

# Confronting Christianity

STUDYGUIDE



## GROWTH GROUP

# Group Commitment

**Group Study**  
Week 10: Conclusion

*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ... Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering ... And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ... Hebrews 10:22-25*

In Growth Groups we grow in our relationship with God and with each other. We meet together to draw near to God, to hold fast to God's Word, and to encourage love and good works in one another.

### **Together, we commit to:**

- Support, care, encourage and pray for others in the group understanding this is a team-effort, not only the responsibility of the leader.
- Prioritize participation in the Growth Group, including contacting the group leader if unable to attend.
- Be a safe and shame-free environment to share honestly. We will keep confidences and refuse to gossip about others in the group. We understand the leader may need to consult with a Highpoint staff member and we trust his/her discernment.
- Be gracious. We will extend grace to others as God has extended to us.
- Show respect. We will be respectful of others in the group and will listen to and love each other.
- Welcome all people. As our group grows, we will multiply the group.
- Let the group leader facilitate the discussion and lead the direction on the group.

### **Share: Get Talking**

- It's the job of followers of Jesus to answer real-world questions with biblical wisdom. On a scale of 1-10, how prepared do you feel for this job after taking this study? How has your faith grown this past week?

### **Study: Go Deeper**

- Review your personal Bible study of 1 Peter 3:15-16. What verse(s) impacted you most? Did anything change from your study in week 1?
- Throughout this study, what encouraged you the most? Challenged you the most? Impacted you the most?
- What answers did you find in this study that helped grow your faith?

### **Support: Grow Together**

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- What plan do you have for your spiritual growth after this study?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word

## Passage: 1 Peter 3:15-16

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# About This Growth Guide

Our mission is to help people believe in, belong to, and become more like Jesus.

We are committed to intentional discipleship. As we gather, we desire to grow to become like Jesus. Every Growth Group study is designed to with this goal in mind.

Here are some tips to best maximize this study for personal growth and group discussions.

- **GET READY** - Purchase any books or resources needed for the study 1 week before the study starts.
- **GET CONNECTED** - Join a Growth Group that is going through this study. Our groups are the primary place at Highpoint for you to be disciplined and cared for.
- **GET COMMITTED** - Start each week by going through the HEAR Bible Study and completing any assigned readings on your own. Make note of anything impactful during the week.
- **GET DISCIPLED** - Be consistent and engaged in your Growth Group. Each meeting you'll work through questions to share, study, and support one another in mutual ministry.

# Group Study

Week 9: “How Could A Loving God Send People To Hell?”

## H.E.A.R from God in His Word

### HIGHLIGHT

What does the Word say?

PRAY: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Psalm 119:18)

Avoid using Additional Bible study tools: do not cut corners in this step.

#### IDENTIFY

- Key words: emphasized, repeated
- expressions of time: then, after, until
- prepositions of time: then, after, until
- prepositional phrases: in, on, upon
- cause & effects: if, since, because
- Comparisons & contrasts
- results: therefore, so that, for this
- commands: clear action statements

#### MARK UP THE PASSAGE:

write in your Bible. Circle, underline, and highlight.

Write in margins.

- Blue: God, who He is, His character
- Red: Christ, gospel, salvation
- Green: God’s promises
- Yellow: commands
- Black: anything else

IDENTIFY a key verse to memorize in each chapter

NOTE what is unclear

### EXPLAIN

What does the Word mean?

Refer to an ESV Study Bible for additional study notes, insights, historical background, and more.

#### USE ONLINE RESOURCES

- to assist with your study:
- [esvbible.org](http://esvbible.org)
- [youversion.com](http://youversion.com)
- [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)
- [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com)

#### RESEARCH THE CONTEXT

Who? When? Where? What? Why?

#### IDENTIFY THE GENRE

historical, poetic, prophetic, parable, epistle

CHECK cross-references to see how the passage relates to others.

#### COMPARE TRANSLATIONS:

refer to NIV, NASB, NKJV to see what is similar, different, or clarified.

CONFIRM OR CORRECT your personal observations with additional, trusted sources.

DEFINE key words.

DISCUSS insights and questions with others

### Share: Get Talking

- Why does McLaughlin believe the topic of judgment and hell is the, “hardest question in the book”?

### Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of Luke 15:11-32. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read Luke 15:11-32. How does passage affect your ability to answer the skeptics questions around God’s judgment and hell?.
- How does McLaughlin answer this question? How does she make her case that judgment can be seen as a good thing?
- Which of the many Scriptures McLaughlin cited in chapter 12 did you find most compelling? Which raised questions in your mind?
- In this final chapter, McLaughlin pulls various threads together from throughout the rest of the book. How does this chapter serve to unify and cap the argument of Confronting Christianity?

### Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

## Passage: Luke 15:11-32

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

We read the Bible to HEAR from God. This 4-step Bible study process help you to highlight, explain, apply, and reflect on the Word.

**APPLY**  
How will I apply the Word?

**ASK** God to **SPEAK** to you.

Are there any...

- Sins to confess?
- Promises to claim?
- Examples to follow?
- Actions to obey?
- Knowledge to grow in?

Most passages have one or more of the above applications.

**KNOW. BE. DO:** Consider specific application in three statements "I understand... I am... I will..."

**EMBRACE** what God's Word says is true about your identity.

**PRACTICE** specific application in your

- Life contents (home, work, community, church)
- Life relationships (spouse, children, extended family, friendships, coworkers).

**SHARE** God's truth with someone else as a way of ministrering to them.

**REFLECT**  
How will the Word dwell in me?

**RENEW** your mind with God's Word.

**REVIEW** the passage over and over for better comprehension and longer retention.

**PRAY** through the passage by personalizing the text back to the Lord.

**RECITE** key verse(s) from memory from each chapter.

**JOURNAL** application, handwrite verses, jot down notes from the text.

**PONDER** a phrase, a verse, a paragraph.

**LISTEN** to the Spirit as your read the Word.

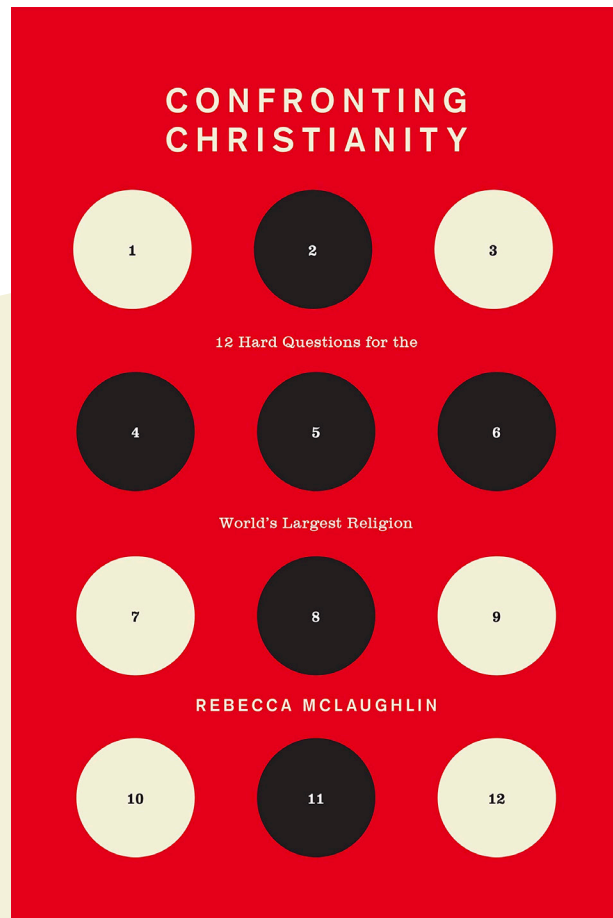
**DO NOT RUSH** this final step in the process of studying God's Word

# Get The Book



## Group Study

Week 8: “How Could A Loving God Allow So Much Suffering?”



### Share: Get Talking

- McLaughlin says the question of suffering..., “haunts us all at one time or another... and for many torpedoes their faith.” Have you ever struggled with this question? How did you answer it then?

### Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of John 11:1-27. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read John 11:1-27. How does passage affect your ability to answer the skeptics question of suffering and even death.
- McLaughlin compares the differences between Christianity’s ideas on suffering and the comparative ideas of other world religions/ worldviews. How do these comparisons help us to evaluate answers to the question at hand?
- What was the most challenging point that McLaughlin made in chapter 11?
- How does Jesus’ claim of being, “the resurrection and the life” affect your life in the midst of suffering?

### Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

## Passage: John 11:1-27

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

## Introduction

“Faith is not the belief in spite of evidence, but a life in scorn of the consequences.”  
Clarence Williams

That kind of real faith is developed when a real person is brave enough to find real answers to their real questions about God.

Have you ever asked, “Can I take the Bible literally?” or “Does science disprove Christianity?” or maybe “How could a good God allow so much suffering?” Everyone has - and it’s time to find answers.

This Growth Guide will help you find biblical answers to the biggest questions about God and the Christian faith for 2 important reasons: 1) to grow your faith by answering your questions 2) to grow the faith of others by answering theirs. And as you find answers, may you grow in your intimacy with the God who gives them.

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

## Passage: 1 Peter 3:15-16

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# Group Study

Week 7: “Isn’t Christianity Homophobic?” +  
“Doesn’t Christianity Condone Slavery?”

## Share: Get Talking

- McLaughlin said she said Chapter 9 is the most controversial so far - why is that? How have you felt the burden of answering the title questions of Chapter 9 or 10?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of 1 Timothy 1:9-16 and Matthew 20:26-28. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read 1 Timothy 1:9-16. How can this passage be helpful to a skeptic's question around Christians being homophobic?
- McLaughlin takes the discussion in directions that may have been unexpected. What did she argue that was surprising or provocative to you? What was the most helpful?
- Read Matthew 20:26-28. How does Jesus' embracing the status of a slave affect how you would answer the title question?
- After studying the topic, how could you explain the bible's position on slavery in 90 seconds?

## Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?



# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

## Passage: 1 Timothy 1:9-16 + Matthew 20:26-28

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# Group Study

Week 1: Introduction

## Share: Get Talking

- Look over the Growth Group Commitment. Which commitment stands out to you?
- It's the job of followers of Jesus to answer real-world questions with biblical wisdom. On a scale of 1-10, how prepared do you feel for this job? How would others around you be impacted if your number grew in the coming weeks?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Each week you are encouraged to do a personal Bible study seeking to HEAR from God - highlight, explain, apply, and reflect.
- Read 1 Peter 3:15-16.
- HIGHLIGHT - What verse(s) especially speak to you? What title would you use to describe this passage?
- EXPLAIN - How would you explain this passage to someone else?
- APPLY - How should the truth of this passage affect your thinking and living?
- REFLECT - Take a few minutes to reflect on the passage, find an impactful verse to memorize, or journal a prayer to God.

## Support: Grow Together

- What would you like to see God do in your life through this study?
- How can we pray and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

**Passage: Hebrews 12:1-2 + Colossians 3:9-15**

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# Group Study

Week 6: “Hasn’t Science Disproved Christianity?” +  
“Doesn’t Christianity Denigrate Women?”

## Share: Get Talking

- What would make someone believe science has disproved Christianity? Or think that Christianity denigrates women?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of Isaiah 40:12-15 and Genesis 1:26-29. What verse(s) impacted you most?
- Read Isaiah 40:12-15. How would you explain the relationship between God and science?
- How would you summarize McLaughlin’s “A (Very) Brief History of Christians in Science” on page 114?
- This chapter is full of cited Scripture. How does each of the following passages shape your answer to the title question:
  - Isaiah 49:15
  - Genesis 2:18-2
  - Isaiah 54:5
  - Luke 10:38-42
  - Ephesians 5:22-31
- McLaughlin uses an overview of gender through the storyline of the Bible - creation, fall, Israel, Christ, Church, and New Creation. What did you learn? What was most impactful? What questions did it raise?

## Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you?

## Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

**Passage: Isaiah 40:12-15 + Genesis 1:26-29**

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

## Group Study

Week 2: “Aren’t We Better Off Without Religion?” +  
“Doesn’t Christianity Crush Diversity?”

### Share: Get Talking

- Do you see ways our culture questions the benefits of religion? Where?

### Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of Hebrews 12:1-2 and Colossians 3:9-15. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-2. How do you see our culture harmed by it revolving around instant gratification? How has it affected your life? What alternative does Hebrews 12 offer?
- Which of McLaughlin’s “Benefits of Seven Biblical Principles” compels you most for the importance of religion? Explain your answer.
- Read Colossians 3:9-15. What does this passage show us about the bible’s view of diversity?
- What did you find most interesting in Chapter 2? What questions do you need to explore further?

### Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

**Passage: Mark 2:1-12**

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# Group Study

Week 5: "How Can You Take the Bible Literally?"

## Share: Get Talking

- Has anyone ever asked you how you can trust the bible? How did you respond? Why do you think they asked?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of 2 Timothy 3:16-18. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read 2 Timothy 3:16-18. What claims does the bible make about itself?
- How does McLaughlin define the word "literal". How does that play a role in answering this question?
- Which of the texts McLaughlin cites is most interesting to you? Which ones would you direct someone towards to explain how to understand the bible?
- Now if someone asks you, "How can you take the bible literally," how will you respond?

## Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

# Group Study

Week 1: Introduction

## Passage: 2 Timothy 3:16-18

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

## Share: Get Talking

- Why do you think people ask how Christians can say there's only one true faith?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of Mark 2:1-12. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read Mark 2:1-12. How does Mark 2, specially verses 5, 7, and 9, help explain Christianity's exclusivity?
- Which problem with the Elephant paradigm is most compelling to you? Explain your answer.
- Read Matthew 28:18-20. McLaughlin writes, "Jesus claims rule over all of heaven and earth. He presents himself not as one possible path to God, but as God himself." What logical options does this leave people to have about Jesus? What logical options does it take away?
- Why do you think there's less Scripture cited in this chapter?

## Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you this week?

# Personal Study

Take time to personally HEAR from God in His Word.

## Passage: Colossians 3:1-17 + Mark 5:38-48

Highlight: What does the Word say?

Explain: What does the Word mean?

Apply: How will I apply His Word in my life?

Reflect: How will His Word dwell in me?

# Group Study

Week 4: “Doesn’t Religion Hinder Morality?” +  
“Doesn’t Religion Cause Violence?”

## Share: Get Talking

- Which of the titled questions do you think our culture genuinely is asking more? What makes you think that?

## Study: Go Deeper

- Review your personal Bible study of Colossians 3:1-17 and Mark 5:38-48. What verse(s) impacted you most? How so?
- Read Colossians 3:1-17. What transformation does Christianity claim to have on morality? Do you have a personal experience that displays this transformation?
- In chapter 4 McLaughlin writes, “To be a Christian is to acknowledge your utter moral failure and to throw yourself on the mercy of the only truly good man who ever lived.” How could you use this quote to address the questions of skeptics?
- Read Mark 5:38-48. How would you explain the biblical view of violence to someone?
- McLaughlin ends this chapter by considering the violence of the Cross of Christ. What truth does Jesus’s dreadful crucifixion and victorious resurrection speak to the title question?

## Support: Grow Together

- How can you apply the Word and this study to your life?
- How can the group pray for and support you?