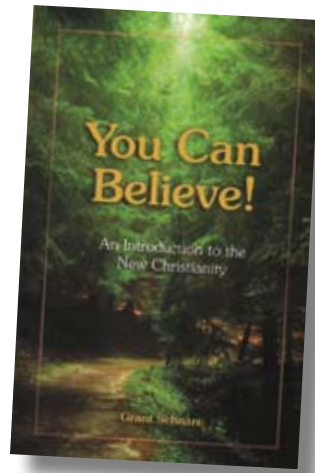


You Can Believe!

Small Group Study Guide

For Study, Reflection, and Discussion



Week One | *Introduction*

WELCOME / CHECK IN (5 Minutes)

Introduce yourself to the group. What brings you here? What interested you about this book and this study group? What do you want to get out of it?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the times you struggle to believe or feel you can't believe? (10 minutes)

Read page x to the top of page xi – about barriers. (10 minutes)

What do you see as the major barriers to attaining and sustaining any kind of faith or belief today? What do you see as your personal barriers to a deeper belief?

Read the section titled “Do you wish to be made well?” on page xii. (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS

With 4 people in each group, each person takes 4 minutes to share his or her answer to the question below. (16 minutes)

Step one is letting go of your old beliefs. What do you feel like or know you need to let go of?

SHARE YOUR OWN PERSONAL STORY (10-15 minutes)

Each week one participant has the opportunity to share the story of your own spiritual journey. (2 will share if the group is larger than 8 people.) This the time for you to introduce yourself, highlight pivotal events in your life, and share your journey using any method you prefer. The group leader can share his or her story first to model the process. The person who will share next week is then chosen, either by volunteering or at random.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 1 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK ONE TASK (5 minutes)

Take a Step : Come up with a list of three things you can do to open yourself up to the possibilities of spirituality and belief (for instance, focusing on prayer). Write them down. Practice them each day for one week. Be ready to report on your progress next time.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Two | *Who is God*

CHECK IN (5 Minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS - Report on Week One Homework and Task (16 minutes)

Take a Step: Come up with a list of three things you can do to help open yourself up to the possibilities of spirituality and belief for instance focusing on prayer. Write them down. Practice them each day for one week. Be ready to report on your progress next time.

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (10 minutes)

Read pages 3 - 5 from Chapter 1 "Who is God?" and answer the following question:

What are the issues you face in forming a picture of God for yourself?

DISCUSSION QUESTION (10 minutes)

Take five minutes to quietly refresh yourself with the material on pages 5 - 9, about God being both Divine Love and Human. As a group, respond to the following question:

How do you see a loving God playing an active role in your life?

ACTIVITY (15 minutes)

Take a few minutes to jot down the words that come to mind when you think of the Lord individually as Divine and Human.

Divine	Human
.....
.....
.....

After everyone has had the opportunity to brainstorm these words take a few samples to fill in the following sentence and read them out loud all together.

The _____ God.

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share, and someone is selected to prepare for next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 2 of You Can Believe!

INTRODUCE WEEK TWO TASK (5 minutes)

Show and Tell: Bring something in next week that best describes your ideal/desired relationship with God for instance, choose an object, write a paragraph or poem, draw a picture, etc. Share it with the group next week.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Three | *What Am I Doing Here?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS - Report on Homework and Task (16 minutes)

SHOW AND TELL: Bring something in next week that best describes your ideal/desired relationship with God for instance, choose an object, write a paragraph/poem, draw a picture etc. Share it with the group next week.

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (10 minutes)

Were you brought up with the idea that you were basically good or evil? What did that mean to you?

DISCUSSION QUESTION (10 minutes)

Take a few minutes to review pages 19 - 23 about being neither good nor evil. What does it mean to you to be neither good nor evil but a receiver of both?

ACTIVITY (20 minutes)

Read aloud the beginning of the chapter (pages 17-19) about why we are here.

Do you feel like you were created for a specific use on earth or something else?

Take a few minutes to make three lists for the following categories: A, things you do well and like to do; B, things you do well but don't like to do; and C, things you struggle with.

A: Things you do well and like to do

B: Things that you do well, but don't like to do

C: Things that you struggle with.

We serve best and get the most fulfillment when we do the things we love and do best. Fulfillment comes from the things on list A. How can you focus more on list A and let some of the things on lists B and C go?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 3 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK THREE TASK (5 minutes)

One way for us to learn about ourselves is to ask others. Ask five people via Email what they think are your unique qualities or abilities you have exhibited. This could be a partner, friend, sibling, coworker, etc. Tell them this is homework for a class. Come back and share. What did you learn about yourself?

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Four | *How Can I Grow?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS – Report on Homework and Task (16 minutes)

One way for us to learn about ourselves is to ask others. Ask five people via Email what they think are your unique qualities or abilities you have exhibited. This could be a partner, friend, sibling, coworker, etc. Tell them this is homework for a class. Come back and share. What did you learn about yourself?

As a group, read the formula for growth in Chapter Three, pages 26-30. After each step answer the following question. (40 minutes, 10 minutes for each step)

What are your experiences with this step?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 4 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK FOUR TASK (5 minutes)

Exploring the Process: Ask the Lord to help you see areas in your life which need growth. Take time to reflect on the answer. Write down three things you need to work on (worry, gossiping, judging others, etc.). Pick one area you will work on. Shun that particular evil all week. See what happens.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Five | *Am I Being Cared For?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS – Report on Homework and Task (10 minutes)

Exploring the Process: Ask the Lord to help you see areas in your life which need growth. Take time to reflect on the answer. Write down three things you need to work on (worry, gossiping, judging others, etc.). Pick one area you will work on. Shun that particular evil all week. See what happens.

Read pages 35-37 about the idea that God doesn't will evil but leaves us in freedom. Even when bad things happen, God brings good out of every situation, leading to eternal happiness in heaven. (5 minutes)

DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

How satisfied are you with the perspective that bad things happen to people for the sake of human freedom, etc.? What are your views?

Read aloud the three quotations from Swedenborg's *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)* 8478 (pgs. 40, 41, 42) (5 minutes)

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (20 minutes)

Have there been times when you feel you have seen Providence working in your life? Are you willing to share your experience?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 5 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK FIVE TASK (5 minutes)

Reflect and Journal: Note times when the Lord has shown up in your life. Bring them to the group next week, and those who are willing will put them into a hat anonymously. Read them together.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Six | *What Is the Bible Telling Us?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

REPORT ON TASK (15 minutes)

Note times when the Lord has shown up in your life. Bring them to the group, and those who are willing will put them into a hat anonymously. Read them together.

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTIONS (5 minutes)

What was your experience with the task this week?

Are there those willing to share their favorite Bible story and why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 minutes, 10 minutes each)

What has your relationship been with the Bible? This could mean no experience or a very personal experience with the Bible.

What about the idea of a deeper meaning to the Bible? What are your experiences (if any) with this?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 6 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK SIX TASK (5 minutes)

If you don't have a Bible, get one. Set a time to read the Bible everyday this week, even if only for 5 minutes. While reading, simply ask the Lord what you need to know this day. See what a difference this makes. Be prepared to come back next week and share.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Seven | *Does Love Last Forever?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS - Report on Homework and Task (10 minutes)

If you don't have a Bible, get one. Set a time to read the Bible everyday this week, even if only for 5 minutes. While reading, simply ask the Lord what you need to know this day. See what a difference this makes.

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (10 minutes)

What are your thoughts about marriage after death? What were you taught growing up? Have your views changed?

Read aloud the section on "Spiritual Growth and Marriage" on page 57. (5 minutes)

OPEN DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

What do you think is the essential or core message in what you just read about love and marriage?

ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

In a basket, the leader will give you enough cards with quotes on love for each person in your group. (Note for leader: These are provided on the following page please print or transcribe onto nice paper.) Everyone will take one and read it. Take your quote home, read and incorporate into your life. If you would like to share your quote or have any questions please feel free to do so now.

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapters 7 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK SEVEN TASK (5 minutes)

Every day, read the card you were given and ask the Lord for the gift of married love and the power to live by what He shows you. Do this whether single or married. See what happens.

For next week, list the top five movies you think have helped forward the ideal of married love. Can you list some which have done the opposite? Be ready to share.

READ ALOUD THE STORY ON PG. 60 (5 minutes)

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

PSALM 37:3, 5

Trust in the Lord, and do good.... Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass....

PSALM 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

MARRIED LOVE 216: 4

When married partners love each other tenderly, they think of eternity in regard to the marriage covenant, and not at all of its being terminated by death. Or if they do think about this, they grieve, until strengthened again with hope by the thought of its continuing in the life to come.

MARRIED LOVE 180

It is the nature of love to will to share with another, indeed, to confer joys upon another whom it loves from the heart, and to seek its own joys in return from doing so.

TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION 196:2

The Lord loves all and so wishes to do good to all and good is service. Since the Lord does good or performs services indirectly through angels, and in the world through people, He gives those who faithfully perform services a love of service and its reward, which is inward blessedness, and this is everlasting happiness.

SEE DIVINE PROVIDENCE 8

To the extent that people are governed by a marriage of goodness and truth, to the same extent they are an image and likeness of the Lord, since these two are united in the Lord.... Love and wisdom are united in an angel in heaven and in a person of the church when the will and intellect, thus when goodness and truth, are united.

MARRIED LOVE 534

Truly conjugal love with its delights comes only from the Lord and is given to those who live according to His commandments.

JOHN 13:34

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you...."

MARRIED LOVE 534

Truly conjugal love with its delights comes only from the Lord and is given to those who live according to His commandments.

MARRIED LOVE 229

The Lord's Divine providence is most specific and most universal in connection with marriages and in its operation in marriages, because all delights of heaven flow from the delights of conjugal love, like sweet waters from a gushing spring.

Week Eight | *Is There an Afterlife?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

REPORT ON HOMEWORK AND TASK (25 minutes)

TASK #1 - 4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS

Every day, read the card you were given and ask the Lord for the gift of married love and the power to live by what He shows you. Do this whether single or married. See what happens.

TASK #2 - AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION

List the top five movies you think have helped forward the ideal of married love. Can you list some which have done the opposite? Be ready to share.

Read the beginning of Chapter Seven, "Is There an Afterlife?" on page 62. (5 minutes)

GROUP DISCUSSION (20 minutes, 10 minutes for each question)

How convinced are you that you will live after death?

How do ideas about life after death affect the way you think and live?

Read It's real and better than you thought on page 68. (5 minutes)

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (10 minutes)

What ideas in this reading did you find interesting, confronting, or exciting?

GLIMPSES OF THE OTHER WORLD – Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Sometimes when people lose someone close to them, they may receive a strong sense that the person is alive and well in the other world, or perhaps they have a significant dream. Have you personally had an experience like this or know someone who has that you are willing to share with the group?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 8 of *You Can Believe!*

INTRODUCE WEEK EIGHT TASK (5 minutes)

Take some time to reflect: "If I were taken to the other world today, what would I regret not having done?" What spiritual goals are you neglecting? This week take one step towards doing it. Be prepared to share next week.

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Week Nine | *Are We Living in the End Times?*

CHECK IN (5 minutes)

4X4 BREAKOUT GROUPS - Report on Homework and Task (10 minutes)

Take some time to reflect: "If I were taken to the other world today, what would I regret not having done?" What spiritual goals are you neglecting? This week take one step towards doing it.

AROUND THE ROOM QUESTION (10 minutes)

What were you taught growing up about end times? The second coming?

Read the beginning of Chapter Eight, page 75-78. (5 minutes)

OPEN DISCUSSION (10 minutes, 5 minutes each question)

What is your reaction after reading this and exploring the idea that the second coming is a new understanding of God?

What does the idea that there won't be a cataclysmic judgment on the earth do for you?

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES (10-15 minutes)

The person who volunteered to share their personal story will now share and someone is selected to prepare for the next week.

ACTIVITY (15 minutes)

Read "A New Jerusalem" on page 78.

After reading this passage, take a few moments to think about a prayer or hope that you would like to offer to the world--for example, peace, health, or love. Each person will offer his or her prayer or hope for the world and light a candle as a symbol of that hope.

HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 9, "Who Was Emanuel Swedenborg?" of *You Can Believe!*

CLOSING THOUGHTS (5 minutes)

CLOSING PRAYER (5 minutes)

WHAT'S NEXT (10 minutes)

A brief discussion on what is next. Do people want to explore another small group study?

Look on www.newchurchjourney.org or www.newchurchconnection.org for ideas.