

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. ***Enjoy discovering more about Him!***

"WHEN LIFE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE" | LUKE 7: 18-22 | PASTOR ANDREW PAULSEN

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What was confusing this past year?

"Senseless Circumstances" Luke 7: 18

John is confused. Instead of living out his purpose, he is stuck in jail and isolated, leading to doubts and questions.

- What kinds of circumstances cause confusion today?

"Lean Not On Your Own Understanding" 1 Samuel 28: 3-10

King Saul repeatedly followed his own advice and that of others in wrong places instead of following God's word and godly leaders.

- What's the difference between following your own sense and following the Holy Spirit?

"Good Community Makes Sense" Luke 7: 19

John sends two friends to talk to Jesus because he's stuck and can't himself.

- What keeps people from allowing their community to life them up in prayer?
- Describe a time you needed others to pray for you.

"Jesus Makes Perfect Sense" Luke 7:20-22

Jesus tells the disciples to share with John that God is healing and moving hearts like John hoped and prophecies foretold.

- Why is this message comforting to John in prison?
- How does Jesus meet His followers who are confused today?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Life will often not make sense. God asks people to trust in His way and not their own. Jesus is the way, and trusting in Him will not disappoint. He will be with us through all the ups and downs, bringing assurance and peace.

- Have you been leaning on your own understanding lately? How has that impacted you and others?
- What is an area that you can trust God in this week instead of yourself?
- Who can you ask to pray for you this week?
- Pray and wait for God to show you His ways are true and His promises are real.

Intro

Happy New Year! Thank you for starting off the first Sunday of 2026 with us here at Calvary Murrieta. Pastor Brian and his wife Kelly are still visiting their daughter, son-in-law and grandkids in SE Asia, catching up and encouraging them on the mission field. Many of you have been doing the same, having time with family and friends, looking back as you also look ahead. As we look back, many of us have looked at the top this of 2025 and top that, either in pop culture or in our own unique hobbies and journey. Do you know what was the highest grossing movie for most of 2025? I'm ashamed to say, Minecraft. If you haven't seen it, you're not missing much, I tried to forget it after watching it on a flight home. And then of course, the word or phrase that took 2025 by storm was.... Yes, 6-7. If you think about it, middle school boys ruled pop culture of 2025, and they can be the most non-sensical creatures. And these trends weren't just weird, but disruptive. Movie theaters started demanding parents sit with their kids for Minecraft to control the popcorn throwing at the Chicken jockey scene. Teachers, especially in math, banned the phrase of 6-7, and fast food restaurants had to even program their registers to not use those numbers for customers. And people, including so many of you, were saying, this doesn't make sense.

Dadaism- Art

Over a hundred years ago, many people were seeing something similar, though it pretended to be more sophisticated. You see, in the early 1920s, the other 20s, there was an artistic movement called Dadaism. Here's an image of a work produced by Hannah Hoch. Take a moment to look at it, what comes to mind, what do you feel? You can see the word "Da-da" in it, not Dada.

Dadaism- Quote

As one of the early leaders of Dada movement said: "Dada means nothing. We want to change the world with nothing."—Richard Huelsenbeck

You see, during and after World War I, with all its death and destruction, along with the deadliest pandemic in modern times, the Spanish Flu, many had given up on life. It was a time period of disillusionment, and Dadaism represented an embrace of the senselessness people felt. Could the Minecraft movie and "6-7" and so many other things in our culture also be a sign that after Covid and combative elections and inflation and AI, life isn't making sense to so many? That they might as well enjoy the absurd?

Maybe that's too deep, maybe many of you don't pay much attention to the larger world, but still life is confusing. Medical challenges popping up out of nowhere, relationship drama that seems unfair, work is difficult and money is tight. Or just a nagging feeling that this all just doesn't make sense.

Most of us feel like this at some point, if not often, even as believers and followers of Jesus. If you thought real Christians never have tough questions or doubts, you're mistaken.

When Life Doesn't Make Sense

So what does the Bible teach about when life doesn't make sense. What wisdom does it offer? I'd like to look at a moment in John the Baptist's life when he was confused and doubting and point out some things we can all learn from.

Let's Pray

Please look up, turn, click on Luke 7:18-22

¹⁸The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" ²⁰And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" ²¹In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ²²And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them

Senseless Circumstances

Why is John confused? He had a miraculous birth, been raised by Godly parents, and had become quite popular in his ministry by the river. All kinds of people had flocked to him, including political and religious leaders. It seems the prophecies his father had shared at his birth were coming to pass. He had even baptized his cousin Jesus and had seen and heard God confirm that Jesus was His Son. So why the questions?

He's in prison. King Herod had thrown him in jail for speaking out against his immoral divorce and marriage to his sister-in-law. John had always been bold in speaking the truth, but instead of getting cheers from the people for his courage, he's in a cell, isolated and alone. How does this line up with his calling and purpose? He's supposed to prepare the way for the Messiah, not doing time in the dungeon.

Did John have unfair expectations? I don't think so, but still, he's having to adjust to what God has allowed and it doesn't make sense. His circumstances don't line up with where he thought life would be.

So many of us can identify with that I'm sure. So in senseless circumstances, what do we do?

Well, many of you know a famous proverb, I bet John knew it too. Proverbs 3:5 says "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

I love that this wisdom says what to do, and also what not to do. And there's a great example of what not to do in the life of King Saul, found in 1 Samuel.

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding: King Saul

Saul was like John in that he had been given a special task by God. Saul was anointed the first King of Israel by the prophet Samuel. But at key moments in his life, times when life didn't make sense, he didn't listen to God and leaned on his own understanding. And the story of Saul's life often can produce pity. He just keeps blowing it, letting fear and jealousy and insecurity get the best of him. Pity can lead to compassion and empathy for someone. But we have to stop there. Because pity can lead to excuses, and then excuses lead to enabling, and that doesn't help anyone.

Right after Samuel tells him the message from God, Samuel brings him before the people to be anointed king. But Saul had hidden among bags and baskets. He was afraid, this new path didn't make sense. So he hid until the crowd found him. Now we can be fooled into making excuses for Saul. Poor guy, he's afraid and anxious. And that's true, but he had just heard God's message and purpose for his life. Saul was choosing to listen to his fears and hide instead of obey God in that moment. How many of us can relate to that mistake?

Some time later, Saul was supposed to wait for Samuel to offer sacrifices and bless the soldiers before going into war. But Samuel was delayed, Saul got impatient. Waiting too long before war didn't make sense. So Saul did the ceremony himself and went into battle. The battle was much more difficult than it should have been and Saul was criticized for his actions. How many of us have blown it in our impatience?

Another time, Saul was told by God to destroy all the spoils of war. To Saul and I'm sure to his soldiers, that seemed like such a waste. Why not use this for offerings and sacrifices, to reward those who put their lives on the line? It doesn't make sense. So Saul disobeys God and he is rebuked. How many of us have let our greed, our desire for stuff, lead us to disobey God?

And then Saul, after apologizing, asks Samuel to still come with him so he looks good in front of the people. This again shows he doesn't get it. How many of us have let our concern reputation or image lead us down the wrong path?

Near the end of Saul's life, after Samuel had died, Saul had been rejected as king by God, and David had been anointed next in line. Saul had to defend Israel again and panicked because he didn't have his same people in his life. Nothing made sense anymore. So he sought out a medium, a pagan priestess to try to speak with the dead for some guidance. And he is condemned for his actions. How many of us have turned to wrong advice from wrong places in our broken relationships?

Leaning on our own understanding or listening to fools and arrogant people makes senseless circumstances worse.

But John the Baptist shows wisdom, he doesn't lean on himself.

Good Community Makes Sense

John sends his disciples to ask Jesus for clarity it says in verse 19. He can't go himself, he's stuck. But instead of giving up or isolating himself further, he asks for help. He leans on his close friends and helpers who are able to go to Jesus for him.

Having wise family and friends, people who will pray on your behalf and share God's wisdom, is so important when life doesn't make sense. Countless studies bear this out and many of us can remember times when we had to lean on others.

When my father was tragically killed by a drunk driver while walking in his neighborhood, my family was thrown in confusion. Life didn't make sense at all, none of it. But so many good Christian friends and family were there, providing comfort, help and going to Jesus for us. At times I couldn't pray or share because of the shock and grief. I needed others to go God for me, like the paralytic whose friends carried him to Jesus. Letting others lift you up and pray the prayers you should but can't are so important. Good community makes sense when life doesn't.

Jesus Makes Perfect Sense

When John's disciples reach Jesus, He gives them a message for John. John needed to be reminded that prophecies were being fulfilled, that healings and miracles were proof that the Kingdom of God was here. That's what John needed to be reminded of, that even though he was in the dark and isolated, things were happening, despite his imprisonment. Often, that's what God does, reminds us that He is control and He is working things out. That's also His way of humbling us, reminding us that life isn't about us and He's at work without us and we were never meant to be the hero or star.

Jesus knows what we need. He has the right words, right people, right opportunities for us. His timing is different, his purposes and goals are different than ours. Waiting for Him is hard, accepting His answers aren't always easy. But Jesus Makes Perfect Sense. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. So any sense He offers us is the perfect sense. He created wisdom, so His Sense is Perfect, automatically. His ways may not be what we want at first, and they aren't easy, but His words are true and his promises can be trusted, and He walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death. Because that's what John is facing, he will stay in prison and be executed. And Jesus gives him the assurance that he needs that he put his trust in the right place. Jesus makes perfect sense when life doesn't.

So as the worship team comes up, I want to challenge you to pray along with me. No matter where you are right now, healthy or sick, wealthy or poor, surrounded by love or desperately lonely, we all need God's wisdom. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.

Let's Pray

You know, the night Jesus shared his last meal with his friends and followers, he knew before they did they needed to be challenged and encouraged. In a few hours, life would definitely not make sense. Their master and friend would be arrested, beaten and crucified in a senseless act of injustice and cruelty. For the only man to ever live a perfect life to die the death of a traitor and criminal doesn't make sense. But that's what had to happen so we could have life with God forever, where everything makes sense. So Jesus gave them something to remember the reason why this all happened, something to remind them that He died to not just bring comfort or remove confusion, but to save a broken world from evil. So if you also would like to remember and honor what Jesus did on the cross, during this next song please head to a table in the back, on the side, or in the front to get the double cup of juice and bread and we'll take communion together.

Song

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread and broke it, saying this is my body, broken for you. Remember and eat.

And in the same way, he took the cup, saying this my blood, poured out for many. Drink and remember.

Pray