

Small Group Discussion Questions

Series: Plot Twist

Speaker: Jay Haugh

Message: Will the Real God Please Stand Up

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Memory Verse: 1 Peter 5:5b-6 NIV

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Read 1 Samuel 5

- God’s presence among the Philistines brought both judgment and a witness to His power and supremacy. Instead of repenting and worshiping the one true God, they send Him away. When you are convicted by God’s presence in your life, do you send Him away, or do you repent? How can we be a witness for God in our lives, even in challenging or unfamiliar situations?
- After the Philistines captured the Ark, they placed it in the temple of their god Dagon. Is there something in your life that holds a higher place than God? Since your body is considered a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), what occupies the place of prominence? Is God on His throne, or is He placed next to something else that is in His spot?
- Idols are gods fashioned by the hands of humanity (Psalm 115:5-8). They are gods you can see, like Baal, Asherah, and Dagon. Do you find it difficult to worship a God you cannot see? What gives you confidence in God’s existence if He is not physically represented? Can idolatry also involve things that are not named as gods but are treated as though they are? These are things like money, possessions, or prominence that are sought above all else.

Read 1 Samuel 6

- The Philistines sought advice from their priests and diviners when faced with the impacts of the presence of the Ark. How does this contrast with the Israelites’ approach to seeking guidance and wisdom from God? When you are seeking



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wisdom or direction, where do you turn? If God or His Word is not first, why is that? What would it take to have God be a first resource instead of a last resort?

- The return of the Ark demonstrates the importance of treating God's presence with respect and honor. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Now that God's presence is continually with us in the form of the Holy Spirit, how can we apply these principles to our lives?
- In v.20 the people of Beth-shemesh asked, "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?" Do you recognize and acknowledge the holiness of God? How does understanding God's holiness draw attention to our sinfulness? How can a recognition of sinfulness lead to dependence on God and a transformed life? Is there anything you need to confess to the Lord?

Read 1 Samuel 7

- Samuel instructs the people to remove the foreign idols, return to the Lord with all their heart, and to serve Him only. Then they will be delivered. What are some distractions in your life that hinder you from being fully committed to God? What are some practical steps that you will take to elevate God and minimize the distractions? How have you thrived when serving Him only?
- The Lord thundered against the Philistines and brought confusion upon them. Why did Israel experience a different outcome during this battle than the previous one where the Ark was captured? Can a parallel be drawn for our own lives? Will the Lord bless us if we are resistant or out of step with Him? Does obedience necessitate blessing?
- The Ebenezer stone was set up by Samuel to be a reminder of God's faithfulness. When is a time God has shown up and proven His faithfulness in your life? How can we cultivate a heart of gratitude and remembrance of God's past faithfulness in our lives?



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