GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
11.30.25
Presence in the Garden

About This Series

As we enter the Advent season, we are tracing the Bible's mega theme — the relational presence of God — from the Garden of Eden to the New Creation. Scripture is one unified story of a God who continually draws near to be with His people. Throughout this series, we'll explore how God's presence is our greatest need, and how His nearness brings life, joy, and restoration. God delights to dwell with His people, and Advent reminds us that He came near in Jesus and continues to come near today.

Goals of This Week's Discussion / Study

• To understand God's original intention for creation as a place of His presence.
• To see how sin disrupts humanity's mission and relationship with God.
• To identify the hope embedded in Genesis 3 and how it points to Jesus.
• To reflect on God's persistent pursuit of His people even in their hiding.
• To respond personally to God's question: "Where are you?"

Connections with the 7 Marks of a Jesus Follower

Stand in Awe:
Marvel at God's majesty as both transcendent and intimately near — a God who creates, blesses, pursues, and covers His people.

Keep in Step:
Recognize the daily decisions that draw us closer to God's presence or lead us into hiding.

Share Your Story:
Everyone has a "garden moment" — a time when shame, fear, or doubt made them hide. Sharing our stories displays the hope of a God who comes near and restores.

Suggested Starter Questions

- When you think about the Garden of Eden, what is the first image or idea that comes to mind?
- What's one experience in your life when God felt especially near to you?

- Why do you think many Christians struggle to believe that God actually delights in them?

Discussion

Read Genesis 1:26–31

God's Intention for Creation

**26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.**

Questions

- What do these verses show us about God's heart toward humanity?
- How does being made in God's image shape our understanding of identity and purpose?
- What do you notice about the connection between *place*, *people*, and *presence*?
- Why is it important to see that work and purpose existed before sin?
- How does this vision of Eden contrast with how we often view God today?

Read Genesis 1:28 & 2:15

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Questions

- What responsibilities did God give to Adam and Eve?
- Why do you think God intentionally created a space to dwell with His people?
- How does the Creation Mandate help us understand our purpose today as Jesus-followers?
- What does it reveal about the kind of relationship God desires with us?

Read Genesis 3:1–7

The Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Questions

- What do you notice about the serpent's strategy?
- How does the deception appeal to both desire and insecurity?
- Can you relate to the feeling of "not enough"? How does it affect your relationship with God?
- What shifts the moment Adam and Eve listen to another voice?
- Where are you tempted to question God's goodness or His heart toward you?

Read Genesis 3:8–13

God's Pursuit in the Midst of Hiding

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are

you?” [10] He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” [11] And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” [12] The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” [13] Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Questions

- How do Adam and Eve respond when they hear God approaching?
- What does their hiding reveal about the effect of sin and shame?
- Why is God’s question “Where are you?” so significant?
- How have you experienced the tension between wanting God but hiding from God?
- What situations in your life make you more likely to withdraw from God’s presence?

Read Genesis 3:14–19

The Consequences — Mission Interrupted

[14] So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. [15] And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush[b] your head, and you will strike his heel.” [16] To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” [17] To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. [18] It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. [19] By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Questions

• What stands out most to you about these consequences?
• How does sin impact both our mission and our communion with God?
• Where do you see the effects of Genesis 3 in your life or our world today?

Read Genesis 3:14–15

The First Gospel — Hope in the Midst of Judgment

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring[a] and hers; he will crush[b] your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Questions

• Why is it significant that hope appears before Adam and Eve ever leave the garden?
• How does this promise demonstrate the character of God?
• What does this reveal about God’s heart for redemption, even in our failure?
• How does seeing Jesus in Genesis 3 shape the way you view the Old Testament?

Read Genesis 3:20–24

Covered by Grace — The God Who Clothes the Ashamed

20 Adam[a] named his wife Eve,[b] because she would become the mother of all the living. 21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[c] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Questions

- What does God’s act of clothing Adam and Eve teach us about His character?
- Why is this moment so theologically important?
- What does it feel like to know that God covers your shame rather than exposes it?
- Where do you sense God inviting you to step out of hiding and into His presence?

Personal Reflection

- When you hear God ask, “Where are you?”, how do you honestly answer?
- Are you living with an awareness that God delights in you?
- What area of your life resembles hiding rather than communion?
- What lies about God or about yourself do you need to repent from?
- What part of God’s presence do you most need this Advent: His nearness? His joy? His healing? His covering?

Application

- Set aside intentional time this week to be in God’s presence — even 10 minutes of stillness.
- Confess one area of hiding to God and receive His grace.
- Share a piece of your story with someone who needs hope.
- Re-read Genesis 1–3 and underline every action that God takes toward His people.
- Look for practical ways to extend God’s presence — love, joy, peace — to someone in your life.

Pray Together

- Praise God for His beauty, power, and holiness.
- Thank Him for His immanent nearness — that He draws close and delights in His people.
- Confess areas of hiding, shame, or distrust.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you live in the joy of God’s presence.
- Pray for a renewed sense of hope as we journey through Advent.