



For when God feels absent

Gather:

Consider incorporating these questions into your check-in time to help your group start thinking about this week's topic.

What do you spend the most time thinking about?

What are some of the events in your life that made you who you are?

Reflect:

We may encounter God through his Word, but also through the words of others. Invite the Spirit to help you encounter God as you read the following poem together. Note scriptural themes and movements of the Spirit as you consider this week's topic.

One Thing (Paul David Tripp)*

One thing,
One thing,
One thing!
It's hard to imagine
one thing
When I seem to be attracted
to so many things.
It is a continuing
struggle.
It is a daily
battle.
It is my constant
war.
The world of the physical
attracts me,
excites me,
magnetizes me, and
addicts me.
I confuse consumption
with satisfaction.
I confuse satisfied senses

with true joy.
I confuse a stomach that is full
with a heart at rest.
Sometimes I would rather have
my appetites satisfied
than a grace-filled heart.
Sometimes I would rather hold
the physical
than have the eyes of my heart
filled with the beauty of
the spiritual.
I am tired of only seeing
what
my physical eyes
can see.
I want eyes
to see
what
cannot be seen.
I am tired of craving
people,

possessions,
locations,
circumstances,
positions,
experiences,
appearances....

Somewhere in my heart,
I know that only you
satisfy.
Deep in my heart,
I want you to be
enough.
I must quit
moving,
running,
driving,
pursuing,

consuming.
I need to
stop.
I need to
be quiet.
I need to sit
in the seat of grace
and wait,
and wait,
until these blind eyes
see,
until this cold heart
craves
the one beauty that
satisfies --
the one beauty that
is you.

Connect:

Choose one or more of the following scriptures to read together. How is reading these scriptures the same or different from reading the poem? How is God reflected differently or similarly?

Psalms 42

Respond:

Take time together to think about how you have encountered God in community, the words of others, and in scripture. Consider the following questions or activities to conclude your time together.

How do you/have you heard from God? Where do you see/encounter God in the world?

Would your life look different if you felt God being near to you?

What attribute of God do you most resonate with? (ex. strength, patience, gentleness, humility)

Find a rock and decorate it, with paint or pens, and the word that reminds you of an attribute of God. Put it somewhere you will see it as a reminder of God as rock and foundation, and that characteristic as a way to remind you of the nearness of God's Spirit.

Prayer:

Close your time in prayer for each other. Consider asking each person to write down their prayer requests on a 3x5 card and switch them with someone else in the group. Pray for each other throughout the week.

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