

Heart of God

Session 1: God's Heart Is Holy

NOTE TO LEADER

We intentionally created this study guide with more than enough material so that you can pick the questions that work best for your group. Before your meeting, watch the video, read the study guide's corresponding session, and decide which questions you'd like to discuss. For more information on using this guide in your group, click the three lines in the menu bar and select How to Use This Guide. Thank you for choosing this study and for faithfully leading your group.

ICE BREAKER

Leader: *This icebreaker is a game many of us have played before. It's a guessing game in which participants guess historical figures based on a description given by their small group leader.*

In front of the group, the leader will pick a handful of historical figures like Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King, Jr., or anyone the group may be familiar with. One by one the leader, without telling students the names of these historical figures, will describe each of them using words or phrases to help the group identify each person.

If they'd like to guess, students should raise their hands before giving their answers. Once the students have successfully guessed four or five historical figures, the leader can wrap up the activity by describing one final figure: God. The leader should describe God with clues that are slightly obscure and not obvious for students to associate with God. The goal here is to drive home the point that we all have room to learn more about God.

Which historical figure was the most difficult to identify? Why?

Why do you think it was difficult to identify God?

It's not uncommon for us to assume that we know what God is like. Sometimes our assumptions are driven by our feelings and sometimes by what others say about him. But how can we really know who God is and what he's like?

In *The Heart of God*, Francis Chan will help us better understand who God is and what he's like by looking at what God says about himself in the Bible.

VIEW

Watch Session 1: *God's Heart Is Holy* (9 minutes).

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REVIEW

Francis opened this session discussing how important it is to recognize that we have a creator. **Do you ever struggle to believe that there is a God? If so, how do you respond to those doubts?**

Even if we don't struggle to believe in God, we may still struggle to know what he's really like. Often, we rely on our own ideas about God. **When you think of God, what do you imagine he's like?**

Assuming you know about someone from a distance is very different from knowing them in person. In the book of Exodus, Moses asked God for his presence. Moses wanted to be near to God—to know him. **What can we learn about Moses's need to be close to God from this prayer? Do you feel like you need to know and be close to God? How so?**

God responds to Moses's prayer by saying, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and I know you by name" (Ex. 33:17). In other words, God is granting Moses's request because he wants Moses to know him. We don't have to earn God's attention or love—he is nearby and wants you to know him. **What do you think God thinks of you? Do you think he wants to know you?**

Just like he says to Moses, God also knows you by name. And he wants you to know him too! **In what ways does it encourage you to realize that God knows you by name? What might change in your life if you trusted that God wants to know you?**

Moses took his prayer one step further, asking to see God's glory. But God refused. "You cannot see my face, for humans cannot see me and live" (Ex. 33:20), he said to Moses. God refused because Moses didn't know what he was asking for. Moses wanted to see God but did not realize that it would mean his death. Sometimes, God does not give us what we ask for because it would hurt us. **What kinds of prayer requests could hurt us in ways we don't expect?**

Moses could not see the glory of God. We can often assume that God is a person like us—a friend we can see on touch. But Francis said, "God is not just a bigger

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version of us.” He is *holy*. Set apart. Different from us. So different, in fact, we can’t even look at him and survive. **In what ways do we treat God like a friend or just another person?**

Based on God’s refusal of Moses’s request, how should we approach God?

Francis took us back to an earlier encounter Moses had with God in Exodus 19:16–20. God summoned Moses to come and meet with him at the top of Mount Sinai—a mountain shrouded in the Lord’s presence. While the Israelites trembled at the foot of the mountain, Moses entered the terrifying presence of God. **Why do you think it was terrifying to enter God’s presence? In what ways should we be more respectful when we approach God?**

Francis made a connection between these two encounters with God, saying that Moses’s experience on Mt. Sinai informed his prayer in Exodus 33. **When, if ever, have you experienced the presence of God? Whether it was an event like a camp or retreat or a quiet prayer in your room, how would you describe that experience?**

In what ways has that experience shaped your prayers, even to this day?

Francis closed by challenging us to earnestly seek what God is like and what his heart is toward us—to be consumed with knowing him. **What could it look like for you to be consumed with knowing God’s heart toward you? How can you challenge one another as a group to earnestly seek God through this series?**

BIBLE JOURNEY

One of the features of both passages that Francis referenced in this session is Moses's relationship with God. Moses has a relationship with God, but it's not casual. Moses understood who God is and the way he should relate to him. We should also be reverent when we approach God, but we often are very casual, treating God like just another guy.

What do you think it looks like to treat God too casually and familiarly? What does it look like to go too far in the other direction, seeing him as distant and unapproachable?

Read Exodus 19:16–25.

This text describes God's presence with vivid imagery. Smoke, fire, loud trumpet blasts, and a violently shaking mountain. **When you imagine God's presence, are these the images that come to mind? How would you describe your perception of God's presence?**

While God's presence is often depicted with terrifying terms, it's something that Moses wasn't willing to do without—he wanted more of it. Read Exodus 33:12–23.

After reading this passage, what would you say are some of the benefits of God's presence (v. 14–16)?

Moses recognized that he and the Israelites needed the presence of God to go with them, which is something that we don't always recognize today. We may know we need God in times of trouble, but on normal days, we may not feel a *need* for God. **Is it still true today that we need the presence of God always with us? Why, or why not?**

After watching this session, we might know that the presence of God is good. We might also recognize that we need God's presence with us. But we might not yet have asked for God to give us his presence **In what ways do you need God to be with you? What would it look like for you to begin each day seeking his presence?**

It's also important to note that God is not far off—he is always near to us. We only have to pay attention. **What can we do to grow in our awareness of God's presence?**

How might a greater awareness of God's presence help us in our day-to-day life?

Moses understood that the presence and the glory of God were the absolute best thing for him and the people of God. He refused to move on without God. **What might change about our lives if we were as stubborn for the presence of God as Moses was? What can you begin doing today to seek the knowledge and presence of God more earnestly?**

LAST WORD

God is so good and so integral to our lives that we should not want to take even one step forward without him.

As we close this first session, take a moment to reflect on how you approach God: with the same kind of yearning that Moses had or with fear like the Israelites at the bottom of the mountain (maybe so much fear that it keeps you from approaching God at all).

Yet, by his grace, God's holiness does not make him unapproachable. He welcomes us into his presence. All you have to do is approach him and ask him to be with you.