

GOD

WITH US





GOD WITH US

More than 2,000 years ago, Jesus came into the world He created so we could be with Him forever. Join us for our Christmas series, *God With Us*, as we see how Jesus is *before* us, is *for* us, lives *within* those who trust in Him, and is always *with* us.

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 on 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!

SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

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: GOD IS BEFORE US

Group Discussion Guide

PREPARE

Listen to the [Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast](#).

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

Jesus was not created at Christmas. He has always been. He was there at creation before all. He entered our world at Christmas and took on human flesh—full of grace and truth. But He has always been *before* us.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

Describe your Christmas décor style. All in or just a touch?

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, 13 who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'") 16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

What does this passage tell us about Jesus?

What do we learn about why the Word became flesh?

1 John 1:10-11 says that the world was created through Jesus, and Jesus was in the world, but the world didn't recognize Him and didn't receive Him.

How do you see this in your world today?

Why do you think people don't recognize/receive Him?

What is one phrase from John 1:1-18 that the Holy Spirit is emphasizing for you today?

What does it mean to you in this season of your life that God, who was before us all, also goes before you into every challenging moment you encounter?

What are some ways you might acknowledge and receive Jesus, the true Light, this week?

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

LOOK IN
APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

WEEK 2: GOD IS FOR US

Group Discussion Guide

PREPARE

Listen to the [Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast](#).

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MAIN POINT

Christmas reminds us that God is *for* us, not against us. God the Father gave up God the Son to ensure He would never have to give us up. Because of Christmas, we will never be separated from His love.

RHYTHM REMINDER



Generosity, Repentance

LEAN IN

BREAK
THE ICE

Share about a time when you felt that you had to fend for yourself. What did that feel like?

OR

Share about a time when someone stepped in to protect or defend you. What did that feel like?

LOOK DOWN

LOOK AT
GOD'S WORD

Read Romans 8:31-39

31 What, then, are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He did not even spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. How will he not also with him grant us everything? 33 Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. 35 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written:

Because of you, we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered.

37 No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What does this passage tell us about God and His rule?

What do we learn about our reality with a God who is for us?

What are some events or circumstances at play in the world and in the lives of people you love that feel threatening?

What “created things” have you seen people look to for security?

Imagine if the world lived as if it were true that God, the Creator of all created things, is for us. What would change?

In what circumstances in your own life do you need to be reminded of the truth that God is for you?

**What “created things” have you looked to for security?
What might God be calling you away from through repentance?**

What is one rhythm God might be inviting you to engage with in this season to help you put your full weight on God, who is for you?

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

LOOK IN
APPLY GOD’S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

WEEK 3: GOD IS WITHIN US

Group Discussion Guide

PREPARE

Listen to the [Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast](#).

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MAIN POINT

At Christmas, we remember that Jesus stepped into our world, but that is not the end of the story. Jesus has also stepped into the lives of those who trust Him. The Spirit of Jesus is *within* us.

RHYTHM REMINDER



Share Your Story

LEAN IN

BREAK
THE ICE

Share about a time when your expectations were different from reality.

LOOK DOWN

LOOK AT
GOD'S WORD

Read Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. 5 This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

How does this passage describe the relationship between suffering and hope?

What roles do we see God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit playing in this passage? And what do we, through faith, get to enjoy as a result of their work?

LOOK OUT

IDENTIFY THE
RELEVANCE OF
GOD'S WORD IN
THE WORLD

If God is within us, how should the Church look different from the world in the way we walk through afflictions?

Name two people in your world who need the hope that “will not disappoint,” emphasized in Romans 5:5.

LOOK IN

APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

Where in your life do you see the chain reaction of affliction producing endurance, endurance producing character, and character producing hope?

What affliction is God, who is within you, inviting you to boast in because of the hope it has or will produce?

Consider sharing your story of hope with the people you named above.