

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
Beyond the Bio: Addressing Barriers to a Deeper Relationship, September 8, 2019

The Big Idea

In Jesus Christ, we have full access to God. Yet it can still seem that God is at a distance, or that something is in the way of our connection with him. More important than knowing about God, he desires that we know him personally. More than gathering information about God, he wants us to experience the transformation that comes in a life-giving relationship with him. So what's getting in the way? Jesus says, "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."

Where we are in the Bible

Mark 15:33-39 is the story of Jesus' death, where the Temple Curtain was torn "from top to bottom." Israel was God's nation. Jerusalem was God's city. The Temple was God's house. And inside the Temple, in the inner-most place, a place called the Holy of Holies, God dwelt. This room contained the Ark of the Covenant, another container of God's presence, along with an altar for the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. Holiness and purity were interchangeable concepts to the ancient Jew, so in order for this sacred place not to be contaminated, a giant curtain, or veil was constructed (Ex 26:31-33). But at the moment of Jesus' death everything changed. The Temple curtain was torn in two and God was on the loose.

Other scriptures to consider

Rev. 3:20
Ex 26:31-33
Hebrews 9:1-28
Hebrews 10:19-25
Matthew 11:28-30

Finding a bit of ourselves

- Consider the nature of relationships. What are some of the differences between acquaintances and friends, friends and close friends, or friends and spouses?
- Based on your experience, what are some things that can harm a good relationship?
- Now think about your relationship with God. What are some barriers that can compromise our relationship with God? If those barriers were broken down, how would your relationship be different?
- In the sermon 4 different barriers were discussed. Which one resonated with you the most?

Where do we go from here?

- Can you remember beginning a relationship with God? What was that moment like?
- What does it mean that God wants a relationship with us?
- What are some of the behaviors and actions that are necessary for a vital relationship with other people that can help us understand what is necessary in our relationship with God?
- What is one thing you can do this week to invest in your relationship with God?

Prayer focus

As you spend time in confession over the obstacles between you and God, thank God...

- For His abundant forgiveness that leads to freedom.
- For grace that draws you closer to Him.
- For peace and joy that comes in knowing Him personally.
- For strength that allows you to live for Him on a daily basis.

