

ON THE TABLE

QUESTIONS CONFRONTING
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Why is there suffering? Why does God care about my sex life? Is Jesus the only way to God? God welcomes us with our questions and meets us with His grace and truth. Join us for our new series, *On the Table*, as we unpack eight pressing questions confronting the Christian faith.

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

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!

FREE RESOURCES

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

MAIN POINT

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.

RHYTHM REMINDERS

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.

LEADER NOTES

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.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

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.

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

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.

LOOK OUT IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

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?

LOOK IN APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

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 1: CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PREPARE

Listen and subscribe to the [Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast](#). Each episode includes a quick conversation to help you prepare for your study, discussion, and application. The first week of each series, Eric will share key thoughts and hopes for your group.

If you missed the weekend message or want to review specific points, you can always watch, listen, and find bulletin notes online at marinerschurch.org/messages.

MAIN POINT

The Bible prepares us to live in and enjoy God by telling us His story. God uses the Scripture to teach us who He is, how we are rescued by Him, and how to live.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

What makes for a good story? Who do you know that is a great storyteller and what's a story that you have been captivated by?

Leader Note: Citing sports psychologist Rich Luker, Eric said that we are drawn to being fans because we long to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We strive for a sense of identity and belonging, and we are pulled into the story of the team we root for. The Scripture agrees that we are in search of a story. God created us to long for a story, an overarching view of the world that will help us discover our place and give us meaning in the pain and the mundane. Not only did He create us with the longing for story, but He intentionally and beautifully crafted the story that we need. The Scripture is the telling of His story because He wants you to know Him. The Scripture is 66 books penned over 1500 years by 40 different human authors, and yet it does not tell a bunch of disconnected stories but one overarching story of God Himself creating us, loving us, and bringing us back to Himself through Jesus. This means that the Bible is the supreme and true story that should guide our lives.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

What does Scripture claim about itself in this passage? What do you learn about the role and power of the Scripture?

Leader Note: Eric pointed out that the Scripture prepares us to live in and enjoy the story of God. God uses the Scripture to teach us who He is, how we are rescued by Him, and how to live. The Scripture rebukes and corrects, meaning God is not only saying, “Don’t go that way,” but also saying, “Come this better way.” God is not just a coach rebuking, but also our loving Father correcting. The fact that Scripture claims to be God’s Word for this purpose is something that only it can claim about itself. No final, authoritative source can point to another source to validate its claims of authority, otherwise it would cease to be truly authoritative.

Read Psalm 1:1-6

1 How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! 2 Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

4 The wicked are not like this; instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

What two types of people are contrasted in this psalm? Why are these two people different?

Notice in verse 1 how the person goes from walking to standing to sitting. What does this progression show you about the nature of sin?

During difficult times, what is the result for those who delight in God’s Word?

Leader Note: Psalm 1 presents a stark contrast between those who choose to follow the Word of God and those who choose a different path. The former are described as happy, for they avoid destructive spiritual and moral pitfalls and have full and productive lives. The freedom to choose how you live comes with the reality that your choices have real consequences. The blessed man in this psalm is the one who not only reads, but delights in God's Word. Reading the Bible is necessary and enjoyable for him daily. When we delight in God's Word, our roots will grow deep. We will have dwelt on the promises and character of God revealed in His story day after day so that when the season of difficulty comes, we won't find ourselves swept away by fear and doubt. We will still believe, standing firm in the midst of trouble.

LOOK OUT

IDENTIFY THE
RELEVANCE OF
GOD'S WORD IN
THE WORLD

**What responses to the validity and authority of the Bible might we expect from someone who does not believe in God?
How might insights from Eric's message and today's passage help us have those conversations?**

Where do people turn to instead of Scripture for ultimate authority? How do those sources compare to Scripture?

Leader Note: Eric mentioned that the common narrative today in our generation is that we are the authority in our own story. If we believe that, then we will only believe parts of the Bible that support our plans and our desires. We will fashion a Bible around ourselves instead of Him...a story we breathed, not the story He breathed. Furthermore, we will miss out on His blessing if we are the authority in our own lives. Life is much better and fuller when we gladly place ourselves under the authority of the God-breathed Word.

What would change for you if you didn't believe Scripture was divinely inspired for the purposes we've discussed today?

How does seeing yourself within the biblical story change the way you think about your past? Your future? Your present needs? Your hardships?

How are you planning to be in God's Word this year? Encourage those who do not have a plan already to start with the Mariners Church Annual Read.

LOOK IN

APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE