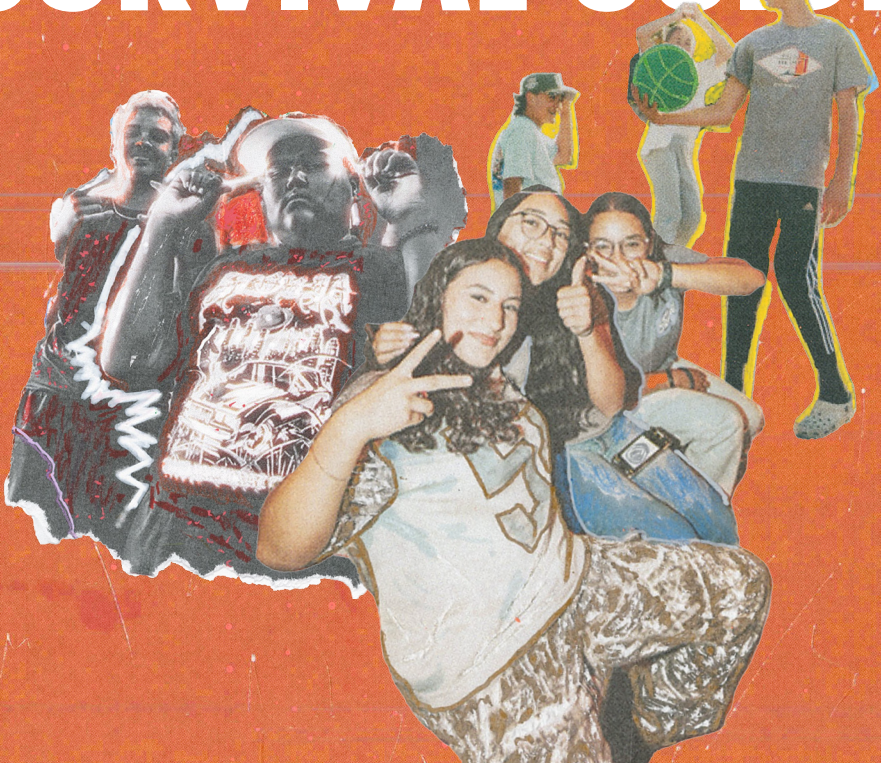


**HDC
HIGH SCHOOL
FALL
SMALL GROUP
SURVIVAL GUIDE**





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STAY CONNECTED WITH HDC STUDENTS

Instagram - Follow us @hdcstudents for all things student ministry.

Text Updates - Stay in the loop with your specific campus by texting: VVstudents, AVstudents, or HSstudents to 64567

Student Newsletter - Get a weekly update straight from our team. Subscribe at highdesertchurch.com (look for the sign-up on the homepage).

Website - For calendars, upcoming events, and general info, visit: highdesertchurch.com/students



HDC STUDENTS PURPOSE STATEMENT

Partnering with parents to prepare students and provide opportunities to change their worlds for Christ.

SMALL GROUP PURPOSE STATEMENT

Our small groups help prepare students to walk with Jesus by developing Christ-centered relationships with a caring adult, centered around God's Word where students can ask honest questions, grow spiritually, and be challenged to live out their faith.



Our SG Leaders are Guides, not teachers.

A guide...

- Knows where they want to take the group, but invites students to help shape the journey.
- Builds healthy relationships that naturally lead to trust, honesty, and accountability.
- Embraces tangents and is prepared to navigate them back to the main focus.
- Asks thoughtful questions and continually points students back to God's Word.
- Recognizes that silence is valuable, allowing students time to reflect and process.
- Creates an environment where every student feels safe and has the opportunity to contribute.

Student Involvement in Student Groups

We know that when a student is an active participant in a small group, they grow deeper in their faith, stay more engaged, and connect more naturally with the experiences of their peers.

Each week, we want students to take part in one or more of the following:

- Reading the passage(s) we're studying.
- Sharing a brief update on what God is doing in their life.
- Telling their personal story at least once during the year.
- Asking and answering one of the discussion questions.
- Closing the time together in prayer.



OUR CURRICULUM STRATEGY

As we prepare students for lifelong faith, we recognize the differences in the cognitive and spiritual maturity of junior high and high school students. Both need a caring adult and can understand God's Word, but they require different approaches.

Our questions are tied directly to the teaching series and relevant Scriptures. This provides consistency and clarity across campuses.

High School Groups: Guided Discussion

High school students are ready to dive deeper into God's Word themselves. Each week, we will use three simple questions to explore the passage:

- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply?

Here is a deeper understanding and guide to the type of questions for each section.



What does it say?

These are observation questions.

- Who is speaking? Who is being spoken about?
- What's the main subject or event of this chapter?
- What do you learn about the people, the event, or the teaching?
- When do these events happen? When will they happen?
- Where does this take place?
- Why is this being said or written?
- Are there any words, ideas, or phrases that repeat or stand out?
- Do you see a particular characteristic of God highlighted?
- What other questions come to mind as you read?
- Does this passage include any lists that you could look at one by one?

What does it mean?

These are interpretation questions.

- What was the author's purpose in writing this?
- How would the original readers have understood this message?
- What was God trying to communicate through this author?
- What circumstances or problems might have prompted this writing?
- Are there other Bible passages that help explain this one?

How does it apply?

These are application questions.

- You are asking the large question of “So what?”
- What does this mean for me today?
- How does this truth impact my life, my choices, my thinking?
- How might this apply to others around me?
- What specific actions can I take to live this out?



TAKING ATTENDANCE USING THE APP

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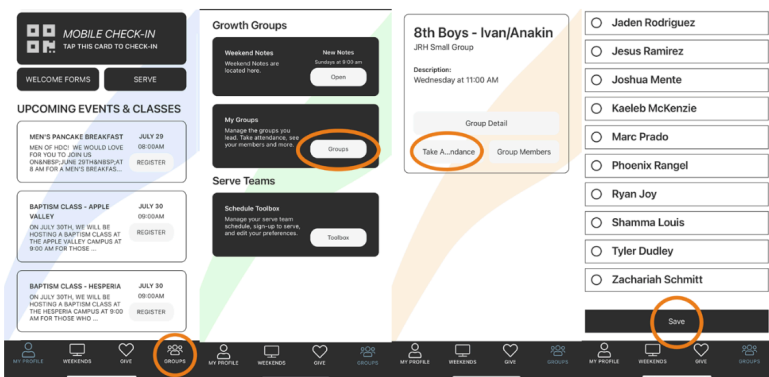
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SMALL GROUP DISCIPLINE:

Our role as adult youth leaders is to help our students look more like Jesus. Discipline issues, at first glance, appear to be a disruption of that goal. It is our hope, however, that as a team, we will begin to see these moments as opportunities for transformation.

Here are some quick tips to guide us in the process.

1. Assess the Risk

- a. Does this need to be dealt with now or can it wait?
- b. How will this student respond to discipline?
- c. Remember, heart change over behavior change.

2. Diffuse the Situation

- a. Get down on their level.
- b. Ask questions and seek to understand
- c. Remove the student ("Let's take a walk...")

3. Next Steps

- a. The end goal is always to build up students in order for them to fully participate. Always aim for this.
- b. What we say can never be more important than what they say.
- c. Help the student to determine their own next steps.



4. **Don't yell at students or embarrass them in front of the group.**
 - a. Handle discipline one-on-one (when possible).
 - b. Handle discipline one-on-one (when possible).

5. **Don't assume you know what's going on.**
 - a. Ask lots of questions.
 - b. Work to find the heart of the issue.

6. **Don't think you are in this alone.**
 - a. Ask the staff team for help.
 - b. Include another leader in the conversation.

7. **Don't walk them through the issue:**
 - a. "Please don't _____ again."
 - b. "I asked you not to _____, if you _____ again, then _____."
 - c. "Since you _____, now you have to _____."



WORKING WITH DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES

It is easy to get frustrated with your students and their personalities. However, be sure to focus on their positives.

The Distractor/Multitasker

This student gets caught up on the no so important stuff. They are easily distracted.

- Ask them to help.
- Meet with them outside of Small Groups.
- Give them a “mission” during small group time.

The Crisis Producer/ Problem Solver

This student always seems to be in crisis mode. They might get labeled the drama queen and feed off emotional responses.

- Let them know they will have a chance to talk with you before or after group.
- Help them to see past the crisis to a solution.
- Only respond with words, not emotion.



The Debater/ Smart Kid

This student always has an answer or a question that is the opposite of what's being said.

- Create ground rules.
- Tell them it is okay to disagree but not attack.
- Direct their participation instead of stifling it.

The Talker/ Mover and Shaker

This student typically speaks before they think and jumps in whenever someone takes a breath. Often they might cut other students or you off when speaking.

Tips:

- Position them next to you.
- Consider letting them lead the small group now and then.
- Get some alone time with them and listen to them.

The Thinker/ Observer

This student almost never speaks unless prompted, and even then, it may be a struggle.

- Position them across from you, in your line of sight.
- Spend one-on-one time with them.
- Don't try to fix the silence.

The Church Kid

These students know their Bible and need to be reminded to focus on how it applies to them.

- Avoid asking questions that have a 'right' answer.
- In your one-on-one time, cultivate a passion for reaching the lost.



GENDER AND SEXUALITY HELP

This is becoming a common conversation among our culture and our groups. We want to give you some general tools for dealing with this topic when it comes up and some specific tools for gender and sexuality specifically. You are beginning a dialogue with students, don't feel like you have to have all the answers.

- Always acknowledge that the student has trusted you with something personal by saying something like, "Thank you for trusting me; let's talk about that."
- Ask follow-up questions in your conversation. It is important that your questions use the student's words so that the student knows you are listening to them.
- Follow up with HDC Staff. The first conversation is always a surprise and can sometimes catch us off guard. Our staff team wants to support you as you process difficult conversations and also figure out when our involvement might be required.
- Follow up with the student. These topics are never a one-and-done. Encouraging the conversation to continue will show the student that you care about them and will allow you to continue shepherding them.



Gender and Sexuality Help

Gender is an identity-based topic, and struggles around gender are at their core a struggle with the big question of “Who am I?” Gender-based topics include things like gender, name-changing, and pronoun preference.

If the topic comes up in a group setting, ask the student if you can talk with them about that after the group. These conversations are much easier one-on-one, especially because this is a hot topic conversation in our culture today. The key to starting the conversation is just to get the student to open up.

Questions Regarding Gender

- “So, you said in the group that you don’t feel like a girl?”
- “Your name is ___, but you want to be called ___. Can I ask why?”

Questions Regarding Sexuality:

- “You said in a group that you’re gay; what do you mean by that?”
- Some students aren’t very clear on what it means to say this, so make sure you know what they mean.

Follow up Questions:

- “How long have you been feeling this way?”
- “Why do you think you feel this way?”



How does HDC engage a gender confused or LGBTQ student?

At High Desert Church we believe every person is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated with love, dignity, and respect. When we engage a student who is navigating gender confusion or identifies as LGBTQ, our goal is not to single them out, but to walk alongside them with compassion as we point them toward Jesus. We will listen carefully, extend grace, and gently speak biblical truth into these conversations.

We recognize our role is to faithfully present what Scripture teaches about identity, gender, and sexuality. We are committed to upholding biblical convictions while approaching each student with humility and grace.

Practically, we align our strategy with our purpose statement as we partner with parents and prepare students to be worldchangers.

Preparing Students

Student Programming: All students, regardless of how they identify, are invited to attend large group, small group, and event programming. Our heart is for every student to feel welcomed and included as they explore their faith.

Small Groups: Our small groups are divided by gender, and we place students according to the biblical, historical understanding of their biological sex at birth.



Overnight Trips: On overnight trips like summer camp and mission trips, we place students in cabins and rooms according to the biblical, historical understanding of their biological sex at birth.

Dress Code: If a student is a boy and chooses to dress in traditionally female clothing, or a girl who chooses to dress in traditionally male clothing, we will respond with compassion and respect while also upholding HDC's theology and policies. We will talk with the student with grace, encourage modesty, and allow them to dress that way as long as they understand our belief that God has a better plan for them.

Name Change: If a student requests to be called by a different name that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth we will remain steadfast in our commitment to the Scriptures, while extending grace to the student. We will talk with the student and explain that we will be using the name they were given at birth. We do not use names that differ from the biblical, historical understanding of their biological sex at birth.

Pronouns: We do not use pronouns that differ from the biblical, historical understanding of their biological sex at birth.



Partnering with Parents

If parents support their student's decision and challenge HDC's policies for group and cabin assignments, we will arrange a face-to-face meeting. In this meeting, we'll listen with compassion, ask questions to better understand their perspective, and graciously explain our church's theology, policies, and practices.

If a student shares that they are wrestling with their gender or sexuality, we will involve parents as soon as possible. Our heart is for the student to have that conversation with their parents, and our team will follow up intentionally. After this initial conversation, we will gladly offer to meet with both the student and their parents together. However, if the student is unwilling to involve their parents and continues to struggle in these areas, our student team will reach out to the parents directly to set up a meeting, so we can come alongside the whole family in a supportive and caring way.

HDC's Policy

In accordance with HDC's policy, we may ask a student's gender for emergency, safety, and medical purposes.



Cell Phone & Communication Guidelines

As a leader, your communication should be respectful of boundaries. The following guidelines are in place to remove any doubt from parents, students or others regarding your intentions and involvement as student ministry volunteer.

- No communication with students after 9:00 PM (unless approved for urgent ministry needs).
- Avoid one-on-one messages with the opposite gender, always include another leader or use group chats.
- Group chats are preferred over private conversations whenever possible.

Social Media & Online Conduct

What you post, like, or engage with online reflects your character.

- Don't post pictures that could be seen as offensive or inappropriate. Don't like or follow posts that could indicate you condone that worldview, behavior or language.
- You represent Christ and HDC in every digital space including social media, group chats, and gaming platforms.
- Keep your content, tone, and interactions consistent with a life that honors Jesus
- Do not private message any student on social media. If you comment on a post it must be public for all to see



IMPORTANT DATES

August

- August 31st - Parent Meeting at each campus (VV Campus JRH Only)

October

- October 8th - HS No Midweek (Fall Break)
- October 15th - VV and AV No Midweek (Fall Break)
- October 29th - Fall Bash/Costume Party (AV)

November

- November 19th - Thanksgiving Reunion@ Victorville Campus
- November 26th - No Midweek (Thanksgiving Break)

December

- December 17th - Christmas Bash/Party
- December 24th - No Midweek (Christmas Break)
- December 31st - No Midweek (New Years Break)

January

- January 7th - Groups Start back up
- January 11th- Parent Meeting at each campus

March

- March 4th - Reunion: Camp Preview at VV Campus
- March 18th - AV No Midweek (Spring Break)
- March 25th - VV and HS No Midweek (Spring Break)
- March 27th-28th - JRH Big Serve

April

- April 29th - Senior Send Off

May

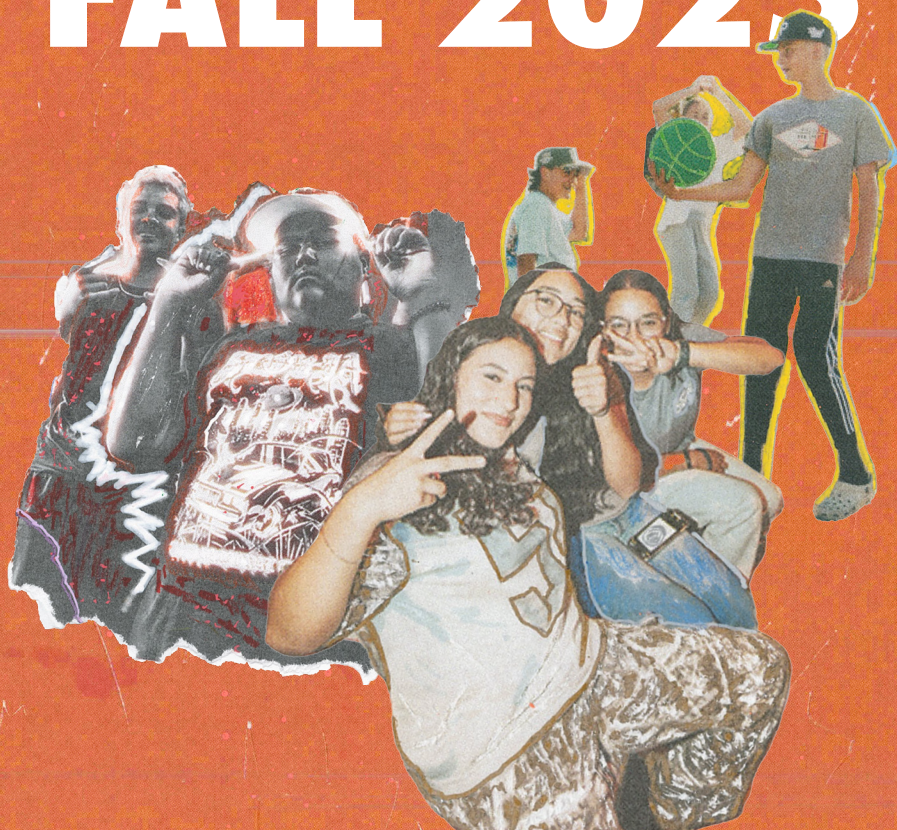
- May 6th - Reunion: Student Choice Awards at VV Campus

June

- June 5th - Elevate Rivals
- June 7th - Elevate Weekend



HIGH SCHOOL SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS FALL 2025



THE CHURCH AS FAMILY

Over the next nine weeks, we'll explore what it means to be part of God's family. We'll learn how family values like truthfulness, forgiveness, and humility shape the church. We'll discover the importance of meeting regularly for worship and teaching, understanding how the church should handle conflict, and grow in generosity, the gifts each member has, and submission to the elders God has placed over us.



WEEK 1

Sept 3, 2025

Title: The Church is a Spiritual Family

Big Idea: We all have a biological family, but when you become a Christian, you become part of a spiritual family. That means you have brothers and sisters in Christ who will care about you, help you through tough times, and treat you like you truly belong. Being part of God's family is a gift, you never have to walk through life alone.

Relationship Builder: Name one thing that happened this summer that you think you'll never forget

Ice breaker:

1. What do you think makes a family... a family?

Read 1 Peter 2:17, 1 Peter 5:8-9 and Galatians 6:10

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 2

Sept 10, 2025

Title: What are the values of God's Family?

Big Idea: Just like your own family, God's family, the church has its own vibe, values, and way of doing things. One of our most important values is believing that God's Word is true and letting it shape how we live. We also share our faith with those around us, our friends, neighbors, and classmates otherwise known as an Oikos. That's called evangelism, and it's a big part of what it means to live as God's family.

Ice breaker:

1. What is something you love to talk about?
2. Why do you think we naturally want to share things we care about?

Read Matthew 28:18–20, Acts 1:8, and Romans 10:14–15

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 3

Sept 17, 2025

Title: Every person in God's Family has a role to play

Big Idea: God has given every Christian special gifts so we can serve one another. Each of us has an important role to play in God's family. These gifts aren't just natural talents, they're supernaturally given to encourage the Church and make a real difference in the world. No one's gift is too small or too big, and every part matters.

Ice breaker:

1. When have you felt like your unique talents or personality didn't fit in with a group? How did that affect how you saw yourself?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 4

Sept 24, 2025

Title: Sacrificing for the sake of God's family

Big Idea: Being part of God's family means we have to sacrifice our own desires and needs for the sake of our brothers and sisters. This might mean learning to be content so that others can have more. As a Christian, we give financially so that others will hear the Gospel, God's kingdom will grow and we will learn to be content in what God has given us.

Ice breaker:

1. What's something you've given up or sacrificed recently? How did it feel?

Read Philippians 4:10-13 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 5

Oct 1, 2025

Title: Learning to live with God's Family

Big Idea: Fighting with your family happens, but in God's family we need to fight for unity. That means choosing to be humble, patient, and forgiving with each other, even when it's hard.

Every time you do this, you show others what Jesus looks like.

God loves when His family stays together in peace and grows stronger because of it.

Ice breaker:

1. What's one time you had a fight or disagreement with a friend or family member? How did it get resolved?

Read Ephesians 4:2-3

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 6

Oct 8, 2025

Title: Why does God's family take communion, get baptized and wash each other's feet

Big Idea: When we gather together as a Church it's important to remember who brought us together in the first place.

Communion reminds us of Jesus's sacrifice; Baptism reminds us of our obedience to Jesus and washing each other's feet reminds us that like Jesus we need to be humble and serve others.

Ice breaker:

1. Would you ever consider washing someone else's feet?

Read John 13:1-17

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 7

Oct 15, 2025

Title: What happens when there is a conflict and a fight in God's Family

Big Idea: Our spiritual family is made of lots of different families and at times there is conflict. Jesus tells us that when this happens, we must be held accountable. No one likes being confronted when they sin, but to be in a healthy family, we must learn to confront and hold each other accountable with gentleness and kindness.

Ice breaker:

1. Has anyone ever told you that you did something wrong to them? How did it feel?
2. Is it hard to talk to someone when they do something that upsets you? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 18:15-17

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 8

Oct 22, 2025

Title: God's family needs to meet regularly

Big Idea: Being part of God's family means gathering together with other believers. Coming to church regularly is so important because it helps you stay connected to God's people and grow in your faith. We come together to hear God's Word, worship, encourage, challenge, and support one another, we grow stronger in our walk with Jesus.

Ice breaker:

1. If someone asked you, "Why is church important?" What would you say?

Read Acts 2:42-47 and Hebrews 10:25

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 9

Oct 29, 2025

Title: Submitting to the authorities God has put over us

Big Idea: Every family has an authority structure, and God's family is no different. God has placed pastors over His family to lead, love, and guide us. We need to learn to respect and submit to the authorities God has placed in our lives whether that's our parents, teachers, or pastors.

Ice breaker:

1. Who is an authority figure you respect? Why?
2. Have you ever struggled to submit to someone in authority? Why?

Read Acts 20:28-31 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



GRATEFUL: LIVING WITH A THANKFUL HEART

Over the next nine weeks, we'll explore what it means to be part of God's family. We'll learn how family values like truthfulness, forgiveness, and humility shape the church. We'll discover the importance of meeting regularly for worship and teaching, understanding how the church should handle conflict, and grow in generosity, the gifts each member has, and submission to the elders God has placed over us.



WEEK 1

Nov 5, 2025

Title: Gratitude starts with God

Big Idea: A grateful heart begins by recognizing all that God has done for us. He forgives our sins, redeems us, provides us with strength, love and mercy to face life's challenges. When we remember His faithfulness and compassion, we are moved to praise, and we live with joy, hope, and generosity.

Ice breaker:

1. What are you most grateful for this week?

Read Psalm 103:1–5

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 2

Nov 12, 2025

Title: Gratitude starts with God

Big Idea: A thankful heart transforms the way we speak and treat those around us. It leads us to see the good in others and nurtures strong, meaningful connections with the people in our oikos. When we appreciate one another with joy and confidence, we reflect God's grace and help each other grow in faith.

Ice breaker:

1. Who is someone that you are thankful that God has put in your life?

Read Philippians 1:3–6

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



REUNION NIGHT

Nov 19, 2025

NO GROUPS

A few times during the school year, we cancel small groups and as we gather for a reunion of our student ministries. Reunion is a reminder that we're part of something so much bigger than our own campus. On this unforgettable night, we'll bring every campus together to worship, hear God's Word, have fun, and provide opportunities to invite parents and oikos to be part of HDC student ministries.

As a small group leader, you'll have the night off from leading your group but we'd love for you to come to Reunion to hang out and keep building strong, healthy relationships with your students.

**We can't wait to see you at our VV Campus at 5:30pm for a leader meeting.
All the fun starts at 6:30pm.**



THE STORY OF GIFTS

The Gifts of Jesus reminds us that Christmas is all about receiving the greatest gift ever given Jesus Himself. Throughout this series, we'll reflect on the humility of Jesus and the eternal life He offers, and as we intentionally give Him our obedience, sacrifice, and celebration, we'll experience the true wonder of Christmas.



WEEK 1

Dec 3, 2025

Title: The Gift of Jesus

Big Idea: Jesus came to offer His life and salvation as a gift to everyone. Leaving the comfort of heaven, Jesus humbled Himself to a manger to bring you the gift of eternal life. His goal is simple: to invite you to receive this gift of salvation and begin a life transformed by God's grace and love.

Ice breaker:

1. How do you celebrate Christmas?
2. What's the best gift you've ever received and why was it so meaningful to you?

Read Luke 2:1–20

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 2

Dec 10, 2025

Title: The Giving of Gifts

Big Idea: Just like the wise men, once we recognize the gift of Jesus, we respond with worship and surrender. Worshiping and obeying God is the greatest gift we can give Jesus, and it requires intentionality, sacrifice, and celebration. This Christmas, we are invited to give back to Jesus through our hearts, our actions, and our praise.

Ice breaker:

1. If you could give any gift to someone you love this year, what would it be and why?
2. What do you like or dislike about the Christmas season?

Read Matthew 2:1 – 12

What does it say?

What does it mean?

How does it apply?



WEEK 3

Dec 17, 2025

There is no small group curriculum tonight, it's a Christmas Party! So relax, have fun, laugh together, exchange gifts, and enjoy building strong, healthy relationships. This is a special time to celebrate the season and connect with your small group in a meaningful way.





