

WHO IS THIS GOD?

DISCOVERING THE CHARACTER OF THE CREATOR

WHO IS THIS GOD?

Group Discussion Guide

God knows everything about us, but how can we know Him in all of His complexity? Throughout this series, you'll discover God's nature and character is not hidden from us. Our Creator desires for us to know Him intimately and reveals Himself to us through His world, His Word, and His work in our lives. We designed this Group Discussion Guide to take a deeper look at the weekend message. Each lesson contains the following sections:

► MAIN POINT

Discussions often take on life of their own, but they typically lack power when they lack focus. The discussion leader ought to use the Main Point to keep everyone on the same page. To do this, you might say something like, *"That is very interesting and a good topic for another discussion, but today's study is about..."* and ask a question that brings people back to the topic of discussion.

There will be times when it makes sense to ignore the Main Point. For example, if someone in your group experiences a significant crisis. If you decide to move away from the lesson's Main Point, you want to do so on purpose and not by accident.

► LOOK OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

This question focuses the subject in a disarming way by first evaluating a topic through the lens of the culture. This is a "wide end of the funnel" question.

► **LOOK
DOWN**
LOOK AT
GOD'S
WORD

GOAL: Read and examine the Bible together and assess the interplay between what Scripture says and what the culture says.

Encourage people to read the passage, allowing people to become more familiar with both reading and digesting the Bible.

► **LOOK
IN**
APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

► **LOOK
BEYOND**
RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a “better future” if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

► **CATEGORIES**
FOR LEADER'S
GUIDE

LEADER NOTES: These notes will provide tips on how to steer the conversation, care for your group, and troubleshoot and anticipate difficult topics.

CONNECTION: Connections will provide you with transitional statements to help move your group from one section to the next.

CONTEXT: Context can give you insight into the background of a passage, the mentality of the author, the connection to another book of the Bible, or a cultural context that brings deeper understanding.

WEEK 1: KNOWABLE

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 19

▶ MAIN POINT

The *knowable* and *relational* God invites us to know Him through creation and Scripture.

▶ LOOK OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

Group Questions:

- Think of your most intimate relationship: How do you make yourself knowable in that relationship? In what ways do you become a student of the other person?
- What are some different ways you see people in our culture express awe and wonder for God's creation?

CONNECTION: To connect the warm-up question to your group reading and discussion of Psalm 19, consider saying something along the lines of *"We're going to look at a psalm that describes the two ways through which God makes Himself known and knowable to us."*

▶ LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 19.

LEADER NOTES: Remember, this is the Word of God; don't rush through it. Remind the volunteer to read slowly, and allow God's words to sink into their hearts. This creates space for the Spirit to highlight truth and speak to the individuals in your group.

You might want to encourage people to start thinking about the first question as you read through the scripture the first time. This is one way that might help them engage the Scripture more intentionally. It also works well to read through it once, have people soak it in, and then come back to it for the questions.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. 3 There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. 4 Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun. 5 It is like a bridegroom coming from his home; it rejoices like an athlete running a course. 6 It rises from one end of the heavens and circles to their other end; nothing is hidden from its heat.

7 The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up. 9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. 10 They are more desirable than gold—than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb. 11 In addition, your servant is warned by them, and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.

12 Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults. 13 Moreover, keep your servant from willful sins; do not let them rule me. Then I will be blameless and cleansed from blatant rebellion. 14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Group Questions:

- How does God make Himself knowable through creation? Who does He reveal Himself to through creation and how often?
- What are the different ways David describes God's Word? What attributes does His Word have in all its forms?
- Why are both creation and Scripture important testimonies to the glory of God? Is one more important than the other?

**“ALTHOUGH WE
CAN'T KNOW
GOD IN HIS
TOTALITY, WE
CAN KNOW
HIM TRULY.”**

CONTEXT: Although we can't know God in His totality, we can know Him truly. As we see all throughout Psalm 19, God makes Himself known through general revelation (creation, conscience) and through special revelation (Scripture). In the New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 refers to Scripture as our primary way of knowing God: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Every word in Scripture is inspired (lit: “breathed out”) by God - it comes forth from Him. So as we learn His Word, we learn and know Him. While it is impossible for our finite minds to know our infinite God in His entirety, the Bible does give us everything we need to know Him the way He wants us to know Him. It gives us everything we need to live life with Him the way we were designed to live it.

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

► **LOOK
IN**
APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

Group Questions:

- Think of something in creation that you enjoy, that you're in awe of, and that moves you to worship God. What do you learn about God through it?
- How have you seen creation and Scripture work together to help you learn more about God? Why is it important to see (in creation) and hear (through Scripture) to know God?
- What does it tell you about God that He has made Himself knowable and invites you to know Him?

► **LOOK
BEYOND**
RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

LEADER NOTES: Our hope is that this discussion would move each individual in the group to want to know God more and to take advantage of the different ways He has made it possible for us to know Him. We want to highlight the difference between knowledge of someone and truly knowing someone. Knowledge of something or someone starts and stops with information and facts. But really knowing someone is taking the tools that give us information about the person and using them to grow deeper in relationship with the person. God desires communion and intimacy with us, so He has given us creation and Scripture to learn from Him, know Him, and grow deeper in relationship with Him.

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a “better future” if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

LEADER NOTES: Encourage participants to be bold and specific in their response to this week's discussion. What are some specific and practical things they will do differently in response to Jesus' invitation to truly know Him?

Group Questions:

- Romans 10:14-15 says: "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."
- How might God be inviting you to bring the Good News, the Word, to those who have seen (in creation), but need to hear (through Scripture)?
- What might look different in your life and our world if you saw every creature and creation as an opportunity to know God and invite others to know Him?
- What is one thing you can do this week to seek and know God more through:
 - a. Creation
 - b. Scripture

► PRAYER

Father, we give all the glory to You! You are good. You love us and created us out of that love to live in Your love. You are relational. And, though You are infinite and too much for our minds to fully grasp, You have made Yourself known and knowable to us through Your creation and Your Word. Would You meet us in both of these areas this week and give us the courage and the hunger to use the tools You've given us to seek You and to truly know You. Amen.

WEEK 2: ETERNAL

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 90

▶ MAIN POINT

Knowing our God is eternal (unchanging and timeless) leads us to a posture of humility and dependence.

▶ LOOK OUT

LOOK AT THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

Group Questions:

- What was one major life change you experienced (relational, professional, directional, etc.) and how did it make you feel or respond? What helped you make it through the changes?
- They say hindsight is 20/20. Knowing what you do now, is there anything that you wish you would have done differently? Why or why not?
- Which season (fall, winter, etc.) best represents the current season of your life? Why?

CONNECTION: To connect the warm-up question to your group reading and discussion of Psalm 90, consider saying something along the lines of *“We’re going to look at a psalm that shows us that while we go through changes, we make mistakes, and ultimately, we are mortal, our God is eternal, unchanging, and timeless.”*

▶ LOOK DOWN

LOOK AT GOD’S WORD

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 90.

LEADER NOTES: Remember, this is the Word of God; don’t rush through it. Remind the volunteer to read slowly, and allow God’s words to sink into their hearts. This creates space for the Spirit to highlight truth and speak to the individuals in your group.

You might want to encourage people to start thinking about the first question as you read through the scripture first time. This is one way that might help them engage the Scripture more intentionally. It also works great to read through it once, have people soak it in, and then come back to it for the questions.

CONTEXT: This is the only psalm attributed to Moses. Most scholars say that this psalm was written almost as a prayer during the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness to God.

1 Lord, you have been our refuge in every generation. 2 Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, you are God.

3 You return mankind to the dust, saying, "Return, descendants of Adam." 4 For in your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that passes by, like a few hours of the night. 5 You end their lives; they sleep. They are like grass that grows in the morning—6 in the morning it sprouts and grows; by evening it withers and dries up.

7 For we are consumed by your anger; we are terrified by your wrath. 8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. 9 For all our days ebb away under your wrath; we end our years like a sigh. 10 Our lives last seventy years or, if we are strong, eighty years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow; indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away. 11 Who understands the power of your anger? Your wrath matches the fear that is due you. 12 Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts.

13 LORD—how long? Turn and have compassion on your servants. 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your faithful love so that we may shout with joy and be glad all our days. 15 Make us rejoice for as many days as you have humbled us, for as many years as we have seen adversity. 16 Let your work be seen by your servants, and your splendor by their children. 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be on us; establish for us the work of our hands—establish the work of our hands!

► **LOOK
DOWN**
LOOK AT
GOD'S
WORD

COMMENTARY: This psalm is meant for the reader to reflect on the mortality of man, especially in light of the contrasting picture of the eternal nature of God. In fact, scholars say this psalm was often read at burial services because of the matter-of-fact way that it deals with the realities of life and death. This presentation of life and death is meant to point to our only hope: our powerful and eternal God.

Group Questions:

- How does the psalmist describe God in verses 1-6? What do we learn about His nature from these characteristics?

LEADER NOTES: We see that God is a God of generations. God is present and exists before creation, which He formed and created. God is eternal. God's eternity compared to our lives evokes a sense that He is outside of what we can even quantify as time. Our lives are transient and finite, God is timeless.

- How does the psalmist describe mankind? What do we learn about ourselves?
- What is the cause of our “struggle and sorrow,” and ultimately, our mortality referenced in verses 7-10?

LEADER NOTES: Verse 8 mentions the iniquities (transgressions, sins) that rightfully evoke the just wrath of God. The term “secret sins” in the same verse are those transgressions committed discreetly or even unrecognized by the individual. Before our holy God, even the smallest blemish of sin, whether known or unknown to us, is known by God and considered an offense. Remember the context of this psalm was written by Moses while the Israelites were wandering the wilderness because of their disobedience and lack of faith in God’s goodness and provision.

And we know, personally, that the struggle and sorrows that we experience in life can be attributed to sin. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages of sin is death. Sin drove a wedge between us and God. Not only that, it shattered the perfect shalom (peace, wholeness, unity) that God intended for us, and introduced brokenness in our relationships to ourselves, each other, and our world. The fact that God, knowing all of these transgressions, still chooses to love us and show us compassion should be humbling.

- Where does the psalmist turn to find hope? What things does the psalmist realize we are absolutely dependent on God for?

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

Group Questions:

- Where in your life have you switched roles with God? Where do we need to be reminded to be humble before an all-knowing God?
- In our lives, what do we need to surrender to an all-knowing, unchanging, and eternal God? What would it take for us to actually surrender that today?

- What does it mean for you to be satisfied with God's faithful love? What would it take for you to be satisfied with God's faithful love to the point of shouting with joy, especially in seasons in which we face adversity?

▶ LOOK BEYOND

RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a “better future” if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

LEADER NOTES: Encourage participants to be bold and specific in their response to this week's discussion. What are some specific and practical things they will do differently because their God is eternal (unchanging and all-knowing)?

Group Questions:

- How would your life be different if you surrendered to God the one thing you're struggling to trust Him with?
- What area of your life do you need more wisdom?
- How would your prayers or even your relationship with God change knowing that He is never caught off guard, and His love for you is unchanging?

▶ PRAYER

God, thank You for loving us. Even knowing all of the times that we would sin, or choose our own way instead of Your's, You still choose us. Thank You that nothing I do is a surprise to You. Thank You that nothing that happens in this world is a surprise to You. Thank You that we can surrender everything to You, knowing that You know all things. Your ways are higher than our ways. Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Help us to recognize our own mortality, and in humility, seek You for wisdom and guidance in all things. Would we cherish the life that you have given us as a gift, and use every moment to honor You. Lord, would we find our ultimate satisfaction in Your faithful love. Amen.

WEEK 3: JEALOUS

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 78:10-39,56-58

▶ MAIN POINT

God is *rightly* jealous for His people and His glory.

▶ LOOK OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD

Group Questions:

- In what kinds of situations might it be good or right to feel jealous?
- How would you describe the difference between *jealousy* and *envy*?

LEADER NOTES: The biblical difference between “jealousy” and “envy” is that a person might feel jealous over something that is rightfully their’s (i.e., a husband who is jealous for his wife who is unfaithful) and a person might feel envious for something that belongs to someone else (i.e., a friend feeling envious over his friend’s new car).

▶ LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD’S WORD

10 They [the Israelites] did not keep God’s covenant and refused to live by his law. 11 They forgot what he had done, the wondrous works he had shown them. 12 He worked wonders in the sight of their ancestors in the land of Egypt, the territory of Zoan. 13 He split the sea and brought them across; the water stood firm like a wall. 14 He led them with a cloud by day and with a fiery light throughout the night. 15 He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as abundant as the depths. 16 He brought streams out of the stone and made water flow down like rivers.

17 But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High.

18 They deliberately tested God, demanding the food they craved. 19 They spoke against God, saying, “Is God able to provide food in the wilderness? 20 Look! He struck the rock and water gushed out; torrents overflowed. But can he also provide bread or furnish meat for his people?”

21 Therefore, the LORD heard and became furious; then fire broke out against Jacob, and anger flared up against Israel 22 because they did not believe God or rely on his salvation. 23 He gave a command to the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven. 24 He rained manna for them to eat; he gave them grain from heaven. 25 People ate the bread of angels. He sent them an abundant supply of food. 26 He made the east wind blow in the skies and drove the south wind by his might. 27 He rained meat on them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the seas. 28 He made them fall in the camp, all around the tents. 29 The people ate and were completely satisfied, for he gave them what they craved. 30 Before they had turned from what they craved, while the food was still in their mouths, 31 God’s anger flared up against them, and he killed some of their best men. He struck down Israel’s fit young men.

32 Despite all this, they kept sinning and did not believe his wondrous works. 33 He made their days end in futility, their years in sudden disaster. 34 When he killed some of them, the rest began to seek him; they repented and searched for God. 35 They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God, their Redeemer. 36 But they deceived him with their mouths, they lied to him with their tongues, 37 their hearts were insincere toward him, and they were unfaithful to his covenant. 38 Yet he was compassionate; he atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them. He often turned his anger aside and did not unleash all his wrath. 39 He remembered that they were only flesh, a wind that passes and does not return.

56 But they rebelliously tested the Most High God, for they did not keep his decrees. 57 They treacherously turned away like their ancestors; they became warped like a faulty bow. 58 They enraged him with their high places and provoked his jealousy with their carved images.

▶ LOOK IN

APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

Group Questions:

- As you read through the psalm, underline/highlight/note all the ways Israel rebelled (verse 17, 32) against God and provoked His jealousy (verse 58).
- How did God respond to Israel's rebellion? List His actions and emotions.
- As you step back and look at the text as a whole, for what is God jealous?

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

LEADER NOTE: Please share the following "Context" notes with the group before diving into the LOOK IN discussion questions.

CONTEXT: God's jealousy comes out of His love for you. You belong to Him. He created you.

God made a covenant with His people, very much like a covenant that is made between a husband and wife in marriage. So, when Israel is unfaithful, it stirs up rightful jealousy from God. She belongs to Him. He loves her and He allows her to make her choice and experience the pain of breaking that covenant to see how good and amazing her first love is. God is jealous for His glory. God is jealous for His people. God, the Creator of the universe, is jealous for you. When you wander off He will stop at nothing to get you back.

The Old Testament book of Hosea 2:5-8 illustrates Psalm 78 well. It is the story of a wife who is unfaithful to her husband and is used as an illustration of Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

"5 For she thought, 'I will follow my lovers, the men who give me my food and water, my wool and flax, my oil and drink.' 6 Therefore, this is what I will do: I will block her way with thorns; I will enclose her with a wall, so that she cannot find her paths. 7 She will pursue her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will think, 'I will go back to my former husband, for then it was better for me than now.' 8 She does not recognize that it is I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the fresh oil. I lavished silver and gold on her, which they used for Baal."

Group Questions:

- Take a minute to sit in silence and let the Spirit search your heart:
 - In what ways might you be like the Israelites who forgot what God had done for them and rebelled against Him?
 - In what ways have you turned away from your first love or assigned His glory to something or someone else?
 - In what ways have you seen God respond to that rebellion?
- As you read about God's jealousy for His people (for you!) and His glory, what does that evoke in you? How does it comfort you and/or challenge you?

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a "better future" if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

LEADER NOTES: Encourage participants to be bold and specific in their response to this week's discussion. What are some specific and practical things they will do differently because they are so loved by God that He is jealous for them?

Group Questions:

- How might your life look different, internally and externally, if you responded to God's jealousy for you rather than feeding into the envy our world encourages?
- What is one step you can take this week to return to your first love?

God, thank You that we love because You first loved us. We don't have to earn Your love. We already have it. Would you soften our hearts in the places we have hardened them towards You? Would You help us remember Your goodness and kindness towards us daily? Help us remember Your love and to live our lives responding to it. Thank You for pursuing us when we turn from You. Show us today and each day what it means and what steps we can take to return to our first love, knowing You are patiently waiting and eager to welcome us home.

► **LOOK
BEYOND**
RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

► **PRAYER**

WEEK 4: SOVEREIGN

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 135

▶ MAIN POINT

God is sovereign in all His ways and has the power to move as He pleases.

▶ LOOK OUT

LOOK AT
THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

This question focuses the subject in a disarming way by first evaluating a topic through the lens of the culture. This is a “wide end of the funnel” question.

Group Questions:

- What TV or movie character is known for his/her power? What was the character like and how did they interact with others?
- Share about a moment when someone moved on your behalf (e.g., worked behind the scenes to make something happen for you or protected you from a difficult circumstance). What was that experience like and how did that affect your view of that person?

LEADER NOTES: Today, we are diving into the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God is made known to us through His divine power and authority. Throughout Scripture, we see the many ways God was in control of all circumstances. At times, God moved on behalf of His people to make a way for them. At other times, God did not move in order to protect them. The amazing truth is that God was, is, and always will be sovereign over all creation!

▶ LOOK DOWN

LOOK AT
GOD'S
WORD

God continues to move according to His will in our lives and in the world. So, who is this God? God is the One who is sovereign in all His ways and has the power to move as He pleases!

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 135.

1 Hallelujah! Praise the name of the LORD. Give praise, you servants of the LORD 2 who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. 3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praise to his name, for it is delightful. 4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his treasured possession.

5 For I know that the LORD is great; our Lord is greater than all gods. 6 The LORD does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths. 7 He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings the wind from his storehouses.

8 He struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both people and animals. 9 He sent signs and wonders against you, Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his officials. 10 He struck down many nations and slaughtered mighty kings: 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan. 12 He gave their land as an inheritance, an inheritance to his people Israel.

13 LORD, your name endures forever, your reputation, LORD, through all generations. 14 For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.

15 The idols of the nations are of silver and gold, made by human hands. 16 They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. 17 They have ears but cannot hear; indeed, there is no breath in their mouths. 18 Those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

19 House of Israel, bless the LORD! House of Aaron, bless the LORD! 20 House of Levi, bless the LORD! You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD! 21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion; he dwells in Jerusalem. Hallelujah!

Group Questions:

- How does the author describe who God is in this psalm?
- Which verse points the reader to a definition of the sovereignty of God?
- According to verse 4, who was Israel to God and what does this demonstrate about God's sovereignty?
- How are the servants of the Lord encouraged to respond to God throughout this psalm? Why is this response so important?

LEADER NOTES: For question one, you can divide this psalm into smaller sections and have group members create a list of the ways God is described. The ways God is described may include:

- Descriptors: good, delightful, greater than all gods, does what He pleases, and His name endures forever.
- Actions: caused clouds to rise, made lightning and brought wind, moved in Egypt on behalf of the Israelites, conquered worldly kings, provided land for Israel, vindicated his people, and showed compassion.

“THE LORD
DOES
WHATEVER HE
PLEASES IN
HEAVEN AND
ON EARTH.”

For question two, direct the group to verse 6, “The LORD does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth.” While this psalm highlights the many ways God’s sovereignty was on display in the life of Israel, verse 6 anchors us in the main point: God is sovereign in all His ways and has the power to move as He pleases!

Israel is described as God’s treasured possession. Consider how great and gracious God’s love is for His people! God’s love is made known to us in so many ways and His sovereignty is another way we witness and experience His love in our lives. The sovereignty of God is what makes Him unlike any of the other gods, idols, or kings mentioned in this psalm. This draws in the psalmist to respond in praise, worship, and obedience to God.

CONNECTION: As we see what happened in the life of Israel, God’s sovereignty is on display and we are drawn into a deeper understanding of who God is. The God of the Israelites is the same God of today. He is sovereign over our lives.

CONTEXT: Many of the ways God is described as sovereign point us back to the Israelites and the book of Exodus. The Israelites were God’s chosen people (see verse 4). God moved in powerful ways throughout their history: delivering them from slavery, leading them through the wilderness, and conquering worldly kings. If needed, connect the group back to the first few chapters of Exodus and the life of Moses.

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

Group Questions:

- How have you seen God’s sovereignty at work in your life in the past? Are there ways He may be moving in your life presently?
- What idols do you think are being exposed in our lives when we can’t trust in God’s sovereignty?
- When was a time God didn’t move the way you wanted Him to but later you saw His sovereignty in it?
- In what ways does the sovereignty of God over creation and your life affect the way you worship and obey?

► **LOOK
IN**
APPLY GOD’S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

LEADER NOTES: Create space for the group to process these questions and share with each other about how they have seen or have not been aware of God's sovereignty in their lives. The sovereignty of God invites us to open our eyes to all orientations of time (past, present, and future) in our lives where we witness His sovereignty.

As the group reflects on these questions, an important truth to remember is that because God is sovereign, He has the power to move on our behalf and the wisdom to NOT move on our behalf. At times, God's ways will not always make sense to us, but we must hold fast to the truth that He is faithful to lead us. God was, is, and will always be sovereign over all creation!

CONNECTION: Taking time to consider the ways God is at work in our own lives can draw us closer to seeing how His sovereignty is on display in the world around us.

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a "better future" if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.



Group Questions:

- Is there an area in your life or in the world where you need to rest in God's sovereignty in this season?
- How might your perspectives of yourself, others, the church, and the world look different by trusting in this truth that we are God's treasured possession (verse 4)?
- In addition to weekend services, what's one practical way that you can praise God this week for His sovereignty?
- What's a prayer request that arises in you from the truth that God is sovereign in all His ways and has the power to move as He pleases?

LEADER NOTES: This season may be one of confusion, fear, and uncertainty. Encourage the group to lay these circumstances at the feet of God and trust in His wisdom to move or not move in the midst of the unknown.

God's love for His people is on display through the many ways He is sovereign. As we look at the world and those around us, God desires that we would love others as He has loved us. Imagine what it would be like for you to love, fight, protect, and care for others as God did for the people of Israel—as He does for us today! We can step into this kind of love when we embrace the truth that God loves us fully and completely no matter the circumstances.

► PRAYER

End your time together by sharing prayer requests and closing in prayer. Begin with having the group sit in a few moments of silence to reflect on God's sovereignty.

Dear Heavenly Father, what a gift it is to be loved, seen, and known by You. Lord, we thank You for the God You are in our lives and in the world around us. For the ways You have gone before us and worked in our lives according to Your will and the ways You have cared for Your people. God, may You continue to be the One that we look to in all circumstances, knowing that You are sovereign and in control. May we feel Your presence and love this week and trust in Your ways no matter what we face this week. We love You, God, and we thank You for who You are. Amen.

WEEK 5: HOLY

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 99

▶ MAIN POINT

God is holy and He invites us to be holy.

▶ LOOK OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

This question focuses the subject in a disarming way by first evaluating a topic through the lens of the culture. This is a “wide end of the funnel” question.

Group Questions:

- In nature, what leaves you completely awestruck (the ocean, mountains, forests, etc.)? How do you feel after experiencing it?
- Who is someone in history or today’s society that people worship? What is it about that person that draws people to worship them?

LEADER NOTES: Today, we are looking at the holiness of God. God’s holiness is incomparable to anything in this world. God is holy, perfect in all His ways, and set apart from creation. Though God is not of this world, He chooses to love the world. God’s holiness is made known to us through His love, justice, mercy, and righteousness. All of His attributes and acts are coated in holiness. And, in the midst of it all, He desires to be in relationship with us, to meet us where we are, and to draw us closer to Him. When we encounter God’s holiness, whether it be as mighty as an earthquake or quiet like still waters, it moves us to exalt and worship Him.

▶ **LOOK
DOWN**
LOOK AT
GOD'S
WORD

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 99.

1 The LORD reigns! Let the peoples tremble. He is enthroned between the cherubim. Let the earth quake. 2 The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted above all the peoples. 3 Let them praise your great and awe-inspiring name. He is holy.

4 The mighty King loves justice. You have established fairness; you have administered justice and righteousness in Jacob. 5 Exalt the LORD our God; bow in worship at his footstool. He is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests; Samuel also was among those calling on his name. They called to the LORD and he answered them. 7 He spoke to them in a pillar of cloud; they kept his decrees and the statutes he gave them. 8 LORD our God, you answered them. You were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their sinful actions.

9 Exalt the LORD our God; bow in worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

Group Questions:

- What are the ways the author describes the holiness of God in this psalm? And what does the emphasis/repetition communicate about this attribute?
- How do those who have experienced God's holiness respond to Him?
- Why would justice (verse 4) and obedience (verse 7) matter to a holy God?

LEADER NOTES: God is holy (transcendent and set apart). He is described as being great, awe-inspiring, mighty, fair, just, righteous, forgiving, and avenging. God is incomparable to anything else in this world. The repetition emphasizes the centrality of this attribute to the very being of who God is. God is not just holy and loving. He loves in a holy way. God is not wrathful and holy. He is wrathful in a holy way.

The people responded in trembling, in exalting the LORD's name, in bowing in worship, and in keeping His decrees and statutes. The holiness of God demands a response (bowing, trusting, obeying). God's holiness draws us to a posture of worship, humility, and reverence for who God is.

It makes sense that a God who is set apart and pure would care about the right ordering of all things in our personal lives and in society at large. Because God is holy, He desires the holiness of His people and the right ordering of things in His world. God's perfection and greatness is not merely transcendent, but also to be experienced and pursued in the here and now.

CONNECTION: As we encounter the holiness of God, it transforms us. It reveals to us the intentions of our hearts, our posture in worship, and the ways we need to humbly come before God.

CONTEXT: The language of people calling upon the LORD and the LORD answering is seen throughout the Old Testament. This points us to the covenant God made with His people and the promises God made to be with them, drawing all the way back to Abraham in Genesis 12. God's covenant was central to Israel's history.

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

Group Questions:

- Share about a time in your life when God's holiness became real to you. What was that experience like and how did it affect your faith?
- In what ways does the holiness of God comfort you? In what ways does it convict you?
- How is God inviting you to grow in holiness in this season? What might this require of you?

LEADER NOTES: We get to experience God's holiness in the big, extraordinary ways and in the small, quiet ways. His holiness is reflected in the world (verse 1) and in the intimate moments with His people (verse 7). Encourage the group to share their authentic experiences, rather than digging for an "amazing" experience.

Growing in holiness is hard work but important work! It is a daily process of "sanctification" (transformation), of becoming more like God. It may invite confession, repentance, engagement with group life, and a willingness to posture our hearts through spiritual disciplines. We are not alone in the process because the Holy Spirit is the one leading it.

► **LOOK
IN**
APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

▶ LOOK BEYOND

RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a “better future” if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

Group Questions:

- How can we encourage one another towards living in holiness? What does it look like to hold each other accountable with grace and truth?
- If everyone lived in awe of God’s holiness on a daily basis, how would the world look different to you?
- Is there a practical step you can take this week to increase your awareness of God’s holiness?
- What’s a prayer request that arises in you from this truth: God is holy and He invites us to be holy?

LEADER NOTES: God invites us to be holy as He is holy. While we will not be at the same level of holiness as God, this does not mean that we cannot be transformed from the inside out to see others and to see the world as God does. It is a holy calling to pursue His love, justice, and mercy in the world. God invites us into this work alongside Him and empowers us with the Holy Spirit. Imagine what our world would look like if we committed to encouraging one another to be holy and living in awe of God’s holiness. May we strive towards holiness together.

End your time together by sharing prayer requests. An option for this time is to pair up group members to share their answers to the last question in this section, pray over one another and encourage each other to live in holiness. Then, close in prayer together.

▶ PRAYER

God, we are in awe of who You are. You are great, just, and full of mercy and love. God, we thank you for who You are and that You are unchanging, always constant, and always holy. Lord, we thank You for how You care for us and for the world, despite the ways the world may treat You and Your people. You are holy, no matter the circumstances. This week, would we be moved to accept the invitation to be holy and encourage one another in this process. As we walk into holiness, may our eyes be fixed on You and our hearts drawn to worship you. We love You God and we thank You for who You are. Amen.

WEEK 6: LOVING

Group Discussion Guide for: Who is this God?

Psalm 103

▶ MAIN POINT

Remembering God's faithful, compassionate love for us leads to a life of worship.

▶ LOOK OUT LOOK AT THE WORLD

GOAL: Warm up the group and prepare for transition into Scripture by demonstrating the relevance of the subject in the culture.

This question focuses the subject in a disarming way by first evaluating a topic through the lens of the culture. This is a "wide end of the funnel" question.

Group Questions:

- Describe a situation in which you felt completely loved by someone else. How did they show that they loved you? Why was this experience so memorable/significant?
- Which of the Five Love Languages (words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, physical touch) is the way that you feel most loved? Why?
- What is one way you show the people you care about that you love them?

CONNECTION: To connect the warm-up question to your group reading and discussion of Psalm 103, consider saying something along the lines of *"We're going to look at a psalm that David wrote as a hymn, praising God for all of the ways that He shows His faithful, compassionate love to His people."*

▶ LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 103.

LEADER NOTES: Remember, this is the Word of God; don't rush through it. Remind the volunteer to read slowly and allow God's words to sink in deeply. This creates space for the Spirit to highlight truth and speak to the individuals in your group.

You might want to encourage people to start thinking about the first question as you read through the scripture the first time. This is one way that might help them engage the Scripture more intentionally. It also works great to read through it once, have people soak it in, and then come back to it for the questions.

1 My soul, bless the LORD, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 My soul, bless the LORD, and do not forget all his benefits.

3 He forgives all your iniquity; he heals all your diseases. 4 He redeems your life from the Pit; he crowns you with faithful love and compassion. 5 He satisfies you with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle.

6 The LORD executes acts of righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. 7 He revealed his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. 8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love. 9 He will not always accuse us or be angry forever. 10 He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his faithful love toward those who fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. 14 For he knows what we are made of, remembering that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are like grass—he blooms like a flower of the field; 16 when the wind passes over it, it vanishes, and its place is no longer known. 17 But from eternity to eternity the LORD's faithful love is toward those who fear him, and his righteousness toward the grandchildren 18 of those who keep his covenant, who remember to observe his precepts. 19 The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD, all his angels of great strength, who do his word, obedient to his command. 21 Bless the LORD, all his armies, his servants who do his will. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all the places where he rules. My soul, bless the LORD!

COMMENTARY: In verse 2, David urges himself not to forget all God's benefits. Other translations say "good things" or "blessings" in place of "benefits." In the original language, the Hebrew term *gemul* means "deeds" or "accomplishments," and in this case is referring to all of God's loving acts toward His people, some of which are stated in the following verses.

Group Questions:

- What are some of the ways that God has loved His people according to David? And which of these stand out to you in your current season, and why?
- How does David see God's love?
- How does David see mankind? What are the characteristics or qualities of those whom God loves?
- What is the significance of including the removal of our transgressions (our sin) in David's description of God's great love for us?
- What is David's response to remembering all of God's benefits?

► **LOOK
IN**
APPLY GOD'S
WORD TO
YOUR LIFE

LEADER NOTES: The key to helping your group to understand this text is in the juxtaposition of God and man. While man could forget about all of His benefits, God, in His love, remains faithful. While man could have iniquities and act in such a way to justify God's anger, God responds in compassionate, kind, and gracious love. While man is finite, God's love is infinite and everlasting. And He pours out this faithful, compassionate, kind, gracious, infinite, and everlasting love on each of us. That is good news!

GOAL: Create space for participants to confess honestly and draw connections as they apply the meaning and implications of the passages to their lives.

► **LOOK
BEYOND**
RE-IMAGINING
A WORD
APPLIED
WORLD

Group Questions:

- As you read about the different ways that God shows His great love for His people, what feelings does that evoke in you?
- How is God's love different from the way that the world defines love?
- What are some of the ways that you have witnessed God's faithful, compassionate love in someone else's life?
- What is one way that you have experienced God's faithful, compassionate love in your own life?
- Why do you think we are often so quick to forget about the ways that God has shown His love for us? What are some ways that can help us to remember?
- What are some of the things that cause us to doubt God's love for us? What is keeping you from "blessing the Lord"?

GOAL: Give space for participants to envision a "better future" if this passage was applied in their lives, in the church, and in the world. Give space to brainstorm about applications.

LEADER NOTES: Encourage participants to be bold and specific in their response to this week's discussion. What are some specific and practical things they will do differently in response to remembering God's faithful, compassionate love? What specific steps could they take to reflect that kind of love back to God and to others?

Group Questions:

- How would your life look different in your relationship with yourself, with others, and with God if you lived out of the truth of being fully loved by a loving God?
- What is one thing that you can do to “not forget all His benefits” this week?
- Who is someone in your life that you can remind of God’s faithful, compassionate love? And how can you be an instrument to show that love?

► PRAYER

God, You are love. Thank You for the ways that You love us that we are aware of and in ways that we will never fully understand on this side of heaven. Thank You for Your faithful, compassionate, gracious, kind, and everlasting love for us. Thank You for continuing to love us even when we forget. When we act in ways that aren’t loving, in return, you choose to love us unconditionally because that is who You are. Thank You that even while we were Your enemies and still stuck in sin, You chose to love us with the greatest example of love through the sacrifice of your Son, Jesus Christ. Please help us to remember all of the ways that You love us. And when we forget, would You help us to remind each other of Your great love for us—especially through the Good News of the Gospel. Amen.