life
MAKING THE MOST OF IT
“Seize the day.” “Live life to the fullest.” “Make every moment count.” Those popular phrases resonate because we know life is short. The Bible even says our lives are like a vapor—here for a little while and then vanishing. How can we make the most of the gift of life? Join us for our new series, *Life*, as we see how the Scripture offers wisdom on how you can make the most of your time, your gifts, your resources, your relationships, and your career.

Remember that you aren’t in this alone! God will help you prepare and lead your group discussion. Make it your goal to keep in step with the Holy Spirit!

Pray and read the passage a few times on your own. Take a few minutes to identify what makes an impression for you and how the passage might impact your group.

Once you’ve taken some time to read the passage on your own, read through the entire Discussion Guide. Make sure you understand the Main Point. Identify which questions you want to use in your group time and rewrite them in your own words.

Once your group time is over, take a few minutes to evaluate the discussion. What went well? What could have been different? If you had a “bad night,” DON’T GIVE UP! Everyone has tough nights. There were times that even the disciples didn’t get what Jesus was talking about!
To equip you as a leader, we provide resources each series to help you and members of your group understand and respond to the biblical truths we’re studying as a church. Don’t forget about the Mariners Annual Read and the Gospel Every Day podcast discussing each devotional.

The CSB Study Bible is an excellent resource if you’d prefer a physical copy of the translation used by Mariners Church. It is available for purchase online and in the bookstore at Irvine.

All Scripture references in this guide are CSB unless otherwise noted.

**HOW TO USE THE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

Discussions often take on a life of their own, but they typically lack power when they lack focus. The Discussion Leader ought to use the Main Point to keep everyone on the same page. To do this, you might say something like, "That is very interesting and a good topic for another discussion, but today’s study is about..." and ask a question that brings people back to the topic of discussion. There will be times when it makes sense to ignore the Main Point—for example, when someone in your group experiences a significant crisis. If you decide to move away from the lesson’s Main Point, you want to do so on purpose and not by accident.

A prompt will be provided when one of the 7 Rhythms of Rooted has a natural point of emphasis. We want to help everyone continue to grow holistically in their spiritual journeys. Obviously, some rhythms always exist, like prayer, but occasionally it will be helpful to draw fresh attention to or spend additional time in one of the rhythms.
Where needed, each lesson may have several Leader Notes. This material will provide insight on how to steer the conversation and care for your people. Additionally, these notes will provide greater context to help you understand a difficult word, phrase, or verse.

These questions will help kick-start your discussion time. The main goal for this time is to get everyone talking and prepare them for the more focused conversation to follow.

The goal for this section is to let the passage speak for itself and stand on its own. This isn’t easy! During this time, you will read the passage out loud (twice) and answer questions focused on the details of the biblical text.

Jesus calls us to love others, just as He loved us. Based on your understanding of the text and how God is transforming your heart, how will you treat others? How will you apply this teaching to all of your relationships and to everyone you will see this week and beyond?

Transformation comes from renewing your mind (Romans 12:2). The goal for this section is to look inward to allow God’s Word to change you from the inside out. Use this time to discuss how your thoughts and feelings are affirmed and/or challenged.

Be sure to close your time together in prayer. You can take requests from the group, invite others to lead, and bring God the needs that stood out to you in your group time.
Week One: Making the Most of Your Time
GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PREPARE

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MAIN POINT

The days are short and evil and we must make the most of our opportunities.

Daily Devotion, Prayer, Repentance, Serve the Community, Sacrificial Generosity, Share Your Story, Worship

RHYTHM REMINDERS

What experiences have you had that reminded or reinforced for you that life is short and that something about the way you live should change as a result?

Leader Note: We can have very sweet moments in life that help us grasp a bit more just how brief our time on Earth is. In such moments, we often say that we want to “pause time” so we can savor them all the more. Yet we can also experience very hard and difficult things that teach us the same lesson. Suffering in the form of terminal illness or a prolonged job loss reinforces how short life is. In good times and bad, pondering our short time on Earth is a healthy exercise that pushes us to make the most of our time for the glory of God. Yet this is not an easy thing to do, because thinking about how short life is can be unsettling, regardless of the experience that brought you there, and we’ll see this very thing in Psalm 39.
Read Psalm 39:1-7

1 I said, “I will guard my ways so that I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth with a muzzle as long as the wicked are in my presence.” 2 I was speechless and quiet; I kept silent, even from speaking good, and my pain intensified. 3 My heart grew hot within me; as I mused, a fire burned. I spoke with my tongue: 4 “LORD, make me aware of my end and the number of my days so that I will know how short-lived I am. 5 In fact, you have made my days just inches long, and my life span is as nothing to you. Yes, every human being stands as only a vapor. 6 Yes, a person goes about like a mere shadow. Indeed, they rush around in vain, gathering possessions without knowing who will get them. 7 “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.

What was it that was troubling David?

Leader Note: Verses 1-3 reveal that David was clearly bothered by something. The thing that he was meditating on had him at once speechless and yet desiring to speak about it. Finally, in verses 4-6, we learn what that thing was: the brevity of life—how short our time on Earth really is.

How did David respond to this profound thought burning within him? Why is his response a great model for us?

Leader Note: David’s response to this profound and disturbing muse was to lean into it and ask God to teach him its meaning and implications. Though it troubled him, he also knew that behind his short life was God’s eternal life, so he sought God in the troubling thoughts. Rather than suffer in anxiety over the thought of his short life, David gave his anxiety over to God, seeing it as an opportunity to know and love the One who made him.

What did David learn as a result of leaning into God with these thoughts about life’s brevity?

Leader Note: Leaning into God on this question, David discerns that our days are made and, therefore, fixed. Whatever we may do to shorten or lengthen our time is not beyond God’s sovereignty. David also learns that this brevity demands that one make the most of it in pursuit of a relationship with God. As he says in verse 7, “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.”
How might someone who does not believe in God respond to a long contemplation on the brevity of life? What conclusions would they draw?

How would those conclusions compare to David’s? Ours?

As you contemplate how short your time is, how does your response compare with David’s?

What are the things you need to “lose” in order to make the most of your time?
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We are stewards of God’s grace until Jesus returns.

Serve the Community, Share Your Story

What is one talent you have that might surprise members of the group? It could be something odd and quirky, or something more traditional.

Was this “hidden talent” something you discovered that you had, or one that you worked on for some time?

Leader Note: Hopefully group members get into sharing their “hidden talents.” Though some of these talents may have been carefully cultivated over time, others may have always been present but unknown until their sudden discovery. Our Bible passage today emphasizes gifts that are given (“gifts of grace”) yet also can be, and should be, cultivated for the health of the Church and the glory of God.
Read 1 Peter 4:10-11

10 Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

How do spiritual gifts show God’s “varied grace”?

Why did God give spiritual gifts to the Church?

Leader Note: The point of every spiritual gift is not to exalt the person with the gift. Rather, spiritual gifts are for the purpose of glorifying God as a demonstration of the gospel. All of our actions are supposed to act as beacons pointing others to God and His greatness.

Why might Peter specifically have mentioned speaking and serving as gifts?

Leader Note: Speaking and serving amount to proclamation of the good news and to demonstration of the good news. It’s probably no accident that Peter chose these two gifts, as all other gifts can be categorized under proclamation or demonstration...talking and walking...speaking and serving.

What are we denying the Church if we do not steward our gifts?

Leader Note: If we refuse to steward our gifts, we are denying the Church the ability to minister in specific ways. God has all the resources He needs to build His Church, and through His grace, we are one of those resources. He will give us the strength we need to represent Him well both through our gifts and in our service in whatever circumstances come our way.
LOOK OUT
IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S WORD IN THE WORLD

What does culture generally say about gifts and their purpose? How is this different from the biblical understanding of gifts?

LOOK IN
APPLY GOD’S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Where have you seen God use the gifts He’s given you to serve others?

What, if anything, holds you back from using your gifts for the sake of others?

Considering the unique gifts from within your group, what could it look like to serve others together?
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When we take action with what we’ve been given, we can enter confidently into the joy of the Lord.

Sacrificial Generosity

What’s a project, goal, or resolution you’ve set that proved to be too ambitious?

Leader Note: Even if we have the best of intentions, those intentions don’t mean anything until they are put into action. In the Parable of the Ten Minas, each of the slaves started out with good intentions, but only the slaves who used the talents to bear fruit followed through on those good intentions. This parable shows us that we only really enter into the kind of joy God has in store for us when we put intentions into action, and there is no better resource to which this truth applies than money. Perhaps this is why Jesus chose money as the illustration for making His point!
Read Luke 19:11-27

11 As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable because he was near Jerusalem, and they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away.
12 Therefore he said, “A nobleman traveled to a far country to receive for himself authority to be king and then to return. 13 He called ten of his servants, gave them ten minas, and told them, ‘Engage in business until I come back.’ 14 “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We don’t want this man to rule over us.’ 15 “At his return, having received the authority to be king, he summoned those servants he had given the money to, so that he could find out how much they had made in business. 16 The first came forward and said, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten more minas.’ 17 “Well done, good servant!’ he told him. ‘Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over ten towns.’ 18 “The second came and said, ‘Master, your mina has made five minas.’ 19 “So he said to him, ‘You will be over five towns.’ 20 “And another came and said, ‘Master, here is your mina. I have kept it safe in a cloth 21 because I was afraid of you since you’re a harsh man: you collect what you didn’t deposit and reap what you didn’t sow.’ 22 “He told him, ‘I will condemn you by what you have said, you evil servant! If you knew I was a harsh man, collecting what I didn’t deposit and reaping what I didn’t sow, 23 why, then, didn’t you put my money in the bank? And when I returned, I would have collected it with interest.’ 24 So he said to those standing there, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’ 25 “But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’ 26 “I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given; and from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away. 27 But bring here these enemies of mine, who did not want me to rule over them, and slaughter them in my presence.”

What is Jesus saying about His Kingdom? What is He saying about His expectations for Kingdom people?

What do the nobleman’s actions in verse 13 teach us about God and how He interacts with us?

What do the minas represent in this parable?

Leader Note: Ten minas was nearly three years’ wages for the average person in Jesus’ day. The parable is intended to highlight how God graciously blesses us with talents, resources, and gifts that He intends for us to use to glorify Him. The parable also warned the listeners not to expect an immediate consummation of the Kingdom and taught that until that time believers would be held accountable for their stewardship of their lives. Understanding that the slaves represent believers in Christ makes clear the application for disciples then and now. Jesus was about to leave His followers and return to His Father in Heaven. One day He would return, but in the meantime His followers must serve Him faithfully with all He has entrusted to them.
How did each of the slaves handle the minas the master gave to them?

Do you think it’s common for people to view God in the way the third slave viewed the nobleman?

The third slave claimed to know the nobleman (v. 20-22) Based on his actions, do you think he knew the nobleman as well as he said? Why or why not?

What does it look like when people live generously? Where have you seen it?

What does it look like when people live for themselves? Where have you seen it?

What lessons have you learned as a result of living generously?

How intentional are you when it comes to regular giving? What, if anything, holds you back from giving regularly? How does the passage challenge those barriers to giving?
Week Four: Making the Most of Our Relationships (Help You and Others Know God)

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MAIN POINT

Relationships are a gift for helping us know God more and become more like Him.

RHYTHM

Share Your Story, Serve Your Community

REMINDERS

LEAN IN

What’s a “fictional family” you would have liked to grow up with?

BREAK

Leader Note: Have fun with this question. Encourage people to think about “sitcoms” or other types of fictional families. What do they admire or find interesting about that setting? What would they have experienced or learned from that family? This question is designed to open us up to family dynamics, and what it’s like to grow and relate to others in relationships no matter how messy they may be at times!
How is the way we are called to encourage and relate to one another different from that of those outside of biblical community? What does it look like when we get it right? What does it look like when we don’t?

When was a time God used community to challenge you?

Where have you experienced healing and encouragement through community?

Read Hebrews 3:13

13 But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.

What do you learn about the role and power of relationships from the passage?

**Leader Note:** Relationships are a gift from God. Like any of God’s gifts, relationships can be abused or misused and turned into idols. But if we want to steward our relationships well, we will see them as gifts to help ourselves and others know God more through encouragement and grace-filled truth-telling that points us to reconciliation and obedience to God’s Word. While biblical community is not our “saving grace” in and of itself, it is one of the primary ways that God works to grow and challenge us.
What does it look like when people live generously? Where have you seen it?

What does it look like when people live for themselves? Where have you seen it?

What lessons have you learned as a result of living generously?

How intentional are you when it comes to regular giving? What, if anything, holds you back from giving regularly? How does the passage challenge those barriers to giving?

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If we understand the nature of work from God’s perspective and purpose, we can find more satisfaction in it and discover a higher purpose through it.

What was your first job? How did you get it? What did you learn from it?

Since then, what has been the best job you have had, and why?

Leader Note: Average Americans will spend about 90,000 hours of their lives at work; yet roughly one-third of Americans are unsatisfied with their jobs. This disparity between time invested and satisfaction gained suggests that we need a new perspective on work. Perhaps if we saw our work from God’s perspective, we may actually enjoy what we do and serve a higher purpose than the work itself.


In what ways were humans set apart from the rest of God’s creation?

What does it mean to be made in God’s image or likeness, specifically in regard to our work ethic?

**Leader Note:** The creation of humans constituted the climax of God’s creative work. The Bible indicates the importance of humanity’s creation in several strong ways. First, God built up to humanity’s creation by creating all other living things first. Second, the description of the creation of humans comprises a longer account than the creation of any other living thing. The term “image” refers to the aspects of reason, personality, the ability to make value judgments, and other qualities that cause a human being to resemble God. Just as family members take on the qualities and personality traits of one another, God created people in His own image to reflect some of His qualities, including all of those that were evident in the work of creation.

What initial responsibilities did God give to men and women (v. 28)?

What do the concepts of subduing the Earth and ruling over its creatures mean? What are the limits to our ruling and subduing?

How does your job intersect with this mandate?
Leader Note: One of the many takeaways from this text is that we all have the responsibility of creating a God-glorifying culture insofar as it depends on us. As Christians, we are to make every effort to develop a God-glorifying culture around us. Because our jobs are where we spend so much of our time, they are an obvious place for us to put this command into action.

Genesis 2:3 says God set aside a holy day to rest from His work.

Do you see a connection between the quality of your work and the quality of your rest?

Leader Note: When God took a Sabbath following His work of creation, He demonstrated that hard work earns rest. Just as God created us to work, He also created us to need His restorative peace, which is the point of the Sabbath. When we give ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever we’re doing, we glorify God in our work and play, in our effort and leisure.

Read Genesis Genesis 3:17-19.

17 And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’: The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19 You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust.”

What connections do you see between the consequence of Adam’s sin and our frustration or dissatisfaction in our work?

Leader Note: God’s judgment on Adam was that “the ground is cursed because of you.” God did not curse Adam as He had the serpent (Genesis 3:14), but He did curse the ground that had been created for growing crops to provide for humanity’s dietary needs. The ground itself would turn against human beings in their attempts to grow crops so that the plants needed for food would be difficult to grow. The work Adam was created to do became burdensome, rather than joyful.
What are some specific ways that our culture’s approach to work has strayed from God’s original design?

Based on what we’ve read and discussed today, what should the purpose of your work be, no matter what you do? How does this translate to your specific job?

Why does your job matter for eternity?