



Closer Than You Think 1 – God is Closer Than You Think Spiritual Formation Guide

We hope you'll use this guide to take the teaching from Sunday's service and reflect on it with a few friends or with a group. If you have questions or want to talk more about how to take a next spiritual step, contact us at info@wschurch.org.

Scripture:

"Come close to God and God will come close to you."

James 4:8

"I can never escape from your Spirit!

I can never get away from your presence!

⁸ If I go up to heaven, you are there;

if I go down to the grave, you are there.

⁹ If I ride the wings of the morning,

if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,

and your strength will support me.

¹¹ I could ask the darkness to hide me

and the light around me to become night—

¹² but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.

To you the night shines as bright as day.

Darkness and light are the same to you."

Psalms 139:7-12

"As Jacob slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. ¹⁵ What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” ¹⁷ But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”

¹⁸ The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹ He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz.”

Genesis 28:12-19

“This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God’s people. For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.”

Colossians 1:26

Reflection Questions:

- What is one moment when you knew that God was with you? Share in one or two sentences.
- What stood out to you from Sunday’s service? How did you sense God at work in you through the songs, the message, and being together with others as part of the church? (The message main points and scripture are listed below if it helps you think back.)
- The worship service had several images to portray God’s nearness – the song (“Starlight”), the images from outer space, the Scripture reading from Psalm 139, and the Creation of Adam painting by Michaelangelo. What image helped you reflect on God’s presence?
- Eddie shared, “**Christianity is not about people pursuing God – it is about God pursuing people.**” How do you react to this?
- How does thinking about God as a good Father, eager to be with you as his kid align with how you usually think about God? How do you think God thinks about you? What’s his emotion or posture toward you?
- Read the story of Jacob’s dream in Genesis 28:12-19. If you have time, read it in several translations and listen to someone read it. What do you notice about God? What do you notice about Jacob? How does this speak to your life today?
- Eddie shared three suggestions for where to look for God:
 - In creation – It points to God as the Creator.
 - In our losses – “When you’re hurting, God is closer than you think.”
 - Within* - Jesus made closeness to God possible, not just for Jacob and his descendants, but for all of us. Read Colossians 1:26. If you’ve trusted in Jesus and are baptized into Christ, he is alive in you. He is closer than you think.How have you experienced those as places of encounter with God? Is there one that you might need to lean into this week?
- How is God inviting you to respond and move toward him?

Looking for some ways to grow and be stretched spiritually? Check out our highlighted resources at www.wschurch.org/resources. These resources can be purchased using the links or are available for a small donation at the Next Steps area on Sunday mornings.

Message Main Points and Scripture:

- **God is very near, but leaves room for us to respond.**
- James 4:8 - “Come close to God and God will come close to you.”

- Psalm 139:7-12 - “I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there... if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night – but even in darkness I cannot hide from you... darkness and light are the same to you.”
- **Christianity is not about people pursuing God – it is about God pursuing people.**
- Genesis 3:8 – “When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden.”
- Isaiah 43:5; 41:10 - “Do not be afraid, for I am WITH YOU... Do not fear, for I am WITH YOU... I will strengthen you and help you.”
- Psalm 23 (KJV) – “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art... WITH ME.”
- Matthew 28:20 - “Be sure of this: I am WITH YOU always, even to the end of the age.”
- Revelation 21:3 - “I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live WITH THEM, and they will be his people. God himself will be WITH THEM.’”
- **Jacob lied and manipulated his way to the top of his family.**
- Genesis 28:12 - “As Jacob slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.”
- Genesis 28:15-16 - “What’s more, I am WITH YOU, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!”
- **Bethel, “the house of God.”**
- **Look for God in the creation.**
- Isaiah 40:12 “Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale?”
- **Look for God in your losses.**
- Psalm 34:18 – “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.”
- **Look for God within* .**
- Colossians 1:26 – “This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God’s people. For God wanted them to know that the riches and glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret: Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing his glory.”