



This week we look at Jesus' birth narrative in the Gospel of Matthew. He invites his readers to reimagine the way we often relate to God. Christmas is a reminder we can stop living "Apart" from God and start enjoying the "With" God life. (Matthew 1:18-25)

REFLECT (10 Minutes)

How has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you through the sermon this week?
OR
Was there anything new or interesting that grabbed you from the teaching Sunday?

Dig Deeper (20 Minutes)

Which of the four popular postures (Life Over, Under, From, and For God) best describes how you relate to God? Has this always been the case? Can you think of seasons of your life when you related to God differently?

Can you think of a time when "the coin dropped" and a different understanding of God was illuminated for you? What were the circumstances that led to this new vision?

Which posture of the 4 do you think best captures the way our community or church tends to relate to God?

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4. What do you think it looks like to be one who partakes in the divine life? What has this looked like for you?

Read this Quote to the group: "Why is it so important that you are with God...? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you "my beloved daughter," "my beloved son," "my beloved child." To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being." - Henri Nouwen

1. What sort of questions are you holding when you hear a quote like this read over you? Or How do you find yourself reacting to the idea of belovedness?
2. Silence, Solitude, Mediation, Prayer, Sabbath, etc. can all be ways of slowing down to be With God. How have you found these exercises to be life giving?

RESPOND (10-15 Minutes)

Take a moment and think back over the previous week. If you had fully trusted that God was with you, what might you have done differently? What "risks" might you have taken?

How are life and death redefined for those living *with* God? What significance does Jesus' resurrection have for you? Does it really influence how you live?

PRAYER and Mutual Encouragement (10-15 Minutes)

Take some time to pray one another. Perhaps confess which of the four postures you usually live from. And ask God to help you slow down and just enjoy his presence or be with him?

LEADER NOTES

These questions are a guide; feel free to use/exclude ones as people may have already answered the question or talked about the theme OR if your group takes a long time to tackle one particular theme it's ok to skip over questions in the interest of time/focus.