



# **UNEXPECTED**

## **WORDS OF JESUS**

AND WHAT HE'S SAYING TO YOU

**LIFE GROUP GUIDE FOR MARINERS CHURCH**

# UNEXPECTED WORDS OF JESUS

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Throughout the gospels we see Jesus in unexpected conversations. Unlike today's constant stream of shocking scandals and controversies, Jesus surprised people in the best of ways. The people He spent time with were outside of the religious establishment, and the content of His conversations took everyone by surprise. He has good news for you too...

## 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.

## 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 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.

## 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?

## **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.

## **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.

## **STORIES & CELEBRATION**

A few questions will provide opportunities to follow up on comments, commitments, or applications from previous group discussions. This time is also intended to provide space for sharing stories of how God is at work in people's lives, what the Spirit is showing them, and things they learned or that were timely in the weekend message or Annual Read.

## **PRAYER**

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.

## **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 when even the disciples didn't get what Jesus was talking about!

## **FREE RESOURCES**

The following list is updated for each series to help you and members of your group understand

and respond to the biblical truth we're studying as a church. Don't forget about the Mariners Annual Read and the **Gospel Every Day Podcast** discussing each devotional.

- Mariners Worship: **Mariners Current Series Playlist** (Spotify Playlist)
- The Bible Project: **How to Read Biblical Narrative-The Gospel** (Video, 6 min.)
- The Bible Project: **Book Overviews-New Testament** (Videos, 8 min. each)
- Scott Sauls: **The Essence of Jesus** (Blog Post)
- ESV **Global Study Bible** (Biblical Commentary)

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 from the CSB unless otherwise noted.

# WEEK 1: ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Group Discussion Guide for: Unexpected Words of Jesus...and What He's Saying to You

### MARK 10:17-22

#### MAIN POINT

Jesus surprises His original audience and our modern culture by revealing that no amount of good works, even religious rule keeping, can achieve eternal life. Is anything worth more than a relationship with Jesus?



**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members of the spiritual rhythm of Repentance. Watch for this icon near the end of the lesson.

#### Repentance

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What is the hardest you've ever worked on something?
- Why were you motivated to work so hard? Was it worth the effort?

**Leader note:** Be prepared to share your own quick example or story.

- In this first conversation with Jesus, we'll meet a young man who was surprised to find out that all of his accomplishments, even following strict religious rules, couldn't earn God's approval. He faced the same decision we all do...what matters most?

#### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read Mark 10:17-22. Choose someone to read the passage out loud.

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone.

19 You know the commandments: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother.",

20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth."

21 Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you

have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”  
22 But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

- In this passage, how is God described in this passage? How does Jesus’ initial question in verse 18 frame your understanding of this whole story?

**Leader Note:** Help your group articulate the importance of identifying what is ultimately “good” in life. By comparison, nothing should even be in the same category as God when it comes to our priorities and values. Jesus is honing in on the rich young man’s motive and the deeper desire of his heart, hidden just below the surface of his greeting and question in verse 17. This becomes obvious in the following verses.

- Though Jesus never denies His own goodness nor equality with God, why is His example of humility extra important here?

**Leader Note:** Allow group members to wrestle with this question and the answer’s implication. After allowing some time to think through the dynamic, clarify the unexpected kindness that Jesus is showing. He isn’t dismissive of the man, nor is He setting him up for humiliation. By pointing out that “no one is good except God alone,” Jesus humbly provides an opportunity for the rich young ruler to acknowledge that he is not perfect. Instead, the man claims he has “kept all these [commands] since my youth.”

- How would you summarize the commandments Jesus quoted? Do they sound familiar? If so, what commandments are not mentioned? How would you summarize those? What might it be significant that these are mentioned and others are not?

**Leader Note:** These verses recall commandments 5-10 of the Ten Commandments given to the Israelites through Moses in Exodus 20:1-17. Commandments 1-4 deal with our relationship with God; 5-10 address human relationships. It’s possible that the rich young ruler was so focused on measuring his achievements according to human standards that he was oblivious to his lack of value for God. In a conversation with another man, Jesus provided the following summary:

He said to him, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.” (Matthew 22:37-40)

- Though not explicit in the text, what does the story imply to be the ultimate outcome of this conversation? What words are used to describe the man’s response? What words are used to describe Jesus’ response?

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus “loved him” and invited the man to follow Him? Is this story encouraging or discouraging to you? Why?
- In what ways do you try to achieve being “good” enough?

**Leader Note:** Consider ways that different people in the group may struggle most with trying to earn (“inherit”) their value from:

God

Others

Self

- What do you need to let go of in order to follow Jesus? Is there anything specific in your life that risks breaking the first commandment: “Do not have other gods besides me.” (Exodus 20:3)?



### Repentance

**Leader Note:** Remember, it’s not just so-called “bad” sins that separate us from God, even “good” things like moral rule keeping can become strongholds that prevent us from following Jesus. Model humility for your group by sharing areas that “grieve” you—areas that you value equal to or above the Lord. Create a safe space for confession, repentance, and invite people into freedom from strongholds in their lives. If meeting in a co-ed group, it may be best to get into smaller groups of the same gender for a place of honest repentance.

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

**Leader Note:** Allude to the previous series of wisdom from Proverbs. Emphasize the foolishness of choosing to hang onto earthly possessions and achievements when offered eternal life with Christ. Remind group members of Jesus’ humble love and invitation, even though we’ve all chosen our own ways.

- Reread verse 17-20. How does the world try to define the “good” life on their own terms? What achievements are most valued?
- Reread verses 21-22. Do you know anyone who is trying to earn their worth before God, others, or even, themselves? How might you humbly invite them to see the infinitely greater worth of following Jesus?

**Leader Note:** Remind everyone that we've all been in the rich young ruler's shoes and in many ways we are tempted to step back into them. Encourage them to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world.

- Does anyone have anything else that really stuck with them from the message on this text? Why do you think that stood out to you? What might God want you to do with it?
- Close each time together as a group with prayer and the following reminders:
  - » New prayer requests
  - » Prayer
  - » Any questions or comments related to what the Spirit is revealing to them through their time in Scripture using the Annual Read.
  - » Remind people about the **Mariners Annual Read: Gospel Every Day Podcast**.
  - » Worship by playing or sharing this week's song from the curated Spotify playlist: **"Refiner" by Maverick City**.

**Leader Note:** Mariners Current Series Playlist on Spotify is another new way to inspire you to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world. The **Mariners Worship** team has selected a song for each week in order to engage our hearts with a key truth from the message and group discussion. If your group would like, feel free to play the song during your prayer time, and sing along or silently reflect as the words are sung over you. Additionally, it's a great (and free) way to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus throughout the week.



# WEEK 2: ABOUT YOUR PAST

## Group Discussion Guide for: Unexpected Words of Jesus...and What He's Saying to You

### JOHN 4

#### MAIN POINT

- The longest recorded conversation of Jesus in the Bible was scandalous in His cultural context. Even more shocking is the beautiful offer to someone ashamed of their past.



**Share Your Story**

**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members of the spiritual rhythm of Telling Your Story. Watch for this icon near the end of the lesson.

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What is the furthest you've ever gone out of your way to get or to avoid something? What did you do and why?

**Leader note:** Be prepared to share a quick story of your own. Examples can be funny, serious, inspirational, embarrassing, or even extreme but mundane (like driving to another county to save \$0.02 per gallon on gas).

- In today's story from Scripture, we'll see multiple examples of people going out of their way to avoid interacting with certain people. Even more importantly, we'll overhear the unexpected words of Jesus about God's desire for us—no matter who we are, where we've been, or what we've done.

#### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read John 4:1-30. Choose someone to read the entire passage out loud. You may also want to choose three people to read aloud ten verses each: 1-10, 11-20, & 21-30.

1 When Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard he was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were), 3 he left Judea and went again to Galilee. 4 He had to travel through Samaria; 5 so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph.

6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

"Give me a drink," Jesus said to her, 8 because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

9 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

11 "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?" 12 You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

13 Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. 14 But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well, of water springing up in him for eternal life."

15 "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

16 "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here."

17 "I don't have a husband," she answered.

"You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,' " Jesus said. 18 "For you've had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

19 "Sir," the woman replied, "I see that you are a prophet. 20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

21 Jesus told her, "Believe me, woman, an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know, because salvation is from the Jews. 23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth."

25 The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Jesus told her, “I, the one speaking to you, am he.”

27 Just then his disciples arrived, and they were amazed that he was talking with a woman. Yet no one said, “What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

28 Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people, 29 “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” 30 They left the town and made their way to him.

- In this conversation, how does Jesus describe God? What do these word pictures tell us about God’s nature?

**Leader Note:** Jesus describes God as the giver of a gift (verse 10), the giver of living water (verse 10), Father (verse 21), knowable and provider of salvation (verse 22), wanting true worship (verse 23), and spirit (verse 24). Jesus also refers to himself interchangeably with the Father as the giver of eternal life (verse 14).

- Why might it be significant that Jesus refers to God as “Father” after the woman raises a debate between Jewish and Samaritan ancestors?

**Leader Note:** Jesus accomplishes at least two things with His reply:

He avoids being distracted by “religious” debates to focus on a personal relationship with God the Father. Jews and Samaritans held a long and bitter rivalry. Samaritans were considered an unclean ethnic group of mixed descent from Israel’s captivity by the Assyrians. (Most people are familiar with the shocking story of “The Good Samaritan” from Luke 10:25-37.)

He focuses on a commonality in God that transcends culture, tradition, ethnicity, families of origin, geography, etc. While those things are an important part of who we are, our ultimate identity is found in relation to God. Every family on Earth traces its lineage back to Him as Creator, and in Christ, He unites us as one family again. (See Genesis 3:20, Ephesians 3:14-21)

- What was the first thing about Jesus’ words to this woman that was unexpected? (verses 1-10)
- What was even more unexpected in the second part of their conversation? (verses 11-20)
- What was the most unexpected thing Jesus said to her in the final part of this conversation? (verses 21-30)

**Leader Note:** Help group members recognize the increasingly unexpected levels of depth to the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well.

In verse 9, she is blunt about the fact that Jews and Samaritans did not associate with one another. She did not expect Jesus to speak to her. In fact, she probably did not expect to speak to anyone at all. The woman came alone at noon, the hottest time of day. Women typically traveled together for safety and companionship; they would carry the heavy water jugs for their households in the cooler mornings and evenings. This woman was going out of her way to be left alone as someone whose past and reputation would be viewed as shameful or even cursed. Jews typically traveled out of their way to avoid Samaria, opting for a route going around the area on the other side of the Jordan River. Verse 4 emphasizes Jesus' intentionality—"He had to travel through Samaria." This was not necessary from a practical and geographical perspective, rather it was part of God's missional plan of redemption for all people.

In verses 16-20, Jesus reveals His unexpected knowledge of her personal life—both past and present. He does so in a way that does not shame her but invites her into a better relationship with God, her Father. She recognizes the divine nature of this revelation but turns the attention away from her personal life and onto a religious debate, mistaking Jesus for a mere Jewish prophet.

Finally, in verse 29, the woman has left her water jug and rushed to tell others (the very people she was avoiding) that the Messiah has unexpectedly arrived, knows everything about her, yet has chosen to engage with her and their town.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- What thoughts or emotions are stirred up in you through this story? What is Jesus saying to you right now?

**Leader note:** It may be helpful to point out a subtle-yet-meaningful parallel to Jesus' interaction with this woman at "Jacob's well" (see verses 5-6,12). Jacob and Jacob's father, Isaac (the covenant son of Abraham), had both found their wives at a well when they came to draw water (see Genesis 24 and 29). The servant of Isaac knew that God had revealed the bride when she responded to his request for a drink.

Jacob met his wife, Rachel, the mother of Joseph (the betrayed son who saved Israel) during the noontime at a well. In extravagant love, Jacob removed a heavy stone by himself to give her water. Just before this conversation at Jacob's well, in the land given to Joseph, John the

Baptist described Jesus as the “groom” who is seeking His “bride” (see John 3:29).

Nothing could have been more unexpected to readers and hearers of this Gospel than for Jesus to immediately go through Samaria, meet a woman rejected by multiple husbands, ask her for a drink, and reveal the true nature of the Church—the Bride of Christ (see Ephesians 5:31-32 and Revelation 19:6-8). What a beautiful and emotional scene!

- Read John 4:39-42. Who did God use to first share the good news about Jesus with you? When did you start believing for yourself that Jesus was the Savior and giver of eternal life?
- What does it look like in your life to worship the Father in Spirit and truth? How is this type of relationship with the Father different from cultural religion?



**Share Your  
Story**

**Leader Note:** Allow time for people to share their stories of meeting and following Jesus. Help people consider the distinctions between going through the motions of cultural religion in contrast to worshiping the Father in Spirit and truth. Emphasize the personal, totally honest, and liberating nature of a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ.

## **LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S WORD IN THE WORLD**

- Who are the people that we go out of our way to avoid? In what ways might we act like they aren’t worthy of God’s salvation because of who they are or what they’ve done? How do we label or judge certain people?
- How can we extend the grace and love of Jesus to others around us, helping them find new beginnings?
- Does anyone have anything else that really stuck with them from the message on this text? Why do you think that stood out to you? What might God want you to do with it?
- Close each time together as a group with prayer and the following reminders:
  - » Updates on previous weeks’ prayer requests
  - » New prayer requests
  - » Prayer
  - » If people are using the desktop calendars, remind them about the first “Goal Check

Up” page between February and March. Encourage them to consider their closest relationships and whether they are mutually beneficial for growing in Christ-like love.

- » Any questions or comments related to what the Spirit is revealing to them through their time in Scripture using the Annual Read.
- » Remind people about the **Mariners Annual Read: Gospel Every Day Podcast**.
- » Worship by playing or sharing this week’s song from the curated Spotify playlist: **“Come Back Home” by Lauren Daigle**.

**Leader Note:** Mariners Current Series Playlist on Spotify is a new way to inspire you to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world. The **Mariners Worship** team has selected a song for each week in order to engage our hearts with a key truth from the message and group discussion. If your group would like, feel free to play the song during your prayer time, and sing along or silently reflect as the words are sung over you. Additionally, it’s a great (and free) way to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus throughout the week.



## WEEK 3:

Dear Life Group Leaders,

This is the print equivalent of a “page not found” message online...except that it’s intentional, not an error! There’s no need to refresh your screen.

We transitioned into the new year with a message from the Book of James that included this promise: “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5)

While preparing this material for each of you, our leadership has been asking God for increased wisdom. As a result, this third week is being carefully considered as we sense the Spirit’s movement.

Please join us in praying for Eric and our pastors as they seek to discern what the Lord wants to say to Mariners Church in this season. We apologize for any inconvenience this lesson not being here may cause, but thank you for your part in leading our church through Life Groups.

We are truly grateful for your partnership, and thank you again for your flexibility and prayers. We believe that God has something special for us, and we want to make ourselves available however and whenever He moves.

The guide for Week 3 will be sent to you as soon as it’s available.

# WEEK 4: ABOUT YOUR PRAYERS

## Group Discussion Guide for: Unexpected Words of Jesus...and What He's Saying to You

### MARK 7:24-30

#### MAIN POINT

- God is not bothered by our prayers. Jesus reminds us that persistent prayer touches the heart of our heavenly Father.



Prayer

**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members of the spiritual rhythm of Prayer. Watch for this icon near the end of the lesson.

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- In the 1990s, Garth Brooks took country music mainstream as one of America's most popular performers. What do you think he meant by the title line from one of his earliest hits, "Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers."
- When have you been glad that God didn't give you what you wanted in the past?
- On the other hand, when have you been glad that God clearly answered a prayer?
- What is the most recent example of God answering a prayer?
- Today, we'll witness more unexpected words from Jesus—this time revealing a surprising truth about prayer.

#### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read Mark 7:24-30. Choose someone to read the passage out loud.

24 He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but he could not escape notice. 25 Instead, immediately after hearing about him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at his feet. 26 The woman was a Gentile,, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she was asking him



to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, because it isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

28 But she replied to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

29 Then he told her, “Because of this reply, you may go. The demon has left your daughter.” 30 When she went back to her home, she found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

- Before the conversation with Jesus, three proper nouns are mentioned (verses 24, 26). What is highlighted by these capitalized names for a place and a person?

**Leader Note:** The verses mention “Tyre” (verse 24), “Gentile,” and “Syrophoenician” (verse 26). Jesus is once again in a Gentile (non-Jewish) setting interacting with someone outside of the ethnic, cultural, and religious expectations of Israelites. This norm is further emphasized by the fact that a woman would have less social standing than a man, she interrupts Jesus without an invitation, and her family is tormented by a demon. The inclusion of these facts all makes a clear contrast between the holy Son of God and a woman perceived to be “unclean.”

- Verse 24 mentions that Jesus left somewhere else to come to this place, not wanting to be noticed. Ask someone to read verses 1-8 out loud. How does this background story help make sense of Jesus’ coming to this Gentile area and hoping not to be noticed?

**Leader Note:** Jewish religious leaders had been harassing Jesus and His disciples while they were trying to eat. Jesus is looking for time alone with His disciples. We can assume part of this desire is relational and a desire for rest under constant pressure. We know that Jesus often instructed His disciples in private, answering questions and providing clarity to what He had said publicly—this is exactly what Jesus had done in verses 17-23. (You may want to ask someone to read verses 17-23 aloud for more context to the passage.)

- How do the unexpected words of Jesus about the heart and what is clean or unclean help make sense of this conversation with a Gentile woman seeking His help?
- How does the woman break tradition and honor God, in contrast to the Pharisees who held onto human tradition and abandoned God’s commands?
- While the expression Jesus uses may be confusing to us today, from what you know of Jesus’ character and from the Gentile woman’s response, how can you assume that He isn’t insulting her in frustration?

- What does her unexpected response to Jesus reveal? What does His final response to her reveal?

**Leader Note:** Some scholars suggest that by contrasting “children” and “dogs”, Jesus is using a common expression and derogatory term that the woman would recognize as a way to test her faith—a question asking why she should be able to expect anything from Him. Others interpret Jesus’ statement as a less offensive word picture. The Greek word being understood as “little dog” as in a puppy or pet, not a “mangy mutt” scavenger dog.

Either way, the mother impresses Jesus with her response that even the tiniest blessing, even indirectly without stopping what He’s currently doing with the disciples, would be more than enough to meet her humble need. Jesus reveals that her child has already been healed. The prayer of her heart had already been answered.

On a larger scale, we know that God’s plan for the salvation of all nations was through Israel first. This was not only true in the Old Testament but also seen in the life and ministry of Jesus and then Paul—first going to synagogues, teaching from Scripture, and then to Gentiles or anyone who would listen with sincere hearts.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD’S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- What was revealed to be in the mother’s heart through her words and actions toward Jesus? How does her example encourage or convict you?
- Using Jesus’ explanation of clean and unclean (verses 17-23), are you more like the Pharisees or the mother?
- Honestly, right now, what is the desire of your heart? What would you pray if you believed He would hear and would answer?



Prayer

**Leader Note:** Allow for an extended time of prayer for one another. Praise God for His love for all people. Ask for sincere hearts overflowing with faith. Pray for specific needs and for each other by name. If you’d like, include a time of prayerful reflection using this week’s song from the Mariners Worship playlist: **“No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus” by Steffany Gretzinger.**

## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Read Luke 11:5-13. Using absurd examples to make His point, what is Jesus saying about prayer?

- How can we be persistent in prayer on behalf of our families, neighbors, communities, and world? What needs can we bring before our Father?
- Does anyone have anything else that really stuck with them from the message on this text? Why do you think that stood out to you? What might God want you to do with it?
- Close each time together as a group with prayer and the following reminders:
  - » Updates on previous weeks' prayer requests
  - » New prayer requests
  - » Prayer
  - » Any questions or comments related to what the Spirit is revealing to them through their time in Scripture using the Annual Read.
  - » Remind people about the **Mariners Annual Read: Gospel Every Day Podcast**.
  - » Worship by playing or sharing this week's song from the curated Spotify playlist: **"No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus" by Steffany Gretzinger**.

**Leader Note:** Mariners Current Series Playlist on Spotify is another way to inspire you to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world. The **Mariners Worship** team has selected a song for each week in order to engage our hearts with a key truth from the message and group discussion. If your group would like, feel free to play the song during your prayer time, and sing along or silently reflect as the words are sung over you. Additionally, it's a great (and free) way to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus throughout the week.

# WEEK 5: ABOUT A GOD WHO SERVES YOU

## Group Discussion Guide for: Unexpected Words of Jesus...and What He's Saying to You

### JOHN 13:1-20

#### MAIN POINT

- Greatness in the Kingdom of God is revealed in a totally unexpected way. After we are served by our King, we are commanded to serve others.



**Serve the  
Community**

**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members of the spiritual rhythm of Serving the Community. Watch for this icon near the end of the lesson.

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- For the past 20 years, Mike Rowe has been the voice for the value of hard work through hit shows like *Dirty Jobs* and *Deadliest Catch*. Recently his Facebook Watch series *Returning the Favor* and *Somebody's Gotta Do It* on TBN continues this idea of recognizing unsung heroes of daily life.
- What's the "worst" job you've ever had? Did it give you a new appreciation for anything? How would the world be different if this job didn't exist?

**Leader Note:** The job could be physically, mentally, or psychologically demanding. It could be messy, uncomfortable, or thankless. Examples could be humorous or serious. Be prepared with your own answer to get discussion started if nobody else chimes in.

- Think about a normal day and all of the things you enjoy. Pause to think about the fact that there are people working to design, create, sell, ship, install, serve, etc. everything you use. What simple thing do you appreciate but rarely consider what and who is "behind the scenes" making it possible for you to enjoy it?
- Today's Scripture focuses not only on Jesus' unexpected words, but also on His unexpected actions as He voluntarily does one of His culture's dirtiest jobs.

## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read John 13:1-20. Choose two people to read the passage out loud (verses 1-11 and 12-20).

1 Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

2 Now when it was time for supper, the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, Simon Iscariot's son, to betray him. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his hands, that he had come from God, and that he was going back to God. 4 So he got up from supper, laid aside his outer clothing, took a towel, and tied it around himself. 5 Next, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel tied around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who asked him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."

8 "You will never wash my feet," Peter said.

Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

9 Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."

10 "One who has bathed," Jesus told him, "doesn't need to wash anything except his feet, but he is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you." 11 For he knew who would betray him. This is why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer clothing, he reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you.

16 "Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master,, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

18 "I'm not speaking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: The one who eats my bread has raised his heel against me. 19 I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am he. 20 Truly I tell you, whoever receives anyone I send receives me, and the one who receives me receives him who sent me."

- Think about the culture 2,000 years ago. Why would Jesus washing everyone's feet be so unexpected?

**Leader Note:** Even if washing feet might be awkwardly personal today, it was a common task 2,000 years ago. Typically, it was performed by a servant or the lowest member of a household—certainly not a guest of honor or holy person. Footwear, when worn, would be sandals. Dusty, muddy, and rocky paths, sandy deserts, grassy fields, and animals everywhere for food, work, and transport resulted in seriously messy and calloused feet. This was one of the worst jobs of daily life at that time in history.

Remind group members of last week's discussion on prayer and Jesus' unexpected words for the Pharisees who obsessed over ritual washing and being ceremonially "clean" while neglecting the true heart of God's commands. Remind them also of the first week's unexpected words of Jesus summarizing the commands in two major categories of loving God and loving others as ourselves. It's possible that the disciples were aware of their need to wash their feet and even wanted to be clean, but felt the task was beneath their status as Jesus' companions and that they should be served by their host.

- What can be learned from Jesus' example after the explicit mention of the awareness of Judas' betrayal in verses 2 and 11?

**Leader Note:** Help people feel the depth of Jesus' humility in serving everyone, even the one He knew would betray Him later that same night. (See Matthew 5:43-48 for Jesus' teaching on loving your enemies from whom we'll receive no benefit in return.)

- Reread verses 14-15. What does Jesus reveal about the true nature of discipleship and following Christ?

**Leader Note:** Emphasize the imitation of character and conduct, not just memorization and recitation of teaching. The Christian life is not simply a matter of knowing good doctrine, as important as right theology is, that right belief (orthodoxy) should lead to right practice (orthopraxy). Even the name "Christian" is first used as a derogatory term meaning "little Christs," meaning that the watching world saw men and women living out the example of Jesus in daily life, not merely believing something about Him in their minds.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- Reread verses 16-20. How is this theme of Jesus being sent by the Father and His disciples being sent out by Him apply to our lives today?

**Leader Note:** Help people recognize the simple yet profound fact that each of them has received and believed in the gospel because someone shared it with someone who shared it with someone who shared it with someone... tracing back 2,000 years to the unexpected words of Jesus in this room. Now we are expected to continue following this example of serving others so that they too can be in right relationship with Christ.

- Read verse 35. How did Jesus say the world would recognize His disciples? How would the world define “Christians” today? Would someone be able to look at your life and know that you are a follower of Jesus? If so, what would they say makes it obvious?
- What thoughts or emotions are stirred up in you through this story? What is Jesus saying to you right now?
- In what ways do you take for granted the work Jesus has done for you? In what ways has He blessed you? How has He handled even the dirtiest parts of your life that you’d be embarrassed for anyone else to see?
- How have you experienced the love and joy of Christ through serving others?
- How can we serve one another as a church?
- How can we serve others in our community and beyond?



**Serve the  
Community**

**Leader Note:** If you’d like to explore current opportunities for serving one another within the church, you can visit our [SERVE](#) page. For opportunities to serve others in our communities and beyond, visit our [OUTREACH](#) page.

## **LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S WORD IN THE WORLD**

- Read Philippians 1:3-11. How would our days look differently if we had the attitude of Christ?
- What problems would go away if we considered others as more important than ourselves and looked out for the interests of others?

**Leader Note:** Wrap up with a summary statement, pointing back to the “Main Point.” Remind group members that serving others is not something extra or optional for the Christian life—it is central to following Jesus’ example.

- Does anyone have anything else that really stuck with them from the message on this text? Why do you think that stood out to you? What might God want you to do with it?
- Close each time together as a group with prayer and the following reminders:
  - » Updates on previous weeks' prayer requests
  - » New prayer requests
  - » Prayer
- Any questions or comments related to what the Spirit is revealing to them through their time in Scripture using the Annual Read.
- Remind people about the **Mariners Annual Read: Gospel Every Day Podcast**.
- Worship by playing or sharing this week's song from the curated Spotify playlist: **"Comforter" by Laity**.

**Leader Note:** Mariners Current Series Playlist on Spotify is another way to inspire you to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world. The **Mariners Worship** team has selected a song for each week in order to engage our hearts with a key truth from the message and group discussion. If your group would like, feel free to play the song during your prayer time, and sing along or silently reflect as the words are sung over you. Additionally, it's a great (and free) way to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus throughout the week.



# WEEK 6: ABOUT YOUR DOUBTS

## Group Discussion Guide for: Unexpected Words of Jesus...and What He's Saying to You

### JOHN 20:24-31

#### MAIN POINT

- Jesus welcomes your questions—the Resurrection is hard to believe, but without it, faith is meaningless.

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- When have you missed out on something amazing that others experienced?
- What emotions did you experience as you heard the story of something totally unexpected and incredible? Did you immediately believe them? Were you happy for their experience, jealous, skeptical, or even angry and feeling left out?
- Today's Scripture highlights what is among the most incredible experiences in history—the unexpected words of Jesus to one of His closest companions who had missed out on something life changing.
- Watch the following **video clip** (4 mins) exploring an artistic composition and the biblical account of today's unexpected words of Jesus. A world-famous painting serves as the **subject**, Caravaggio's 1602 masterpiece, **The Incredulity of Saint Thomas**.

#### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read John 20:24-31. Choose someone to read the passage out loud.

24 But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."

26 A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless, but believe.”

28 Thomas responded to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- Thomas got stuck with an unfortunate nickname that has become a common expression. What is the nickname, and what has the expression come to mean?

**Leader Note:** A “Doubting Thomas” is someone who refuses to believe something, even if others insist that it’s true; they want to be convinced through personal and rational experience. While the nickname has a clear origin, we’ll also see that it’s unfortunate to forever identify Thomas by his doubt.

- What does John, the author of this Gospel, say at the end of this passage is the purpose of everything he wrote down? How is that purpose perfectly illustrated in unexpected words of Jesus to Thomas?

**Leader Note:** As the last of the four Gospels to be written, John had an evangelistic intent with the selection and arrangement of some stories not found in the other three Gospels (often referred to as the “Synoptic” Gospels due to their similarities presenting a unified summary—synopsis—of Jesus’ life and ministry). Thomas exemplifies a natural human response to such unbelievable news as the resurrection of someone publicly executed by governing officials at the prodding of religious leaders. He also exhibits natural grief, mourning the loss of someone to whom he had devoted three years of his life—Jesus’ crucifixion was tragic in every way imaginable. Thomas was not allowing seemingly unrealistic hopes to be raised. He may have been more withdrawn from the group than other disciples, processing the tragic disappointment by himself, therefore missing Christ’s first appearances to other disciples.

- Why is the first word spoken by Jesus to His disciples significant? How does Jesus’ word, “peace,” address and contrast the mood and circumstances?

**Leader Note:** “Peace” or *Shalom* in Hebrew was a customary greeting and farewell among Jewish and even other Semitic cultures. It’s an important theme throughout Scripture. In

Jesus' appearances to His disciples in verses 19, 21, and 26, He has also suddenly appeared physically in a locked room where His disciples are grieving His death and hiding in fear of the people who just had Jesus executed. His physical presence and spoken word brought unexpected peace into every degree of pain, confusion, fear, and even doubt they were experiencing.

- Why is it significant that Jesus immediately addresses Thomas after greeting everyone with His peace? What does He say to Thomas? What does this reveal about Jesus?

**Leader Note:** Jesus immediately addresses Thomas' doubt. Thomas never verbalizes his doubt to Jesus. Jesus simply presents Himself to Thomas in a way that was abundantly clear to the reality of His resurrection. Interestingly, despite the portrayal in Caravaggio's painting, the text does not indicate whether or not Thomas actually touched Jesus. Whether or not he did is not the point. The point is that in God's amazing grace, Jesus met Thomas in the midst of his questions and concerns.

- Compare verses 19-20 (when Thomas was absent) to verses 26-27 (when Thomas was present). What similarities do you see? Reread verse 25. Has anything changed about the way you hear Thomas' doubt?

**Leader Note:** Perhaps most people have never noticed that Thomas did not ask for any special revelation of Jesus that was any different from what every other disciple experienced. Everyone but Thomas had met Jesus in a locked room where He appeared, greeting them with peace, and immediately showing His wounds as proof of both His death and His resurrected life.

This is not to say that Thomas did not doubt, simply that we often judge quickly and miss details. It's easy to be critical of or even to condemn Thomas (and those like him) in our minds. It's also easy to read Scripture too quickly with the assumption that we know what it says. Consequently, we miss out on our own questions and the wonderfully personal nature of Jesus' revelation.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- Re read Thomas' response to Jesus in verse 28. What do you notice now? What moves you?

**Leader Note:** Even though Thomas gets remembered for "doubting," He also makes what may be the boldest and most explicit declaration of Jesus' divinity in the Gospels. The Synoptic Gospels include Peter's earlier declaration of Jesus as the Messiah or Son of God (Matthew 16:13-20, Mark 8:27-30, Luke 9:18-21). In Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39, a Roman centurion exclaims "Truly this man was the Son of God!" after the Earth quakes with Jesus'

death on the cross. Here in John's account, Thomas is the only one to ever identify Jesus as being equal to God—and he adds personal and relational emphasis, “my Lord and my God!”

This is the climactic scene of John's Gospel, breaking back into the story as the narrator to plainly state the purpose in verse 31: “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Thomas embodies the reality that John opened the book with “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

- What thoughts or emotions are stirred up in you through this story? What is Jesus saying to you right now?
- How would you express your questions or doubts about faith and life, seeing Jesus' interaction with Thomas? What would you want to ask or say?
- How would you express your personal worship of Jesus as your Lord and your God? What would you want to say? What characteristics of Him would overflow from your heart when you reached a tipping point of His overwhelming goodness?

**Leader Note:** Provide a safe environment for people to express questions and doubts as well as worship and praise.

For expressing doubts, consider providing a piece of paper if meeting in person or encouraging people to write down questions they'd like to humbly take to Jesus. Emphasize the gracious and gentle nature of Jesus even when stating that most people will be blessed in their belief without ever having the physical encounter that Thomas and the other disciples had. We are all recipients and benefactors of their faithfulness to spread the good news.

For expressing praise, consider writing things down again. Encourage group members to acknowledge the beautiful tension of being able to have questions but also trust and worship Jesus. Encourage them to keep seeking, asking, and knocking as Jesus said before about prayer (Week 4, Luke 11:5-13). You may also want to take a few minutes to worship together using this week's song from the current series Spotify playlist: **“Made A Way” by Travis Greene.**

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

- With Jesus' final words to Thomas in mind, who needs to be blessed with the peace of Jesus through belief in Him? Does anybody have any updates regarding people or circumstances mentioned in previous weeks?

- Tradition holds that Thomas spread his faith far beyond Jerusalem, taking the gospel to India, further away than any other Apostle. How might the world be changed if we followed Jesus fearlessly anywhere for His glory? Are there any steps of faith you feel led to take now? How can we help you?
- Does anyone have anything else that really stuck with them from the message on this text? Why do you think that stood out to you? What might God want you to do with it?
- Close each time together as a group with prayer and the following reminders:
  - » Updates on previous weeks' prayer requests
  - » New prayer requests
  - » Prayer
  - » Any questions or comments related to what the Spirit is revealing to them through their time in Scripture using the Annual Read.
  - » Remind people about the **Mariners Annual Read: Gospel Every Day Podcast**.
  - » Worship by playing or sharing this week's song from the curated Spotify playlist: **"Made A Way" by Travis Greene**.

**Leader Note:** Mariners Current Series Playlist on Spotify is another way to inspire you to follow Jesus and fearlessly change the world. The **Mariners Worship** team has selected a song for each week in order to engage our hearts with a key truth from the message and group discussion. If your group would like, feel free to play the song during your prayer time, and sing along or silently reflect as the words are sung over you. Additionally, it's a great (and free) way to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus throughout the week.

