



Groups

Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

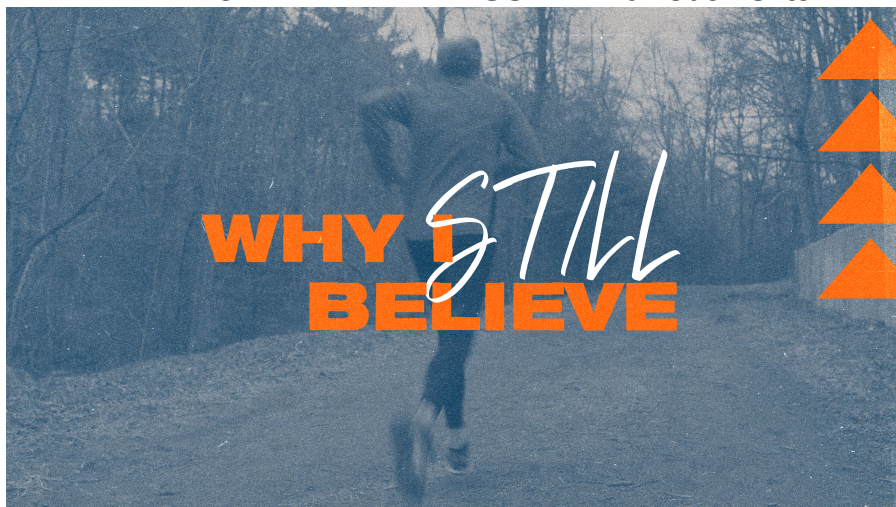
- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on April 14, 2024

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

“WHY I STILL BELIEVE IN GOD” – Various Texts



Prayer In Transition:

As we enter this transition of senior pastors at Grace Chapel, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for Pastor Bryan, Pastor Joshua, and Grace Chapel.

I. Introduction

Over the course of the next four weeks, I'd like to share with you why after a lifetime of following Jesus, and 40 years as a pastor, I believe as strongly as ever in God, in the Bible, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in the local church. Some of what I share will sound familiar to those who've been listening to me for a while, but I don't want to miss one last chance to affirm some foundational truths as we look to the future, and to speak into the challenging and deconstructing conversations that are happening in the church today, especially among younger generations. I'll also be sharing some of the ways my beliefs have matured and even changed over the years. Because while I still believe in God, the Bible, the gospel, and the church – I may not believe exactly the same way I did 40 years ago.

Today I'd like to begin by telling you why I still believe in God, and specifically, a God who loves us. For these next few minutes, I'd like us to consider 4 Lines of Evidence, 2 Troublesome Questions, and 1 New Learning.

BIG IDEA: I still believe in a God who loves us, more than I dare to ask or imagine.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

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Main Scripture Readings:

Psalm 19:1-3

- ¹ The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
² Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
³ They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

Ecclesiastes 3:11-12

- ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart;
yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. ¹² I know that there is
nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.

Acts 17:22-27

- ²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in
every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects
of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant
of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

- ²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does
not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he
needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From
one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out
their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they
would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one
of us.

II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Bryan begins the sermon series “Why I Still Believe” by telling us why he still believes in God, and specifically, a God who loves us, despite having seen a lot in 40 years of ministry – the good, the bad, and the ugly.
 - How long have you believed in God?
 - Who in the group believed in God the longest?
 - Have you also experienced moments of existential doubt, skepticism, the dark night of the soul, that caused you to question about God, Christianity, and/or the church? In what ways can you resonate with Bryan’s journey of faith? In what ways does your journey differ?
2. Pastor Bryan lists out the 4 lines of evidence for the existence of God:
 - 1) The natural world (Psalm 19:1-3),
 - 2) The human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11-12),
 - 3) The historical record, and
 - 4) Personal experience.
 - Out of the four lines of evidence, which evidence resonates most with you?
 - Which evidence helped you understand the existence of God with the least amount of difficulties?
 - Take a moment to focus on 1-2 of the evidence and meditate on the Scripture passage provided. (For points 3 and 4, discover and discuss as a group what scripture passages points to this evidence).
3. Pastor Bryan talks about two difficult questions.
 - 1) The first question concerns the problem of evil and suffering. If God exists, and God loves us, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? How do we reconcile evil and suffering with the existence of a good and loving God?
 - 2) The second question concerns other belief systems – what about other religions?
 - God gave human beings freedom, and we have exercised our freedom poorly. Majority of the world’s suffering can be traced to the foolishness, selfishness, and wickedness of human beings. Knowing God has given you the freedom to make your own choices in life, how does this impact how you choose to live your life?
 - Read Acts 17:22-27. What do you notice about Paul and his actions? What can you learn and apply in your life as you interact with others of differing beliefs?

- In addition to these two difficult questions, what other questions have you encountered that challenged your understanding or acceptance of the Christian faith?
4. Pastor Bryan points out that not believing in God does not solve the problem of evil and suffering. If there is no God, there is no possibility of divine intervention to relieve that suffering, or to bring something good out of it. If there is no God, suffering is pointless, evil wins, and death has the last word.
- How does the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ address the problem of evil and suffering?
 - How has Jesus dealt with your evil (within you, surrounding you) and your suffering?
5. The New Learning Pastor Bryan shares is that he still believes in a God who loves us, more than he dares to ask or imagine.
- Why is it difficult to believe that God's love is far more expansive, inclusive, and more gracious than we can dare to imagine?
 - When did you last realize in the depths of your being that God deeply and truly loves you?

In closing, take time to thank God for His love. Take the time to also pray for one another, for God to meet each person in all seasons.

Take Home Message:

He loves us so much that He's made Himself known to us, not only in the natural world, as we've talked about today, but through the Scriptures, and through His Son, Jesus, who came into the world to show us that love. And we'll talk more about that in the weeks to come.

He loves us so much that He invites EACH of us, ALL of us, EVERY human being into a personal relationship with Him, for this life, and the life to come. A relationship characterized by meaning, and purpose, and connection, and joy. But he also loves us enough to let us ignore Him, and resist Him, and even to walk away from Him, for this life, and the life to come.

So if you're struggling with faith these days, if you're finding it hard to believe for any of the reasons we've mentioned today, let me encourage you NOT to quit. Because after a lifetime of running AND believing, I've learned that sometimes you just have to press through. You have to keep putting one foot in front of the other, and wait for that second wind, that wind of the Spirit, to find you, and fill you, and bring you home. God met me in every one of those troubling seasons, and I'm confident He'll meet you, too.

So keep bringing your doubts and questions to Jesus. Keep considering those four lines of evidence, and wrestling with those troubling questions. Keep looking and listening for God as you make your way through this world, because as it turns out, He is not far from each one of us.

III. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

The Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

IV. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points: