

ON THE TABLE



BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT
LIFE, FAITH, AND GOD.



GUIDES TO GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A loving God—yet conquests and genocides in the Bible? What happens 60 seconds after you die? When should Christians disobey the government? What about those crazy spiritual gifts? Borders and immigration: Why do some Christians have different views? God welcomes us with our questions and meets us with His grace and truth. Join us for our series, *On the Table*, as we unpack new pressing questions about life, faith, and God.

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 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!

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**

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: A LOVING GOD—YET CONQUESTS AND GENOCIDES IN THE BIBLE?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PREPARE

Listen and subscribe 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

When the world saw the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda and the evil atrocities of the Nazi regime, some thought, “Where was God?” Only evil people thought, “God is for this.” When we open our Bibles, there are some passages that sound similar on the surface, passages that cause many people to struggle with what kind of God is this that Christians worship? Passages where God’s people are told to completely destroy others is a reason many unbelievers give as why they cannot believe in God. What if a closer look at these passages, the ones some Christians ignore, actually shows us how much God loves, His patience and mercy, and how much He delights in rescuing the powerless?

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

When you think back over your life, is there a major world event that has profoundly shaped you, and why do you think it left such an impact?

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-2

When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and he drives out many nations before you—the Hethites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you—and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you and you defeat them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy.

What words or phrases in these verses strike you as intense or confusing? Why do they stand out? If someone were reading this passage without context, what questions do you think they would naturally have?

When speaking to Israel and instructing them on how to enter the Promised Land, God says, “Instead, this is what you are to do to them: tear down their altars, smash their sacred pillars, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn their carved images” (Deut. 7:5). What does this suggest is God’s primary concern?

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

How does the idea that God confronted cultures committed to violence, exploitation, and idolatry change the way you interpret these commands?

What does this passage reveal about God’s posture toward people who are oppressed or vulnerable?

Why do people in the world today struggle to believe God is good?

LOOK IN
APPLY GOD’S WORD
TO YOUR LIFE

Do you wonder about the goodness of God? It’s okay to admit it! What makes you struggle with God’s goodness?

What truths about God or Scriptures help you be reminded of God’s goodness if you sometimes wonder whether God is actually good?

How might we pray for God to work in our hearts to help us as we grapple with His character and the realities of brokenness we see in the world?

Leader Notes

This section helps you grasp the key themes and intended outcomes of the discussion before you lead your group. These notes are not the group questions; they simply guide your preparation so you can lead with clarity and shepherd the conversation well. You may also find them helpful at the end of your discussion to wrap up your time together.

Think About It

As you consider how God acted in Deuteronomy 7 to confront what was destructive and protect His people, reflect on where He may be doing similar work in you today. Remember the goodness of God who removes what harms not to punish you but to preserve you and lead you into life. Think about how He might be inviting you to trust His justice, His timing, and His heart more deeply, even when His ways feel difficult to understand.

What Will You Do?

In light of God's refining and protective work, consider one intentional step you can take this week to cooperate with Him. Think about how you can let go of an unhealthy influence, open yourself more fully to His guidance, or create space through prayer or Scripture to allow Him to strengthen and redirect you in areas where you would normally depend on your own strength.

Changing Your Mind

The LORD will fight for you, and you must be quiet. (Exodus 14:14)