

# God Speaks

## Small Group Guide

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is something a parent or guardian regularly said when you were a child that you still remember today?
2. Would you find it difficult to go an entire week without talking to anyone? Explain.

**Read the following passages:** Genesis 1:1-3, 26, 28; 2:15-17; 3:8-9.

The opening chapters of Genesis present a God who differed in striking ways from the pagan deities of the ancient near east. Israel's prophets often picked up this theme. "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One." (Isaiah 40:25) One of the most obvious, and most important, characteristics of God that emerges in Genesis is that God speaks. In the passages referenced above we find that:

- God speaks to bring light to the darkness and order to chaos.
- God speaks to reveal His intention to create human beings.
- God speaks in order to bless us.
- God speaks to show us our purpose.
- God speaks to give us instructions and warning.
- God speaks to call us out of our hiding places.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. We were made to be in relationship with God. When we don't have God, we look to other voices for meaning, protection, wisdom, and love. What are some of the voices you find yourself relying on as a substitute for God? God clearly intends for us to be in relationship with other people and to be influenced by their words. How can we tell when some other voice is having a negative influence in our lives?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 2:13. How did the "word of the Lord" (translated in the NIV as "the Lord's message") spread in the first century? In verses 9-10 Paul alludes to several elements in the message he shared with the Thessalonians. What was Paul's message? What message has God called followers of Jesus to share with others? How would you describe this message in your own words? If you are a follower of Jesus, what are some ways you can be active in sharing God's message in this unique season?
3. The Jewish, and then Christian, Scriptures were a unique phenomenon in the Greco-Roman Empire. Pagan religion had collections of oracles and handbooks for interpreting omens, but nothing like the Hebrew (or Christian) Bible. This difference in sacred writings can be traced back to the radical differences between the pagan deities and the God of Israel. One scholar, N.T. Wright, describes the differences in the use of sacred writings this way:

*In the world of ancient paganism such books never played anything like the role of*

*Israel's scriptures in Judaism and Christianity. Indeed, the absence of 'sacred texts' in the latter sense within ancient paganism is one of many fascinating differences between the common life of the ancient world and the message and worldview which Paul the apostle was commending.*

N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*

What role are the Scriptures playing in your life right now? How do the Scriptures speak to important subjects like our identity, our mission, our pain, or our worldview? What is the biggest obstacle to your engagement with the Scriptures?

4. Read John 14:15-18, 25-27. What does Jesus say about the Holy Spirit? What are some of the roles the Holy Spirit plays in our lives?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. How does this passage connect with the idea that having intellectual comprehension of a passage of Scripture is not the same as recognizing God's voice in the Scriptures?
6. How can the Scriptures help us recognize when the Holy Spirit is speaking to us?
7. Can you think of times when the Holy Spirit has spoken to you? Explain. What are some different ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us? What are some ways the Holy Spirit can speak to us through other people?
8. Do you have a sense of what God may be speaking to you in this season? Explain.
9. What can you do this week to better understand what God wants to speak to you?

**Pray**