



CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- Have you learned anything from God in prayer and reading Scripture over the last week?
 - Has anything you've read in the Bible in the past few weeks confused you?
 - As you discuss some of the more confusing parts of Scripture together this week, you may find this Bible Project video on God's anger helpful: <https://bibleproject.com/slow-to-anger/>.
-

DISCUSS UNDERSTAND AND APPLY GOD'S WORD

The Bible is often confusing. Sometimes it's even offensive. God can seem cruel or heartless when we read certain stories or commands. What are we supposed to do with a Bible that confuses and bewilders us?

It's important not to shy away from our offense when we read these stories. For example, when we read about God flooding the world, we should let ourselves be shocked and horrified! If we take God's words seriously, we will let them offend us. We won't gloss over the confusing passage; we'll let ourselves respond to it.

Because the most important lesson we can learn about Scripture is this. *God is more wise, more loving, and more just than us.* That's not an excuse to stop asking questions! That's an encouragement to *keep* asking questions, because our Teacher wants to make us wise.

In fact, *the places where Scripture confuses us are the places where it has the most to teach us.* When Scripture confuses us, it means our thinking and God's thinking aren't lining up. Maybe the passage doesn't say what we think it does, or maybe God sees something we don't. That means we have something to learn.

And so, when we come to these passages, we shouldn't turn away from our offense—we should turn toward it and let it bring us before God! Ask God: why did you say this? How is this a blessing rather than a curse? Our promise to you is this: as you do this, you will not only discover the depth of God's goodness; you'll become more like him yourself.

Ask one another: are there places in Scripture that confuse and offend you? What do you do with those feelings when they come?

PRACTICE LEARN TO SEE AND SHARE THE BEAUTY OF SCRIPTURE

Your goal for today isn't to solve every scriptural confusion you have. Instead, you want to practice understanding your own confusion and bringing it before God. That's the first step to letting him use it to make you more like him.

Pray and ask God to help you trust him and learn from him, and ponder what pain or confusion you want to process. You do not have to jump to the hardest question you have, though you're allowed to! This is a beginning to a lifelong process; begin wherever you feel most comfortable.

Write down your feelings about the question, and about God within it. Your first step is simply expressing and understanding your own confusion. Often our Biblical confusions aren't just theoretical; they touch on larger issues in our lives. Perhaps you feel hurt, and are angry at God; or maybe you mostly feel confused. Depending on how intense this question is for you, this may take only a few moments, or it may take quite a while.

Write down a "because" statement. For example, "I feel frustrated with God because I don't think this is loving," or "I feel confused with God because I don't think this was just."

Try to articulate what other perceptions are shaping your emotions. Your emotions are downstream of how you see the world. Our assumptions shape our feelings. When I don't understand God, it's because he and I see the world differently. We want to make explicit how we see the world, so that we can see where we disagree with God. It may be helpful to write a chain of "because" statements: "I think this was unjust. Why? *Because* God punished innocent people. Why is that unjust? *Because...*" and so on.

Ask God to show you what he thinks about this. If you hear anything (or think you might), write it down; otherwise, begin to try to solve the puzzle for yourself. How does God view this? Feel free to write down any thoughts you have.

Be okay with incompleteness. If you fully answer your confusion, great! But that's not the usual experience. Our deep confusions—with Scripture and with life—are meant to draw us into conversation with God. The questions you articulated should serve as grist for your next few prayer sessions. Let your confusion encourage intimacy and honesty with God.

Share as much as you feel comfortable. Go around the room and let people share what they were praying over and if they heard anything. There's a time and place for advice, but for now avoid giving unasked for advice or unsought answers to other peoples questions for God. Instead, give them your full attention and try to understand the question itself. Christian community is tremendously helpful, and one of the ways it can serve best is by encouraging people to bring their questions to God.

“God reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.” (Daniel 2:21).

Our certainty that God wants to bring us understanding is rooted in our certainty that he is good. He loves us, and wants to make us wise. The Bible is meant to make us bring our confusions to him so he can “reveal deep and hidden things” to us. That way, when our life presents us with tragedies or confusions, we can bring them to God as well, and let him light up our darkness with his joy and wisdom.

Close your time together in prayer for one another. Include in your prayers the request that God will meet you this week and use the darkness of your confusion as an opportunity for the light of his goodness. Thank God that he is a God of light.

Discipleship Check-In

- Have you read your Bible and prayed consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?
- How did you become more like Jesus this week?