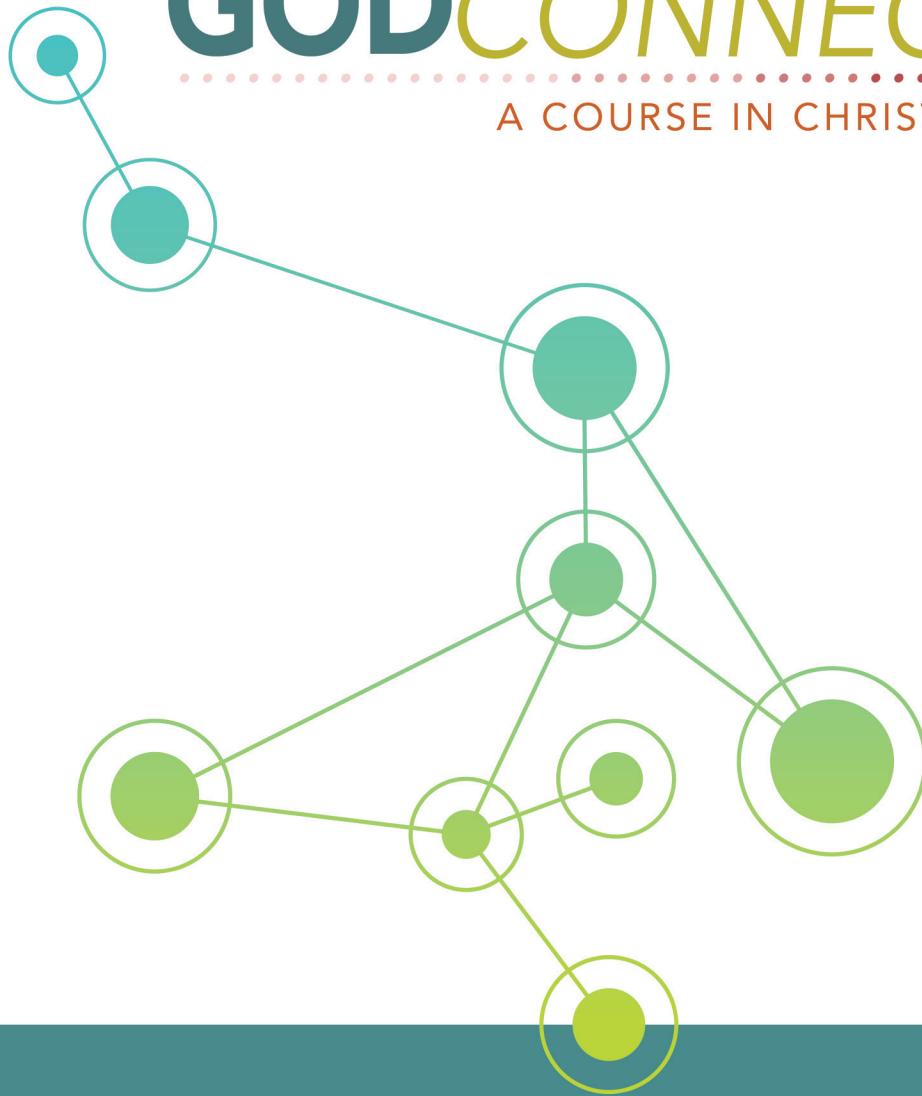


# GODCONNECTS™

A COURSE IN CHRISTIANITY



[LHM.ORG/GODCONNECTS](http://LHM.ORG/GODCONNECTS)

## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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 ....**

# CHRISTIAN LIFE

## Session 12: A Course on Christianity

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, Heavenly Father, with all You have done for me, teach me how I can live my life for You and for the good of my friends, family, and everyone I meet. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Life with God is something new and wonderful. He has promised to be present with us; His Word blesses us; His sacraments offer us forgiveness that we can taste and touch! Having been "born again" we dedicate our lives entirely to Christ—not to earn His favor, but because we already have it.

### 12.1. DOES THIS MEAN I WON'T HAVE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES ANYMORE?

The Bible makes it clear that as Christians we should not expect our lives to always be smooth and easy, far from it. Christians have always faced persecution in response to their beliefs. Paul warned the church in Thessalonica to expect trials:

*For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. (1 Thessalonians 3:4)*

Even Jesus cautioned the disciples to expect persecution in His Name:

*(Jesus said) "Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My Word, they will also keep yours." (John 15:20)*

But these challenges pale in comparison to the joy of knowing God in this life and the next. His Word gives our lives meaning. His Word gives us comfort. The Christian faith gives an eternal hope!

*(Jesus said) "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)*

### 12.2. SO WHAT IS MY ROLE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus left us the Great Commission: instructions to spread the Gospel to every nation.

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)*

This direction makes logical sense for pastors, teachers and missionaries, but what about waitresses, mechanics and accountants? It's not always easy for a dentist to share the Good News of Christ while also sharing the bad news that you need a root canal. But our occupation does not stop us from performing our vocation to the best of our God-given abilities. As Christians, we help fulfill the Great Commission by doing the jobs we do in a God-pleasing way and taking every opportunity to bear witness to our faith.

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:17)*

If you are a husband or wife, treat your spouse as God has instructed. If you run a business, do so honestly, bringing honor to God. If you volunteer serving meals in a homeless shelter, provide your service with a heart filled with love and compassion. We do this so that in all things we are showing ourselves to be ambassadors of Christ and when others see the difference He makes in our lives, they too will seek that same peace for themselves.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How can the hope Christ Jesus gives make you the kind of person other people enjoy being around?
- How is this especially true when Christ is carrying you through difficult struggles in your own life?

#### DIGGING DEEPER

- "What is Evangelism and Whose Job is It?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA8049PD.mp3>)
- "Where are Missionaries These Days?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA8045PD.mp3>)

## 12.3. WHAT ROLE DOES PRAYER PLAY?

Prayer is one of the greatest gifts God has given us: immediate access to speak with Him in both words and thoughts. At any time of the day or night we can turn to God and find Him there, ready to receive our praise, to share our joys, to hear our cries, and to answer us in every situation. What an amazing feeling it is to know that God, the Creator of the universe, loves each one of us enough to invite us to come to Him anytime.

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- How does prayer serve to remind us that God is always present to protect, strengthen and equip us for every situation?

## 12.4. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

We should pray because God has instructed us to do so.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*

Jesus has not only instructed us on how we should pray (see Luke 11:1-13), but He also modeled it for us, demonstrating His own active prayer life at several points throughout the Gospels. Jesus' answer to the disciples' question in Luke 11 is the basis for the Lord's Prayer (<http://www.lcms.org/?pid=1049>), which believers will pray often. But formal prayers in church are not the only way prayers should be offered. We receive great benefits from regularly communicating with God in prayer.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Think of a difficult situation people in your family, church or community are facing today. Discuss how each petition or request of the Lord's Prayer addresses that situation:

- Our Father who art in heaven,
- Hallowed be Thy Name,
- Thy Kingdom come,
- Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
- Give us this day our daily bread;
- And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
- And lead us not into temptation,
- But deliver us from evil.
- For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

## 12.5. DO I HAVE TO ATTEND WORSHIP?

There may be legitimate reasons we may not be able to worship on a given Sunday. But God did set aside the Third Commandment requiring weekly worship:

*(God said) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. ... For in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-10a, 11)*

In truth, there is no good reason a Christian would not want to enter the Lord's presence, receive His gifts through the Bible, Baptism, Confession and Absolution, and the Lord's Supper, and participate in regular fellowship with other believers in worship. We reap the benefits of encouragement, which are both given and received from those with whom we worship.

*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, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

Why would we ever want to do anything that would separate us from the love of God and the blessings that come from having a strong relationship with Him?

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)*

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- What part can a church Bible study group play in helping us live a strong Christian life?

## 12.6. WHAT ARE GOOD WORKS?

Good works (<http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=G&word=GOODWORKS>) are all those things that believers think, say and do as a result of their faith in Christ. These are actions done for the good of others and the glory of God. They are not done to bring praise and honor to ourselves. With our hearts set upon God and His will for our lives, we are moved to serve Him through serving others.

*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Serving others, even believers, is not always easy or pleasant. How does it help when we keep focused on what God has done for us through Jesus Christ?

## 12.7. DO I NEED TO PERFORM GOOD WORKS?

Doing good works to earn our salvation? Absolutely not! Works cannot save us, nor do they earn us a spot in heaven. Writing to believers at Ephesus, Paul makes this abundantly clear:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

## 12.8. SO IF GOOD WORKS DON'T SAVE ME, WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?

The fact that our salvation isn't determined by the number of good deeds we perform on a daily, weekly or annual basis does not mean we should hesitate from doing good. In fact, our faith in Christ should naturally fill us with such love and gratitude that we can't help producing good works in response to the great blessings we have received from God.

*Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (James 2:18b)*

The Bible also reveals numerous blessings and rewards that will be given to those who perform good works, even to those people who are not deserving of them.

*(Jesus said) "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil." (Luke 6:35)*

As Jesus showed, when we are walking closely with our God, we won't always notice the good deeds we are doing or remember who we are really doing them to—that is, Jesus! But God does.

*(Jesus said) "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and welcome You, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick or in prison and visit You?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:37-40)*

### DIGGING DEEPER

- "Why Can't I Keep Improving My Spiritual Performance?" (audio, <http://media.lhm.org/lutheranhour/mp3s/QA8048PD.mp3>)
- Check out free, downloaded booklets from **Project Connect** (<http://www.lhm.org/projectconnect/booklets.asp>) for resources related to the Christian life.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, forgive me all my sins, and strengthen me to love You with all my heart, mind, soul and strength and to love my neighbor as myself. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.