

Access to the Holy

Series: Dwelling with God

Text: Exodus 26:1–6, 30–35 (with Mark 15:37–38; Hebrews 10:19–22)

Group Discussion Guide

“The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.”

— Exodus 26:33

We often think of worship as a warm, comfortable exercise designed to help us feel peaceful. Modern church culture works hard to ensure everyone feels welcome and at ease. Yet throughout the Old Testament, approaching God’s presence was neither casual nor comfortable—it was marked by awe, boundary lines, and life-or-death reverence.

In Exodus 26, God gives Moses precise instructions for the curtains of the tabernacle. Far from being decorative tapestries, these barriers revealed both the majesty of God’s absolute holiness and the tragic separation caused by human sin. Understanding the gravity of these ancient curtains transforms how we view Sunday morning: worship in the presence of a holy God is a privilege we could never earn, but one we now possess through the blood of Christ.

Getting Started

1. Think of a time you visited a high-security facility, an official government building, or a dangerous natural site with strict barrier rails (like Yellowstone’s boiling thermal basins). What did the fences, checkpoints, and warning signs communicate to you?
2. How do modern Christians tend to talk about and approach God? In what ways can our corporate worship lean toward casual familiarity rather than reverent awe?

Investigating the Text

Read Exodus 26:1–6, 30–35

3. Look at the description of the inner curtain in verses 31–33. What specific materials, colors, and designs were woven into it? What impression would this craftsmanship make on someone standing before it?
4. Genesis 3:24 describes cherubim stationed at the entrance of Eden with a flaming sword to guard the tree of life. What message did it send to Israel that cherubim were woven directly into the fabric of the inner veil?

5. Notice the relational prepositions and spatial terms in verses 33–35 (*behind, separate, outside*). What do these terms reveal about humanity's access to God under the Old Covenant?
6. In ancient Israel, access was strictly graded:
 - The outer courtyard for the congregation of Israel
 - The Holy Place for the priests
 - The Most Holy Place (behind the veil) exclusively for the High Priest once a year
7. How does this floor plan mirror Israel's experience at Mount Sinai (the people at the base, the seventy elders on the slope, Moses alone at the summit in Exodus 24)?

Connecting to Christ

Read Mark 15:37–38 and Hebrews 10:19–22

7. In Mark 15:38, the curtain of the temple is torn in two *from top to bottom* the moment Jesus breathes His last. What is the theological significance of it tearing from the top down rather than from the bottom up?
8. In the Civil War era, generals and ambassadors had to wait hours outside Abraham Lincoln's office, yet his young son Tad could burst through the doors unhindered at any time. How does Hebrews 10:19–22 explain the kind of access believers have received through Christ?
9. Hebrews 10:19 says we have "confidence" (or boldness) to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. How is biblical confidence different from arrogance or casual presumption?

Applying the Truth

10. Theologian Marva Dawn once observed that given who God is, believers ought to arrive at church wearing hard hats. If you truly grasped the holiness of God this week, how would it reshape:
 - The way you pray in private?
 - Your posture and attitude when gathering with the church on Sunday?
11. Pastor Jon's friend, Ryan, begins each worship gathering with the phrase: **"We get to do this."** How does shifting from *"I have to go to church"* to *"We get to do this"* change

your heart toward worship, prayer, and fellowship?

12. Where in your life have you slipped into treating God casually or taking His presence for granted? What practical adjustment can you make this week to recover both holy reverence and bold gratitude?

13. Is there something in your Saturday night or Sunday morning routine that could change so that worship is a privilege rather than a chore?

Prayer Focus

Spend time as a group thanking God for His blazing holiness and absolute purity. Confess the casual, flippant attitudes we often bring into His presence. Thank Jesus Christ that His broken body and shed blood tore the barrier from top to bottom, giving us royal access to the Father. Pray that your church's worship gatherings would be marked by joyful awe and eager gratitude: *"We get to do this."*

Leader's Notes & Facilitator Tips

- **Question 1:** The goal is to surface the idea of *demarcation*. Warning lines and barricades exist not out of malice, but because of real, objective power or danger (e.g., Yellowstone's geothermal crust, high-voltage power stations). This sets up the concept of holiness.
- **Question 4:** Emphasize the Eden connection. Cherubim were first introduced in Genesis 3 as armed sentries blocking sinful humanity from holy ground. Seeing cherubim woven into the curtain was an unmistakable reminder that sin broke our direct fellowship with God and barred our entry.
- **Question 5:** Draw the group's attention to the precision of the text. The Ark was *behind* the veil; the table was *outside*; the curtain *separated*. These are geographical and spiritual boundary markers.
- **Question 7:** Ensure the group sees divine initiative. A human cannot reach the top of a temple veil (historically understood as up to 30–60 feet high and a handbreadth thick) to rip it downward. God initiated the opening; salvation is from heaven downward, not man climbing upward through moral effort.
- **Question 8 & 9:** Help the group distinguish between *presumption* and *blood-bought authorization*. Tad Lincoln didn't have access because he was exceptionally skilled or powerful; he had access because of his relationship to his father. We enter not because we are worthy, but because Christ's blood gives us legal standing as sons and

daughters.

- **Question 11:** Close by highlighting the sermon's big idea: *Worship of a holy God is an astonishing privilege that we could never earn, but have the blood-bought right to offer.* Let this truth move the group from duty to delight.