

God Comes Where He's Wanted Series Discussion Guides

January - February 2023

Week 1 - God Comes Where He's Wanted



BRINGING FIRE BACK TO THE FOUR ALTARS (HEART, HOME, CHURCH, CITY) TO BRING REVIVAL

GOD COMES WHERE HE'S WANTED
CHURCH OF THE CITY NEW YORK

Teaching Text

Psalm 63

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

“You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; they will go down to the depths of the earth. They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. But the king will rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced.”

Recap

This Sunday Pastor Jon Tyson began our first teaching series of the New Year, “God Comes Where He’s Wanted”, that will focus on cultivating the altars of our hearts, homes, church, and city in hopes of ushering revival through an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Jon started by presenting the idea that the secret to revival is hunger, and posing the question of, “How do we cultivate hunger?” In Psalm 63 we find King David on the run from his own son who is trying to usurp his throne, but we also find him hungry. In the gap of comfort, pleasure, and security, David’s desperation drives him to long for God. Oftentimes, when we are lukewarm, God pulls us into a desperate situation to cultivate our hunger for Him again.

We are creatures of desire, and we must understand, examine, and seek full fulfillment for our longings in the right place. This psalm says that the love of God is better than life, and it is the only thing that can fully satisfy us. We will be in love with sin until we fall in true love with God, and we must learn to delight in God’s satisfying love. God does not want to kill our desires, but wake them to the right things. God calls us to cultivate our connection to Him by embracing our spiritual passions, and this means that we must go to war with mediocrity in our spirits and build a deep devotion to God. As we move through this series, we encourage you to cultivate this hunger in your life by getting near the flame of God's presence so that He can meet you, befriend the saints by reading about the people with lives that you want to live, and determine to earnestly seek God in community.

Week 2 - The Cry of the Heart

Teaching Text

Proverbs 4:23

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Recap

This Sunday Pastor Jon Tyson continued our teaching series “God Comes Where He’s Wanted” by diving into the practice of cultivating our hearts in such a way that they would be a place God delights to dwell. Our hearts are the center of our being, the governing of all of our actions, but the human heart is also fallen, prone to deceit and wandering. For this reason, Proverbs 4:23 warns to guard our hearts above all else because everything else flows from it. Human efforts such as education and law, and even surface level religious efforts are not enough to change our hearts. Only by the transformative grace of God can our “hearts of stone be changed to hearts of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26-27), freeing us from our compulsions to indulge in sin, and enabling us to seek God’s goodness and extend unhindered love to those around us.

Pastor Jon then posed the question of how to guard these new hearts. Firstly, we must keep out idols and cultivate loyalty to the Lord. Modern idols can be more difficult to identify, and can even stay hidden for years, but anything from power to comfort to approval will get in the way of your love for God when blown up to divine proportions. Instead, we are called to give the Lord our undivided heart, putting no other loves before Him. Secondly, we must keep out apathy and cultivate a hunger for Him. Apathy is the silent killer of love for God, and can use things that are not inherently sinful to harden our hearts to the Lord’s presence. To cultivate hunger in our over-saturated, over-satiated world we must choose restraint, constantly relocating to the wilderness to remind us of our need for God. Thirdly, we must keep out bitterness and cultivate healing. We live in a world that easily wounds us. Everything from our emotions, identities, human dignities, physicality, relationships, souls, hearts, are vulnerable to offense. However, Hebrews 12:15 advises us not to let any bitterness take root in our hearts. God desires to heal our wounds, but forgiveness remains central to Jesus’ ministry because it brings the kind of healing we truly require. Finally, we must keep out sin and cultivate holiness by creating an environment that invites the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 reminds us that we can actually grieve the Holy Spirit living within us when we sin. When our hearts cry to God and say, “I want you in my heart,” they are also telling sin to get out. Cultivating holiness starts with returning to God with our whole hearts, and He promises that when we seek Him, we will find Him.

Week 3 - The Cry of the Home

Teaching Text

Psalm 145:1-13

"I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works—and I will proclaim your great deeds. They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. All your works praise you, Lord; your faithful people extol you. They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does."

Recap

This Sunday Pastor Jon Tyson continued our teaching series "God Comes Where He's Wanted" with a teaching on cultivating the cry of our homes. We are experiencing a period of radical decline in faith among the next generation as they transition from their teenage years to young adulthood, because there has been a failure of discipleship and formation in their youth. Pastor Jon did not share this to dishearten us, but to serve as an encouragement to be a part of awakening the next generation to the glory and power of God. Whether we are parents, married, or single, we can make the cry of our homes, "God I want you here," and be a part of raising up the next generation in faith.

This begins by understanding our own formation. Our families of origin, adolescent experiences, and generational idols have unknowable impact on us, but the Holy Spirit longs to heal us in these areas. He invites us into freedom, transforming our pain points into places of spiritual authority for the benefit of others. We must then prioritize the formation of the next generation. The rhythms and values of the world are shaping everyone, but especially the young. Only by creating ecosystems of discipleship centered on God's love can we foster hearts and imaginations that remain captivated by and loyal to the Lord even in the face of the disorders of our time.

One of the ways we can effectively do this is by declaring the beauty and story of our great God. When we share both redemptive history and our personal history with the next generation, we can remind them of who God is and what is possible through Him. Another important way to raise up the next generation is to integrate and empower them in the church. Forming faith that goes beyond surface church participation will yield resilient identities rooted in intimacy with Jesus, muscles of cultural discernment in a complex and anxious age, meaningful intergenerational relationships when isolation and mistrust are the norms, grounded and motivated vocational discipleship, and lives focused on countercultural mission instead of entitlement. Most of the great moves of God through the ages were ushered in on the prayers of an older generation who caught concern for the lack of faith in the one behind them. We are being called to embrace this heart of prayer, and take up responsibility for the transfer of faith to the generation to come.

Discussion Questions

Connect

What is something you are looking forward to this season?

Character

Ask someone to read the teaching text (Psalm 145:1-13) aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What truth about God's character in this passage is the most encouraging or comforting to you?

Consider

1. What would it look like for you to say, "God I want you here," in your home?
2. Has anyone from an older generation invested in you spiritually? What lessons do you still carry with you from them?
3. Consider areas of your life where you have experienced healing from the Holy Spirit. How might these parts of your story be helpful to share with the next generation?

Cover

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal specific names and needs of people in the next generation, and spend some time praying for the transfer of faith.

Spend time (at the end or the beginning of your meeting) casting vision and setting goals for this next season of Community Group. Start by praying for the Holy Spirit to come and reveal what this can look like for your group throughout the season. Ask for courage and strength to not shy away from His promptings. Then, ask what group members hope to give/receive from this group, and what they want to commit to together.

CHURCH OF THE CITY ^{NY}

Week 4 - The Cry of the Church

Teaching Text

Psalm 2 (NKJV)

Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'" Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Judges 6:11-16

The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive."

Recap

(AM)

This Sunday guest Pastor Corey Russell continued our teaching series, "God Comes Where He's Wanted" by digging deeper into the importance of the cry of the church being one of communal prayer. Framing our cultural moment against Psalm 2, Pastor Corey pointed out that we are in a corporate crisis, under siege by a demonic movement opposed to the people and the house of God. Our world sees God's laws as restrictions of freedom, and we are in a

moment where leaders and influential voices are uniting together to dismantle the authority of God. However, the church is called to respond in corporate prayer, as modeled in Acts 4 when the disciples lifted up their voices in one accord to intercede against persecution. Many believers tend to live in anxiety over the evil in the world, but God has already achieved ultimate victory through His Son, and He invites us to take on His divine confidence, gather together, and ask for His victory to be made known. For the moment we are in, the church must be full of people who have cultivated intimate, internal realities that can withstand external pressures, who are humble enough to leave their preferences of prayer to come together with one voice so that God will fulfill the promise of Joel 2 and pour out His Spirit on all flesh. It is in response to our obedience, that God can and will restore the years that the enemy has stolen and turn our greatest areas of warfare into our greatest areas of inheritance.

(PM)

This Sunday, guest Pastor Lee Cummings continued our teaching series, “God Comes Where He’s Wanted” by teaching on the importance of building altars through our lives. By looking at the beginning of Gideon’s story in Judges 6, Pastor Lee revealed ties between Gideon’s struggles and the struggles of the American church today. When the angel of the Lord appeared to call Gideon to a new destiny, he was void of hope and filled with doubt because of the evil and hardship happening around him. God called him a “mighty man of valor, but his identity had been so defined by his experiences of pain, he struggled to receive what the Lord said about him. Like Gideon, we need our false identities to be shaken up by the Truth, and receive the holy confidence that is found in God’s promise, “I will be with you.” Out of this confidence Gideon was able to tear down the idols of his father’s house, and build new altars to the Lord in their place. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God allows His people to be living temples of the Holy Spirit, invites us to walk in holy confidence, and equips us to invade the darkness of our world with His glory.

Discussion Questions

Connect

What is the hardest part about waking up for you?

Character

Ask someone to read Psalm 2 or Judges 6:11-16 aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about what God values?

Consider

1. Do you tend toward meditative, silent prayer or praying out loud? Is there anything about the one you do not lean towards that makes you uncomfortable or uneasy?
2. Joel 2 displays that the answer to growing crisis and corporate resistance is corporate assemblies of prayer and fasting. Where do you first turn when life gets chaotic or stressful? What do you think this reveals what you believe about God?
3. What does it look like for you to spend time fostering an awakened spirit and cultivating your internal capacity to deal with the external pressures of our culture?
4. Pastor Corey talked about having friends that 'sing your song' back to you when you lose heart. Who is a friend you have that can sing your song back to you?
5. Where have allowed the pain of your experience to shape your identity? What truth from scripture speaks a better word over you?

Cover

Ask the Holy Spirit to uncover any lesser loves you have placed on altars in your life that you need to confess and submit to the Lord. Invite the Lord to return to His rightful place on the throne in your heart, and make sure to cover individual prayer requests as well.

Week 5 - The Cry of the Region

Teaching Text

Isaiah 62:1-7 (ESV)

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Sam continued our sermon series “God Comes Where He’s Wanted” by unpacking the cry for the region through Isaiah 64. He offered three invitations to help us move from complacency, to concern, to crying out for God to intervene and reveal Himself in our region based on the pattern evident in Scripture. Pastor Sam’s first invitation was for us to take our place before God and grow in intimacy with Him. A deep, abiding relationship with Him is the necessary foundation for our lives to reflect God’s care for the people and places He has called us to. It is paramount, then, that we maintain a proper view of God, so that we can intercede for others from a posture of assurance and conviction about God’s character. The next invitation is to take our place on the wall to develop intimacy with the land by becoming deeply acquainted with where God has purposefully placed us, and living with the vision that everything on the earth belongs to Him. Finally, Pastor Sam called us to take our place on behalf of others through intercession. When we press into the pain those around us are experiencing, and ask the Lord to increase our compassion, we will be moved to contend and intercede for others. We can leverage any station or season for the Kingdom we are in when we reach beyond ourselves to saturate all the areas of our lives with prayer. We must discern the season we are in, and develop a desperation for God to come have His way. As followers of Jesus, each with our own unique story, we are able to minister before God and on behalf of others like nobody else can. We must then root our prayers in this holy confidence: our whispers with God can move Heaven and resound across the earth, both in our day and for the generations to come.

Discussion Questions

Connect

What is something (big or small) that left you in awe or awakened your curiosity recently?

Character

Ask someone to read Isaiah 62:1-7 aloud. Then, ask following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage reveal about God's heart?

Consider

1. Are there times when you find yourself particularly insular and focused on your life, struggles, and even something as noble as your desire to do good? Are there specific happenings that tend to turn you inward?
2. Isaiah 2 reveals that the key to creating a cry from our hearts for matters beyond our own, is by fostering intimacy with God. What does it look like for you to create room for God to reveal the secrets of His heart and Kingdom?
3. Pastor Sam talked about letting our dreams die, so God can resurrect His dreams inside of us. In what areas have your dreams been shaped by your own agenda or desires? What do you think God's desires and purposes are for your life?
4. Pastor Sam indicated that intercession is central to developing intimacy with God and nurturing compassion in our hearts for the burdens of others. Where do you find yourself uniquely positioned today? What struggles are you facing? Who else might be facing similar struggles, and how can you intercede for them?

Cover

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where you have lost sight of God's vision. Invite God to shift your perspective and give you eyes that see people, places and circumstances the way He sees them. Make sure to cover individual prayer requests as well.

Week 6 - The Cry of the Lord

Teaching Text

1 Chronicles 13:1-14

David conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds. He then said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of the Lord our God, let us send word far and wide to the rest of our people throughout the territories of Israel, and also to the priests and Levites who are with them in their towns and pasturelands, to come and join us. Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of Saul." The whole assembly agreed to do this, because it seemed right to all the people. So David assembled all Israel, from the Shihor River in Egypt to Lebo Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim. David and all Israel went to Baalah of Judah (Kiriath Jearim) to bring up from there the ark of God the Lord, who is enthroned between the cherubim—the ark that is called by the Name. They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it. David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, timbrels, cymbals and trumpets. When they came to the threshing floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God. Then David was angry because the Lord's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. David was afraid of God that day and asked, "How can I ever bring the ark of God to me?" He did not take the ark to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house for three months, and the Lord blessed his household and everything he had.

Recap

In our final week of 'God Comes Where He's Wanted' Pastor Suzy emphasized the importance of understanding God's cry for our vital consecration and purity, as we desire and call upon our Holy God in our hearts, homes, church, and region. As King of the universe, we need to seek Him based on His terms, not our own.

When sin entered the world, it separated humanity from our Creator, and in the garden of Eden, the first animal was sacrificed by God to clothe Adam and Eve. Sacrificial blood was needed to allow their sinful bodies to be able to handle being near to the purity and holiness of God. In turn, desiring and wanting to live amongst His people, God later gave the Israelites specific rules and laws to obey in order to be protected in His presence. When King David came to power in Israel, he desired to retrieve the Ark of the Covenant from where it lay abandoned and disregarded for years in the outskirts of the kingdom. While his passion

was strong, he failed to seek God in the ways that He had instructed in the Law of Moses. As a result, when Uzzah's sinful hands touched the Ark, he died on the spot. Instead of repenting for seeking God in his own way, and not the Father's way, David left the Ark in the hands of Obed Edom, and fled in fear.

Obed Edom was a man with no great inheritance or status, but he sought the Lord with obedience and reverence, and as a result, his house, family, and generations to come, were blessed. After getting wind of the blessings Obed Edom had received through properly hosting the presence of the Lord, King David repented and brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. By preparing a place for the Ark to rest, making sure the Levites were consecrated and in charge of its transport, sacrificing the animals necessary for atonement, and even wearing a linen ephod instead of a crown on the journey, David declared God was the true King and not him.

Today, to seek the Lord as He desires to be sought, we need to remember that God is holy, perfect, and set apart, accept Jesus Christ's blood atonement, desire the wholeness of His Holy presence, choose to live on His terms, and rejoice in the blessing of His presence. Our bodies are His temple, meaning the Ark of the Covenant is no longer needed, because we have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us. May we consecrate our hearts and bodies to His holiness so that the cry of our heart, home, church and region before we can usher in the revival we long for.

Discussion Questions

Connect

In the spirit of Valentine's Day, what is your favorite candy OR rom-com?

Character

Ask someone to read 1 Chronicles 13:1-14 aloud. Then, ask the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stuck out to you?
2. What does this passage indicate about seeking God on God's terms?

Consider

1. What are some ways we seek God on our own terms and not His?
2. What are some practical ways we can welcome God into our lives?

3. Because of Jesus, we are now the Ark of the Covenant, or the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. How can we live in our bodies as if this is true?

4. Pastor Suzy said desire is not enough if obedience and reverence aren't present. What does reverence look like? Can you think of a time when you've experienced reverence?

Cover

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the ways God wants to be wanted. Ask for more hunger to live in obedience to His will and reverence of His holiness. Then, cover personal prayer requests as people feel led to share.

CHURCH OF THE CITY NY