

*explore*God™

DISCUSSION GUIDE

We are excited to journey together through life's big questions about purpose, God, and the Bible over the course of these eight sessions.

In this guide, you will find:

Conversation Starter—Open the meeting with a question to help get the conversation rolling.

Video—There's a video session for your group to watch each week available online through our YouTube Channel—FACCalgary, the FAC Experience App, RightNow Media, and through our website.

Digging Deeper—Following the Conversation starter, you'll find Digging Deeper questions for group discussion. If you don't get through all the discussion questions, don't worry about it.

Praise and Prayer Points—At the end of each session, you'll find space to list your praise and prayer points. Don't forget to pray for each other throughout the week.

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Session 8—Can I know God personally?



Conversation Starter

- Why should we take the time to explore God?

Video: Why Should We Explore God?

Together, watch the video: Why Should We Explore God?

- <https://youtu.be/RsRiwrkNmvc>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?

In 1 Peter 3:15, we are reminded to always have an answer for the reason for the hope that we have. As followers of Jesus, we are reminded to share the hope we have with gentleness and respect.

- What might you say to someone who asks you what your reason for the hope that is in you?
- What are some doubts that might keep a person from sharing about Jesus? How should we handle these doubts?
- What does the phrase 'always be prepared' mean to you? How can you 'always be prepared'?
- Practically speaking, what would it look like this week for you to better prepare yourself for when someone asks you about your hope?

Praise & Prayer Points

Spend some time praying and share what God is doing in your life.

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DOES LIFE HAVE A PURPOSE?

Conversation Starter

- As a child, what did you want to be when you ‘grew up’?

Video: Does Life Have a Purpose?

Together, watch the video: Does life have a purpose?

- <https://youtu.be/GM76f6SiaWw>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- In the video, Lysa observed, “If I could just discover the right thing, a better job, financial blessing, the right person to love me, the right kids with the right accolades, then I’d feel satisfied.” In what things have you sought satisfaction? Did they satisfy?
- Can you share both a time when life seemed like a random series of events and a time when it seemed like there was an intentional plan unfolding?
- In what ways might someone’s view of eternity affect their sense of meaning and purpose?
- If you believe we all have a purpose, what role does God play in that—if any?

When life seems to make little sense, it's easy to fall prey to the "It's meaningless!" trap. Indeed, the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes is built around these very words. In stark contrast stands the book of Job, in which the lead character exclaims, "Though [God] slay me, yet I will hope in him" (Job 13:15). In other words, hard experiences in life can jade us to any sense of purpose. Rather than looking at life through the lens of our experience, another option is to look for some sense of truth outside ourselves.

Jesus states in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Discovering our purpose is one of the most important endeavors in life. If what Jesus says is true, then if we simply ask, seek, and knock, God will meet us wherever we are and address our heart's desire. How does this thought impact you?

- If it's true that "each of us has a pretty unique story to play" in the world, what's your role?

Praise & Prayer Points

Spend some time praying and share what God is doing in your life.

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IS THERE A GOD?

Conversation Starter

- Almost everyone seems to have an opinion on whether or not God exists. What do you think? Is there a God?

Video: Is There a God?

Together, watch the video: Is there a God?

- <https://youtu.be/vf86vINDnAs>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- What makes it easy to believe in God? What makes it hard to believe in God?
- What role—if any—did God play in your family when you were growing up? How does your upbringing impact your beliefs now?
- In the video, Andy shares that he's convinced God exists because of "cosmological constants" and their impact on life. What has convinced you that God either does or does not exist?
- What do you think of Corey's suggestion, "If there is a God, I can't prove him, nor can I disprove him with science"?

- What do you think could convince you to change your current stance on God's existence—be that belief or unbelief?

Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." In other words, creation reflects its creator. If God exists, all people have seen and experienced God, though they might not have known it or attributed that experience to God.

- In what ways have you experienced (or not experienced) God's presence through creation? How did those experiences affect your belief (or disbelief) in God?

Most of us "hope there's something else out there." And the thoughts people have about God are as diverse as the people who've thought them. Most have attributed their life to some form of god or Supreme Being. As we saw and discussed, there is ample evidence supporting this. Yet, it seems, for us to be confident that there is a God, he/she/it must "reveal himself to us in a way that makes sense."

This week, keep an open mind and consider how the creation around you might speak of God and his plans.

Praise & Prayer points

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WHY DOES GOD ALLOW PAIN AND SUFFERING?

Conversation Starter

- What would be one questions you'd like to ask God?

Video: Why Does God Allow Pain and Suffering?

Together, watch the video: Why does God allow pain and suffering?

- https://youtu.be/gjcpW_kPYq0

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult is it for you to reconcile the existence of both suffering and God (1 = easy; 10 = impossible)? Why?
- One of the Pulse speakers noted, "Some of the best lessons I've learned in life . . . came from very painful times." In what ways might good come from bad? Do you have any experience with this?
- If there's a God, why do you think he allows evil in the world?
- In the video, what did you think of James's suggestion that God "understands our suffering . . . [and] is seeking to heal it"?

The Problem of Evil states that an all-powerful and perfectly good God would not allow evil to exist in the world. Responses to this argument vary within Christianity and other faiths. Maybe it's a test of our faith. Or perhaps God is simply unable to change our circumstances.

Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

- In what ways might your pain and suffering reveal something good and beautiful in the world one day?

In this passage, the Apostle Paul suggests that something good always comes of something bad. Indeed, a few verses later he affirms that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him." Scripture proposes that, despite the painful circumstances in which we often find ourselves, God can somehow use them for his and our good.

Praise & Prayer Points

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IS CHRISTIANITY TOO NARROW?

Conversation Starter

Christianity is often criticized for being exclusive in an increasingly inclusive world. Do you think Christianity is too narrow?

- What do you think about this statement “it doesn’t matter what religious faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons”?

Video: Is Christianity Too Narrow?

Together, watch the video: Is Christianity too narrow?

- <https://youtu.be/ZqPx1i934pA>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- Does the media represent Christianity accurately? Do Christians represent Christianity accurately?
- In the video, Corey suggests, “When people say that all religions are the same, that sounds really humble and tolerant.” Why does he go on to say that those claims are actually exclusive?
- How have people used religion for good? For bad?

- What are some examples of situations in which most people believe that narrow ideas are good?
- What exclusive claims do you hold? Do you allow yourself to be vulnerable when discussing your views with others?

Many people would insist that it's intolerant or "ignorant to say that Christianity is the only right religion." But, in the end, it might be best to admit that we're all exclusivists. All of us make exclusive claims about most things—religion included. Yet the challenge seems to be finding a tone of gentleness in the midst of conversation and even disagreement.

In Jeremiah 29:4-11, God calls his people to be present in their city in a way that enables it to flourish, while remaining focused on God. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7). In other words, the God of the Bible commands his people to be gracious and charitable toward all people—including those who do not share the same faith.

- Is it possible to have an honest yet graceful dialog about important matters like faith?
- What are some practical ways you can seek the peace and prosperity of your city? How might these actions contribute to the common good in the world?

Praise & Prayer Points

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IS JESUS REALLY GOD?

Conversation Starter

- If Jesus is God, the implications are enormous. If he's not, then Christianity is founded on a lie. What do you think?

Video: Is Jesus Really God?

Together, watch the video: Is Jesus really God?

- <https://youtu.be/FjDPkDEGPqk>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- Was Jesus a historical figure, in your opinion? Why or why not?
- What did Leonce mean when he said, "Religion says 'I do, therefore I'm loved.' Jesus says, 'You're loved, therefore you do'?"
- Christians believe that sin separates humanity from God. Yet Jesus, through his death, bridges that gap. Why do you think Jesus had to die in order to accomplish this?
- In the video, Bryan says "[Jesus] was resurrected—rose up from the dead—with over five hundred witnesses. They saw him and, based on that encounter, were willing to die in order to testify as to what they saw." What do you think about his claim?
- What do you think about Jesus's claim to be God?

It's fashionable to suggest that Jesus was a good teacher, a man with an important message of love, and that's all. He wasn't God; that's impossible. However, the problem with that perspective is that he claimed to be God. (In John 10:30, Jesus said, "I and the Father are one.") Consequently, in C. S. Lewis's words, Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. Furthermore, assuming that he lived, he also predicted his death and resurrection. Then

hundreds of witnesses claimed he fulfilled that prediction and indeed rose from the dead. What do we do with that?

You may be curious about what Christians believe about Jesus. To explain that, let me start here: It probably wouldn't shock anyone if I declared that things are not as they should be. And no matter how hard we might try to change that reality, the world continues on in its brokenness. Lying, cheating, stealing, envy, greed, anxiety . . . well, you get the picture. It's a mess. The Bible, which we'll discuss next week, says that this mess was created when humanity chose to go their own way and live outside God's generous parameters. And we've been reaping the consequences since. Unfortunately, no amount of kissing up is going to make up for our waywardness. Our relationship with God has been so fractured that only he can repair it. And he does.

Simply put, in order to right the wrongs of the world, God entered his creation in the person of Jesus Christ. "The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He bore the burden of our shortcomings for us. And then he rose from the grave to defeat the power of sin, brokenness, and death in the world. This was done so that when we abandon our own efforts—which always fall short—and simply accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord, our relationship with God is restored. And we, like Jesus, are given a new life in order to become all that God made us to be" (Norton Herbst, "What Is the Gospel?" Explore God).

This is the gospel; this is the good news. God loves each of us so much that he gave us the gift of his son. And if we believe in him, we receive the gift of eternal life.

As Andy Stanley put it, God loves; God gave; we believe; we receive.

In Mark 8:29, Jesus asks Peter a heavy question. "'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah.'"

- Based on the evidence you've heard, who do you say Jesus is?

Praise & Prayer Points

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IS THE BIBLE RELIABLE?

Conversation Starter

- For many, the Bible is the main source of what we know about God. But is it even reliable? Can you trust what it says?

Video: Is the Bible Reliable?

Together, watch the video: Is the Bible Reliable?

- <https://youtu.be/68-cYoM5Ybw>

Digging Deeper

- What stood out to you the most from this past weekend service?
- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- What are a few of the various sources of truth that people consider?
- If someone asked you to describe the story of the Bible, what would you say?
- Do you think it's possible that a book could be inspired by God? Why or why not?
- As quoted in the film, how might it be possible that the Bible is "the true human story that underlies our experience and our existence"?
- How relevant is the Bible to your everyday life?
- What might make you inclined to rely on the Bible as a source of truth or guidance in your life?

The Bible is understood in a variety of ways: a book of myths, a violent story about an evil god, a book of wisdom about life, the living Word of God, a legal document that prescribes every area of life. But it's more than that. It also claims to be God-breathed. And through fulfilled prophecy, it has shown itself to be something beyond just human creation—indeed, perhaps even supernatural. You may be curious about what Christians believe about Jesus. To explain that, let me start here: It probably wouldn't shock anyone if I declared that things are not as they should be. And no matter how hard we might try to change that reality, the world continues on in its brokenness. Lying, cheating, stealing, envy, greed, anxiety . . . well, you get the picture. It's a mess. The Bible, which we'll discuss next week, says that this mess was created when humanity chose to go their own way and live outside God's generous parameters. And we've been reaping the consequences since. Unfortunately, no amount of kissing up is going to make up for our waywardness. Our relationship with God has been so fractured that only he can repair it. And he does.

Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

- In what ways might the Bible be "offering a better story, a story to help make sense of our crazy human existence"?

In other words, this writer seems to think that there is something special about this book—that it will outlast nature. Another passage states unequivocally that the Bible is "God-breathed." If any of this is true, then clearly the Bible is worth our sincere consideration.

Praise & Prayer Points

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CAN I KNOW GOD PERSONALLY?

Conversation Starter

As humans, we crave relationships and intimacy. Is it possible to have a relationship with God? Can we know God personally?

- Do you desire to have a closer relationship with God? Why or why not?

Video: Can I Know God Personally?

Together, watch the video: Can I know God personally?

- <https://youtu.be/PYTForwwi8M>

Digging Deeper

In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in The Curiosity Collective? What did you find intriguing or compelling?

- Why might someone resist knowing God personally?
- Propaganda stated that “sin . . . has broken that covenant with [God].” What do you think he meant by that?
- In the video, Pete said, “[Jesus] made it possible for our sins to be removed because his blood was spotless; he was a perfect sacrifice for us.” How could Jesus be perfect? What are the implications of that?
- How might one develop a personal relationship with God?

In Matthew 7:7, the Bible says that if we seek, we will find; if we knock, the door will be opened. What might this mean?

The relational nature of humans points to the creator’s desire to be in relationship with us. Yet most people recognize a flaw, some sense of brokenness in our relationship with God. “The problem is not that we’re bad; it’s that we’re dead!” one speaker noted. So what gives? Scripture describes a God who passionately pursues the people he created and makes it possible to fix our broken relationship. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” In other words, God takes us, in all our brokenness, and offers to make us whole forever. James 4:8 says, “Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

In what ways are you craving a relationship with your creator? What steps will you take to develop that relationship?

Praise & Prayer Points

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