



SPX Small Groups

Life is Better Together

**I WANT TO
BELIEVE, BUT ...**

#SpxIWantToBelieveBut

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Katie Skerpon

Communications Coordinator & Interim Small Groups Coordinator

communications@spxbowie.org

It can be difficult to believe in a God we cannot see. We wonder why God didn't answer our prayers, why God allows suffering, or why we can't feel His presence. God may not meet all your expectations—but that's good news! We will discuss four different versions of "God" which don't exist—fabrications people often want to believe about God.

Week 1

November 4

The On-Demand God

I pray and pray, but God doesn't give me what I ask for
and how I ask for it.

Week 2

November 11

The Killjoy God

I don't want to be held down by religion.
I'd rather have fun and happiness in my life.

Week 3

November 18

The Goosebumps God

God should make me feel a certain way, and I just don't feel Him move the
way He does for other people.

Week 4

November 25

The Heartless God

There are so many tragedies in the world,
and I can't believe a loving God would allow them to happen.

Series Prayer

*God of goodness,
you created me to know you,
to love you and to serve you always.
But Lord, at times I struggle.
I want to believe,
but then a tragedy or crisis comes out of nowhere
and I start to question.
Help my unbelief;
strengthen me in times of worry and doubt.
Like Isaiah, give me the wisdom to see you as you are
And to accept your will and plan for my life.
This week, may I help others to see you as the God of love and mercy
who has my world and the whole world in His hands.
Amen.*

Until God is all you
have, you won't realize
that He is all you need.

Week 1: November 4

The On-Demand God

OPENING PRAYER

A Series Opening Prayer is provide for you at the beginning of this booklet.

KEY SCRIPTURE

But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. [1 Samuel 12:24]

KEY POINTS

God's heart is always loving.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 8:38-39]

God's ways are always higher.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." [Isaiah 55:8-9]

God's presence is always enough.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me ... [Psalm 23:4]

START TALKING *Find a conversation starter for your group*

Have you ever binge watched anything? What else do you prefer on demand?

What percentage would you give your faith in God today? What's one reason you picked your percentage?

START THINKING *Ask questions to get your group thinking*

Read 1 Samuel 12:24. What three things does this Scripture ask of us? How does this describe our intended relationship to God?

Who is the main character of your faith? How did you come to your conclusion?

START SHARING *Choose questions that create openness*

Share a time when you most doubted God. What caused you to doubt Him most? Did something in particular restore your faith?

What does it look or feel like when you experience the love and presence of God? Can you give some examples?

Have you ever had something go wrong only to see the situation result in far more than you could have imagined? Share a story.

Are there any areas in your life where you still don't understand God's plans or how He's involved? How can we pray about this together?

START PRAYING *Be bold, and pray with power*

God, we want to believe, but sometimes we struggle. You said You're, loving, trustworthy, and with us. But we have situations in our lives that lead us to doubt You. Will You bring Your love into our darkest valleys? Will You help us in our unbelief? Amen.

START DOING *Commit to a step and live it out this week*

Find out what the Bible says about doubt with one of these Bible Plans: www.go2.lc/doubt

Memorize Psalm 23:4 this week. When you experience something difficult, pray it to God and invite His presence into your situation.

Week 2: November 11

The Killjoy God

OPENING PRAYER

A Series Opening Prayer is provide for you at the beginning of this booklet.

KEY SCRIPTURE

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. [Matthew 23:25-26]

KEY POINTS

You cannot earn God's acceptance by obeying the law.

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law ... [Romans 3:20]

The purpose of the law is to show your need of a Savior.

*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.
[Romans 3:20]*

Being right with God comes by faith in Christ alone.

*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.
[Romans 3:22]*

START TALKING *Find a conversation starter for your group*

What's the craziest or silliest rule you've had to follow?

Are you more of a rule-follower or a rule-breaker?

START THINKING *Ask questions to get your group thinking*

Did you grow up hearing about a lot of rules in church? How do you think this shaped your view of God?

Read Romans 3:20. What are some ways we expect people to follow the law to earn righteousness today?

START SHARING *Choose questions that create openness*

Do you live more like your rule-following makes you close to God or like Jesus makes you close to God? How does this play out for you?

How have you experienced the undeserved grace of God in your life? Can you share something specific?

START PRAYING *Be bold, and pray with power*

Jesus, what You did to take the place of the law for us is beyond what we can possibly repay with our good works. Thank You. Instead, we want to give You our love and our life. Will You show us how to receive Yours? Amen.

START DOING *Commit to a step and live it out this week*

Memorize Romans 3:22 this week. When you start to try to ward off fear and shame with rules or work, quote the Scripture and be motivated by God's love.

Find a Bible plan about overcoming doubt and discovering the true God: www.go2.lc/doubt

Is there anyone you've held to rules and law instead of love and grace? Reach out to them with the grace and love of Jesus this week.

Week 3: November 18

The Goosebumps God

OPENING PRAYER

A Series Opening Prayer is provide for you at the beginning of this booklet.

KEY SCRIPTURE

*But I cry to you for help, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.
Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? [Psalm 88:13-14]*

KEY POINTS

Why don't I always feel God?

Maybe you are over sensationalizing it.

So they asked [Jesus], "What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" [John 6:30-31]

Maybe your heart has hardened.

... "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.'" [Matthew 13:14-15]

Maybe God wants to draw you closer.

"From one man [God] 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. 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." [Acts 17:26-27]

START TALKING *Find a conversation starter for your group*

Do you remember a time you got goosebumps? What happened?

What are some things you've come to see as rather ordinary that are actually quite extraordinary?

START THINKING *Ask questions to get your group thinking*

How do you personally determine whether or not God seems like He's close to you?

Read Acts 17:24 – 27. How would you apply verse 27 to your life today?

START SHARING *Choose questions that create openness*

Share about a time when you felt God was silent. Looking back, do you see Him any differently because of that time? How?

Of the 3 Key Points, which do you most identify with?

How do you most often experience God? How do you think you've come to experience God this way?

Is anything making it difficult for you to see God's presence in your life? Is there something you need to stop or start?

START PRAYING *Be bold, and pray with power*

God, You said if we seek You, we will find You. We are seeking You. We ask that You would bring Your presence into our daily lives. We don't need goosebumps, but we do need You. Will You show us how to find You this week? Amen.

START DOING *Commit to a step and live it out this week*

Find a Bible plan about experiencing doubt and faith: www.go2.lc/doubt

Make a list of 3 ordinary things you will do this week. Now, write below each item how you can seek God in these simple moments.

Week 4: November 25

The Heartless God

OPENING PRAYER

A Series Opening Prayer is provide for you at the beginning of this booklet.

KEY SCRIPTURE

[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. [Psalm 103:10-12]

KEY POINTS

When God doesn't seem fair.

God has a purpose in your pain.

... There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. [1 Peter 1:6-7]

God is present in your pain.

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
[Psalm 46:1]*

*But [God] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
[2 Corinthians 12:9-10]*

START TALKING *Find a conversation starter for your group*

Which of these 4 weeks did you most identify with – On-Demand God, Killjoy God, Goosebumps God, or Heartless God?

Have you ever had someone ask you why God lets bad things happen? How'd your conversation go?

START THINKING *Ask questions to get your group thinking*

If you were God, what are a few reasons you wouldn't stop all pain? Or, would you?

While someone is in the middle of great pain, what could you tell them about God?

START SHARING *Choose questions that create openness*

The message said, "God doesn't cause the pain, but God can use it." How have you seen this play out?

Have you ever asked God, "How could You let this happen?" What life events led to your question?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 – 10. What difficulties can you begin to view from this Scripture's perspective?

Are any of you in the middle of something painful now? How can we pray with you to invite God into it?

START PRAYING *Be bold, and pray with power*

God, Your Word says You are ever-present help in trouble. Will You show Your presence in our pain? Forgive us for when we've doubted Your goodness. We believe You have a purpose for us, and You are here with us. Thank You for Your unfair grace to us. Amen.

START DOING *Commit to a step and live it out this week*

Read the *When God Doesn't Make Sense* Bible Plan this week: www.go2lc/whengod

Think of 1 or 2 people you know who are hurting right now. Include them in your prayer time, and do something practical to show them God's love this week.