

Group Life Leader's Discussion Guide

Date: 3/30/2025

Sermon Title: Wrestling with Doubt Week 4 – Is Heaven Real?

Scripture: John 14:1-3

Gathering:

As you gather with one another be sure to greet each other and check-in. Ask and inquire from group members how their week has gone? Share that they will close with prayer requests at the end of group today.

OPENING PRAYER (Group leader or someone prays this prayer to open or create a similar prayer.)

Gracious and loving God, we come before You with open hearts and searching minds. In a world filled with questions, doubts, and uncertainties, we ask for Your presence to guide us. As we explore the promise of heaven, strengthen our faith and remind us of Your eternal love. Help us to listen, learn, and grow in trust. May Your Spirit lead our conversation and deepen our understanding of the hope we have in Christ. Amen.

Opening Question:

1. Have you ever struggled with doubts about heaven? What are some common questions or uncertainties people have about eternal life?

Digging into the scripture texts:

2. Read the text for this week's discussion John 14:1-3. What are your initial insights from this text?
3. In John 14:1-3, Jesus reassures His disciples, saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Why do you think He begins with this encouragement?
4. How does Jesus' promise of preparing a place for us affect your understanding of heaven?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58. How does Paul describe the transformation that will take place at the resurrection? What does this tell us about the reality of eternal life?
6. Read Revelation 21:1-4. How does this vision of a new heaven and new earth shape your understanding of God's ultimate plan for creation?

Sermon Questions:

7. Dr. Oliphint opens with a story about showing your work from a math teacher. How does the concept of 'showing your work' in math apply to our spiritual beliefs, and what 'work' can we point to in explaining our faith in heaven?
8. What has been some evidence "show your work" of a belief in God in your faith journey?
9. How do we know that heaven is real? The sermon mentions that this is a mystery and a matter of faith. What scriptures and experiences have helped you know that there is a heaven?

10. Dr. Oliphint mentions John 14: 2-3 about the dwelling places in heaven with God. How do Jesus' words about preparing a place for us in his Father's house comfort or challenge your understanding of heaven?
11. The Apostle Paul continues the hope that Jesus shared about heaven. In 1 Corinthians 2:9 mentions this mystery of what waits for all believers; the goodness of God. Does this text as well 2 Corinthians 5:1 description of heaven as beyond human imagination shape your perspective on the afterlife?
12. Dr. Oliphint ends his sermon about the two twins in the womb. How does the analogy of twins in the womb discussing life after birth relate to our understanding of life after death?
13. A quote in the sermon from Marcus Borg says, 'We do not die into nothingness. We die into God'. How does this resonate with or challenge your beliefs?
14. Many people have had near death experiences. What do you make of stories like this? Do you know people who have had similar experiences? Do these experiences reinforce your belief in heaven, or do they bring up more doubts?
15. Dr. Oliphint shared his personal creed: "In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone." How does this statement resonate with you?

Insights from *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith* chapter 4:

16. Rev. Hamilton writes on page 95, "I cannot prove the resurrection of Christ occurred, but I can point to the change that happened in the disciples once they had seen the risen Christ." Do you agree and find hope in this? How have you personally been changed by the risen Christ that has impacted you?
17. What other quotes or things you are underlining from chapter 4 that you would like to share with the group?

Applying it:

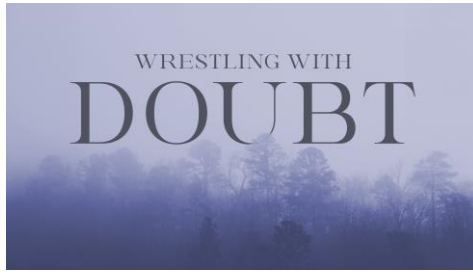
18. How does believing in heaven impact the way you live today?
19. In what ways can the promise of heaven bring comfort to those facing grief, suffering, or uncertainty?
20. In what ways does the concept of trusting God in death as we have in life affect your approach to mortality and the afterlife?
21. How can we support one another when we wrestle with doubts about faith and the afterlife?

CLOSING PRAYER (at the end of discussion have folks share any prayer requests or praises and have someone close in prayer, you can use this prayer if you desire.)

Loving and eternal God, thank You for this time of conversation, reflection, and seeking. We may not have all the answers, but we trust in Your promises. Strengthen our faith, calm our doubts, and fill us with hope as we live in anticipation of Your kingdom. Help us to encourage one another and to hold fast to the truth that in Christ, we have victory over death and the assurance of life eternal. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND (or challenges for you this week)

1. Write down ways you see glimpses of heaven on earth.
2. Spend time this week meditating on Revelation 21:3-4. Write down how this passage gives you hope for the future.



3. Share your beliefs about heaven with a friend or family member who may be struggling with doubts. Practice articulating your faith in a compassionate way.