



Darkwood Brew.org

Wherever You Are, We'll Meet You There

New to the role of facilitator? Here are a few tips to help you get started.

- First of all, a facilitator's job is to coordinate the flow of each session. View the video segment ahead of time and make your own notes and observations.
- Prepare the meeting place so that it is comfortable. Arrive early; help organize any refreshments and test your video player/computer.
- Getting to know one another helps the discussions flow. Welcome all, catch up and reflect a bit on last week's session in the first few minutes.
- You don't have to be the expert. You are not expected to provide answers to questions provided. So let the questions ignite the conversation and see where it takes the group.
- It's everyone's responsibility to make sure everyone else gets an equal amount of time to talk.
- Listen first; evaluate later. Make sure you understand a comment, then ask questions or pose other options.
- Encourage participants to bring a Bible or other resources.
- If you feel so moved, start, and/or end your session in prayer.

Leaders Guide

"The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World"

This series investigates how Christians may hold a particular belief in Jesus as the Christ of God amidst a world of competing religious claims. In these episodes we will focus on both the differences and similarities between Christian faith and other religious traditions. World-class scholars will help us process and learn about how Jesus Christ can be the "way, the truth, and the life," without condemning other people's religious beliefs and values. The central question of this series is how is Christianity related to other faith traditions?

Welcome to the Darkwood Brew journey!

We are glad you can join us. Our primary resources for small group study are condensed versions of Darkwood Brew's weekly one-hour episodes. These are called GUIDED EPISODES. Each Guided Episode is 25-30 minutes in length. There are pause points with questions provided for each Episode, intended for group discussion or individual reflection.

On the following page, you will find information on the Series Topic, Skype Guests, Scripture passage, and Questions posed during the episode.



Questions:

1. What in your experience of the divine do you feel is shared with other religions? What in your experience of the divine is unique?
2. What stood out for you from John 14:1-7? What do you think this passage means?
3. What do you do when an interpretation of scripture seems counter to your experience of God?
4. How might we engage people of other faiths in ways that honor both differences and similarities?
5. How do you come to the Father? What does that mean for you?

EPISODE TITLE: "The Way, The Truth, The Life"

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 1

Featured Guest: Rev. Dr. Allen Hilton

As Minister of Faith and Learning, Allen Hilton leads Wayzata Community Church's Christian Education team, focusing on adult Christian discipleship. After degrees from George Fox College (B.A., 1985), Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div., 1989), and Yale University (Ph.D., 1997), Allen taught Bible at St. Mary's College of California and then New Testament at the Yale Divinity School. He joined the WCC clergy team in April of 2009.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: John 14: 1-7

14'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

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Questions:

1. If it is possible that ancient Jews were polytheistic, what does that mean for your faith today?
2. In the presence of many gods, however you might define them, what shapes your life?
3. What is your best way? How do you know?
4. What is distinctive about your God?

EPISODE TITLE: “The Most High God”

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 2

Featured Guest: Dr. Leong Seow.

Choon-Leong Seow, Princeton Seminary’s Henry Snyder Gehman Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, earned his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary and his Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages and civilizations from Harvard University. An ordained Presbyterian elder, he specializes in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, the history of ancient Israelite religion, Northwest Semitic philology, and the history of biblical interpretation and reception. He teaches courses on the interpretation of Job, Hebraica, Daniel, Aramaic, and Northwest Semitic epigraphy. He has written: *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy*, with F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp and J.J.M. Roberts (Yale University Press, 2004)

Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David’s Dance, Harvard Semitic Monograph 46 (Scholars Press, 1989).

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Deuteronomy 32. 7-12

7 Remember the days of old, consider the years long past;

ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.

8 When the Most High apportioned the nations,
when he divided humankind,

he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;

9 the Lord’s own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.

10 He sustained him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.

11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,

12 the Lord alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from Deuteronomy 6: 4-13?
2. Rumi writes of deep and sincere love. How does that love operate in your life? How does it figure into your relationship with God?
3. How might going deeper into your own particular spiritual practice help you more fully experience the universal nature of God?
4. What meaning do you find in *Like This*, translated from Rumi's *Divan* by Fatemah Keshavarz?

EPISODE TITLE: "The Lord Alone?"

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 3

Featured Guest: Fatemeh Keshavarz

Fatemeh Keshavarz, born and raised in the city of Shiraz, completed her studies in Shiraz University, and University of London. She taught at Washington University in St. Louis for over twenty years where she chaired the Dept. of Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from 2004 to 2011. In 2012, Keshavarz joined the University of Maryland as the Roshan Institute Chair in Persian Language and Literature, and Director of the Roshan Institute Center for Persian Studies. Keshavarz is author of award winning books including *Reading Mystical Lyric: the Case of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (USC Press, 1998), *Recite in the Name of the Red Rose* (USC Press, 2006) and a book of literary analysis and social commentary titled *Jasmine and Stars: Reading more than Lolita in Tehran* (UNC Press, 2007). She has also published other books and numerous journal articles. Keshavarz is a published poet in Persian and English and an activist for peace and justice.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Deuteronomy 6: 4-13

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, ¹²take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³The Lord your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear.

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Questions:

1. What stood out for you from John 10: 11-18?
2. Diana discussed how her experiences with people of a variety of faiths in India affected and inspired her. Have you had similar experiences with people of other faiths? What were the results?
3. How might recognizing our differences change the conversation with people of other faiths?
4. How does Jesus's humanity figure in your faith journey? How does that relationship differ from a belief in religious dogma?
5. What might you say to other people on their own faith journeys up the mountain?

EPISODE TITLE: "Other Sheep"

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 4

Featured Guest: Diana L. Eck

Diana L. Eck is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and Frederic Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society at Harvard University. She serves on the Committee on the Study of Religion in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. She is also a member of the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, a member of the Faculty of Divinity, and Master of Lowell House, one of Harvard's twelve undergraduate residential Houses. She received her B.A from Smith College (1967) in Religion, her M.A. from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (1968) in South Asian History, and her Ph.D. from Harvard University (1976) in the Comparative Study of Religion.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: John 10:11-18

11 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

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Questions:

1. How would you begin to share your faith with people from different traditions?
2. Brian suggests that we must work together with people of other faiths if we want to address some of the world's biggest problems. Where do you see opportunities for that kind of action and dialog?

EPISODE TITLE: "Areopagus to Aerospace"

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 5a

Featured Guest: Brian McLaren

Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, activist, and networker among innovative Christian leaders. His dozen-plus books include *A New Kind of Christianity*, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, *Naked Spirituality*, and *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?* He and his wife, Grace, live in Florida and have four adult children and four grandchildren. He's an avid wildlife and outdoors enthusiast. His newest book, *We Make the Road by Walking*, is available now.



Questions:

1. What stood out for you from Acts 17: 22-31?
2. What do you love about your faith? How would you share that with someone of a different faith?
3. As Christians, how might we live into the distinctness of a faith based in weakness and humility instead of power and strength?

EPISODE TITLE: “Areopagus to Aerospace”

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 5b

Featured Guest: Brian McLaren

Brian D. McLaren is an author, speaker, activist, and networker among innovative Christian leaders. His dozen-plus books include *A New Kind of Christianity*, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, *Naked Spirituality*, and *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?* He and his wife, Grace, live in Florida and have four adult children and four grandchildren. He’s an avid wildlife and outdoors enthusiast. His newest book, *We Make the Road by Walking*, is available now.

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Acts 17: 22-31

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.” ²⁹Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

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Questions:

1. Samir suggests that there may be a danger in assuming that one idea explains everything. What do you think is at risk?
2. What do you think it means to practice in the presence of God in the other?
3. What stood out for you from Colossians 1:13-20?
4. How might your experiences with other faiths make you a better Christian? Has it already happened?

EPISODE TITLE: "In All Things"

The Faith of Jesus in a Pluralistic World, Episode 6

Featured Guest: Samir Selmanovic

Samir Selmanovic, Founder, and Director of Community Engagement at Faith House Manhattan, knows how to create synergy among the stakeholders of an organization and manage them for success. A dynamic community leader since his high school days in former Yugoslavia, Samir was born into complexity with a Muslim father, Christian mother, and an atheist school system, with capitalism to the West and communism to the East. Samir's passion for problem solving propelled him through his B.Sc in Engineering, M.A. in Psychology, M.Div, and Ph.D. His ten years of community leadership as a progressive Christian pastor include a recognition by the organization Muslims Against Terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 in New York City, co-founding a vibrant young adult congregation in Southern California, founding the non-profit Faith House Manhattan, and authoring of *It's Really All About God*, a book about collaboration with the "religious other."

Pneuma Divina Scripture: Colossians 1:13-20

¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.