



Group Discussion Guide: God Is Near | September 26, 2021

Begin with Scripture + prayer (5 minutes).

Read Psalm 139. Once finished, spend a few moments in prayerful silence. Finally, after conversation have a specified person in the group pray for your time together.

Split out into triads and recap last week's devotionals (15 minutes).

- What from the devotionals this past week resonated with you? What deepened your faith? Explain.
- Which day of devotions challenged you the most? Why?
- What might God be inviting you into as a result of your devotional time this past week?

Come back together as a large group, read Scripture, and debrief the sermon as one large group (45 minutes).

- What stood out from your smaller group discussions regarding your devotions this past week?
- What from the sermon this past weekend stood out to you? What resonated? What challenged you?
- In this sermon, guest Laura and Dan talked about God's nearness or His *immanence*. Would you say that God feels near to you? Or no?
- If you answered "yes," to the question above, what is the experience of the nearness like for you? How did you "develop" it or grow in it?
- If you answered "no," what barriers are keeping you from experiencing God as being near?
- In this talk, Laura laid out how God has been pursuing nearness to His people since the beginning. Starting with Adam and Eve all the way to God sending His Spirit to be with us, God has been wanting to be close. When you think of this desire over the course of human history, how does that make you feel?
- As you look over the course of *your* history, do you get the sense that God wanted to be near to you personally? Or no? Explain.



- Take a few moments to look up and read the following bible verses: **Jeremiah 23:24**; **Psalms 34:18**; **Psalms 145:18**; **Philippians 4:5**; **Matthew 1:23**; and **Matthew 28:20**. What do these passages tell you about God's desire for being near?
- When Laura began talking about God being near in the context of **Psalms 139** (which you might want to re-read again), she mentioned that God's wants an *intimate* relationship with each of us personally. When you hear that, what is your gut reaction? Is that something you desire? Is that something you have with God? If yes, explain what that looks like for you? If no, why not?
- What barriers do you think people in our culture experience that keep them from intimately experiencing God's presence in their lives? What barriers exist for you?
- What do you think needs to be changed or rearranged to practice the presence of God in your life more and more?

Practice (30 minutes).

PREPARE

This practice of stillness and silence and prayer will help you connect with God. Before beginning, gather your Bible, pen, journal or paper, candle (optional), a timer, the two pieces of artwork (print out or have them available on a screen) plain paper, colors, or markers.

QUIET

Get comfortable. Withdraw from distractions. Light a candle if you like. Quiet your body and mind. Release tension. Rest in God's presence. Take a few slow, deep, cleansing breaths—inhaling God's love...exhaling stress...inhaling God's goodness...exhaling distractions...inhaling God's peace...exhaling heaviness.

READING

Read **Psalms 46** thoughtfully, taking note of what stands out to you, what pictures form in your mind.



NOTICE

What stood out to you or what pictures came to mind? Write about these in your journal or on paper. How might this relate to you right now? Write your thoughts.

Consider **verse 10**, “Be still, and know that I am God.” The Bible tells us that God is everywhere—right here, right now—even though you cannot see him. You are being still WITH God. Being still in this verse is a drop-your-arms, let-go-of-everything kind of still. It means release control, cease striving. How does this feel? What do you want to let go of? Write about it.

PRAY

Prayerfully consider the changes, challenges, sadness, disappointments, fears, or loneliness you have been facing in this season. Write or draw these out. Now, prayerfully, write or draw what you know to be true about God—the truths and attributes that remind you of his loving care.

Reflect on what you have heard from God, what you have written, invitations you are receiving from Him. Write a prayer of response to Him.

DEBRIEF

Reconnect with your group and share your experiences with one another. Share what stood out. Share any potential God moments or invitations from God that you had. Share about your experience of His nearness. Did He feel close? Distant? Explore that with your group.

Finish with intercessory prayer (5 minutes).

Like each week, finish your group session with prayer. You might designate someone in your group to write down everyone’s prayer requests and then send them to the whole group for everyone to be praying about through the week.

- What is on your heart that you need prayer for?
- Who in your life needs prayer?

Have someone close your time together by interceding for the requests that were shared.