

God With Us Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part altogether, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Who is one person from your childhood you would enjoy visiting?
2. What is one thing you are easily tempted to spend money on?

Read the following passages: Isaiah 52:7-10; Mark 1:14-15; Philippians 2:5-11.

Jewish men and women in the first century were longing for good news. The good news they were hoping for was summarized by the phrase, “the kingdom of God.” When the kingdom of God finally arrived, all kinds of hopes would be fulfilled.

- Israel’s sins would finally be forgiven and centuries of exile would finally end.
- The twelve tribes would be restored to the land and reunited.
- Israel’s enemies would be defeated.
- A new king would reign.
- The earth would be healed and would produce abundant harvests.
- And, above all, God himself would return to Jerusalem and reign over all the earth.

Jesus certainly created a stir when he proclaimed, “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Jesus’ disciples, and the authors of the New Testament writings, eventually recognized that Jesus’ deity, death, and resurrection were at the heart of the arrival of God’s kingdom and the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes. As Isaiah 52:8 prophesied, the Lord did, in fact, return to Zion—in the person of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Why would it have been difficult for a faithful Jewish person living in the first century to conclude that a human being—even a great human being—should be worshipped as God? Why did Jesus’ disciples eventually come to the conclusion that Jesus is God?
2. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How can meditating on the reality that Jesus, while being fully divine, is also fully human, help us draw near to God?
3. Do you have a strong sense that God deeply loves you? Explain.
4. How would you distinguish the concepts of suffering and sacrifice? What are some things or people in your life for which you make sacrifices? Why is it significant that God sacrificed for us?

5. Read John 14:8-10. What are some aspects of God's character or how he relates to human beings that are displayed in Jesus' life and which are particularly meaningful to you?
6. In what ways do you see similarities between various religions and in what ways do you see significant differences? What is unique about the Christian faith? Why should we pray for and work toward all people embracing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Pray