

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).

1.24/25.09 // THE STORY OF EVERYTHING

BiG iDEA: God is Love

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: What are your very first memories of life as a child?

Option 2: What are some of your favorite stories?

// Questions for Discussion _____

How have you tended to view God in the past (or maybe even today): A kindly Grandpa? Santa Clause? A critical Judge? The Big Guy Upstairs? Something else?

When questioned, less than 5% of Americans would deny the existence of some sort of god, but beliefs vary as to the nature of that god. What three words would you use to best describe God? What three words do you think others in the world would use? Read 1 John 4:8

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

So what is the God like that Christ-followers believe in? Christian theology uniquely believes that He is a three persons-in-one God. NT Wright in *Simply Christian* said "Only the Christian tradition, out of the great monotheistic faiths, has explored in any detail the belief that the Creator Himself contains within himself a multiple relationship." How would you describe the Trinity? What helpful pictures, if any, have you heard used to describe it? "

Read Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning, God...the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters

Read John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word ...and the Word was God.

Read Genesis 1:26

"...And God said 'Let us make man in our own image. "

God made us in His image to love and be loved. How would you describe your "reason for living"? What events in your life have shaped it? Is it bringing you the satisfaction you are looking for?

Read 1 John 4:8-10

"God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Read 1 John 3:18-19

"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence."

Though it's to get bogged down in the logic of the 3 in 1 God, why is it so important to Christ-followers that we understand this Trinity idea? What does it say about our nature, and what we were made for, since we were made in the image of God? What does it say about the point and focus of our existence?

Sometimes people think that life with God is one that is less joyful and fulfilling, yet Jesus claims that He came to give us life "to the fullest." What do you think He meant? Has following God made any sort of impact on your life?

In John 10:10, Jesus says "I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest."

God has a dream for us. Life began with everything in wholeness and harmony. The Bible describes this as “*Shalom*”, everything as it is supposed to be. Our relationship with God and our relationships with each other were unbroken. Then sin showed up and fragmented this perfection, truly “all hell broke loose”. It is God’s dream that perfection will be restored. We believe that Jesus is the solution to the problem.

Do you have a dream for the future of your life? Does the idea of God having a dream for your life mean anything to you? Could the two dreams coincide?

Read Acts 3:21

“He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.”

Read Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future.”

While we continue to rebel against the God who made us, He pursues us. He is waiting to restore the original deep and personal relationship that originally existed between God and human beings before sin entered into the world. God is not a force to be reckoned with, or merely an authority to be dealt with, or someone just to be leveraged in time of need. He loves us and wants to be included in every part of our lives.

What can we do to get to know the true God and to learn to relate to Him in the way He wants for us? Read 1 John 3:21-24

“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”

// Application _____

Read and commit to memory 1 John 4:9

This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.

“God is closer than you think.” (John Ortberg)

As a Christ-follower my life is founded on a relationship with the God who made me and desires to be in community with me. Am I consciously aware of him as I go about my day? How would my life be different if I was?

Our mission as a church is to restore the dream of God, to be a community of oneness.

What could this look like? What changes would we need to make in our lives to bring it about?

// Prayer _____

Pray asking God for a desire to know Him and love Him the way He loves you.

Pray to be filled with the knowledge and intimate experience of His love.