

## BIBLE DIALOGUES



: Relational open-ended conversations about the Jesus of Scripture which invite spiritual discovery. A proven tool for one's discipleship journey with Jesus- wherever they are at.

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To *prepare* a Bible Dialogue, the facilitator needs **two** things: A **first-hand understanding** of the Biblical text & **thoughtful questions** about the Biblical text.

Below are 3 simple proven steps for solid Bible Dialogue preparation:

- 1) Invite God to lead your reading through **prayer**
- 2) **Read** the text, **identifying and defining terms** unfamiliar to you or others, **writing down any and all questions that you personally have, researching them for answers.**
- 3) Make your 4-column "**Dialogue Tool**"

Summarize what the text says	Analyze what the text means	Make Reading questions to discover what the text says	Make thinking questions to discover what the text means
<p>First, select a text, making your own "breaks" wherever it seems most natural.</p> <p>Then, relate the who, what, when, and where of the text concisely in your own words.</p>	<p>Ask: "what's at the heart of the text, what does the author want me to take away, why did God include it?"</p> <p>Write out these truths &amp; check to see if they explain all of the text.</p>	<p>Write short open-ended questions that help readers engage the text directly to discover it's content.</p> <p>The answers to * these questions are in your first blue column.</p>	<p>Write short open-ended questions that help readers ponder the text so that they discover the truths it conveys.</p> <p>The answers to * these may be in your first orange column.</p>

To actually *do* a Bible Dialogue, the facilitator needs to do **three** things: **Invite** others into a dialogue over the text, **remain a fellow learner with them**, and **rely on the Holy Spirit** for discernment and guidance at critical moments.

**Ultimately, we've found that learning how to *do* a Bible Dialogue only comes through practicing in real-time with real people in a real dialogue.**

**COLUMN 1:** This is the **most important** column because your analysis and questions will all flow from it. It is here that we look directly at the details the text gives us **to gain first-hand knowledge of it.**

**Making Breaks:** A “**break**” is a group of verses which seem to naturally belong together because they’re about the same idea or story. Your Bible’s translators have likely made breaks for you. However, chapters & sections weren’t included in Biblical manuscripts but were added later to make referencing the Bible easier. *Sometimes this results in placements of chapters and sections which interrupt the flow of a story or thought, making it more difficult for the reader to see the main idea which unifies those verses* (see Rom 7:25-8:1, Eph 5:21-22). **Make your own breaks** by examining the text for transitions the author input which conclude a scene or thought & begin another. Take the translation team’s decision into account & do your best! **Making breaks gives you neat & clear parameters on what you’re summarizing! Check our breaks for Mark 1:1-11 →**

**Summarizing:** Imagine you’ve just seen a movie & later a friend asks you about what happened in the film. You wouldn’t read the script to them or try to give them all the details (spoiling the film). *You would give a short summary of the premise and the general idea of the overall story.* That’s what we’re doing with the text in Col 1.. We don’t relate every detail or read it verbatim, but concisely relate what happened. **Check our summaries for Mark 1:1-11 →**

**In this column we aren’t interpreting the text or bringing in info from outside it. Our summaries should concisely capture the main things without giving every detail. At the same time they shouldn’t be so short that they won’t leave much to analyze later..**



## Summarize what the text says

**Mark 1:1-3**

The good news about Jesus came before He arrived. This news was written by prophets who spoke of a wilderness preacher who would set the stage for the Lord's coming.

**Mark 1:4-8**

John, a desert preacher, immersed people in water who wanted a new life. He spoke of a mightier one who would come after Him to immerse them in the Holy Spirit.

**Mark 1:9-11**

After Jesus was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended on Him and a voice declared Him to be his loved and very pleasing son.

## Analyze what the text means

Mark 1:1-3

Jesus is good news!  
His coming was not incidental, but predicted and divinely planned for long ago. God wanted people to be ready for Jesus' arrival. In Jesus, God gives people hope.

Mark 1:4-8

John was only the opening act for JC. Rituals, confessions, & remorse alone can't change lives, only Jesus is powerful enough to do that. He does that through the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:9-11

Jesus isn't like others who need to repent of sin- He is completely good. God wants everyone to know who Jesus is & what He is like so that they'd come to Him. Jesus' Father is loving.

**COLUMN 2:** Every biblical book has an author, and every biblical text **has a meaning which that author intended**. Our job in this column is to discover what that is.

**Analyzing:** We do this first by giving ourselves the **permission to be ruthlessly curious** in writing down all the questions which we personally have about the text and it's subject matter. **Then we ask ourselves questions like the following** to help us better process the text: *"What question does this author seem to be answering in giving us this text?"* *"What details are they calling our attention to or highlighting?"* *"Does there seem to be a main verse/one which is most central or important?"* (Pray for the Spirit's help!)

**Give yourself a decent amount of time to ponder**, re-read, pray & write out your own questions as well as any discoveries you make. Further research using online resources like [biblehub's interlinear function](#) (for finding precise word meanings) [bible project videos](#), or [commentaries](#) are a great *secondary way* to discover additional info about the author, their audience, context, & the text's language. But these aren't a substitute for the primary call to ponder the text ourselves.

When you believe you understand the heart of the passage and what the author is intending to convey, **write out those timeless truths in your column** (like the ones on your left) & **then check your work** by asking: *"Do these statements I have written capture the heart of the text, and reflect all of its content?"* If so, you've done a good job! **Finally, tweak the timeless truths to be concise and in simple language.**



This takes practice so don't expect profundity immediately. Avoid asking what this text means to you and avoid writing down interpretations that you have heard about these passages before from pastors, sermons or other resources

### Summarize what the text says

Mark 1:1-3  
Mark believes the good news about Jesus came before Jesus came. This news was written by prophets who spoke of a wilderness preacher who would set the stage for the Lord's coming.

### Make Reading questions to discover what the text says

Mark 1:1-3  
For Mark, what is the good news about and where does it begin? Who did these propetic writers speak of and what did they say was going to happen?

**COLUMNS 3 & 4** : in these columns we create open-ended "reading" and "thinking" questions that help fellow learners engage the text directly and ponder it. Our **column 1 summaries (in light blue)** and **column 2 analysis (in light orange)** help us craft these **questions**, serving as answers to the questions we need to make. We ask ourselves: "what question can I ask that will help them get this (column 1 or 2's) answer?" **Many of the column 3 questions will begin with "who, what, when, or where" while many of the column 4 questions will begin with what or why?'**

### Analyze what the text means

Mark 1:1-3  
Jesus is good news! His coming was not incidental, but predicted and divinely planned for long ago. God wanted people to be ready for Jesus' arrival. In Jesus, God gives people hope.

### Make thinking questions to discover what the text means

Mark 1:1-3  
What does Mark want his readers to think about JC? Given prophesy, how would you describe JC's coming? Why do you think God planned this? What did this prophesy give people?

The difference between the answers one can get for questions in col. 3 & 4 is that the answers to column 3's questions *will be* in column 1 while the answers to the open-ended questions one asks in column 4 may be in your column 2. Remember that God may reveal a different answer to the person other than the one you wrote.

**Crafting Questions:** We hope to open *dialogue*, this is why we ask open-ended questions. Close-ended

questions (yes or no questions) often close *dialogue*. When crafting questions **try to keep them short**. Long questions are hard to respond to. It helps **to read your questions aloud to see if they can be matched with the answer in the correlating column**- if they can't you will need to recraft your question; reading these questions aloud will also help you to hear whether they would sound natural for the dialogue you are preparing to have.



## Mark 1:4-9 continued examples...

Summarize what the text says	Analyze what the text means	Make Reading questions to discover what the text says	Make thinking questions to discover what the text means
<p><b>Mark 1:4-8</b> John was a desert preacher who immersed people who wanted new lives in water. He spoke of a mightier one who would come after Him to immerse them in the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:4-8</b> John was only the opening act for JC. Rituals, confessions, &amp; remorse alone can't change lives, only Jesus is powerful enough to do that. He does that through the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:4-8</b> Who was John and what was he doing? Who came to be baptized by him- how would you characterize them? What did John say about Jesus - what did John say Jesus was going to do?</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:4-8</b> What was John's ultimate purpose, do you think? What did John think Jesus could give people that he couldn't? Why do you think John believed this?</p>
<p><b>Mark 1:9-11</b> After Jesus was baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descended on Him and a voice declared Him to be his loved and very pleasing son.</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:9-11</b> Jesus isn't like others who need to repent of sin- He is completely good. God wants everyone to know who Jesus is &amp; what He is like so that they'd come to Him. Jesus' Father is loving.</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:9-11</b> What happened after Jesus was baptized by John? What did the voice declare about Jesus?</p>	<p><b>Mark 1:9-11</b> Why did JC get baptized? Why do you think God announced who JC was? What do you think He wanted them to do? What does this text reveal to us about what Jesus' God is like?</p>

## Doing the Bible Dialogue

**Spirit-Reliance:** The Holy Spirit helps us ask meaningful & pertinent questions in real time. **Through Him, we also learn to discern what to do in certain situations.** Though we will share our experiences on the next page as to what we have found helpful in some situations, we must remember that there is no formula or one-size-fits all solution. **The only solution we have is to rely on the all-knowing, ever-present and radically powerful person of the Holy Spirit by asking for His help & intervention often.** Afterall, this is *His* Word, these are *His* people, & that is *His* job! He is the one who draws these people to the dialogue in the first place. **We invite people around us into a dialogue by simply asking:**

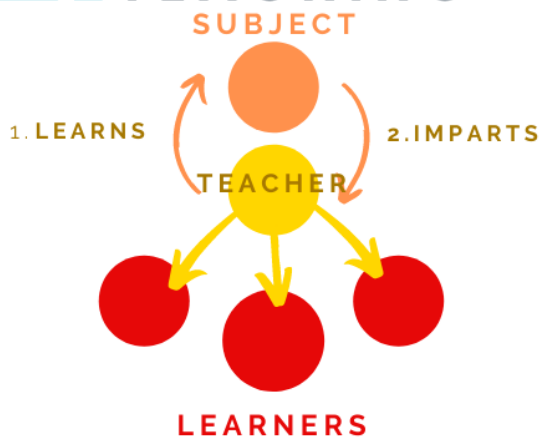


"Would you be open to discovering what the Bible says about Jesus?"



**Remaining a learner:** The temptation in these dialogues is to become "the teacher" and you will have this temptation early on and many times thereafter. However, if we start to give answers we change the dynamic of the dialogue into something *much less effective*. **We remain learners by staying curious, keeping conversation going, and by letting God be the teacher; we share our personalexperiences and thoughts only when invited to by the group.**

### 1. CLASSROOM TEACHING



### 2. PEOPLE IN DIALOGUE



## Helpful Advices for Bible Dialogues

**What do I do if no one is talking?** Don't panic, silence is often good. On average people need 12 seconds to think about a question before they answer it. If people remain quiet way too long, try rephrasing the question or asking a new one. **What do I do if someone asks a random or extraneous question?** If someone asks a random question that is bound to derail or rabbit-trail the conversation simply say "that's a great question, can we come back to that at the end of the dialogue." **What if someone gets aggressive or in your face?**

Honestly, this rarely ever happens. However, if it does, be calm and gentle and don't take it personally. Don't pour fuel on the fire by debating or arguing, instead be gentle and inquire about why their feelings are the way they are.

### **Questions for deeper dialogue:**

- That's a great question, what made you think of it?
- What do you mean by that?
- What do *you* think?
- What do you all think about what \_\_\_\_\_ shared?
- It sounds like what you are saying is \_\_\_\_\_, did I get that right?
- Was there a moment that you came to believe \_\_\_\_\_? What was the evidence for you that convinced you that was true?

### **Questions to ask when it gets quiet:**

- What did you like/not like about what we read?
- What do you find difficult to understand?
- If we were to try to live what we read about, what would that look like and what do you think would change?
- Who do you think you can share what you have learned with?

### **Final Tips:**

- Avoid telling people "no" when they get an answer wrong, instead have them "read it again" or ask "what else do you see?"
- Affirm generously ! Give eye contact & nod your head when they get it right.
- Go at their pace- it's not about getting a certain portion of Scripture done. Investigate what they find interesting and go slow!
- Remember, faithfulness is greater than fruitfulness. Keep God's scoreboard in mind!
- Have them invite others they think would like the dialogue- groups are always better than one-on-ones. Having a partner to prepare and accompany you is 100x better than just you!