

### **Week 7 - Discuss *The Sea and Fish Stories***

Do you have trouble believing some of the Bible's miracle stories? Which ones?

How have the Bible's miracle stories been explained to you? Which explanations did you find compelling or unbelievable?

Rachel writes of getting out of the boat. What does that look like for you? What does it mean to "jump when it matters"?

Rachel says that when it comes to belief, sometimes you have to "fake it till you make it," and to "move your feet and your heart will catch up"? Have you found this true in your own life?

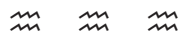
### **Week 8 - Discuss *The Letter, Church Stories, and Epilogue***

What's your reaction when you hear that the Bible says, "slaves obey your masters" and "wives submit to your husbands"? Did you know the context previously? Does context change your thinking?

How has the apostle Paul been regarded in your faith community? Is he held in as high esteem as Christ or is he largely ignored? Do you see his words as illuminating, brilliant, problematic, sexist, outdated, timeless—or perhaps all of the above?

Which Bible story changed the most for you after reading this book? What parts of the Bible are you inspired to explore in more depth?

Rachel says, "If the biggest story we can imagine is about God's loving and redemptive work in the world, then our lives will be shaped by that epic." What does it mean for our lives to be shaped by the story of Scripture?



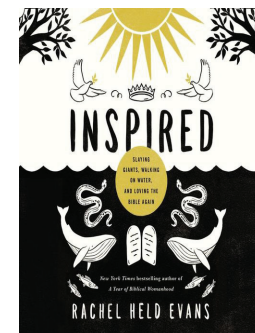
This Discussion Guide is adapted from the 40-page reading guide created by Rachel Held Evans. Her reading guide is online here: <https://gaepiscopal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/InspiredReadingGuide.pdf>

## **EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF GEORGIA**

### **8-Week Discussion Guide**

## *Inspired*

by Rachel Held Evans



Rachel Held Evans said of this book, "*Inspired* is intended to be read, wrestled with, discussed, debated, and creatively engaged with in the context of community." This study is designed to spark just that engagement with *Inspired* through eight sessions of weekly small group discussions.

### **Questions for every week of the study**

Each week, the group may use the following prompts as an icebreaker: How have you seen or experienced God's love in the previous week? Put another away, what has been Godly or what was your moment closest to Christ?

After working through the questions for the week, close with the following questions as time permits:

- What stood out to you in the section you read?
- What reinforced your existing opinions of the Bible and what challenged them?

### **Week 1 - Discuss *the Introduction, The Temple, and Origin Stories***

What Bible story do you remember from childhood? Do you see the story differently now?

Rachel names the ways she saw the Bible in her life, as a storybook, a handbook, or answer book, etc. Which of these do you relate to?

What differences stood out to you in these two creation stories in "The Temple"—the Babylonian account offered by little Haggai and the biblical one offered by his father?

How have you traditionally understood the nature of the Bible's creation stories? As scientific, historical accounts? As myths? How does the context of the Babylonian Exile inform understanding?

What are some ways in which you've observed the Bible treated as a conversation-ender or a conversation-starter?

**Week 2 - Discuss *The Well and Deliverance Stories***

Have there been times in your life when God has "made a way where there seems to be no way"? What did you learn from those experiences?

In what ways has the Bible been used to harm and oppress people? How has it been used for liberation? Do these examples shake your faith in scripture, strengthen it, or a little of both?

When you hear reference to "the Law" in Scripture is your impression positive or negative? Has that changed?

Rachel says that for those who count the Bible as sacred, interpretation is not a matter of whether to pick and choose, but how to pick and choose. Do you agree or disagree with this?

**Week 3 - Discuss *The Wall and War Stories***

Which story from the Bible would you make disappear if you could?

What sort of justifications and explanations have you encountered over the years regarding Israel's conquest of Canaan? Have you found these explanations satisfying? Why or why not?

Rachel finds perspective in 1) paying attention to the experiences of biblical women, 2) keeping humble about her own culture's violent tendencies, 3) seeing in Jesus a God who "would rather die by violence than commit it." Which, if any, of these perspectives do you find most helpful or challenging?

What are some hard questions you have about the Bible that perhaps you've been afraid to confront? What might it mean to continue in your faith, even if your doubts are not fully resolved?

**Week 4 - Discuss *The Debate, and Wisdom Stories***

Rachel says, "In many ways, the Bible of my youth was set up to fail." Have your expectations of the Bible ever disappointed you?

How have you observed wisdom as circumstantial? What are some examples of advice being helpful and true in one scenario, but false in another (like "you reap what you sow")?

Were you aware of the Bible's "angry psalms"? Why might there be a need for them in scripture?

What do you make of the claim that the Bible includes tensions and even contradictions?

**Week 5 - Discuss *The Beast, and Resistance Stories***

Do you ever feel hopeless or cynical about the injustices in the world around you? Does anything from this chapter encourage you?

What comes into your mind when you hear the word apocalyptic? Has that changed since reading this chapter? What about prophet and prophecy?

Who are some people you consider to be modern-day prophets who are willing to speak up for the marginalized?

What's your experience with the book of Revelation? How has your interpretation of that text changed and evolved?

**Week 6 - Discuss *The Water and Gospel Stories***

When did you first encounter Jesus? What about the message or the presence of Jesus first struck you as "good news"?

What are some of your favorite stories from the gospels? Is there one encounter someone had with Jesus that always moves you? Why do you think that story strikes you the way that it does?

What is the gospel for you?

Rachel says it is fruitless to try and turn the gospel into a statement when God so clearly gave us a story, a person. Agree or disagree?