

Ugly Christmas Sweaters – Week 2 Small Group Questions

Ask:

1. Pastor Jeff shared some crazy stories about moments we would all desperately want to escape, like getting off a busy elevator on the wrong floor or a pastor falling into the hole at a graveside funeral. Share a time when you experienced something embarrassing or funny like that where all you wanted to do was get away.
2. The desire to get away and be alone from an embarrassing moment is obviously different than someone who feels loneliness. If comfortable, share with the group your experience of feeling alone or loneliness. (If no one is comfortable sharing, ask them if they know of people who have experienced this.)

Leaders Note: Loneliness is an epidemic in our society today. “Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately half of U.S. adults reported experiencing measurable levels of loneliness.” U.S. Surgeon General

After COVID-19, we know that this epidemic has only increased.

3. Do you agree with the Surgeon General’s statements? How are you seeing this today?
4. Pastor Jeff said that social connection and community are the biggest ways to help against loneliness. Share how something like church and small groups has helped you in this area. Why do you believe or not believe that in-person social connection is more powerful than a connection that happens in places like Facebook or Zoom?

“Overcoming loneliness is not only found in true relationships, it’s found in remembering truths.” Pastor Jeff

Read:

Matthew 1:23, "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

Psalm 139:1-12, O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! I can never escape from your Spirit! 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 ride the wings of the morning, 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. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

Ask:

1. What are some key truths about God in these passages?
2. Why is knowing that God is with us so powerful and helpful in battling loneliness?
3. Do you struggle to feel joy about the presence of God when you experience times when you don't feel God? What do you do to continue to have faith in the promise that God is with you?
4. Pastor Jeff said that fear can often be a factor in causing us to feel alone. How have you found this to be true in your life? If comfortable, share your experience with fear leading to loneliness.
5. How have you seen God work in your life through answered prayer or a resolved situation that showed you never needed to fear?

Apply:

1. What is one thing from this message that stood out to you the most?
2. What fears are you battling right now? How can your group pray for you?
3. If you know someone struggling with loneliness this holiday season, take some intentional time to pray for them, call them, send them a note, or all the above. If you are that someone, consider stepping out in faith by letting your entire group, an individual in your group, or someone else that you trust know. We have all battled loneliness and fear and need to remember that we are in this together.