Small Group Guide | Jehovah Shammah: The Lord Is There

Background and Context

This sermon explores one of the most profound themes running through all of Scripture: God's desire to dwell with His people. The name Jehovah Shammah, meaning "The Lord Is There," comes from the final verse of the book of Ezekiel, where a restored city is given this name as its defining characteristic. As you work through this guide, consider what it means personally and corporately for God's presence to define who you are.

Key Takeaways

1. Separation from God's presence is the primary effect of sin. More than moral failure or rebellion, sin fundamentally breaks our access to the presence of God. Everything else that sin produces flows from that central rupture.

2. God has always been moving toward restored presence. From Eden to the tabernacle, from the temple to the incarnation of Christ, God's entire redemptive story is one long movement toward dwelling with His people again.

3. Jesus is the true and final temple. He fulfilled everything the Old Testament temple represented. Through His death and resurrection, the dividing veil was torn and access to God's presence was fully restored.

4. Believers are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. The presence of God does not dwell in a building. It dwells in people who have received Christ. This means every believer carries the presence of God into every space they occupy.

5. We can presume upon God's presence. Just as Israel took God's presence for granted, believers today can drift into familiarity, treating holy things as common and assuming God's grace without actively pursuing intimacy with Him.

6. The Holy Spirit's presence produces evidence. Transformation, spiritual leading, fruit of the Spirit, spiritual gifts functioning in love and wisdom, and unity among believers are all signs that the Lord is truly there.

7. Full and unhindered presence awaits us. What we experience now in measures and moments, we will experience in fullness and without interruption in eternity. That hope sustains us through difficulty.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- When was a time you were acutely aware of God's presence, either in a personal moment or in a corporate worship setting? What made it feel different from ordinary experience?

Section 1: The Pattern of Presence and Departure

The sermon traced God's presence from Eden through the tabernacle, the temple, and ultimately into exile when Ezekiel watched the glory of God depart.

1. The sermon described how Adam and Eve, after sinning, chose to hide from God's presence rather than run toward it. In what ways do you find yourself doing the same thing today, hiding from God when you feel most broken or ashamed?
2. The sermon made the point that the primary effect of sin is not simply moral failure but the loss of access to God's presence. How does thinking about sin in those terms change the way you view repentance and restoration?
3. Israel did not lose the presence of God overnight. It happened gradually as they tolerated compromise, mixed worship, and spiritual indifference. What are the slow, subtle ways you think believers today drift from genuine intimacy with God?

Section 2: Taking the Presence for Granted

The sermon identified several specific ways we can presume upon God's presence without even realizing it.

4. The sermon listed four ways we can take God's presence for granted:
    - Becoming too familiar with holy things and losing our sense of awe

- Mistaking attendance for intimacy
- Mistaking knowledge for obedience
- Mistaking ministry activity for spiritual maturity

Which of these resonates most with you personally? Why?

5. The sermon referenced Revelation 2:5, where Jesus warns the church at Ephesus that He will remove their lampstand if they do not return to their first love. This was not about losing salvation but about losing the anointing and effectiveness God had placed on them. How does that distinction land with you? Does it feel like a warning you take seriously?
6. The sermon said, "The more I'm in the presence of God, the more I'm out of the presence and power of sin. The more I get myself out of God's presence, the more I find sin creeping back into it." Have you experienced this in your own life? What does that cycle look like for you?

Section 3: Jesus as the True Temple

The sermon walked through the Gospel of John to show how Jesus fulfilled every element of the Old Testament tabernacle, from the brazen altar to the Ark of the Covenant.

7. The sermon made the point that when Jesus said "Tear down this temple and I will raise it in three days," He was declaring Himself to be the true dwelling place of God. What does it mean to you personally that access to God's presence is no longer tied to a place or a building but to a person?
8. The sermon noted that the moment someone receives Christ, the Holy Spirit is deposited in them as a down payment, and "the Lord is there." How often do you actually think about yourself as a carrier of God's presence? What would change in your daily life if that reality shaped how you moved through the world?

Section 4: Evidence That the Lord Is There

The sermon outlined five evidences that the Holy Spirit is genuinely present and at work.

9. The five evidences discussed were transformation, spiritual leading, fruit of the Spirit, spiritual gifts, and unity. Which of these do you see most clearly in your own life right now? Which feels most underdeveloped?
10. The sermon addressed spiritual gifts with a balanced perspective, affirming their importance while calling for wisdom in how they are exercised. How has your background shaped your comfort level with spiritual gifts? Is there an area where you sense God calling you to step out in greater faith or greater wisdom?

11. The sermon described unity as a mark of the Holy Spirit's presence, distinguishing it from uniformity. What is the difference between the two in practical terms? What threatens unity in a church or small group, and what does it look like to actively maintain it?

Section 5: Layers of God's Presence

The sermon described five layers or dimensions of God's presence: omnipresence, the indwelling presence at salvation, the corporate presence when believers gather, the manifest presence that is felt and experienced, and the eschatological presence that awaits us in eternity.

12. The sermon said that the manifest presence of God, the kind that is felt and experienced, is something we can grow in through worship, obedience, prayer, and seeking God. Do you believe that? What has your experience been with pursuing a deeper, more experiential dimension of God's presence?
13. The sermon ended with a vision of the New Jerusalem where there is no temple because God Himself is the temple, and His presence fills everything without restriction. How does the hope of that eternal reality affect the way you live today?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week as a group or individually.

- **Practice the Presence Daily** Set aside a specific time each day this week, even if only ten minutes, to be still before God without an agenda. No requests. No Bible study plan. Simply acknowledge that He is there and invite Him to speak. At your next group meeting, share what you noticed.
- **Examine Your Temple** Take time in personal prayer to ask the Holy Spirit honestly: Is there anything I have allowed into my heart or life that is grieving you? Write down what comes to mind. Bring it to God in repentance and ask Him to cleanse and restore.
- **Pursue Corporate Worship Intentionally** Before your next worship gathering, spend five minutes in preparation. Confess any sin that might create distance. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you fully present and expectant. Notice whether your experience of worship changes when you approach it with intentionality rather than habit.
- **Identify Where You Have Presumed** Honestly evaluate which of the four patterns of presumption the sermon described applies most to your current season. Write a

one-paragraph response to this question: What would it look like to replace that pattern with genuine pursuit of God's presence?

- **Pray for Your Home and Workplace** This week, before you enter your home each day, pause and pray that the presence of God would go with you through that door. Do the same before entering your workplace. Ask God to make you someone whose presence in a room causes others to sense that something is different.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together around these themes:

- Gratitude for the access to God's presence that Christ purchased through His sacrifice
- Honest confession of ways we have presumed upon or neglected God's presence
- A fresh hunger for intimacy with God, individually and as a group
- A request that your church would be known, above all else, as a place where the Lord is there

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Scriptures

- Ezekiel 43:8
- Ezekiel 43:1-5 (glory of God entering the temple)
- Ezekiel 37:26
- Ezekiel 48 (final verse naming the city)
- Revelation 2:5
- Revelation 21:1-2, 22-27
- John 1:1, 10, 12, 14
- John 14:15-17
- John 14:20-21
- Romans 8:13-14
- 1 Corinthians 12:7
- 1 Corinthians 14 (spiritual gifts in corporate worship)
- Ephesians 4:3
- Ephesians 4:30
- Romans 16:17
- Titus 3:5
- 2 Timothy 2:23
- Genesis 1-3 (Eden, the fall, Adam and Eve hiding from God)
- Genesis 12:1-3 (God calling Abram)
- Exodus 25-40 (Moses and the tabernacle)
- Exodus 33:14-15 (Moses insisting on God's presence)
- Exodus 34:6 (God slow to anger, abounding in mercy)
- 1 Samuel 4-5 (Ark captured, Dagon's head knocked off)

- 2 Samuel 6 (David bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem)
- 1 Chronicles 25 (David establishing 24-7 worship)
- 1 Kings 8 (Solomon's temple dedication, Shekinah glory)
- 2 Kings 17 (northern kingdom exiled to Assyria)
- Ezekiel 9-11 (God's glory departing the temple)
- Ezekiel 40-48 (vision of the new temple)
- John 2:19 (Jesus saying destroy this temple)
- John 3:5 (born of water and Spirit)
- John 4:14 (water that satisfies forever)
- John 6:35 (I am the bread of life)
- John 9:5 (I am the light of the world)
- John 17 (high priestly prayer)
- John 20:11-12 (two angels at the tomb)
- Acts 2 (Pentecost, 3,000 saved)
- Acts 3:1-10 (lame man healed at the Beautiful Gate)
- Acts 4:31 (building shaken, filled with the Spirit)
- Galatians 5:22-23 (fruit of the Spirit)
- Hebrews 10:19 (boldness to enter the holy place)
- 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (demonstration of Spirit and power)
- Psalm 22:3 (God inhabits the praises of His people)
- James 4:8 (draw near to God)
- Luke 15:11-32 (parable of the prodigal son)
- Matthew 18:20 (where two or three are gathered)
- Jonah 4:2 (God described as merciful and compassionate)