, "You will not surely die" (see Genesis 3:4). Eve believed Satan, and death has plagued mankind ever since. What is the similarity between "you will not surely die" and "there is no such thing as hell"?

DIGGING DEEPER

- "How Can a Loving God Send Anyone to Hell?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7741PD.mp3>)
- "Who Goes to Hell?" [Part 1] (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7725PD.mp3>) [Part 2] (<http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7726PD.mp3>)

11.7. WHEN IS MY ETERNAL DESTINY DECIDED?

It is decided by the state of faith or unbelief at the moment of death. After death there is no opportunity for changing one's condition, no second probation, no further offer of grace and forgiveness. For the resurrected dead, the last judgment is simply the grand finale of this present world. Their eternal destiny was already pronounced individually at the moment of their death. At the last judgment that sentence will be publicly confirmed and extended to the resurrected body also. He who continues in the faith unto the end has nothing to fear for his soul after death, nor for his body and soul on the Day of Judgment.

(Jesus said) "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."
(Mark 16:16)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How does the fixing of our eternal fate at the moment of death underscore the importance of laying hold of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ now and not waiting for a future date?

11.8. SO IF I BELIEVE IN JESUS, WILL MY BODY REALLY RISE FROM THE GRAVE?

Yes! We repeat this promise of God at every worship service through one of the ancient Christian statements of faith (creeds). This is also why Jesus is often referred to as the *"firstborn of the dead"* (see Revelation 1:5). The truth is every single person will rise from the dead—believer and unbeliever alike. Believers will be received into the joy of heaven, but the future for the risen unbeliever is the opposite.

(Jesus said) "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

11.9. WILL I HAVE A BODY IN HEAVEN?

Genesis describes the Garden of Eden as a place where Adam and Eve walked and talked in the presence of God in a physical world. The Bible describes the new heavens and new earth very much like that—a glorious physical place where we will live with our resurrected bodies.

But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"... So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown (buried in the ground) is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. (1 Corinthians 15:35, 42-43)

God describes this perfect world in which we will live forever in both the Old Testament and the New:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-20a, 25)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1-5)

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How do these passages draw a contrast between our present world and the glorious world Jesus will create when He returns?
- What painful things will be gone from our lives forever?

DIGGING DEEPER

- "Questions about Heaven" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7529PD.mp3>)
- "Are the Souls in Heaven Aware of Us on Earth?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7524PD.mp3>)
- "Are There Different Rewards in Heaven?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA7411PD.mp3>)

11.10. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO LIVE UNTIL THEN?

With faith in Christ's Word, we are safe no matter if the world ends tomorrow, or we die in a car accident tonight. Therefore, as Christians we can live in joyful expectation of the wonderful things to come, and share our hope with as many who will hear.

(Jesus said) "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

And He (Jesus) said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)

DIGGING DEEPER

- If you would like to learn more about the book of Revelation in particular, check out *Explaining All the Scary Stuff in Revelation*, (<http://www.lhm.org/men/studydetail.asp?id=13572>) a video-based Bible study.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, by Your suffering and death You have taken away my sins that I might be worthy to stand before Your judgment seat. Guard me in this faith by Your Holy Spirit that I may always be ready for the day of Your returning. Amen.