

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MARKED BY HIS PRESENCE

YEAR: UNITE / FOCUS: LIVING IN COMMUNITY
SERIES: GOD'S PEOPLE ARE THE CHURCH

BIG TRUTH: GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MARKED BY HIS PRESENCE

Exodus 29:45; 1 Kings 6:13; Numbers 14:14; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 8:8

BIBLE VERSE: JOSHUA 1:9

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

BIG IDEAS

- God's presence is what sets His people apart.
- God's presence is the focus of His people's worship.
- God's presence is both protection and provision for His people.

BIBLE PASSAGE: EXODUS 33:1-17

UNITE: LIVING IN COMMUNITY

The Unite year is an exploration of what it means to be united in Christ as the family of God (Romans 12:5). When we are saved, we are brought into the family of God- seen throughout the Old Testament as "God's People" and in the New Testament and today as the church (Exodus 6:7; Colossians 1:18). We are set free from our sin to walk in freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1) and use our influence to call others to do the same.

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- God has always been making and keeping a people for Himself
- In this age, the church is God's people
- Being a part of God's people should inform every aspect of our lives



Every student should feel...

- Love for God and the people of God
- Accountable to God and to the church to pursue holiness
- Responsible to use their influence to make much of God alone



Every student should strive to...

- Study the connections between God's people in the Old Testament
- and the church in the New Testament
- Memorize the Bible verse each week
- Invite others into God's people, the church



Every student should want...

- Be marked by their faith
- Talk about God every day, in every setting and circle of influence
- Live as a faithful member of their local church

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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BIBLE VERSE: JOSHUA 1:9

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

God commands His people to be strong and to not be afraid.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed..."

- God's words to Joshua to "be strong and courageous" are not just empty platitudes, but are commanded based on who God is and His presence with His people. The words are more than encouragement that they have nothing to fear, rather they put in perspective that anything Joshua would be afraid of is under the sovereign control of the Lord our God.
- God's commands to Joshua are not based on who Joshua is, but who God is. He is not telling Joshua to simply 'get over it' or to pull himself up by his bootstraps. Instead, He is reminding Joshua to trust in His character and His covenant relationship with the Israelites.

God allows His people to know Him.

"...for the Lord your God..."

- God is over all things. His glory is magnificent and covers the whole earth. And yet, He is not distant. He relates personally to His people. When God tells Joshua not to be afraid, He does so because He is the Lord. He is sovereign and in control over all things, and He can be trusted.
- For Israel, God is trustworthy not just because He is in control of the whole world as its creator. But He has chosen the Israelites as His people, and He has declared Himself to be their God. God, who is holy and righteous, allows His people to know Him and be in a relationship with Him.

God promises to be with His people.

"...is with you wherever you go."

- When God spoke these words to Joshua as he prepared to enter the Promised Land with the Israelites, the words were more than encouragement of God's provision for their future. These words were a statement of who God had always been for the Israelites and who He would continue to be for them. God was reminding Joshua and the Israelites of His presence with them.
- God's promise to be with His people is a promise of His presence. He promises to not be distant, but to be near-- to be with them and to go before them. When He reminded Joshua to not be afraid or dismayed, it was because of God's presence.

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MARKED BY HIS PRESENCE

BIG IDEA #1: GOD'S PRESENCE IS WHAT SETS HIS PEOPLE APART.¹

[THIS]

Often, when we want to signify that something is set aside or different from a group, we place a marker upon it. The one thing set apart as special is marked as chosen. When God established the nation of Israel as His people, He marked them with His presence. The distinguishing difference that set them apart from other nations was the way God interacted with them. In Exodus 33:1-17, we see this picture of God speaking to Moses, the chosen leader of God's people. God interacts with Moses and instructs him to lead the people away from Sinai. It was the custom to set up the tent of meeting outside of camp, and when Moses entered the tent the presence of the Lord would descend in the form of a cloud. The Lord would speak to Moses and the people would watch as this happened. His presence was upon them and with them. This was unlike the other nations around them. Israel was not like the pagan nations who worshiped idols who could not do anything. Instead, they were the chosen people of God who were privileged to know Him.

[THEREFORE]

Read Exodus 33:11. How does God's interaction with His people make them distinct from others?

Exodus 33:11 gives us a picture of the way God interacted with Moses. We see that God spoke with Moses like two friends speak. God made Himself available to Moses and interacted with His people. God didn't do this for the other nations that existed at the time. The same is true for those today who are reconciled to God. Those who are reconciled enjoy the freedom of God's presence and relationship with Him.

[THIS]

Being set apart means that our lives are different from those around us. Just as the Israelites lived differently than the nations around them, we are called to live differently than people who do not follow God. We do this today because we have the presence of God through His Spirit inside of us. God's presence has power to work in us and through us. We see this in Exodus 33:1-17 as Moses intercedes for the Israelites who had disobeyed God. Moses asked for God's mercy on them, and God heard Moses' prayer. The Israelites were in danger of being cut off from God's presence, yet Moses pleaded on their behalf. Moses did not want to leave Sinai without God's presence leading them. Our lives are markedly different because we do not want to disobey God or do anything to damage our communion with Him.

[THEREFORE]

How does the temptation to "fit in" with the culture present a challenge to living as God's chosen people?

Fitting in with the culture is a great temptation and has always been a temptation. In the beginning, God's people struggled to resist fitting in with the other nations. In Nehemiah 8:8-9, the people hear the book of the Law for the first time in generations and weep because they have been disobedient to God's Word. The generations before them have chosen to "fit in" rather than keeping God's Law.

How does God's presence help us live set apart for Him?

In Exodus 33:11-17, Moses did not want to go forward without the presence of the Lord. Moses understood the power of God's presence. God's presence guides us and helps us live for Him as His chosen people. Without His presence, we are hopeless.

1. Leviticus 22:3: God's people could be cut off from His presence, meaning that His presence was with them.

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MARKED BY HIS PRESENCE

BIG IDEA #2: GOD'S PRESENCE IS THE FOCUS OF HIS PEOPLE'S WORSHIP.²

[THIS]

We all worship something or someone. Every person has a focus of worship in their lives; it is just a matter of what that focus is. For the believer, the presence of God is the focus of our worship. In Deuteronomy 6, we see this prescribed to God's people in the words of Moses. Moses shared the command of the Lord to the Israelites, showing them how they should live their daily lives in worship to Him because they were called and set apart people. God was to be the center of their lives. They were to praise Him daily for His character and works and they were to teach these truths to their children. God's truth was to be on their lips from the time they rose in the morning until they went to bed at night. What this meant for them literally was that their entire being was to be about worshipping God.

[THEREFORE]

How does worship deepen your communion with God?

For the Jesus follower, the presence of God is experienced in both union and communion. Our union with God refers to our position in Christ and is secure in Him; there is nothing that can separate us from His love. Our communion with God is our interaction with His presence, which flows naturally out of our union with Him. When we disobey Him or run from Him, this is harmed. When we worship and praise Him, we experience deeper communion as we focus our lives on who God is and what God has done.

[THIS]

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses teaches the Israelites the commands and rules that God has told him to share with them. God's commands to them were their guide to help them worship Him and live for Him. Deuteronomy 6:4 shows us that the center of the Israelites' lives was to be their worship and love for God, the one true God. They were to center their lives around Him because He is the one true God and had promised to be with them always. God's presence was cause to worship Him. What we center our lives on is what we worship. When we live in an awareness of God's presence with us, we will worship Him daily. We will praise Him for His presence and desire to know Him more and more because of the power of His presence in our lives.

[THEREFORE]

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-6. How do these verses help us see what the focus of our worship should be?

In these beginning verses, an importance was placed on passing down worship of God from generation to generation. This requires a personal commitment to worship God alone and a pursuit of helping others follow Him. When we think about God and His presence, we will worship Him. When He is the focus of our daily lives, how we live our lives and what we invest in will be determined by His will.

Being marked by God's presence sets us apart from the world. How does your worship show the world that you are marked by God?

Galatians 3:26 and 5:16 teach us what it means to not satisfy the desires of our flesh but to be led by the Spirit. When we do this, we will look differently than the world. Romans 8:14 also helps us see that when we are led by the Spirit, it is a sign that we are God's children. This will set us apart from the world. Our actions will be different than the world's.

2. Psalm 73:28: Being near to God produces worship in His people.

GOD'S PEOPLE ARE MARKED BY HIS PRESENCE

BIG IDEA #3: GOD'S PRESENCE IS BOTH PROTECTION AND PROVISION FOR HIS PEOPLE.³

[THIS]

In Exodus 13:21, we see that God's people are led by a pillar of a cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night. God's presence with His people in this time was visible to them through these physical means. He provided for them by giving them direction and guiding them while they were in the wilderness. He protected them and gave them all the things they needed to sustain life. His presence was His protection and provision for them. For the Israelites, to wander in the wilderness would have been a dangerous thing, but God went before them to protect them and guide them. In His supernatural guidance of them, He protected them and marked them as His chosen people, setting them apart from other people groups.

[THEREFORE]

What has God provided for you? How can this be a way for you to share with others that you belong to Him?

God takes care of His people even today. This does not mean that believers never face suffering, but it does mean that they have His presence during their suffering which provides peace. 1 John 3:1 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3 help us see that God loves us and interacts with us as our Father.

[THIS]

The Israelites struggled during their time in the wilderness. In Exodus 33:1-17, Moses reminds them of their stubbornness and their tendency to sin against God. Though they were prone to sin, God's presence still marked them as His people, and His presence meant that He was providing for them and protecting them. For the Israelites, God's presence with them was manifested through the presence of His Spirit in clouds, fire, and when He spoke through His prophets. For His people today, His Spirit lives inside of those who have repented of their sin and believed in Jesus, His Son. This presence guides and provides wisdom and discernment to God's people. He marks them and always gives them what they need.

[THEREFORE]

Why is it important to remember that our tendency to sin doesn't prevent God from providing for us?

In Luke 12:24 and Matthew 6:31-32, Jesus teaches that God's provision for His people does not depend upon their sinlessness. It is important to remember that God's presence in the lives of His people is His provision for them. This also helps us to remember that God is providing what we need, even when we don't believe this is true. God knows what we need better than we do, and He provides for us.

How does God's presence help you trust in His protection of you in your daily life?

In Exodus 13:21, God protected and provided for the Israelites as they left Egypt. His presence is a sign that He will protect us. We can trust in His protection by abiding daily in Him. Living in a daily awareness of His presence helps us trust His protection.

3. Psalm 81:10: God is a God who provides for His children.