

Please Don't Go

Connect Group Guide - 3.22.26

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by inviting God's presence into your gathering. Ask Him to speak to each person and create hunger for more of Him.

Icebreaker

Question: Share about a time when you achieved something you had been working toward. Did the achievement feel complete, or was something missing? What made the difference?

Key Scripture References

- Exodus 33:1-6
- Exodus 33:14-18

Message Overview

This message confronts us with a sobering truth: it is possible to have God's promises, His blessings, and even success in life or ministry, yet still be missing what matters most—His presence. In Exodus 33, we find Moses at a pivotal moment where God promises provision, protection, and the fulfillment of every covenant, yet declares He will not go with them because of their hardened hearts. What follows is powerful—Moses refuses to move forward without God's presence, recognizing that it is the one thing that sets God's people apart. This challenges our tendency to chase what God can give instead of pursuing God Himself. We often desire provision without intimacy, blessing without relationship, and success without surrender, but Moses shows us a better way: a deep hunger for the presence of God above everything else. When we truly encounter His presence, it doesn't just change our circumstances, it transforms us from the inside out and brings a rest that results alone never could. The question we must answer is simple but profound: do we want what God can give us, or do we want God Himself? This message calls us to stop settling for less and to pursue the fullness found only in Him, because without His presence, even our greatest victories will leave us empty.

Key Takeaways

Write these down and discuss which one resonates most with your group:

- The presence of God is what makes us different from the world around us.
- Hunger for God attracts the presence of God—we must intentionally seek Him, not stumble into His presence.
- The presence of God requires a reverent heart—casual treatment of God diminishes our experience of Him.
- The presence of God brings rest, not just results—peace in pressure, calm in chaos, strength in weakness.
- When you experience His presence, you want more—nothing else satisfies once you've tasted God.

Discussion Questions

Understanding God's Presence

1. The Distinction of Presence

- Pastor Mike said, "It's possible to have success without God." What does this statement mean to you? Have you ever experienced success that felt empty?
- Read Exodus 33:16. What did Moses say would distinguish Israel from all other people? How does God's presence distinguish believers today?

2. Blessings vs. Presence

- God offered Israel the Promised Land, victory, and an angel—but not His presence. Why do you think Moses wasn't satisfied with this arrangement?
- Be honest: Are there times when you're more focused on what God can give you than on God Himself? What does that look like in your life?

Pursuing God's Presence

3. Hunger and Preparation

- Pastor Mike shared how he's learned to prepare for his quiet time with Bible, notebook, and pen. What does your current time with God look like? What might "preparation" look like for you?
- Read Exodus 33:7-11. Moses "pitched a tent" and God spoke to him "face to face, as a friend." What practical steps can you take to create space for encountering God?

4. Reverence and Fear of the Lord

- The message mentioned that "where reverence is absent, presence is diminished." What are some "golden calves" (idols) in modern culture that replace reverence for God?
- How does the "fear of the Lord" connect to experiencing God's presence? (Review last week's teaching if needed)

The Impact of God's Presence

5. Rest in His Presence

- Read Exodus 33:14. God promises not just victory but rest. What's the difference between achieving results and experiencing rest?
- Pastor Mike said, "You can win and still be exhausted. You can succeed and still be empty." Have you experienced this? How does God's presence bring rest?

6. Wanting More

- After God promised His presence, Moses said, "Show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). What does this hunger for more of God look like practically?
- The message used the illustration of a child lost at Disney World—all the attractions mean nothing without the parents. How does this picture help you understand the importance of God's presence?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one or more of these practical steps to take this week:

Personal Commitment

1. Prepare a Sacred Space

- Designate a specific place and time for meeting with God
- Gather tools: Bible, journal, pen, worship music
- Remove distractions (phone, TV, etc.)

2. Practice Reverent Approach

- Begin quiet time acknowledging who God is before asking for what you need
- Spend the first 5 minutes in worship/adoration
- Journal what God speaks to you

3. **Shift Your Prayers**

- This week, pray more for God's presence than for specific outcomes
- Use Moses' prayer: "If Your presence doesn't go with me, I'm not going"
- Ask God to show you His glory

4. **Identify Idols**

- Honestly assess: What competes with God for your attention?
- What "golden calves" have replaced intimacy with God?
- Take one practical step to remove or reduce that idol's influence

Group Commitment

5. **As a group, consider:**

- Setting aside time during your next gathering for extended worship and seeking God's presence
- Sharing testimonies of how you experienced God's presence this week
- Praying together for hunger for more of God

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to people who may be carrying deep shame or feeling unworthy
- Emphasize that this is a safe space where everyone has a seat at the table
- Consider having communion together as a group if appropriate
- Follow up during the week with anyone who shared something particularly vulnerable

Prayer Requests & Closing