



LIVE the **WORD**

IT'S EVERYTHING!

SMALL GROUP LEADER
God With Us

God With Us

SCRIPTURE READING: Is. 7:14; Rev. 21:3

Group leaders should:

- **"Set the table" for interaction and group discussion by (4 minutes):**
 - explaining the idea of the week's theme
 - explaining the context of the main passage(s) to be discussed
- **Debrief from weekly reading (8-10 minutes)**
- **Facilitating, Discipling, Guiding, Shepherding (30 minutes)**

Small Group Questions:

- 1. When was the time of your greatest satisfaction in relationship with another person? What did that feel like?**
- 2. In what ways would Adam and Eve's relationship with one another been better than that? In what ways would Adam and Eve's relationship with God have been even greater still?**
- 3. How does abiding with Jesus today relate to enjoying the presence of God in the Garden of Eden?**
- 4. How can you prepare today for an eternity in the presence of God?**

SET THE TABLE

Intro.

We were made for relationships. Relationships with those we love are a blessing from God. At the same time the goodness of these relationships; the anticipation of reunion after extended separation, a goodnight kiss, and the intimacy of a long walk on the beach with your beloved are all preaching the gospel to us. The deep longings and satisfactions of life are pointing us to the greater- God with us!

Genesis 1-3 (Created in His presence)

Adam and Eve were created to be with God in the garden. Put another way, mankind was created to dwell in the presence of God. Take a close look at Genesis 1-3 and this becomes clear. As people who have only experienced life as fallen creatures it is hard to imagine, but I want you to do just that. Imagine living in the unfiltered resplendent glorious presence of God. You can't can you? How can the finite contemplate the infinite? Yet the truth remains. Mankind was created to dwell in the perfect presence of God. Every relationship that you enjoy, every person you long to spend time with is a tiny hint at the glory of living in the eternal presence of the Lord.

Genesis 3-11 (The world apart from His presence)

Adam and Eve sin and are exiled from the garden, the land of God's presence. After the Garden of Eden (Cain and Abel, Noah, Tower of Babel) we watch as humanity disintegrates from trying to live with success outside of God's presence. This is a problem of mammoth proportions. Because of sin, man is no longer fit to live in God's presence and without God's presence humanity and the world necessarily descends into chaos and death.

Genesis 12- Rest of OT (God's people in and out of His presence)

God reveals Himself to Abram and from Abram creates Israel, a people to dwell in God's presence. The majority of the OT is the chronicling and explanation of the presence of God as the sure way of success for this new people, the bright spots of blessing as time and again Israel lives in God's presence, and the inevitable result of failure as Israel chooses to live life on their own terms so that they are exiled from God's presence and the land is ruined.

Jesus in the Gospels (Jesus brings God's presence to us)

One of Jesus' names is Immanuel which means "God with us." Jesus is God with us. He is the embodiment of the presence of God come to humanity. Jesus is fully God without any reduction in essence or glory. Sinful man should not be able to survive in His presence. In the incarnation, Jesus comes into the midst of humanity by becoming human. He does this so that those who believe in Him can live in His presence.

SET THE TABLE

Jesus Today (How to live in God's presence all the time)

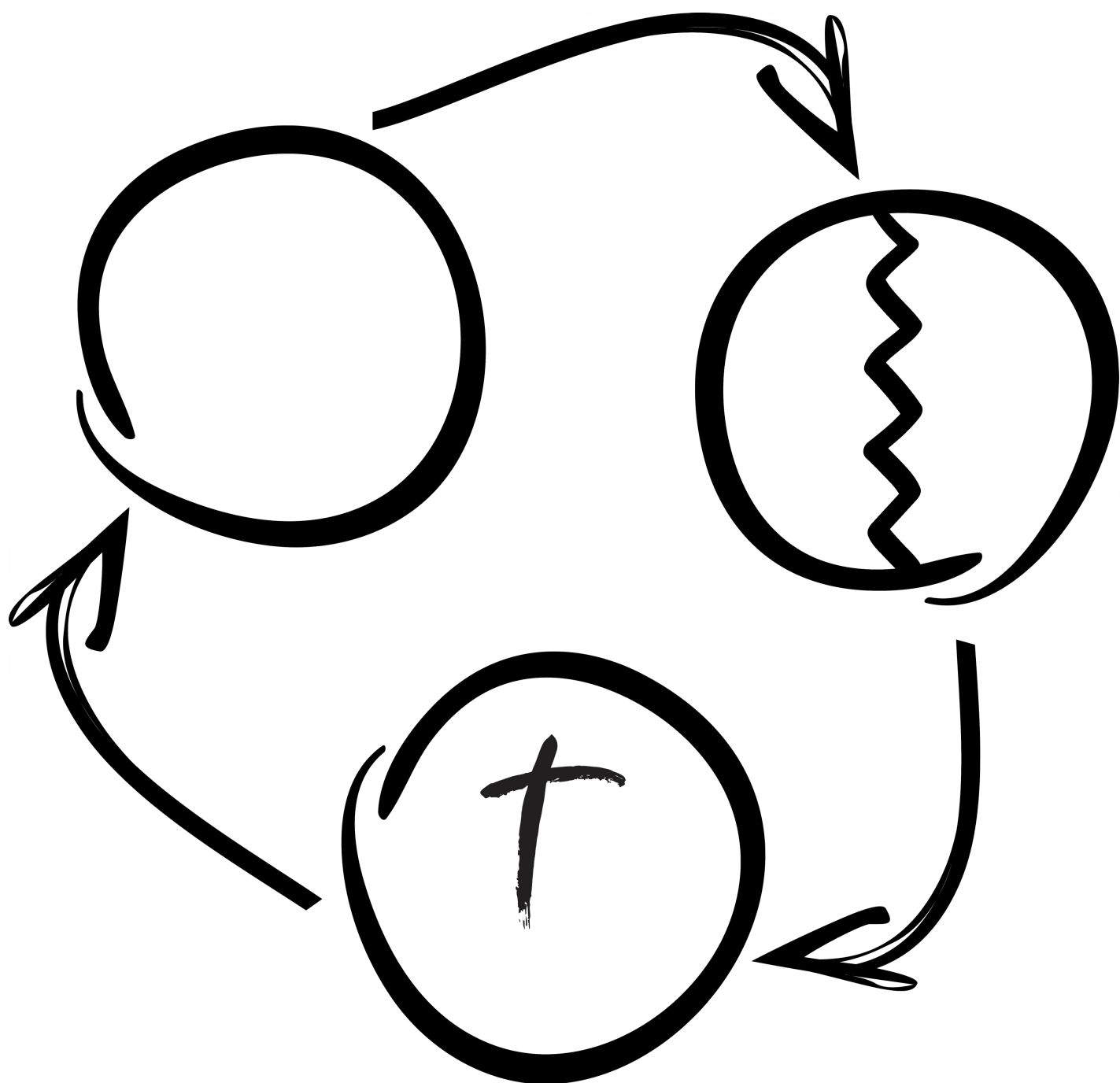
Today followers of Jesus are called to abide (dwell) in Jesus by walking in the Holy Spirit. As believers do this, they are actually living in the presence of God, the sure way of success for God's people.

Jesus Tomorrow (Living in God's presence for all time)

Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God"

One day Jesus will return and make the world and His followers whole. No more brokenness. Revelation 21 makes clear that the essence of that reality will be the presence of God with us. That day will be the climax of the goodness of the presence of God. The sermon of every relationship, every embrace of a loved one, and reunion after the pain of separation from someone you cannot live without will be explained and fulfilled in the presence of God.

Concluding Thought- If the emphasis of Christmas is "God with us," then the whole Bible is about Christmas.



God With Us - Commentary

Jesus is God with us. This truth is at the heart of the gospel. It is the eternal plan of God. God with us means salvation is God initiated and God accomplished salvation in Jesus, the God-man. It means that Jesus is the only qualified Savior.

God with us. Jesus was willing to leave the glory of heaven to come to earth. He was willing to be carried in a virgin's womb. He was willing to be born in the humility of the barn. He was willing to be found in the fashion of a man. He was willing to shed His blood for our sins.

Created to live in God's Presence. Adam and Eve were created to be with God in the garden. Put another way, mankind was created to dwell in the presence of God. All one needs to do is take a close look at Genesis 1-3 to recognize this. As people who have only ever experienced life as fallen creatures it is hard to imagine, but I want you to do just that. Imagine living in the unfiltered resplendent glory of God. You can't can you? How can the finite contemplate the infinite? Yet the truth remains. Mankind was created and you and I were saved to dwell in the perfect presence of God. Every relationship that you enjoy, every person you long to spend time with is a tiny hint at the glory of living in the eternal presence of the Lord.

The Promise. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, He pronounced the judgement on their sin and on the serpent. But in judgment He gives the first promise of the gospel of God with us. It is the promise of the uniquely born seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).

The Prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 is the prophecy of the virgin birth of Emmanuel, "God with us. Matthew 1:22-23 is the fulfillment of the prophecy in the angel's proclamation to Joseph.

His Coming.

- *Who—the eternal Word became flesh to dwell among us (John 1:14).*
- *How—the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and the power of the Most High God overshadowed her, so as a virgin she bore the holy Son of God.*
- *Why—"Jesus" will save His people from their sin. And, to be given the throne of David and His reign and kingdom will be forever.*

His Coming Again

In Revelation 19:11-16 we have a picture of Jesus coming again. His name is the Word of God. The Word that was in the being with God and was God. The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, is coming again as King of kings, and Lord of lords.