

Red Zone
John 3:22-30
Small Group Discussion Guide

OPENING QUESTION (get everyone involved in discussion):

- What is your favorite aspect of *or* favorite memory from the Christmas season?

TRANSITION: We're beginning a new series for Advent, called, "Here I Am." We're taking a look at the question, how do I fit into what God is doing in the world?

This week's study considers how we respond to a certain kind of threat. Psychologists tell us that we all have an innate propensity toward **fight or flight**.

- To which response to you tend to gravitate when threatened?

For some background on John the Baptist, **read** Mark 1:4-8 and John 1:6-8, 15, 19-20.

- What do you gather about the nature and success of his ministry?

READ John 3:22-26

- What's happening? Describe the scene. Why are John's disciples so upset?
- Do you see any similar conflicts in the world today? Discuss.
- Do you see any similar motivations in your own lives? How do you tend to react when something or someone threatens your plans, your advancement, your agenda, or your success?
- Why might John's disciples feel that their identity is threatened? (Leaders: on Sunday we learned that a disproportionate reaction such as this tends to occur when our sense of meaning or identity is threatened.)
- What tends to threaten your identity or sense of meaning? Is there anything to which you tend to overreact?
- How might our lives be different – at home, at work, at church – if we lived by the saying, "There is no limit to what someone can accomplish if he doesn't care who gets the credit?"
- Where might you struggle with a focus on receiving credit?

READ John 3:27-30

- What are the layers to John's reply to his disciples? How would you summarize it?
- Jesus said, in Matthew's Gospel, "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist." Knowing this, how does this further clarify how well John knew his own identity?
- If you haven't covered it, what does John know about Jesus's role and what does he know about his own?
- John uses a wedding metaphor and assigns himself the role of best man to Jesus' groom.
 - What do you know about the role of a best man at a wedding?
 - How might this be illustrative of our role in the community of God?

Read Isaiah 54:4-5 and Isaiah 62:4-5, which discuss a specific aspect of this wedding metaphor.

- What are the implications of John's drawing on this Old Testament metaphor to explain his relationship to Jesus?
- How do you feel about the notion that you are part of the bride of Christ?
- As his bride, what has Jesus done for us? (Review Eph 1:1-14 if you need to.)
- Josh said that thinking about Jesus, pursuing us as his bride, helps to free us from needing credit or needing to prove ourselves. How does this work?
- How can we live daily as if we really are the beloved bride of Christ, in whom he delights?
- Share at your own level of comfort: Is there any wound or disappointment that is preventing you from seeing yourself as the beloved, beautiful bride of Christ? How can we pray for you?

Once you no longer have to find your value in your work accomplishments, or in looking a certain way, or winning every argument, or in some aspect of your performance, you're free to explore this question: What is my role in bringing people to the groom, Jesus?

- Do you know your God-shaped personality, spiritual gifts, and skills that you can offer the community?
- What does it look like to exercise your God-given strengths with confidence, yet not with arrogance or with a need to prove something? How is this possible?
- Have you asked feedback from those you trust regarding what is your best fit in the church? What do *you* think it is?
- Seeing how Jesus proved his love for you, frees you to stop proving yourself. Do you feel that you are able to freely say, "Here I am Lord, what do you want to do with me?" If not, what stands in the way?

PRAYER: Share with one another some of your current needs, and pray for one another. Especially if there is an area where you tend to go into the "red zone," share that and pray about becoming free in that respect.