



surrounded
Small Group Guide



Session 1

::: God :::

The Basics

It's get to know each other time! Go for it! Names, Schools, Grades, the thing you like best about Justin Bieber, etc...

Royalty

The first person to declare that they are queen gets to be queen for a game and receives the crown. Everyone else no longer has a name; rather, the chair that they are currently sitting in takes on their name. The chair's name does not change.

The object of the game is to be Queen at the end of the game. The Queen starts every round by calling out the name of any chair in the group, that person in that chair then says the name of that chair again and another name. If the person sitting in the named chair isn't paying attention, the slacker has to go to the last chair. At that point, everyone behind the person who moved moves up a spot, getting closer to Queen AND has to answer to the name of the chair in which they are sitting.

Example: If Becca, Bill and Jeremy are playing, and if the Queen is Becca and she calls Jeremy's name and he isn't paying attention, he must go to the end of chairs and now, Bill will move into Jeremy's spot and now be responsible for answering to "Jeremy", and Jeremy will move down into Bill's seat and be responsible for answering when Bill's name is called. If Becca fails to answer to her name, she gives her crown to Bill and he is now Queen, responsible for answering to "Queen Becca", and so on.

Back to Back

Students form pairs of two and sit back to back. Have everyone pull their knees up to their chest with their feet flat on the floor and their arms linked to their partners'. Tell pairs

to stand up. Once everyone stands up, go to groups of three and do the same thing until your whole group can't stand up anymore.

Who are you? Who? Who? Who? Who?:

Each person in your group should choose two of the following questions to answer :

- 1: If you could listen to one singer or band for the rest of your life, who would it be?
- 2: What does your name mean?
- 3: What is your favorite part of nature?
- 4: What kinds of things come into your head when you think of God?

Mimi:

Sometimes grandparents think that their grandchildren are going to call them Grandmama or Nana or something that has to do with their name. The kids usually end up calling them something totally off the wall since they couldn't say the name they were "supposed" to call their grandparent.

What do you call your grandparents?

Naming God: Stories of God's Names

There are all these names for God, probably because God is so near. In different parts of people's lives, God shows up in different ways. Therefore, people give Him different names for the different ways He's shown up in their lives.

From Brahmabandhab:

A man from India, named Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (a.k.a. Lil' Brahms), introduced an new name for God to the people of

India. Lil' Brahms was always searching for words that sprung from the soil of India that could be used to describe God's nature. He chose the word "Narahari" as a name for Christ in 1901. Nara-hari means, "man-God." By choosing to call God Narahari, Lil' Brahms wanted to describe how God reveals his love to us in Jesus by becoming fully human while at the same time remaining independent and free of his creation.

From Hagar:

Hagar names God in Genesis 16: 6-14.

From God:

God describes Himself in Isaiah 40:21-31. God names Himself so Moses knows what to call Him in Exodus 3:13-14.

If God allows people to give Him names, what does that say about the intimacy (closeness) of the relationship between God and people?

God comes to love the names of what His children call Him because those names mean His children know Him.

Who do you say I am?

Read Mark 8: 27-29.

When other people have certain things they call God, it's help us see that God is everywher. All around the world, wherever you go, you are surrounded by people who are affected by God. Sometimes, though, when all we do is listen to what other people say about God and we don't say anything about God for ourselves, we can get lost in other people's words.

What we have to do is turn from being Surrounded by God and by people's words about God, to being filled by God and words about God.

Write down a name you have for God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit) or a name that would describe God to you (like Surrounding God, Loving God, Faithful God, Brother, Counselor, Friend, You, etc.). It's ok if your name for God is the same as someone else's :) Take some time, think about it and then write it down:

Combo:

David combined being surrounded by God and being filled with God:

Read Psalm 32:7

What does this verse say about David's relationship with God?

What do you think it means to be surrounded by songs of deliverance?

Does anyone know enough about David's life to remember a

time when he was protected or delivered?

“I want that...a relationship with God”

David was constantly calling on God for deliverance. He asked God to speak. He complained to God. He cried to God. He rejoiced with God, and overall He had a relationship with God that was intimate (close).

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

What is David asking God to do?

By asking God to do this, he's asking God to be close, inviting Him into his life. Maybe you don't know what that's like--to be close with God. If you haven't ever asked to have this intimate relationship with God, you can do that now. Jesus died to allow us to have that kind of relationship with God. That relationship is trusting Him with all of your life and, in fact, trusting Him enough to give your whole life to following in Jesus' footsteps. It's a life-changing deal, so you'll want to pray with someone about it. Find someone who you share good news with first or someone you're comfortable with sharing deep stuff with. Tell them you've accepted Jesus as your Savior. Pray with them, ask them to pray for you as you try as best you can to give your life to Christ.

Here's a prayer for you. Repeat it as many times as you want:

Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Pray:

Before you pray the prayer below together as a group, read

through it.

Decide what part applies most to your life, where you are right now.

Maybe you feel like God is being really good to You right now (Heavenly Father, you always amaze me).

Maybe you want to move from hearing about God to being filled with Him and giving Your whole life to be with Him (Let your kingdom come in my world and in my life).

Maybe your worried about something and need His help (Give me the food I need to live through the day).

Maybe you need healing in a relationship that only God can bring change in (And forgive me as I forgive the people that wrong me)

Maybe your struggling with something (Lead me far from temptation)

Maybe you've been hurt or you see so much hurt in the world that you're discouraged (Deliver me from the evil one)

Stand up as the part you decided applies most to you is called while you all pray this prayer together:

Heavenly Father

You always amaze me

Let your kingdom come

In my world and in my life

Give me the food I need

To live through the day

And forgive me as I forgive

The people that wrong me

Lead me far from temptation

Deliver me from the evil one

All stand:

You deserve everything worth having

You are everything worth having

Forever and ever

Amen.

Going Deeper

Let's bring in another poet, since we hear from David (Psalms) all the time.

Here's Francis Thompson (1859-1907)

Here's part of what he says about God surrounding us:

“I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
 And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears
 From those strong Feet that followed, followed after
 But with unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat--and a Voice beat
 More instant than the Feet--
“All things betray thee who betrayest Me.”

The Hound of Heaven, Francis Thompson, 1893

Talk about what that means, how Francis Thompson saw God and how this shows who God is.



Session 2

:: Culture ::

Pop-Culture Forehead

Pass around the envelope/bag containing the folded name cards. Each person should take one name card (with the name of some pop-culture personality on it) out without looking at it, and stick it to their forehead. Now, allow time for students to mingle with each other asking questions about who they are. **STUDENTS ARE NOT TO MAKE GUESSES YET!** After a few minutes, have everyone sit back down and go around the circle allowing each student to guess and then reveal their identity.

Popcorn Sharing

Decide who will start the game and give them the bag of popcorn. The person to the popcorn-holder's right, chooses from one of the following questions that the popcorn-holder will have to answer. Then the popcorn-holder will give their answer in the following steps: Say a single answer, put a piece of popcorn in their mouth, say another, put another piece in their mouth. If anyone in the group can count to ten in between their answers, their turn is over and the bag passes to the right. If the group leader cannot understand the words the person is saying, their turn is over and the bag passes to the right.

Question:

What are the names of several government officials?

What are the names of several BAD-Quality Pop-musicians?

What are the names of several GOOD-Quality Pop-musicians?

What are some funny YouTube videos?

What are some good books?

What are some of your favorite celebrities?

What are some actors/actresses?

What are some GOOD movies?

What are some BAD movies?

What is Culture?

Before we plunge into understanding how we are surrounded by our culture, we need to answer a difficult question: What is culture? Take a moment and see if you can define it as a group.

This is difficult because it can be so broad that it is hard to nail down. A great philosopher Sarah Grace Kirkendall once defined it as “What life is lived in.” That’s about as good a definition as I’ve heard. It is everything from Music, to Billboards, to the types of things that are OK to talk about in public. It is religion and politics and art, and if we are not careful, it can become so much a part of us that we cannot tell where our ideas end and where it begins. Whoa. That was a deep sentence. Let’s think about that.

Basically, our culture gives us a set of rules that we follow as to what is ok and what is not ok. For example, Victorian culture made it absolutely scandalous for a woman to show the skin on her ankles! As culture changes, so do the rules it gives us to follow. Now, for example, we don’t blush and feel uncomfortable if a girl is wearing clothing that reveals her ankles. What was meant by the deep sentence earlier was that sometimes we assume that culture’s rules are automatically right, and sometimes they are not.

What are some rules you can think of as far as what is ok and what is not that your culture gives you? Think of one rule about each of these categories and then share them with each other

Clothing (Guys)

Clothing (Girls)

Affection between a dating couple

Money

What you talk about

There are also cultural symbols. Those can be celebrities, the American flag, your favorite song, etc. Take a moment and name some cultural symbols in these categories (have fun)

Music

Movies

Books

Politics

Religion

Interacting with Culture

How do we interact with our culture? Maybe a better question is how should we interact with our culture? That depends on who you ask. Some people will tell you that you should resist the influence of your culture. You should live separately. Some will tell you that you should live as part of the culture and use it to communicate the gospel. Let's let Jesus settle the argument. We are going to take a moment to look at how Jesus interacted with His culture to discover how we should interact with ours.

Read John 8:1-11

This deserves a bit of background. The Law that the person is referring to is found in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22. It says that the woman AND the man who are caught in adultery should be stoned to death. Also of interest here is the fact that under the Roman law, the Jewish people were not allowed to carry out a death sentence, but they sometimes did it anyway. That law is important here and later because it is the reason that the Chief Priest was not able to crucify Jesus, but had to send him to Pilate for that type of punishment. In a way, the person accusing the woman is not only asking Jesus if he supports the Jewish law but is asking Him to choose between following the law of Yahweh or the law of Rome.

Did Jesus support the laws of the Jewish culture here (this is not an easy question)?

What was Jesus pointing out as the problem with such a severe law?

After he exposes the violence and hypocrisy of the people ready to stone the woman, he doesn't let her off the hook. He saved her life, but not so that she could continue to live a life of sin. What does he ask of her?

What about his request will be hard for the woman?

This is a very interesting passage. When Jesus appears to be forced into a corner where he has to choose between Israel and Rome, he finds a third option that exposes the problem of the whole system. There are two words to describe how Jesus acted here: Prophet and Priest.

When we hear the word prophet, we often think of someone who can see into the future. While that was often the case, the main role of the prophet was to expose the sin of the people and call them back to God.

How does Jesus act as a prophet to the self-righteous people that are ready to stone the woman?

What problems do his actions expose in how crimes were judged by the Jews?

Jesus also acts as a priest. To the woman who is lying in front of him with her sins having already been exposed to the whole world, he stoops down and gives her hope, dignity, and purpose. The priest is the one who is responsible for aiding the process of healing and restoration in our souls.

How does this tell us to act towards our culture? We are to act as both prophet and priest. Where there are wrong things that go against Justice, Love, Mercy, and all the things God is, we must not allow them to continue without exposing how wrong they are.

By being unjust, unloving, unmerciful, etc those things leave a huge wake of pain, brokenness, addiction, etc. To the people who have been hurt by those systems, we are to minister to them as a priest. We are to help them bandage their wounds and become people who are living a life devoted to connection with God.

Think of a piece of our culture that is going against Justice, Love, or Mercy. How can you act as a prophet?

Who does that thing hurt?

How can you act as a priest?

Going Deeper

Did you know that for many hundreds of years the rules of the culture were pretty much set by the church? It's true, it

started when the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and made it the official religion of Rome. It lasted all the way up until somewhere in the last 200 years. If you want to impress someone you can learn the word for this period and way of doing things: Christendom. That eventually faded and other forces began to be the leaders in culture. Instead of figuring out how to be the people of God in a culture that is not as honoring and submissive, the church began to create “christian” versions of everything from books to music to breath mints. They separated themselves.

What about this is good?

What about this is bad?

How would you like to change this?



Session 3

:: Friends ::

Building the Perfect Paper Airplane

This is important. The goal is to have the furthest-flying, straightest-flying paper airplane in the group. This is a battle to the death. Lay out the different paper airplane instructions/diagrams for everyone to peruse and choose. Give each person three pieces of paper. Piece number one is to learn how to do their design. Pieces number 2 and three are to be the final models used in the competition.

Choose to do one or both:

1. Individual trials - have each person stand at a line with something placed on the ground a good distance in front of them. They get a practice throw and a real throw. Only the second counts. Leave it on the ground until all are finished. Whoever has the straightest and longest wins.
2. Barage - Have everyone stand in a line side-by-side and throw their planes at the exact same time. Same as above. One practice and a final. Straightest and farthest wins.

Take your top two or three and do a throw-off to find the champion of your group.

Friend Stories

Choose to tell two of the following stories:

1. Tell about a time when you got in trouble with a friend.
2. Which of your friends has the most similar taste to movies as your own?
3. Tell about the longest period of time you spent with a single friend.
4. What is the best thing that has ever happened in one of your friendships?

Influential Friends

Friends are incredibly influential. Whether its intentional or not, a whole lot of who you are is influenced by your friends. Culture sets the big rules, and friends generally help you determine the specifics. We know that you don't follow orders from your friends like a robot, but they help you make decisions.

Take a moment to list all of the decisions your friends help you make:

I bet that if you took all of those things together, they add up to be a whole lot of who you say you are. They add up to a lot of your self image.

Read Proverbs 13:20

What does this say about the influence friends have on our life?

If that is true, what do we need to be looking for in a friend?

Most people don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about that last question. They generally hang out with the people who like and accept them. That's kind of scary because if it just so happens that the people who accept you have a lot of bad habits, chances are you are going to end up picking up those bad habits as well.

Take a moment to quietly take stock of your friendships. Are your friends becoming the people that you want to be some

day? Do your friends have the habits that you would like to have for a long time to come? How are your friends' relationships with God?

If you have some friends who are not headed in that direction you may be asking, "Do I have to break up with my friend?" The answer is a very clear maybe. You will have to pray about this yourself, but you may need to step back from some of your friendships especially if you see that you are headed towards being a person you do not wish to be.

How do you do that? More than how do you tell someone you can't be friends with them anymore, how do you have hard conversations with friends?

Read Ephesians 4:15 (NIV)

Speaking the truth can hurt. Why?

What could make it ok to say hurtful things to a friend?

Take a moment and pair up with someone. Decide on something that might need to be said in a friendship that could be hurtful but necessary. Come up with two ways of saying it... the harsh truth and the loving truth. Share with your group.

Harsh Truth:

Loving Truth:

Equally important as having good friends is sharing your faith with your friends. If these are the people who have most influence over you, the same is true in the other direction, you are the person who has the most influence over them.

We're not talking about sitting them down and beating them over the head with your Bible (though you may need to knock some sense into them sometimes), we are talking about allowing your faith to leak out into your everyday life and conversations.

Read John 4:4-26

How does the conversation begin between Jesus and the woman?

How does Jesus keep the conversation on a spiritual topic?

Jesus was alone with this woman. How might he have changed his statements if she was with friends?

How can we imitate Jesus actions here with our friends?

You have conversations like this all the time. It's just a conversation about water. Sometimes you might even think of

something spiritually related to your conversation. When that happens let it come out.

Go away by yourself and take some time to pray through the following questions:

Who of your friends are headed in the right direction?

What about those directions is where you want to be?

Who is headed in the wrong direction?

What about those directions is where you do not want to be?

What issues do you need to talk to your friends about?

Going Deeper:

Tell the group about a hard conversation you had or need to have and ask for their help in knowing how and what to say.

Take time as a group to pray for each person who shares this.



Session 4

::: Sharing :::

It's time to share with your group what God has done/begun in your life so far on the retreat.

Has anyone committed their lives to Christ for the first time?

Has anyone recommitted their life to Christ?

What else has God said? Do habits need to be broken?

Are there friends you need to talk to? Family you need to talk to?

Take a moment to pray for each of the things shared.



Session 5

::: Family :::

It's just emotion taking me over...

Use emotion cards for this game. Form two teams within your group. Each team should have a name and mascot.

This is a lot like charades, but it's with your face. Each time decides who will be their first face actor. The face actor will draw a card with an emotion on it and act out that emotion with his or her face for his or her team. If that team does not guess their arch rivals have a chance to steal the point. Teams take turns. Team with most points wins.

Duck

Choose a person to start. Group stands in circle. First person calls a random name of another person in the group. The person whose name is called ducks. The people on either side of that ducking person face each other and call each others' names. The first person to say the other person's name wins and the winner calls the next "ducker's" name. Rinse & Repeat.

Family Matters: (answer a few)

1. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
2. Where is your family from (heritage--Native American, Irish, Dutch, German, Asian, Antartic, African, Narnian, Caucasian (from Caucasasia), etc)?
3. What is your favorite TV family?
4. What is your favorite family tradition?
5. What do you get in trouble for the most?
6. What is your favorite family memory?

La Familia (translation: "family")

Each one of you knows more about your family than you could ever tell people, obviously. Every family comes with stories. There are stories of heartache and stories of laughter and traditions and ways your family talks to each other that no one else will ever fully know. That is a beautiful thing--to be known so well by people.

You have no control over what family you are in. You did not choose them and they did not choose you. You're sort of ... stuck ... and they are stuck with you. :)

Read Psalm 133.

Would you describe your family as unified? If you can share, why or why not?

What are the best times that you remember with your family?

Why is it so important for you to have unity with your family?

Do you get along well with your brother(s)/sister(s)?

Read Luke 12:13-15

By refusing to make a decision, Jesus is refusing to be the person who splits up the brothers. Why do you think Jesus

would do that?

How does this relate to Psalm 133?

How does this story in Luke relate to your family?

Read Exodus 20:12.

Who are you more like? Your mom? Your dad?

The word “honor” in this verse is the same word as “glory”, as in “the glory of God”. In Hebrew, the original language that Exodus was written in, this is what the word “honor” or “glory” looks like (it sounds like “kavad” or “kavod”)--say it together: “KAVAD”:

Here are some other places that this word appears:
(the word in bold shares the same Hebrew word)

Psalm 87:3: O city of God, what glorious things are said of you!

Proverbs 14:31: Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who help the poor honor Him.

Job 6:2-3: If my sadness could be weighed and my troubles be put on the scales, they would be heavier than all the sand of the sea. That is why I spoke so rashly.

Psalm 50:15: Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will

rescue you, and you will give glory.

Genesis 13:2: for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

So, this word can mean a lot of things, but they have something in common. Can you figure out what that is?

How do you think these words relate to how we honor our mothers and fathers?

Whether or not you think that your parents always deserve honor or not, God has commanded us to honor them and He has given them honor or importance or heaviness in your life. Parents have a huge effect on our lives, whether good or bad, and that's why God says to honor them, or to say it another way, we are to realize how important they are to us.

If you are having a hard time at home with your parents, make sure you talk to your small group leader or a counselor at camp or someone you can trust to talk to about that. Your parents affect the rest of your life and who you are. That is why who they are is such a huge and heavy part of our lives. They are so much more important than we often realize. That's why talking about parents is important.

Thinking.. thinking..

Now, think of ways that you honor your parents in your life already and write it down:

Think of some new ways to honor your parents:

Think of ways that you are close with your siblings, ways that show unity or getting along:

Think of some new ways to get along with your siblings:

Down on my knees:

Prayer for family:

God of love, putting families together in a small house is like compacting molecules into a small space. We're just going to keep bouncing off one another until one of us explodes. We love these people, God, but sometimes we need a break. Sometimes we need the patience of the man, Job, in the Bible. Have you looked down here? Do you know what we do to one another? These people are our past and our present and our future. We are each other, God--that's what family is. We can build one another up or we can tear one another down. Help us reach out when it's all going bad. We can help one another if we just stop fighting long enough to listen. Help us listen, God.

Prayer for parents:

God, there are people in charge of our lives who have

watched us since we were born. We have inherited traits from these people, and we don't even know what some of those traits are yet. God, help us remember that our parents were our age once. They felt what we are feeling. They watch us with an experienced eye we don't have. If we were to drive to a new place, we would ask for directions from someone who has been there. Help us treat our parents that way. They understand more than we think they do. Plus, they really do love us. Amen.

(Option) If needed, ask your counselor or friend in private to pray this with you.

Prayer for people in broken homes:

God of love, nobody lives in a perfect TV world. We don't all have happy households where everyone gets along and every problem gets resolved in 30 minutes with commercials. We live in a real world, God. "Honor thy father and mother" doesn't work when thy father and mother can't stand each other. Sometimes we just have to ride it out, God. I can't pray for you to fix it anymore. Now, I'm just asking you to get me through this day. Get me through this week. Soon I will graduate. Soon I will go to college. Heal my family, God. heal me so my kids don't have to grow up like I have. Amen.

GOING DEEPER option:

Jesus' True Family
Read Matthew 12: 46-50.

Why do you think Jesus said this?

Does Jesus' statement here seem to be mean or disrespectful?

What does Jesus' statement say about the family of God in relation to the family you are born into?

Prayer for Church Family:

God of love, thank you for this family. We don't all have to live under the same roof to be family. We don't even have to share the same blood. This church is family. Family is there when you hurt and when you dance. Family is there when you are lost and when you have found your way home. God, this family is made of love. We don't have to agree all the time. We can argue with love, we can create with love, we can teach with love. That's what family is, God. You have given us one another, and we will cherish one another. We will cherish each moment we have together. We will be your family. Amen.

