

BIG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

**11.29/30.08 // THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON
TO HAVE GOD'S PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES WE MUST INVITE HIM AND CELEBRATE OUR
THANKFULNESS WITH CONCERN FOR OTHERS.**

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: How did your family celebrate Thanksgiving? Was thanks actually given?

Option 2: What is your favorite Thanksgiving memory?

// Questions for Discussion _____

The word "holiday" comes from the words "holy day" – a day set apart especially to acknowledge God. What do you think people are really celebrating during the holidays? How much does it have to do with God?

God is both above and beyond His creation (his "transcendence"), and deeply near and involved in His creation (his "immanence"). What does the Bible say about God's presence in Heaven? How is he present in heaven differently than being present everywhere else?

God is present in a unique way in Jesus Christ—it was his most dramatic demonstration of His immanence. When Jesus spoke about being one with God the Father, what did He mean? Read these verses that speak of Jesus:

Matthew 1:23 The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, "God with us."

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 10:30: [Jesus said] "I and the Father are one."

Philippians 2:6 ...Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped [held onto]...

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form....

How is the Holy Spirit the most personal and powerful presence of God to us? How do you receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit? Read:

John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

How does an individual's life demonstrate the presence of God? What about God's presence in the Church, the Body of Christ? Read:

Acts 11:21 The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Romans 5:5-8 5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. 6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What are some ways that we can seek more of God's presence in our lives this holiday season?

Read Deuteronomy 4:9-10

9Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. **10** Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."

We can "practice God's presence" in prayer, hearing Him in the Bible, and in community with other believers. What are some practical tips for seeking God through His Word? When and where can you set up a "time to meet with God?"

A young woman from a congregation across town visits our church and after the service she says, "I did not sense the Lord's presence in your worship." When you ask her, "Why?" she responds, "People did not seem to be in the presence of God, their body language told me that they were not really swept into the Spirit's moving. They did not worship with feeling." Is she responding from a valid Biblical perspective or is she just expressing a style preference?

Through studying God's word and prayer we can learn the principles for a Christ-like life. What would it look like if we demonstrated concern for people and their needs first?

"No one is ready to take on the depths unless he or she is fed up with the superficial" (Charles Swindoll). What are some ways to set our hearts away from the world, and seek His presence?

// Prayer _____

Pray for more of God's presence in your life...that you would have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ.

Pray for your eyes to be opened to opportunities to help others in need.