

## I Believe in God, But I Don't Fear Him — Week 1

**Objective:** To develop our fear and awe of God so we will be able to serve Him wholeheartedly.

- Describe one of your biggest fears in life. How has that fear shaped your life and your actions?
- In what ways, can fear sometimes be a good thing in our lives?

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- having a form of godliness but denying its power...*

### 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NIV)

- A practical atheist is someone who believes in God but lives as if He does not exist. In what area of your life are you a practical atheist? Give specific examples.
- Do you see any of the qualities mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 in your own daily life?

*Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God to restrain them. In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are.*

### Psalms 36:1-2 (NLT)

*If you love me, you will obey what I command*

### John 14:15 (NIV)

- The greatest evidence of the fear of God is obedience to God. What are some specific areas in your life where you struggle with obedience to God's direction? How would a fear and awe of God make it easier to follow Him in these areas?

**Final thought:** As a group and individually pray this week for God to instill a desire in you to serve Him wholeheartedly without any conditions.

## For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below that you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

### Open

During your childhood or teenage years, describe the most disobedient thing you ever did? How did your parents react?

### Explore

**Read Ecclesiastes 12: 9-14.** Solomon concludes the book of Ecclesiastes in this passage by saving his most important piece of wisdom for his final thought. (12:13-14)

How did Solomon conclude this book? (12:9-14)

What did the Teacher do with his knowledge? (12:9)

For what did the Teacher search? (12:10)

How did Solomon describe what the Teacher wrote? (12:10)

How did Solomon describe the words of the wise? (12:11)

What did Solomon say about books and study? (12:12)

What is a person's whole duty? (12:13)

Why did Solomon tell his reader to fear God and keep His commandments? (12:14)

### Reflect

With what mood would you say Solomon concluded this book?

What is the relationship between fearing God and keeping his commandments?

How we can benefit from the wisdom of other Christians?

In what ways can you be a teacher or advisor to at least one other Christian?

### Apply

What specific areas of your life are you struggling to obey God's commandments?

Who do you need to seek out for the wisdom they could provide in helping you with your areas of struggle?

## I Believe in God, But I Don't Want To Go Overboard — Week 2

- Describe someone you know who is truly passionate about something in their life. How has that passion shaped the way they live their life?

*The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.*

**Isaiah 29:13 (NIV)**

- Do you feel you are more passionate about Christ this year than last year? Why or why not?

*To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm- neither hot nor cold- I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

**Revelation 3:14-16 (NIV)**

### 10 characteristics of a lukewarm Christian:

1. **Crave acceptance from people more than acceptance from God.**
  2. **Rarely discuss their relationship with Christ with others**
  3. **Do whatever it takes to alleviate their guilt**
- Why are we sometimes more passionate about our relationships with other people than we are about our relationship with God?

4. **Think more about life on earth than eternity in heaven**
  5. **Gauge their morality by comparing themselves to others**
  6. **Want to avoid the penalty of sin without changing their lives**
7. **Only turn to God when they are in a bind**
  8. **Give whenever it doesn't hinder their standard of living**
  9. **Are not much different from the rest of the world**
  10. **Want the benefits of what Christ did without conforming to who He is**

- What are some of the distractions in your life you feel are keeping you more focused on temporary life rather than on eternal life?
- In looking at this list of characteristics, are there any you can identify with? Why or why not?

*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked... Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

**Revelation 3:17, 20 (NIV)**

- What are some specific things you can start doing today that will help deepen your passion for Christ?

**Final thought:** With your group and during your personal prayer time this week pray God will instill a deeper fire and passion for Him in your life.

## I Believe in God, But I Don't Want To Go Overboard — Week 2

### For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

#### Open

How do people typically react when they meet a celebrity or famous athlete? Why do you think these are typical reactions?

#### Explore

##### Read John 12:12-19.

This passage details Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem where a multitude of passionate people came to greet Him.

- What had the crowd heard about Jesus? (12:12)
- How did the crowd greet Jesus when He arrived in Jerusalem? (12:13)
- What title did the crowd give to Jesus? (12:13)
- What prophetic event took place in this account? (12:14-15)
- What had been written about this event? (12:15)
- When did Jesus' disciples realize the significance of these events? (12:16)

- What did the crowd do when Jesus raised Lazarus? (12:17)
- Why did many of the people go out to meet Jesus? (12:18)
- How did the Pharisees react to this event? (12:19)

#### Reflect

- What did you hear about Jesus that led you to seek Him?
- Why do you think Jesus should be the ruler in our lives?
- When is it difficult for you to allow Jesus to take His rightful place as King in your life?
- In what ways can we honor and worship Jesus as King?
- What are some practical ways we can earn the opportunity to discuss our relationship with Christ with others?

#### Apply

- How does your passion about Christ compare with the passion the crowds exhibited in this passage?
- What specific areas of your life can your surrender to Christ that will result in a stronger passion for Him?

## I Believe in God, But I Trust in Money — Week 3

- What is the one thing you would describe as your most valuable possession? Why is it so valuable to you?

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

**Luke 12:34 (NIV)**

- What are some of the “treasures” or possessions in your life currently distracting you from focusing on God? What specific things can you do to remove these distractions?

*No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money*

**Luke 16:13 (NIV)**

- Practical atheists tend to trust money to provide happiness and/or security. Has there been a time in your life where you trusted money to provide these things? If so, how has it affected your relationship with God?
- Has there been a time in your life when you decided to put your trust in God rather than in money. If so, what did that experience teach you about God?

*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*

**1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NIV)**

- When you grow in your relationship with Christ, it often results in becoming unexplainably content with what we have. Are you more content today than you were last year? How has your relationship with Christ in the last year affected your level of contentment?

*Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.*

**2 Corinthians 8:2-3 (NIV)**

- Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Describe a time you gave sacrificially and the affect it had on you. Is there any way you could give even more sacrificially? If so, what would it be?

**Final thought:** With your group and during your personal prayer time this week pray for God to help you focus more on Him rather than money. Pray that He will help you obtain true contentment through Him.

## I Believe in God, But I Trust in Money — Week 3

### For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below that you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

#### Open

What does it mean to you to be truly happy?  
Why do most people want more money than they already have?

#### Explore

##### **Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-20.**

This passage explores the futility of wealth and how it does not lead to true happiness.

How should a person go into the house of God? (5:1)  
How did Solomon encourage us to conduct ourselves in the house of God? (5:2-3)  
What did Solomon say about vows made to God? (5:4-6)  
Why should we stand in awe of God? (5:7)  
What should not surprise us? (5:8-9)  
What grievous evil did Solomon notice? (5:13-17)  
What is good and proper for a person to do? (5:18)  
What sort of experience did Solomon describe as a gift from God? (5:19)  
What does this verse say happens to the person who has wealth and possessions? (5:20)

#### Reflect

Why is it important to approach God with the right attitude?  
Why is it hard to keep the promises we make to God?  
What does it mean to you to stand in awe of God?  
Why is money unable to bring happiness or contentment in our lives?  
If we cannot take anything with us when we die, why do you think we work so hard to acquire things in our lives?  
How should we go about finding satisfaction in our daily work?  
What does it mean to accept one's lot in life?  
What is the connection between accepting one's lot in life and finding happiness?  
Why is it so hard for us to accept our lot in life?

#### Apply

What is one thing you can change today in your life that will help shift your focus away from money and possessions and back towards God?  
  
What can you do this week to accept and better appreciate the things God has given to you?

## I Believe in God, But I Don't Know Him — Week 4

- Who is the one person that truly knows you best? Describe how your relationship with that person is unlike any other relationship in your life.

*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

**1 John 2:3-4 (NIV)**

- Describe a time or situation when you knowingly disobeyed God. What were the consequences of your actions? What did you learn from this situation?

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God-or rather are known by God-how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

**Galatians 4:8-9 (NIV)**

- Describe a time when you had an intimate experience with God. How did that experience affect your faith and relationship with Him?
- Discuss some ways you believe we can become more intimate with God.

*God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. .*

**Psalms 9:10 (NIV)**

- Some people believe in God, but don't know Him. Some people know Him, but not well. Some know Him intimately and serve Him wholeheartedly. Discuss which of these best describes you right now and why?

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

**Ephesians 1:17-19 (NIV)**

The Four typical characteristics of Practical Atheists:

- Believe in God, but don't fear him.
- Believe in God, but don't want to go overboard.
- Believe in God, but trust in money.
- Believe in God, but don't know Him.
- Which message in this series had the most impact on you and why?
- What do you sense that God is wanting to change in your relationship with Him? Are you ready to go there?

**Final thought:** With your group and during your personal prayer time this week ask God for a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him. Ask Him to help you grow so your relationship with Him will become intimate beyond anything you could ever imagine.

## I Believe in God, But I Don't Know Him — Week 4

### For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below that you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

#### Open

Describe what your life was like before coming to know Christ. How was your life changed when you entered into an intimate relationship with Him?

#### Explore

**Read Matthew 7:15-23.** In this passage Jesus compares true disciples as being like trees that bear fruit.

Against whom did Jesus warn us? Why? (7:15)  
What do false prophets look like on the outside? (7:15)  
What are false prophets like inwardly? (7:15)  
How did Christ say we could recognize false prophets? (7:16, 20)  
What does nature reveal about a tree and its fruit? (7:16)  
What kind of fruit do good trees bear? Why? (7:17-18)  
What type of produce grows on bad trees? Why? (7:17-18)  
What happens to trees that fail to produce good fruit? (7:18)  
Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? (7:21)  
How will some people try to talk their way into heaven? (7:22)  
What credentials or accomplishments will some people claim? (7:22)

How will Jesus respond to these impostors? (7:23)  
What is necessary for entry into heaven? (7:23)

#### Reflect

Why do you think we continue to sin if we have Christ in our heart and the Holy Spirit in our lives?  
What does this passage tell us about the importance of doing good works?  
How do good works and salvation fit together?  
How can people be "religious" yet not follow Christ?  
What kind of good works have you been working to produce lately?  
What evidence in your life points others to your relationship with Jesus?

#### Apply

What are some specific things you can do this week that will help you allow God to cultivate a deeper relationship with you?  
  
In what area of your life right now do you have the greatest opportunity to increase your good works?