

explore
God™

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KNOWING GOD

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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KNOWING GOD

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

OVERVIEW AND FACILITATOR FAQs

WHAT IS AN EXPLORE GOD DISCUSSION GROUP?

An Explore God Discussion Group is about having honest conversations in a respectful environment that encourages questions and authenticity.

An Explore God Group is an opportunity for people to come together to ask, consider, and discuss challenging questions about their beliefs. A Discussion Group Facilitator will do the following:

- Invite questions
- Create conversation
- Promote self-discovery
- Encourage spiritual growth

WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN EXPLORE GOD DISCUSSION GROUP?

Explore God Discussion Groups are highly customizable and can be done in a variety of formats.

Please customize this example to meet the needs of your group.

10 minutes	45 minutes	5 minutes
Social Time	Watch video and discuss	Wrap up and follow up resources

HOW CAN I MAKE THIS A GREAT EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE?

Keep in mind that you are a facilitator, not a teacher.

The goal of an Explore God Discussion Group is to create a safe place where people can seek credible answers to challenging spiritual questions.

- Foster honest questions in a respectful environment.
- Encourage discussion instead of teaching.
- Be honest. You don't need to have all the answers.

TOP RESOURCES

TVCLIFEGROUP.COM

The best resource we can give you is the Explore God page on the tvclifegroups website. Here is the web address: <http://www.tvclifegroup.com/exploregod>

This is where you will find all the videos that correlate to the week you are currently on. You can also get the discussion guide and each week's talking points, as well as, tips and ideas for you to read on how best to start each week.

7 BASICS BOOK

7 Basics is a great book that takes you through seven basic principles of Christianity. We will give a copy to each person in the class who does not already have one.

CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS (Apostle's Creed) TVC STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

TVC - WHO WE ARE

Our Mission: Connecting People with God

Our Values: Attend, Serve and Connect (Weekend + 2)

Our Passion: Becoming Accepting and Authentic Christ Followers

BEFORE YOU START

CHECKLIST FOR LAUNCH

- Watch the videos to familiarize yourself with the topic for each week.
- Look over the suggested questions for discussion in this guide.
- E-mail or text your group members a few days before your meeting as a reminder—and encourage them to bring a friend.
- An Explore God Discussion Group is meant to be a safe place—remember to maintain a nonjudgmental tone.
- Make sure you have enough 7 Basic books
 - You will be handing one book out to everyone in your group who doesn't already have one.
- Be authentic about your own struggles and questions. Remember that you don't have to have all the answers.
- Send the follow-up resources to your members after each session.

TIPS FOR TODAY: TELL STORIES

This week is a time to share personal experiences. Stories are a great way to get to know one another, and they have the power to inspire and challenge people to reflect on their own lives, hopes, and dreams. If participants are hesitant or feel intimidated, use questions or share your own story to encourage others to do the same. Just be careful not to dominate the group. Be sure to affirm and thank people as they share their stories.

A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Here are a few ways you can create a disarming, nonjudgmental, authentic tone to help everyone in your group feel welcome:

- Be comfortable with tension and lack of resolution. You won't be able to answer every question that comes up during discussion, and that's OK.
- Foster friendships outside of group time.
- Minimize assumptions. For example, don't assume that everyone knows how to use a Bible, or what Christian terms like "grace" or "gospel" mean.
- Encourage disclosure and transparency.
- Be honest about your own struggles and doubts.
- Encourage exploration and discovery. Refrain from giving answers. Realizations uncovered on one's own terms are the ones that stick and have the potential to transform us in lasting ways.



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GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



SESSION ONE

MAKING AN INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL TIME

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following introduction.

INTRODUCTION

When all is said and done, what does it really mean to be a Christian? Is Christianity just about following a set of rules and crossing off a to-do list? It can seem that way sometimes. But what if it's meant to be something different than that? What if, rather than burdening us with a load of rules, being a Christ-follower was actually meant to set us free? What would that kind of Christianity look like? In this group we will be referencing a book called *7 Basics*. This book explains the basics of our faith and is a great thing to read in between group meetings to dig even deeper into what it means to become a Christ follower. There are also some videos that we will watch that spark great questions that we will discuss about what it is we are called to be and do as followers of Christ. Before we begin I would like to invite _____ to share a bit about TVC.

WHO WE ARE

Campus Pastor/Lead Pastor shares the following:

- History of TVC
- Our Mission and Vision
- What we Believe
- Share a God story

VIDEO: THE CURIOSITY COLLECTIVE: MAKING AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Let's check out this ten-minute video discussing the topic of making an introduction to God, Jesus, and what it means to be a Christ-follower. It talks about the various questions, struggles, and perspectives people have about God. Let's see what they have to say and then we will talk.

PLAY VIDEO

Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or feel pressured to cover all of them.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- What do you think when you hear the term "Christianity"? What about the term "Christ-follower"? Do the two mean something different to you?
- Why do you think it's so common to believe that Christianity is a list of do's and don'ts, a rulebook of what you can and can't do?
- Have you ever thought of God as a kind of "police officer in the sky" like J. P. did?
- Lysa went on to say, "Maybe following God didn't mean I had to perfectly follow the rules." What does that idea mean to you? Do you agree with Lysa?

WRAP-UP

Thoughts to Share with the Group

Summarize the group discussion. Or, use the text below for concluding the session. Rather than hand us a rulebook, Jesus provided assurance of God's unconditional love. Following Jesus is about restoring our relationship with God and accepting His offer of love and grace. No matter where you've been, what you've done, or who you've wronged, God is anxiously awaiting your return. Simply making an introduction can initiate a journey of discovering God's love for us.

Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources.
- Thank everyone, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue talking.
- Encourage everyone to read Chapter 1 from *7 Basics*.
- Have new people fill out the **Contact form** located in the binder.

Additional Resources Week One

Check out tvclifegroups.com under life group resources, then click Explore God. On the week one page there is a PDF of additional resources you can download and email to your group.

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SESSION TWO

GOD & PRAYER

SOCIAL TIME

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following introduction.

INTRODUCTION

When you meet a new person, how do you get to know them? Fundamentally, you talk to them. You spend time with them. Well, if there is a God—a personal, knowable God—how do we get to know Him? We talk to Him. As you may know, the act of talking to God is often called “prayer.” That sounds simple enough. But what is prayer, exactly? And how do you do it? How do you talk to someone who doesn’t necessarily talk back to you—audibly, at least? Is there a certain protocol we need to follow to talk to God? What does prayer look like—and how can we know if God is listening? Let’s take a look at this video on prayer and then discuss it together.

VIDEO: THE CURIOSITY COLLECTIVE: GOD & PRAYER

[PLAY VIDEO](#)

Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There’s no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- In the video, Angie said, “I wanted to know—how do you do it? How do you do prayer? What does it look like? What are the rules? What are the steps?” Have you ever asked yourself or others questions like Angie asked?
- Are there ways in which following “steps” or a “ritual” can be helpful for learning something new? Do you think this could apply to prayer?
- Do you ever feel that you need to “_____ yourself” before you talk to God?
- Do you tend to approach prayer more as something where you “stop and talk to God for a half-hour” or as a constant activity you do throughout your day?
- How might you differentiate between your own thoughts and feelings and God’s answers to your prayers?

WRAP-UP

Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group’s discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

One of God’s mysterious qualities is His ability to be intimate and yet immense, empathetic and yet all-powerful. Like Hugh said, it can often seem weird to think that if we speak, the creator of the universe is actually hearing us. We may even wonder, “Why God would want to talk to me?” And yet, God desires personal relationship with each of us. It is clear from Scripture that prayer is key to maintaining a relationship with God; even Jesus Himself regularly retreated for extended times of prayer. It is through the gift of this communication that we can come to know God personally and more fully.

Follow-Up Resources

- Inform the group that you’ll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.
- Encourage everyone to read Chapter 3 from *7 Basics*.
- *Have any new guests fill out the **contact form** located in the binder*

Additional Resources Week Two

Check out tvclifegroups.com under life group resources, then click Explore God. On the week two page there is a PDF of additional resources you can download and email to your group.

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SESSION THREE

GOD & SCRIPTURE

SOCIAL TIME

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following introduction.

INTRODUCTION

Most people would agree that the Bible is an important piece of literature, and an influential text that has lasted millennia. But is it any more than that? Is it more than literature, or history, or art? Is the Bible truly Scripture— God’s written word? If so, how should we approach the Bible? Should we study it like a textbook or treat it as a manual for life? Perhaps even more pressing than all those questions are these: Why should we bother reading the Bible at all? Is it even relevant to life today? What can we learn from it? Let’s watch today’s video and then discuss it together.

VIDEO: THE CURIOSITY COLLECTIVE: GOD & SCRIPTURE

PLAY VIDEO

Questions for Discussions

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There’s no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?

- If someone asked you to describe the Bible, how would you respond?
- What biases—positive or negative—do you have about the Bible?
- In the video, Micah said, “The Bible was not necessarily written just for information; it was written for transformation.” What does that mean to you?
- Do you think the Bible is still relevant to life today? If so, what areas of your life might the Bible impact?
- Can you think of a time when you’ve been surprised by the way the Bible seemed to have something particular to say to you, like David mentioned?
- Jo said that she learned who Jesus was through the Bible. What do you believe you can learn about God through the story of the Bible?

WRAP-UP

Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group’s discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

More than a simple book, the Bible is a collection of letters, songs, laws, history, poetry, and prophecy that paints a vivid and complex picture of God’s relationship with creation. When looked at as a whole, the stories in the Bible tell a grand, overarching story about God and humanity. Through its pages, we get a glimpse of God’s character and His redeeming love for all of mankind, for each of us. For Christians, the Bible is not just about God’s past activity in the world. It’s more personal than that. The Bible is the story of God’s present activity in the lives of every person.

Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you’ll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.
- Encourage everyone to read Chapter 2 and 4.
- Handout the **gifts test card** and encourage everyone to take the gifts test at home before the next meeting time. As the next session will be highlighting our unique gifts and fit at TVC. Have everyone bring their results to the next group!

Additional Resources Week Three

Check out tvclifegroups.com under life group resources, then click Explore God. On the week three page there is a PDF of additional resources you can download and email to your group.

Recommended Bible Verses

[John 1](#)

[James 1](#)

[Proverbs 1](#)

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SESSION FOUR

GOD & COMMUNITY

SOCIAL TIME

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following introduction.

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly independent and individualistic world, it's easy to see one's faith as a purely personal and private experience. But does this kind of perspective limit our spiritual growth? Do we really need others in our lives—even our spiritual lives? Can being around those we admire and respect lead to positive change in our own characters, habits, and thoughts? If we remain too introspective, we can miss out on the incredible experience of community, of growing in our relationships with others and with God. Let's watch today's video and then discuss it together.

VIDEO: THE CURIOSITY COLLECTIVE: GOD & COMMUNITY

[PLAY VIDEO](#)

Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- Can you think of a time in your life when being around others changed your behavior, your thoughts, or your mind-set—either for better or for worse?
- Do you agree that we were created for community? Can you share a time when you felt that you needed others or a time when a friend or family member needed you?
- Does keeping our faith personal and private limit our spiritual growth? How can gathering in community help us to discover more about ourselves and God?
- Looking at your life today, who most encourages and challenges your faith? Is there someone you see as a mentor?
- What do you think of the concept of the church as a family? Have you ever experienced anything like that? What steps could you take to become more connected to a faith community?

NEXT STEPS

As a group take time to visit Your Next Step located in the lobby, explain the resources available and how group members can engage with taking their next step. Handout the **Your Next Step Cards** to each guest and have them go over them in their group. Talk about what their next step in serving and connecting might be and encourage them to sign up using the card today.

- What next step do you feel most interested in?
- What might hinder you from taking your next step?

WRAP-UP

Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group's discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below for concluding the session.

The Christian faith is meant to be lived in relationship with others—both fellow believers and nonbelievers. When we come together with other Christians, we are each challenged and encouraged to live out our faith more fully. We can come to reach a better understanding of what it means to be God's family. Fellowship with other believers naturally leads to personal spiritual growth. At the same time, community with nonbelievers can strengthen our understanding of God and our relationship with Him. Any time we come together with other people is an opportunity to live out the love of God.

Since it's the last group discussion, invite people to share responses to a few parting questions:

- How have you grown in your spiritual journey over the past four sessions?
- How have others in the group affected you?

Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around to chat.

Additional Resources

Check out tvclifegroups.com under life group resources, then click Explore God. On the week four page there is a PDF of additional resources you can download and email to your group

FACILITATOR FEED BACK

Let us know what you think

ABOUT THE GROUP

How do you feel the group members connected with each other?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do you feel you connected with the group members?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How easy was the Facilitator Guide to follow?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What would you change about the Facilitator Guide?

How do you feel, over all, the group went?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you could change anything about the group, what would it be?

How likely are you to be willing to lead another Explore God in the future?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10