



I Googled God

 **Answers for those who are searching...**

Homegroup Booklet

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Thanks for Being Part of a Homegroup

At Central, we believe that disciples grow in circles, not rows. By that we mean that we grow most as believers when we sit together around God's word, discussing the real issues of life as a follower of Jesus.

Central homegroups are part of the DNA of our church. Sunday services are important, but in homegroups there is greater opportunity for learning together, serving together, caring together, praying together and doing life together. God's people are not saved into isolation, but into a community and a great expression of that community is in homegroups.

Making the Most of Your Homegroup Time

Anything worth doing is worth doing well. That's why we ask that you treat your homegroup as an important part of the rhythm of your weekly life. There are a few things you can do so that you get the most benefit out of the group and so that you are a benefit and a blessing to the group.

- Be There: Your presence encourages others. It means you are not only committed to the group, but to the other members of the group. Being inconsistent sends a negative message to everyone else.

- Prayer: Pray for the people in your group, especially your group leader.

- Prepare: Read any parts of the Bible that your leader suggests, do any homework that comes out of the study. It will not be onerous and you will benefit from it.

- Care: Be willing to give of yourself to the others in your group. The Bible says, "Love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Why Do the Same Study?

At Central Church all homegroups study the same passage or topic that was preached at the Sunday church service. What are the advantages of doing studies this way?

- Unity: Doing the same study means all across the church we are learning the same things at the same time. It can provide topics of conversation across the whole church.
- Growth: People learn better when they hear things more than once. People learn better when they hear things more than once. Marketing people know this. That is why you see the same commercials on TV over and over again. But it is true. Most people will only remember one or two points from a Sunday sermon (and they are usually the stories that are told as illustrations). People learn best when given the opportunity to talk over the subject matter. By hearing the sermon on Sunday and then being involved in a homegroup discussion during the week, you will find the message of God's Word is sown more deeply into your heart and mind.
- Relevance: By preparing our own studies, we can be specific about issues that impact all of us in our time and place. Most group study materials are from America or were written 10 or 20 years ago and speak to issues of another place or time. You will find that the studies we prepare will be practical and relevant in Ipswich, today.

About this Series

We live in a world where global news is instant, the latest thing is relevant, and the pace of change is relentless. The popular media would have us believe Christian faith to be a quaint pastime of a few quirky relics, yet all over the world there's a deep thirst for answers - people are googling God!

This study series will follow a slightly different pattern to the usual. As the focus is deliberately outward/apologetic, we'll start with asking the question – who's Googling God and why? That will start us off with the intention of looking for answers that are helpful and speak to both the felt and real needs of googlers!

After that we'll move to see where the Bible most clearly answers the question. But the purpose of this will not be to fill us with knowledge for our own good, but to equip us to speak about this with others. Our mission is to make followers of Jesus by being followers of Jesus and part of what we want to do within homegroups is equip you all for mission on your frontlines.

So our final goal will be to have some clear things we could say to the not-yet-Christian who might be searching. That does not mean that we just want to have some smart response to win an argument. We want to show people Jesus. So the ideal response will take the searcher to the person and work of Jesus.

We will also aim to leave lots of time for prayer, especially prayer for your frontline friends and relatives.

As you commence, take the time to update your frontline list with your homegroup friends so you can be praying wisely for them all as a group.

A HEALTHY HOMEGROUP WILL BE ...

making mature disciples

nurturing loving community



equipping people for mission

OUR FRONTLINE LIST

GROUP MEMBER	FRONTLINE NAME(S)	DETAILS AND UPDATES





Who is God?

Who's Googling God?

Who is God is a valid question. It is fair to say, "Before I believe in God I would like to know more about him." So who do you think might be googling this question?

From the Word

1. What do these verses say about God's nature and character?

Genesis 1:1-2

Psalms 47:1-9

Jeremiah 32:17

John 3:16

John 14:21-23

Titus 3:4-7

Psalms 75:6-8

2. How do we know that God is love and that He loves us? (1 John 3:16)
3. Read John 10:22-39. How does this passage help us in our quest to understand who God is?

My Response

4. If you asked the average (non-Christian) Aussie the question 'who is God?' What kinds of answers would you expect?

5. 1 Peter 3:15 says, 'but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...'

So, how would you answer someone who asked the question 'Who is God?'

For Prayer

Go over your 'frontline' prayer list (see page 6). Pray for them by name.

Pray that God would give you the opportunity to use this answer to help someone come to know Jesus.

Pray for the current 'I Googled God' series and that we would all be inviting people to church to hear the gospel.

MY SERMON NOTES

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Why Does God Allow Evil?

Who's Googling God?

When it comes to the question of the existence of evil, who do you think is likely to google 'why does God allow evil?'

Why do you think someone would be googling this question? See if you can come up with two or three scenarios.

From the Word

Read Genesis 3:15-17

1. What do these verses tell us about the existence of evil, and specifically God's role in how it all went down?
2. Do these verses give us any insight as to why God took this course of action?

The Book of Job

If the Bible doesn't spell out the reasons behind the existence of evil, that's frustrating. But is that a dead end? Could it be like a hedge maze - you just need to find a different path? The Old Testament book of Job takes us through the maze by following the path of Job, the Lord's servant.

The book of Job records the account of a wealthy man who is called "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil". The account records Satan approaching God with the suggestion that Job's righteousness is only because of his blessed status. God allows Satan to afflict pain and suffering on Job and we read of the account of how Job deals with this new set of circumstances. After a long series of speeches by both Job and his friends seeking reasons for Job's circumstances, Job gets the audience with God he hopes for, but not necessarily the response he was expecting.

Read Job 3:11-19

- This is Job's response after not only losing his family, but after Satan "struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." See if you can sum up Job's attitude in four words. Share them with the group.
- Job is a long book; 42 chapters! Most of it is dialogue between Job and his friends trying to make sense of the evil that has happened to him. Read the excerpts below - see if you can summarise in just a few words the point Job's friends are making, as well as Job's responses.

Job's friends	Job's response
<p>Job 8 - Bildad</p> <p>3 "Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? 4 If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression. 5 If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, 6 if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation."</p> <p>Meaning:</p>	<p>Job 9 - Response</p> <p>15 "Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser. 16 If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. 17 For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause; 18 he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. 19 If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him? 20 Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse. 21 I am blameless; I regard not myself; I loathe my life. 22 It is all one; therefore I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.' 23 When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. 24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the faces of its judges— if it is not he, who then is it?"</p> <p>Meaning:</p>

<p>Job 11 - Zophar 2 "Should a multitude of words go unanswered, and a man full of talk be judged right? 3 Should your babble silence men, and when you mock, shall no one shame you? 4 For you say, 'My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God's eyes.' 5 But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you, 6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves."</p> <p>Meaning:</p>	<p>Job 13 - Response "Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. 2 What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you. 3 But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God. 4 As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all. 5 Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom!"</p> <p>Meaning:</p>
<p>Job 15 - Eliphaz 2 "Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3 Should he argue in unprofitable talk, or in words with which he can do no good? 4 But you are doing away with the fear of God and hindering meditation before God. 5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty."</p> <p>Meaning:</p>	<p>Job 16 - Response 2 "I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all. 3 Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? 4 I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you. 5 I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain."</p> <p>Meaning:</p>

Read Job 23:1-7 and Job 31

5. What's his point?

Read Job 38:1 – 40:2

6. Summarise God's response. What's God's answer to the evil present in Job's life?

7. What aspects of His character does the Lord raise for Job to consider? List as many as you can.

Read Job 40:3-5 and Job 42:1-7 (and cast your eye over the bit in between)

8. What's Job saying?



My Response

"If God were good he would seek to make his creatures perfectly happy and if God were almighty he would be able to do what he wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore he lacks goodness, or power, or both. This is the problem of pain in its simplest form." CS Lewis.

9. How would you respond to this conundrum?

10. How does the life and ministry of Jesus help us as we think about the question of suffering and evil in the world?

Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations

Most of us struggle turning our everyday conversations into gospel conversations. To help, your leader will show you two short videos from the author of the book 'Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations.' You will be introduced to a simple paradigm based around 3 circles. Once you look at this, consider how you could turn the following conversations into gospel conversations ...

- 1) Your non-Christian friend has been upset by all the news about COVID deaths in other countries and starts questioning how you can still believe in God.
- 2) Your non-Christian friend has just been diagnosed with cancer and is very upset as s/he talks to you about it.

For Prayer

Ask God to give you a glimpse of his Almighty power, wisdom, strength, knowledge and goodness that you might rest in his plans in the midst of evil.

Ask God to help you live out your trust in him in the difficult circumstances in your life and that you would be equipped to give an answer for the hope you have.

MY SERMON NOTES



What Does God Think of Me?

Who's googling God?

We all like to be liked by people and that is no different when it comes to God. The problem is when we think God acts like people then we might think that God thinks differently of me... *maybe He likes me because I am funny or caring. Maybe he doesn't like me because I sin or have done the wrong thing.*

Who do you think is googling the question 'What does God think of me?'

From the Word

What am I actually like?

1. Look up the following Bible verses and summarize what they're saying about what we're like.

Romans 1:21

Romans 3:23

Romans 3:10

What does God think of me?

2. Look up the following bible verses and summarize what they're saying about what God thinks of you.

Genesis 1:26-27

Psalms 139:13-14

Matthew 10:30

Psalms 8

Psalms 145:8-9

John 3:16-17

Matthew 9:36, Jonah 4:11

2 Peter 3:9

Based on all of these Bible passages, compile a summary statement aimed at the non-believer who asks 'What does God think of me?'

My Response

A response to this question is most helpful when we are able to show that we are all in the same situation. We are all sinners and we all deserve the punishment for sin - death. But God, in his wisdom and love, made a way for us to be made right with him. Sin and death were defeated for those who love God and trust in Jesus as their Saviour.

Using the 3 circles of 'Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel Conversations' that we learnt about last week, consider how you might talk to friends in these situations:

- 1) Your friend who says, 'God wouldn't want anything to do with me if he knows all the things I've done.'
- 2) Your friend who believes he's going to heaven because he's a decent person.

For Prayer

Pray again for your frontline friends and pray for the upcoming Faith Course starting on Thursday 11 November.

MY SERMON NOTES



Will God Forgive Me?

Who's Googling God?

The question of forgiveness is often deeply personal and very complicated. As people we often think God works similar to us, especially when it comes to forgiveness. We can find it hard to forgive someone who wrongs us. So, who do you think are people that are googling - 'Will God forgive me?'

From the Word

1. Before we dive into the Bible and what it says about forgiveness, what does God say about sin?

Mark 7:14-23



James 1:14-15

Romans 3:23

2. What does God say about forgiveness?

Acts 13:38-39; Ephesians 1:7-10

2 Corinthians 5:21

1 John 1:7-9

3. What does 1 John 1:7-9 say about how we receive forgiveness?

4. The story of the sinful woman who came and wept at Jesus' feet in Luke 7:36-50 presents an image of forgiveness. Discuss the elements of this story and what it teaches us about forgiveness.

My Response

It is good to be reminded that God can and will forgive us from our sins. This can also be an answer that can really show people a God who cares and wants to help us deal with our sin.

So, what is your answer when someone asks, Will God forgive me? Consider verses or stories from the Bible that you could refer to.

For Prayer

This question will probably bring with it a burden of sin. As Christians we have the opportunity to be the salt and light in the world and offer an alternative to people's problems. Pray that God would give us the grace and love to help people work through these problems.

Pray that we wouldn't shy away from answering this question because it is hard to deal with what might happen. Pray that we would enter people's mess so that they may know Jesus.

MY SERMON NOTES



Why Does God Seem Absent?

Who's Googling God?

Out of all the questions, you could argue that this question is asked by just as many Christians as non-Christians. When would someone ask this question?

Think about someone who you know, who has asked this question recently. Why were they asking it? (or maybe it was you?)

From the Word

Think about God's presence in the Bible. While you do so, also think about how God is absent.

1. What are we told about God's presence in Genesis 3:8-10?



2. What does the Psalmist say in Psalm 16:11?

3. What does David say about God in Psalm 139?

4. Read Lamentations 3 (or just 3:19-27). What does Jeremiah do, while God seems absent?

5. What does John 15:7-10 say about presence and absence?

6. Read Mark 15:33-34. Here Jesus cries out to God for he was truly alone. How does what happened on the cross help us as we consider this question of the absence of God?

My Response

7. Is God absent? Based on the passages we have looked at, what would you say to the non-Christian who sees God as distant and uncaring?

8. What advice would you give them?

9. As someone who trusts in Jesus, how have you seen both God's presence and absence in your life?

10. How might your personal experiences help when you witness to an unbeliever?

For Prayer

Pray we would be aware of whether God is present or absent and what he could be doing in our lives.

Pray that our desire for God to be present doesn't cloud the reality of the kind of presence that is required for us.

MY SERMON NOTES