



Our God capitalizes on relationship. He made us to be in relationship and in community, first with Himself (Father, Son, Spirit) and then with His Body, the Church. God intervenes in our lives and desires to be fully present with us, every day, every moment.

But often, even as His children, we distance God. Maybe we don't feel His presence, or we go through tough times and don't understand. We rely on our present feelings and not on the promises God has given, or things He has done in the past. So, we keep Him at a distance, and often that distance grows into weeks, months, and even years.

Where are you in your current relationship with the Lord? Is He present? Pastor Ármann asked whether we want the God of miracles to do a miracle of JOY? We'd probably all say 'yes'. If you are currently in a great space with the Lord, thank Him! If you want more joy, more Presence, how can we get there? Paul asks in Gal. 4:15, "What has happened to all your joy?"

Suggestions for Cell Group Discussions/Activities:

1) Let's start with His promises. In your cell group have each person **share very briefly a favorite promise of Scripture and when/why it was special**. Renewing an awareness of His promises will encourage our hearts and those of others. Receive these promises as 'rhema' words from Jesus. **Have someone lead in a thanksgiving prayer.**

2) Sometimes when we don't feel the Lord's presence, we resort to 'golden calves' - we begin to trust in things we can see, feel and do - like social media, favorite people, jobs, shopping - to fill the gaps in our lack-luster spiritual walk. Take a few minutes to **think about things in your life that you may have built up to replace the presence of the Lord. As you feel free, share one with your cell group.** As Jesus cried over Jerusalem (Mt. 23), can we ask Him whether He is crying over me because I have chosen to replace Him with 'golden calves' in my life? **Spend time in repentant prayer** individually confessing these 'idols' to the Lord, committing to allow the Holy Spirit to renew your mind on these issues (Rom. 12:1,2). What has happened to all your joy? Maybe I've tried to replace it, instead of going back to Jesus who first gave me the joy of my salvation. He can restore it when we give up our golden calves.

3) At other times we don't feel the Lord's presence because we simply can't fathom that He loves ME!! **Meditate on/discuss Zephaniah 3:17.** The Lord takes delight in YOU, He longs to quiet you with His love because He is genuinely happy about you!! He longs to sing over you, like a parent sings over their baby in a crib, going to sleep. What a beautiful picture of God's tender commitment to each one of us, His children! **Find/share other Scriptures** that express His deep love for us. **Ask His forgiveness for not believing this truth**, of His promise of commitment and relationship! **Spend time individually opening your heart to allow God to speak to you about how much He loves you.**

4) Pastor Armann said that God sees something in us that we often don't see in ourselves. Sometimes it helps for others to share how they feel God sees you. While this may seem subjective, trust God to speak His words of encouragement through the Body, your community. **Spend some time in listening prayer. Ask each person to listen for the Lord's words of encouragement for each other.** Some may receive a word just for one person; others may receive words for several. Take time to listen to what the Lord is saying about how much he loves us, and what it is He loves about us. **Then share something with each person: "I think the Lord sees this in you...."** This ministry to each other can also be seen as being a 'warrior' for the Lord. We are doing battle not only for ourselves, but for each other. We have authority to speak God's heart and words, into the lives of our community, and our world.

5) Becoming more aware of how much God loves us can be a very humbling experience. **IF** my people...will humble themselves and pray...**THEN** I will hear from heaven, and heal.... From all we have discussed/prayed through in this session, what is the **IF** in my life that has a "then I will..." response from God? In conclusion, **spend time in prayer together for each other**, 2-3 in a group, taking authority over idols and doubts, and further encouraging each other with promises from His Word.