

KEANU REEVES  
**CONSTANTINE**

Bible  
Study  
Guide

## Intro

In a short time, people over the country are going to be talking about spiritual things. Conversations will be about Heaven and Hell, angels and demons, God and Satan. Everyone, and I mean everyone, will be talking about salvation, sin, forgiveness, and spiritual warfare.

All because of a movie. All because of *Constantine*.

What an opportunity for savvy ministry leaders! Remember, we are to be “making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:16) This Bible Study Guide will help you to harness the interest in spiritual things that the Warner Bros film *Constantine* will create. Included are three sessions for you to use with your group to examine what is Biblical and true about this extraordinary film.

## About The Movie

John Constantine has been to hell and back. Born with a gift he didn't want, the ability to clearly recognize angels and demons walking the earth in human skin, Constantine (KEANU REEVES) was driven to take his own life to escape the tormenting clarity of his vision. But he failed. Resuscitated, he now finds himself back in the land of the living, patrolling the earthly border between heaven and hell, hoping in vain to earn his way to salvation by sending the devil's foot soldiers back to the depths.

But Constantine is no saint. Disillusioned by the world around him and at odds with the one beyond, he's a chain-smoking, hard-living bitter hero who scorns the very idea of heroism. Constantine will fight to save your soul but doesn't want your admiration or your thanks – and certainly not your sympathy.

All he wants is a reprieve.

When a desperate but skeptical police detective (RACHEL WEISZ as Angela Dodson) enlists his help in solving the mysterious death of her beloved twin sister, their investigation takes them through the world of demons and angels that exists just beneath the landscape of contemporary Los Angeles. Caught in a catastrophic series of otherworldly events, the two become inextricably involved and seek to find peace at whatever cost.

CONSTANTINE  
FEBRUARY 18

In the film the viewer encounters demons of various kinds, an angel named Gabriel, and even Lucifer himself. The action is intense, the mood is very dark, and some scenes are downright scary. The movie is rated “R” – so if you have an underage youth group, you won’t want to take your group to see the film. But we all know that, somehow, individual teens do find a way into see R-rated films – and Constantine has the right recipe to attract a ton of interest from a lot of teenagers.

And that’s why you need to be prepared.

## **But but but...**

While Constantine is an excellent Hollywood film, it’s also just that – a Hollywood film. Not surprisingly, there is much imperfect, messy theology in the movie. However, a wise ministry leader knows how to turn almost any moment into a “teachable moment” and instill truth in the hearts of his or her students. And, a prudent ministry leader understands that opportunities like Constantine can also be used to foster heresy and misunderstandings. This material is also designed to help you shine the light of truth on some of those unclear theological issues.

But what makes *Constantine* so terrific for the average group leader is that it gets the big picture pretty much right. There’s Heaven and Hell. There’s God and Satan. There are angels and demons. It’s all right there in the movie – and there’s no way that people coming out of *Constantine* won’t be talking about these topics.

Are you up for the challenge?

Make sure you tweak these sessions to suit your needs. If you’re a college ministry director, you’ll want to beef up some the concepts presented here, and maybe lose the games. On the other hand, if you lead a group of junior highers and you’ve discovered that a ton of your kids, then go with the games and try to lighten up on some of the information presented.

## Session 1: Angels and Demons

This session explores angelic beings, their roles and activities. By the end of this session your students will have a clearer understanding of these beings, and a greater appreciation for their role.

The depictions of demons and angels in *Constantine* reinforces untrue stereotypes of those beings: “soldier” demons in the film are more like menacing, brainless ape-like monsters than spiritual beings; androgynous angels that have huge feathered wings; higher-ranking demons who are as slick and well-mannered as they are evil; a yellow-toothed, thoroughly devious Satan who has far greater powers than any other being in the film, and others.

As scary as the spiritual beings are in the film, from this session’s Bible study your students should discover that angels transcend “scary” – they are *awesome* and somewhat incomprehensible.

### **Crowdbreaker**

To get the meeting rolling, play *Angels, Demons, Man* – a version of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Have your students pair up and stand back-to-back. When you say, “Ready, Set, GO!” the players spin around in one of three positions:

- Angel (hands in armpits, flapping “wings” and say, “Blessings!”)
- Demon (hands in air with fingers curved like talons and say “Curses!”)
- Man (hands on hips and say, “Hi there!”)

The Man defeats the Angel, the Angel defeats the Demon, and the Demon defeats the Man. (Quick theological disclaimer: no hierarchy or teaching is implied in this game!) Have the winners pair up with other winners and play again. Rinse and repeat until you have a single winner left.

### **Discussion**

Generate some discussion around these kinds of questions:

- What images come to your mind when you hear the word “angel”?
- What do you think of when you hear the word “demon”?
- Where do we get our ideas of angels and demons?
- How accurate do you think our concepts are?
- What do you think angels and demons do?

## **Bible Study**

The Bible does not specifically deal with the subject of angels, yet there are many incidents in Scripture that give us plenty of information about them. For the first part of this study, focus on one incident recorded in **Daniel 10:1–11:1**, and draw the conclusions listed below.

*Angels Are Real* – The being that Daniel talked with was a real creature, not a vision. However, this angel was a “spiritual” being—Daniel could see him, and even describe his appearance; the other men with Daniel could not see the angel, but sensed something scary (maybe from Daniel’s reaction) and ran for cover. Previously, an angel named Gabriel had appeared to Daniel to give him some inside information that Daniel needed. This time, though, this being seems to be someone else – a warrior angel instead of a messenger.

In the movie, Constantine could see what nobody else could: the real world of angels and demons. In a way he was like Elisha. In **1 Kings 12:15-17** we read, *“When the servant of Elisha got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. ‘Oh, my lord, what shall we do?’ the servant asked. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ the prophet answered. ‘Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, ‘O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”* Elisha knew that angels were real, and that they were everywhere around them. Even though we do not have Constantine’s (or Elisha’s) ability to see them, there are indeed angelic beings all around us.

*Angels Are Awesome* – Try to put into your own words Daniel’s description of the angel. This guy, although in human form, was one scary dude! The description that Daniel gives is so detailed that this person must have made a significant impression on Daniel. However, angels don’t all look this way—have someone look up and read **Hebrews 13:2**. From that verse we learn that we might encounter angels, even have them over for dinner, and not realize it.

*Angels Conflict* – This being was held up for three weeks, unable to complete his mission because of a battle with a similar being sent from Satan. The battle was so evenly matched that, without the help of another angel named Michael, this angel would have still been fighting. Possibly they were fighting over influencing the King of Persia, which would affect the treatment of God’s people who were living in Persia as a subservient population to the dominant world power.

*Angels Have Rank* – Note that Michael’s rank is “one of the chief princes” – or “archangel.” From the rest of Scripture we can deduce that there are “ranks” that are assigned to angels. The angel talking with Daniel was evidently high ranking, and had been fighting with an equally talented angelic being sent from Satan.

In *Constantine* we encounter various kinds of angelic beings – from scummy little scavengers to bug-infested strongmen, from slickly-dressed smooth operators to vile Satan himself. The movie does indeed indicate that there are various kinds of angelic beings.

Satan and his angels need a little more discussion. Have your students look up and read **Revelation 12:7-9**.

Here's *The Message* paraphrase:

*War broke out in Heaven. Michael and his Angels fought the Dragon. The Dragon and his Angels fought back, but were no match for Michael. They were cleared out of Heaven, not a sign of them left. The great Dragon—ancient Serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, the one who led the whole earth astray—thrown out, and all his Angels thrown out with him, thrown down to earth.*

Talk through these points:

*Satan Is An Angel* – Satan rebelled against God, tried to take over Heaven, and lost. From other Bible verses we know that he was the most powerful and perfect angel that God made. He rallied one-third of all angels to his cause. He didn't grow horns, turn red, or get a pitchfork when he lost his fight against Michael and the rest of Heaven's angels. Satan is not the opposite of God, or of Jesus – he's more like the opposite of Michael.

*Satan, And His Cohorts, Are Evil* – They have "led the whole earth astray" by tempting Adam and Eve to sin, by accusing Christians and causing them to doubt their faith, by bringing death to the world. Christians are warned against Satan's "devices" (**2 Corinthians 2:11**), and called to "resist" him (**James 4:7**). However, and this is a point the movie misses, Satan and demons almost never come across as evil – Satan attempts to hide the horror of his evil. **2 Corinthians 11:14** says, "*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*"

*Satan Is Already Defeated* – The Bible is clear: Jesus defeated Satan and death on the Cross, and made His victory plain when He rose from the dead (**Hebrews 2:14**). The war's outcome is already known, but many battles are yet to be waged.

### **Conclusion**

Bring your meeting to a close by reminding your students that angels – both good and evil – are a part of our life. We rarely get to see their influence, but we certainly can feel it. Read **Ephesians 6:10-18** –

*God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is no afternoon athletic contest that we'll walk away from and forget about in a couple of hours. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels. Be prepared.*

*You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.*

Finish up with the kind of prayer mentioned in those verses!

## Session 2: Heaven and Hell

Fire and brimstone. Streets of gold. Weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Singing “Halleluiah” over and over and over for eternity. Even if the phrases are Biblical, our society has turned them into myths about Heaven and Hell. This session attempts to debunk some common misconceptions about eternity, and give clear Biblical teaching about the reality of Heaven and Hell. By the time your meeting is over, your students should see Heaven as their true home, and have a fresh concern for people headed in the opposite direction.

We have a much easier time imagining what Hell is like than we do Heaven. Images of Hell are commonplace, whereas we have much more difficulty picturing Heaven. In the movie, Hell is pictured far more times, and in much greater detail, than Heaven. The filmmakers went to great lengths to recreate a hellish version of Los Angeles' Highway 101 freeway, yet we get only a fleeting glimpse of an ethereal heavenly version of the same location. Hell is easier to imagine than Heaven.

In this session, we will look at two incidents in Scripture that give us some clues about Heaven and Hell: the incident with the “rich man” and Lazarus, and Paul's description of a “man” who had a near-death experience and saw paradise.

### **Crowdbreaker**

Play the old favorite: *Twister* with a bit of a twist. (Get it? Twister? Twist? Hehehe!) Divide into four teams, and have each team choose a player. While the players are tying themselves into knots, their teammates cheer them on. When a player is eliminated, a new player from the cheering section takes his or her place. Play until only a single player remains.

## **Discussion**

Mention that the difficulty of playing *Twister* is trying to be two or more places at once. In the film, Heaven and Hell coexists with our world. When a person dies, they are in the exact same room or spot – only they're in Heaven or Hell. This concept of alternate realities isn't too far from the actual truth. Heaven and Hell do exist, but in a different dimension of time-space. The spiritual realm is not restricted to the four dimensions that make up our reality (up, down, forward, back and time). Get some discussion going around these types of questions:

- What do you think Heaven is like?
- What images of Hell come to your mind?
- Where do you think Heaven is? How about Hell?
- How have your concepts of Heaven and Hell changed since you were a little kid?
- How “real” do you think Heaven and Hell are?

## **Bible Study**

Have your students look up **Luke 16:19-31**. Read the passage aloud, letting one student read one verse, then move to another student who reads the next verse and so on. You will want to be careful in teaching from these verses – Luke's purpose of including this parable, and Jesus' emphasis in telling it, was to condemn the self-righteousness and selfishness of the Pharisees, not to explain the afterlife. However, there are some clear lessons about Heaven and Hell given by Jesus in this parable:

*Life Doesn't End At Death* – Both men, the rich man and Lazarus, die. But they're not dead – they are living in a different place. Humankind is different from all others in God's earthly creation: we are eternal beings. That's likely part of what God meant when, in **Genesis 1**, He said, “Let us make man in our image.”

*We're The Same People After Death* – Note that neither the rich man nor Lazarus changed their identity after dying. They are still who they were—they have not been reincarnated as someone else, nor have they transmogrified into angels. Interestingly, the rich man still seemed to view Lazarus as his pawn, his social inferior. In the movie, characters that die discover that they are immediately in a new reality. They haven't changed who they are, just *where* they are. *Constantine* does an excellent job of portraying these Biblical truths.

*Hell Is Horrible* – The rich man experienced “torment” – so much so that he tried to negotiate his way to relief. He was also very concerned that none of his family experiences the agony of Hell. Draw some comparisons with the depictions of Hell in *Constantine*: roaming scavengers, decaying landscape, flames, roaring and howling sounds, etc.

*Heaven Is Heavenly* – Lazarus' condition was in direct contrast to the rich man's. In fact, the reversal of fortunes between the two men is the main point of the story. Lazarus was being "comforted" in Heaven, which was probably a new experience for him.

Now turn your group's attention to **2 Corinthians 12:2-4**. Here it is in *The Message* paraphrase:

*I know a man who, fourteen years ago, was seized by Christ and swept in ecstasy to the heights of heaven. I really don't know if this took place in the body or out of it; only God knows. I also know that this man was hijacked into paradise—again, whether in or out of the body, I don't know; God knows. There he heard the unspeakable spoken, but was forbidden to tell what he heard.*

Most students of the Bible conclude that Paul is referring to himself, likely describing what happened when he was stoned by an angry mob, and then revived by his Christian friends (**Acts 14:19-20**). Draw out these two observations from this Scripture:

*There's only one Heaven* – The "heights of heaven" is translated "third heaven" in most Bibles, which can confuse some people. The phrase was a common way of saying "all the way" or "to the extreme" – kind of like we use "grand slam" to describe something totally great. The point is that we don't work our way through successive lifetimes or heavens – when we die, we enter eternity.

*Heaven Is Indescribable* – There is no way that we, with our limited experience and vocabulary, can adequately describe what Heaven will be like. We cannot even imagine even the tiniest sliver of how great it will be! No wonder *Constantine* shows so little of Heaven – it is beyond our ability to conceive!

## **Conclusion**

The glimpses of Heaven (and of Hell) that the Bible gives, and they're just glimpses, are aimed at strengthening faith and promoting holiness, not satisfying curiosity. So finish up your session by challenging your students to live and act in a heavenly manner. Read to the group **Philippians 3:20-21**:

*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Close in prayer.

## Session 3: Faith and Salvation

In the movie, Constantine is desperately trying to earn a reprieve. He is working hard for God by sending demons back to Hell. The only person he can plead his case to is the angel named Gabriel, but each time the answer is the same: no. You need faith to enter Heaven and Constantine is disqualified because faith is about belief without proof.

This issue is where the movie offers ministry leaders the greatest opportunity to teach truth. The movie gets it right – one cannot earn God's forgiveness. Eternal life in Heaven is a gift from God that is received by faith, not a prize that is won by effort. This session attempts to communicate grace and faith in such a way that your students will have an opportunity to take a step of faith and accept God's gift of salvation.

### **Crowdbreaker**

The *Trust Fall* has been done so often in youth ministry programs that it has almost become a cliché. However, the reason it's used so much is because it is so effective!

Have a volunteer stand on an elevated platform – a table, tall chair, etc. – with his or her back to the edge. Have the rest of your students (at least six or more) form two lines near the edge of the platform, cross their arms and grab the wrists of the person standing opposite of them. Their interlocking arms form the "bed" upon which your volunteer will fall back onto. Have the volunteer cross his or her arms over their chest and, on the count of three, close their eyes and fall backward – into the waiting arms of their friends. Let as many kids participate as the volunteer as is practical.

### **Discussion**

Debrief the *Trust Fall* activity by talking through these kinds of questions:

- What made falling backward so scary?
- What was going through your mind just before you fell backward?
- As you were getting ready to catch your friends, what thoughts were you having?
- How does this activity relate to Christian "faith"?
- What is the difference between "faith" and "foolishness"?
- Why do you think "faith" is difficult for people to have?

## **Bible Study**

John Constantine had a hard time with faith. He wanted to earn his way into Heaven, and could not bring himself to simply trust God and receive forgiveness. And the thing is, he's a lot like most people. We innately want to *do* something so that God will accept us, forgive us, and grant us eternal life. "Religion" is all about "doing" for God, but Christianity recognizes that God has already "done" the work for us. Read these verses aloud to your group, and then teach through the main points listed below.

### **John 3:16-18**

*This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, His one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in Him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in Him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust Him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to Him.*

### **Hebrews 11:1, 6**

*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*

### **John 1:10-13**

*He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*You Can't Earn Heaven* – No one can be good enough to impress God. He doesn't work that way. That's the lesson John Constantine couldn't seem to learn. No matter how much you do for God, your efforts are not what He requires. God's love for us is so great that He made the ultimate sacrifice, rather than requiring us to earn salvation. He became one of us, and paid our penalty by dying for us. He proved that His death satisfied the debt by coming back to live. He did all that so that we can have a "whole and lasting life."

*Faith Is Reasonable* – You would never fall backwards into open air, but even knowing that your friends would catch you didn't make the *Trust Fall* easy. Faith is never blind belief, but a genuine *trust* in something

worthy of your trust. Jesus' death on the Cross, God's offer of eternal life, and God's dependability to reward your belief make your faith in Him a reasonable act.

*The Gift Needs To Be Received* – Realizing that God has done everything necessary for our salvation, and that trusting in Him is reasonable, isn't enough. As **John 1** says, "...to all who *received* Him, to those who *believed* in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—" For some people, the act of believing in Him comes slowly, like the sunrise in the morning. For others, faith comes suddenly, like a flash of lightning. Either way, there comes a point when every person chooses to accept God's gift, or to continue trying to earn God's favor.

### **Conclusion**

The wrap up of this session is a significant occasion for you. You know your students – do you need to give them an opportunity to accept God's grace? Do you need to challenge them to receive God's gift of forgiveness? Plan your closing time carefully!

### **Wrap Up**

The issues covered in these three sessions could easily, *easily* be expanded into several sessions, EACH. Teenagers are naturally curious of spiritual beings, the afterlife, Heaven and Hell. We haven't covered all the questions that kids might ask, but hopefully this material will give you a start. God bless you as you work to reach and teach teenagers with the love of God!

