



Getting Close to God Is Possible

Derek Sanford

January 7, 2018

Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. Talk about what each member hopes to get out of this study.
3. Read **Psalms 139:1-10**. Have group members share their answer to the reading plan question on day 1: How do you know God desires a close relationship with you?
4. Read **Revelation 21:3**. Have the group members identify some of the situations they experienced this week where they could see God's presence. How can and will this affect their life?
5. Read **Isaiah 41:10**. Have group members identify areas of their lives where they are currently fearful or overwhelmed. How might God's presence give them peace in those areas? Take time to pray for each other that the presence of the heavenly Father would give them peace.
6. Read **James 4:8**. The phrase "Draw near" carries with it the idea of joining one thing to another. It is not just that they are in the same vicinity as God but that we are united together with Him. Discuss why that is significant.

Next Steps: Encourage each other to commit to attending all of the services in this series. If someone can't physically come to church they could commit to watch it online.

Prayer Thought:

- **ADORATION:** Worship God for drawing close to us
- **CONFESSION:** Confess all things we do and think that keep us from reaching out to God
- **THANKSGIVING:** Thank the Father how he comes into a loving relationship with us
- **SUPPLICATION:** Ask God to draw us, or families, our Life Groups and our church into a closer walk with Him

Suggested Memory Verse: **James 4:8** "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded."



Close to God: CHAIR CHALLENGE FOR 2018

Pastor Derek Sanford

January 14, 2018

Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. What was your experience with "Finding Your Chair" in 2017? How would you like your experience in 2018 to be different?
3. Read **1 Peter 1:23-2:3** and talk about what a hungry baby is like. As a group, how can you challenge each other to crave God's Word like that?
4. Read **Psalms 19:7-11** and list some of the things God's Word does for us. Ask one person to share a concern or problem they are facing and have the group find help for that in God's Word. You can use a concordance (index in the back of your Bible) or even Google search.
5. Read **Psalms 119:97-106**. Why does the psalmist love God's Word so much? (remember he probably only had early portions of the Old Testament) How can we 'acquire a taste' or 'develop an appetite' for the Bible?
6. Read **1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4**. Pastor Derek said Bible characters can become mentors for us. With which Bible character do you most closely identify? Why?
7. LEADER: Look at the daily Bible Readings for this week at whoisgrace.com/read and choose one question to use with your group.

Next Steps: As a group, develop a plan to hold one another accountable for finding your chair (ie. text reminders, share at your group meetings)

Prayer Thought: Thank You, Father, for giving us the gift of Your Word, and thank You, Jesus, for coming to speak God's Word to us through your life on earth. We want to know You and to learn to love Your Word. Help us overcome the distractions of our lives and find our chair so we can hear from You. Amen.



Close to God: SILENCE

Pastor Brian Lusky

January 21, 2018

Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. Share with one another your experiences with silence in the past or during this week.
3. (If anyone in the group attended the L2L Blitz ask them to share what they learned about silence and Sabbath)
4. Read **Matthew 3:13- Matthew 4:11**. How did Jesus' time in the wilderness prepare him for his ministry?
5. Watch this short, 2 minute, clip from Right Now Media about soul weariness: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/197266> (from Garrett Higbee, Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Coalition).
6. Read **Matthew 11:28-30**. How is your soul wearied and burdened in this season? What does Jesus promise?
7. How could regular times of rest, silences, Sabbath prevent us from becoming soul weary?
8. Read **1 Kings 19:1-18**. Elijah was soul weary. Where and how did God meet him? Derek reminded us during Christmas at the Warner that God whispered to Elijah because He was close. How does this encourage you in the season you are in?

Next Steps: What is your first step toward more space for silence and rest in your life? How can this group care for one another and encourage one another in this discipline of silence?

Prayer Thought: Thank, Father, that you care for us and love us so much that you intend for us to rest and be silent. Thank you for being close to us and speaking to us in the silence. May we seek you and find you and be filled with more of you.



Close to God: CELEBRATION

January 28, 2018

Pastor Derek Sanford

Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. The Big Idea for this week's sermon is: **"We need to get serious about our celebration!"** Has your church and religious experience focused upon the importance of celebration and joy? Do we find evidence in God's Word for His expressions of joy? Can we find His commands to us to celebrate and seek joy in our Christian walk?
3. Derek shared two Celebration Traps:
 - a. We must always appear to be happy
 - b. God merely tolerates JoyHow are these attitudes and behaviors counterproductive as we work to spread the good news of the Gospel?
4. **Read Nehemiah 8:9-10.** Why are the people of Israel weeping as the scribe, Ezra, reads from the Book of the Covenant?
5. What is Nehemiah's reaction to the people's grief and weeping?
6. How does God, through Nehemiah, connect celebration and joy with sharing and giving?

Next Steps: Derek encouraged us to "Choose joy". With the following sermon comments, he reminded us that choosing joy is a choice:

"By focusing our lives on the good things that God has provided and by constantly thanking Him for these things, we will become joyful; we will realize our reasons to celebrate. And once we decide to focus on these things, we will become so full of these things that most of our problems will seem small and insignificant."

Do you have experience with this sort of willful experience of joy? Discuss how can you begin to apply Derek's recommendations.

Prayer Thought: Lord, convict us daily of the many, many blessings that might prompt our joyfulness. Grow us in the discipline of seeking and recognizing opportunities to sense joy and to celebrate it throughout each day. Father, also guide us in the understanding that joy is gained through sharing and giving of our time and treasure. Help us to be generous and kind and aware of opportunities to find and celebrate joy.