

## STUDY GUIDE

### OVERVIEW

[Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power – and How They Can Be Restored](#)

### QUESTIONS

Possible conversations with others as you read **Speaking Christian**.

- Marcus suggests that being Christian includes “speaking Christian.” Knowing and understanding the language of our Scriptures, the tradition, its meanings and its ethos. He also recognizes that there are a variety of Christianity’s (this might have been true from the beginning) that define belief, the content of our faith, the purpose of our worship, the interpretation of the bible, what it means to be Christian. These contrasting and often competing views are contributing to an identity crisis as to what it means to be Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. What is your observation of this? How do you see the tension of conflicting claims and mission within Christianity? How serious is this matter for you? And how does it affect your being Christian (or not) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- Marcus talks about a “heaven-and-hell” framework (pg 10ff) that emphasizes an afterlife, sin and forgiveness, and Jesus dying for our sins as the default position of orthodox Christianity. Marcus challenges this claim. Give some thought to the implications of this “heaven-and-hell” framework. How has it shaped your understanding of life, ourselves, Jesus, God, Christianity? As they say, how is that going for you? Keep in mind that the worldview of the Bible is pre-Enlightenment, pre-scientific, and based on a monarchical model of Reality. And if being Christian is not about going to heaven and saving us from hell what is it about?
- Marcus identifies that all religions are “cultural-linguistic traditions.” (pg. 6) What does he mean by that and how is that helpful in understanding Christianity then and now?
- Marcus insists that the Scriptures were not written for us. They were written for and by their ancient communities. Is this surprising? How are we to understand what was believed “then” to what we believe “now”? Consider the importance of context, world-view and why keeping both in mind is crucial in reading the Bible and understanding the language of our tradition.
- In Chapter two, Marcus explains that biblical literalism or the idea of the factual inerrancy of scripture first appeared in the late 1600’s in reaction to the Enlightenment. (pg. 25) Inerrancy and literalism are modern ideas not ancient. Is this a surprise? Marcus suggests an *historical-metaphorical approach* for understanding Christian language and scripture. What does he mean by this? Does this open possible meanings and purpose of the scriptures? Does it make reading the Bible more interesting? How might this approach help us “speak Christian”? What do you think?



*the*  
**MARCUS J BORG**  
*Foundation*

- In Chapters 3-21 Marc selects one of the “big” words of Christianity and unpacks its meaning and application. Pick a word and discuss your understanding of it. Then review how Marcus understands the word. Compare. Consider how you came to an understanding of that word and what you learn from the chapter. How does this affect your understanding of how you came to “speak Christian”? And why “speaking Christian” might need to evolve?
- “Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words Have Lost Their Meaning and Power – *And How They Can be Restored*” is the title of this book. Arguably, “speaking Christian” and restoring its meaning and power is a task for education. What might that education include? And how might education affect the future of Christianity?

## FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback. Give us suggestions, comments, what was helpful, what was not, so we can provide better study guides. No suggestion is too small. What other resources would be helpful for you? We appreciate your help. We would also like to know how you used these guides, for individual study or groups?

[Provide Feedback](#)