

in all things

PRE-GATHERING BIBLE STUDY #4

GOD DWELLS WITH HIS PEOPLE IN THE STORY OF ALL THINGS

MATERIALS:

- Bibles (participants will be asked to write in their Bibles)
- Pens/Pencils
- 1 Participant Guide per student

GOALS:

1. This study will show participants how God uses the temple and His dwelling to display his presence as He reveals His character repeatedly in the Bible. (We call repeating big ideas like these, “Biblical Themes.”)
2. Through reading and re-reading the Scriptures, this study will help participants see God’s desire to be present with His creation and how He continues to dwell with His people in all things.

LEADER NOTE: *In the story of all things, God constantly pursues His people and draws near to them. When we read the Bible, we see clear signs of God’s presence on numerous occasions. Over and over again in Scripture, we hear the promises of God reminding us that “He will not leave you or forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6). The Israelites experienced God’s presence through the building of the tabernacle, God speaking to various people like Moses, Isaiah, etc. and in the incarnation of Jesus Himself (“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)). In the story of all things that Paul tells in Colossians, he writes, “For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” (Colossians 1:19), God’s presence continues to come to His people, “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”*

**Before introducing this next study, take some time to recap what you and your group have learned from reading and re-reading the stories from the first Pre-Gathering Bible study. The hope is that all of these Bible studies connect together and help participants start piecing together various parts of the story of all things. **

INTRODUCTION:

Game—Grandma’s Watching (You can choose to split into teams, depending on the size of your group for this activity.)

1. Decide on one person in your group to be “Grandma”. Have them stand at the opposite end of the room facing the wall. The rest of your group should be at the other end of the room facing “Grandma”.
2. The goal of this activity is to reach “Grandma”. The game starts when “Grandma” yells, “Grandma’s Watching!”
3. Students will try to make it from one side of the room to the other and reach “Grandma”. However, when

“Grandma” turns around, everyone has to freeze in place.

4. Students that are moving when “Grandma” turns around have to go back to the beginning and start all over again.
5. The first student (or team) that reaches Grandma wins. You can play this game a few rounds, switching whoever plays “Grandma”.

LESSON

ASK: What do you think about God always being present? Is it comforting, scary, hopeful, etc? Why?

SAY: Our icon for this biblical theme is a temple/God’s presence. As you read these next stories, draw an image of a temple to remind you of how God Himself is present with His people.



ASK: Think of some stories in the Bible where God’s presence is evident. (Examples of stories include Moses and the Burning Bush, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace, the birth of Jesus, etc.). What usually happens when God shows up in these narratives?

SAY: God’s presence is everywhere throughout Scripture. Over and over again, God chooses to be close with His people, Israel. One of the ways that Yahweh dwells with His people is through the tabernacle.

As a group, have students read aloud these three passages and discuss them together.

LEADER NOTE: *Yahweh’s presence is often depicted as a scary thing to witness throughout the Old Testament. People who were in His presence were filled with fear because they were sinful people in the presence of a righteous and holy God. God would not allow His people to look directly at him as a sign of mercy, lest they see him and perish. See Exodus 33:12-23.*

Read **Exodus 40:34-38**.

ASK:

1. Whenever the cloud was over the tent of meeting, the people could not enter it. Why do you think that is? *God’s presence is so big, and his glory is too much for people to experience.*
2. The cloud covered the tabernacle through the day and the fire through the night, which was the glory of Yahweh. What does this say about God’s character towards the Israelites? *God cares about the people and goes with them wherever they go, God is always there for His people, etc.*

Read **2 Samuel 7:1-17**.

ASK:

1. What did David want to do for God? *To build a temple for Him.*
2. What was God’s response? What does Yahweh promise to David and his family? *His response was that He has always been with His people and promises to establish His kingdom through David’s line. He also foretells of Solomon to rule Israel and that Solomon would build Him a temple.*



3. How does this passage relate to the other reading in Exodus? Do you think this passage reflects the same characteristics of God? How?

Read **John 1:1-16**.

ASK:

1. Who is the Word? What can we know about this “Word” from these passages? *Jesus. Jesus is God and became flesh so that people who would believe would be called God’s children.*
2. Look at verse 14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” See if other students have different translations of this verse. What does it mean that “the Word dwelt among us”? How does this verse connect with the other passages we read before? Some translations read “and took residence among us”. *If Christ is the Word of God, and the Word is God, His dwelling in the flesh is reflecting Yahweh’s dwelling in the tabernacle, and His presence is with the people of Israel! Jesus’ glory is parallel to the Father’s glory, full of grace and truth.*
3. How do we experience Christ’s presence today? *Through His Word, in baptism, whenever we gather in His name, through the Lord’s Supper, through His Spirit, etc.*

LEADER NOTE: This would be a great time to split students into their family groups for the Gathering to continue building those relationships with their Adult leaders. A goal for this Pre-Gathering Bible study is for students to facilitate these conversations in their family groups. If you have not already identified a student leader for the group, take time prior to this Bible Study to encourage and equip them as a leader for their peers.

Have each group read all the verses and make a list of where they see God’s temple/presence and how it’s being shown in each of the verses. See which group can come up with the most!

1. Isaiah 6:1-7 *Isaiah is in the presence of Yahweh and is forgiven. God uses Isaiah to prophesy the coming of Christ.*
2. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Our bodies are a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. God is with us through the Holy Spirit.*
3. Matthew 26:26-29 *Christ’s presence is in, with, and under ordinary things like bread and wine and promises to us the forgiveness that we will experience with Him in His kingdom.*
4. Psalm 5:7-12 *Yahweh’s presence covers us, makes our paths straight, allows us to be full of joy, and protects us.*
5. Colossians 1:19-20 *Jesus was fully God and fully man, and His dwelling was so that He might reconcile all things to Himself through His cross and resurrection.*

APPLICATION:

We experience God’s presence every day! From the creation that He created (including you!), to the Lord’s Supper where we partake of the bread and wine, body and blood, God’s presence is all around us as He continues to work in the world. And what’s even cooler is that we get the opportunity to celebrate God’s presence with thousands of other people from all over the world together at the Gathering! Jesus promises us “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” **(Matthew 18:20)**.



In your group ask these questions:

- Where do you most experience God’s presence in your life?
- When is it hard to see that God’s presence is with you?
- After reading through these passages, what’s something about God that helps you to see His presence more clearly in your life?
- What are some ways that we, as a group, can encourage each other in Christ’s love for us as he continues to work in this world? (Think of simple, applicable ways that you can practice this as you lead up to the Gathering, during the Gathering, and after. It could be something as simple as a text message to someone, listening to someone, forgiving each other, etc.)

CALL TO ACTION:

Between now and the next Pre-Gathering Bible Study, read Genesis 32 at least twice and think about these questions. If possible, find a time to read this passage with someone else in your church:

- What does this story reveal about God’s character?
- Where in this story do you see the biblical theme of God’s dwelling?

LEADER NOTE: The reason that we chose Genesis 32 for your students to read for the Call to Action is to set up the next Biblical theme of light for the next Pre-Gathering Bible Study.

