

INVITATION TO
IMAGINE

Invitation To Imagine Series

Small Group Material

Leader Guide

Part 1 - "Imagine God"

March 4th, 2018

Bottom Line: *If you make understanding and explaining matter too much, you'll miss the thing your heart has been searching for.*

Study Verses: *1 Corinthians 2:6-10, John 1:14-16, Psalm 34:3*

Define The Win: *Participants would be willing to take a step back and examine their picture of God. They would begin to reflect on how they arrive at their viewpoint of God and what is influencing that picture. Group members would allow God to reintroduce Himself to them.*

Key Points

- *Everyone has thoughts about God and what He should do.*
- *We imagine God in the image of what we worship.*
- *The ways of God run against the wisdom of the world in which we live.*
- *Grace always expands and makes us see more.*
- *We believe the best way to understand is to reduce. We love to break complex things down into their parts.*
- *We attempt to understand in order to explain. We like truth because we can break it down into parts and explain it.*
- *Jesus frames our thinking and serves as our beginning in understanding God's character, nature and heart.*

- *Jesus is full of grace and truth. From Christ's fullness we receive grace upon grace.*
- *We don't understand God by breaking down principles and doctrines, but by looking up and having our eyes expanded.*

ENCOUNTER

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important about us." -A.W. Tozer

- **Read the quote from A.W. Tozer. Do you agree with this quote? Why or why not? How does our picture of God influence our actions, words, emotions and sense of identity?**
- **Fill in the blank: God is _____. What makes you answer in the way that you do?**
- **Over the years how has your view of God developed and changed?**

FORMATION

- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10. What does God reveal to us about Himself over time? What are "the things" that the author is talking about in verse 10? How do the ways of God and His wisdom run against the wisdom of the world we live in?**
- **Read John 1:14-16. How does the life of Jesus serve as our best way to understand God's character, nature, and heart? What do we receive by comprehending and trusting in Christ's fullness?**
- **Read Psalm 34:3. How does the verse serve as an invitation to imagine and see God in a different light and from a different perspective?**

EXPRESSION

- **When you think of God, what is the default emotion (shame, guilt, hope, love, fear, etc.) you experience? Why do you feel this way towards God? How do you think He feels about the way you feel about Him?**
- **How willing are you to take a step back and examine your picture of God?**
- **What would it look like for God to reintroduce Himself to you? Where do you need to see Him with fresh eyes?**

LEADER INSIGHT: *At PC3, our mission is to "reach people and help them walk with God." In this, we hope to create environments and opportunities for individuals to encounter Him. But, this can be a delicate process because we all have a different viewpoint of who God is. We all have thoughts about God and what He should do.*

When we hear the word "god," our minds try to figure out who He is, what He's like, what He's passionate about, etc. We do this to explain the world around us, deal with the questions we have about life, justify our behavior, or push our agenda. What comes to our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. It influences our words, thoughts, actions, emotions, and sense of identity.

Over time, we develop a picture of God - sometimes it comes from our parents, culture, our friends, circumstances we face and a host of other different things. But, we rarely take the time to reflect on where our picture of God came from and whether it lines up with the God present in Scripture.

In our quest for understanding, we naturally gravitate towards attempting to explain God away. We foolishly believe the best way to understand is to reduce. We break complicated things, like God, down into their parts. Understanding and explaining are essential in our pursuit of God. However, if we make those matter too much, we will miss the thing our heart is looking for, namely God himself.

The ways of God run against the wisdom of the world in which we live. We tend to rely on a wisdom that rests on our ability to understand and comprehend. Yet, we don't understand God by breaking down principles and doctrines, but by looking up and having our eyes expanded.

It all comes back to Jesus. By setting our eyes on Him, we begin to understand God's character, nature, and heart. He is full of grace and truth, and it is from His fullness that we receive grace upon grace. Grace always expands and makes us see more.

This is an invitation to imagine: to lay aside what we think about God and instead imagine. Imagine the deepest desires of our soul being filled. Imagine the burdens of our heart being held, honored, and redeemed. Imagine those pure longings of our heart being satisfied in Christ. Now, imagine if God were the God we wanted and had been searching for our whole life.