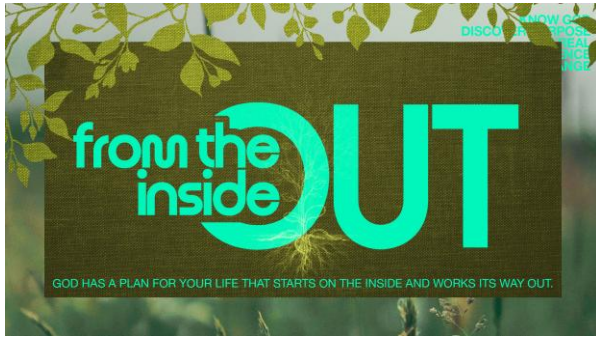




STUDY GUIDE: August 23, 2026
Message Series: Inside Out
Message Title: Just You and God
Teaching Pastor: Brian Hughes

Warm-Up / Icebreaker (10 min.)

If you suddenly had an entire day with no phone, no responsibilities, and no schedule, what would you actually want to do with it? Would you spend the day alone, with people, outside, relaxing, doing something adventurous—or something completely different? Why?

Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank You for making a way for us not only to know about You, but to truly know You. Help us slow down enough to hear Your voice and make room for You in our lives. Give us the desire and discipline to draw near to You, to live in community with Your people, and to persevere even when following You is difficult. Show us what You want to change in us today and help us take one step closer to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Get Started: (30 min.)

- Think about the people you know well. What made it possible for you to really know them—not just know facts about them? How might that be like knowing God?

Read John 17:3.

- What is the difference between knowing *about* God and actually knowing God? What do you think that looks like in everyday life?

“Knowing God is not the same thing as knowing about God. I meet people all the time who have an incredibly vast knowledge about God. They can quote scripture. You ever met someone like this - they know the Bible backwards and forwards, in their sleep, never a moment without a slick verse inserted into a conversation. But when you peer into their life, there is a disconnect. The God they know a lot about doesn't seem to have had an effect on the way they behave or think or treat others or treat money or whatever. That's an indicator that you know about God but haven't positioned your life in proximity TO God so that HE - not knowledge of him but God Himself - by his very presence in your life, changes your life. Knowledge of God doesn't change you. Proximity does.” — Pastor Brian Hughes

Read James 4:8.

- Brian said that knowing God requires proximity, community, and perseverance. Which of those three comes most naturally to you, and which one requires the most intentionality?

Read Psalm 46:10.

- What makes it difficult for you to be still and give God your undistracted attention? What are some practical ways you could create more space for God?

Read Mark 1:35.

- Jesus had a busy schedule and people constantly needed Him, yet He intentionally withdrew to pray. What does Jesus' example teach us about the importance of time and focus with God?

“You cannot multi-task Proximity.” — Pastor Brian Hughes

Reflect and Commit: (30 min.)

Read Hebrews 10:24–25.

- Why do you think community is essential to knowing God and following Jesus? What can we experience through being part of a church community that we can't experience as easily on our own?

“Knowing God also requires Community. Specifically, this means THE church. It doesn't have to be our church, but it does have to be A church. A person who claims they can be a fully devoted follower of Jesus without being a planted part of the local church is a person who has not read the very scriptures they say they believe. I'm not trying to be judgmental; I'm trying to be helpful. You simply cannot have a complete spiritual life and not be connected in a local church. — Brian Pastor Hughes

- Pastor Brian described perseverance as more than simply surviving a difficult season. What is the difference between enduring something and persevering through it? Where might God be asking you to persevere right now?

“The most significant and pervasive theological flaw that I see is people thinking that following Jesus is a contract with God where I give God my life and God gives me a pass on trouble. This is, in my view, the underlying cause of the deconstruction movement. People misunderstood the cost of following Jesus, so when what Jesus said would happen actually happened, they got disillusioned because they thought God didn't keep up his end of the bargain. But here's what Jesus really said, 'Blessed are you when you are persecuted.' And 'if you want to gain life, you've got to lose it' And 'The greatest among you is the servant'. And especially, 'In this world you will have trouble.'” — Brian Pastor Hughes

- Think about your current spiritual rhythm. What is one thing you could change or add—a tool, a time, a place, turning off your phone, journaling, walking, reading Scripture, or something else—that could help you move closer to God?
- Pastor Brian closed with the desire for his legacy to be that he was “dedicated to making Jesus the center of his life and got a little closer to that goal every day.” What would it look like for you to get a little closer to making Jesus the center of your life this week?

Gather Prayer Requests: (5–10 min.)

Pray:

Father, thank You for inviting us into a relationship with You. Help us not to settle for simply knowing about You but give us a desire to truly know You. Teach us to draw near through Your Word, prayer, stillness, and focused time with You. Thank You for the gift of community and for the people You place around us to encourage, challenge, and walk with us. And when following You becomes difficult or we don't feel Your presence, give us the strength to persevere. Help us become more like Jesus—not just someday, but a little more each day. May Jesus be at the center of our lives, our families, our groups, and our church. In Jesus' name, Amen.