

May 21, 2023

I Got Questions: Week 6

Question: How many of you believe you felt the presence of God at some point in your life?

Follow up question: How many have ever struggled to feel the presence of God?

Well, I want to tell you: if you don't always feel the presence of God, you're not alone.

Psalm 88:13-14 (NIV)

"But I cried to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Why, Lord, do you reject me and hide your face from me?"

I. Maybe you're over-sensationalizing God's presence?

You're looking for something supernatural, something awe-inspiring, while the presence of God can be that, it's not ALWAYS that!

In John 6, people were seeking a SIGN!

And so if you've ever wondered, "What's wrong with you? Why don't I feel the presence of God?" I've come to tell somebody that feelings aren't the only evidence of the presence of God.

- If you always felt God, you wouldn't need faith!
- How many have learned you can't trust everything your feelings tell you! If you trusted everything your feelings told you, you'd probably be in jail right now!

II. Maybe your Heart has Hardened somewhat?

Maybe your heart has grown a bit cold towards the things of God?

Matthew 13:14-15 (NIV)

You will ever be hearing but never understanding. You'll ever be seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused.

Why don't you always experience the presence of God? Maybe you're a Christ follower, but you've allowed your heart to harden in some areas?

Let me explain this: If it's freezing outside, super, super, super cold, you bundle up. You put on the thickest coat and gloves and long underwear and hat and scarf and the boots and a whole thing. If you're covered in clothes and you go outside, guess what? You can't feel the cold. Because you're covered in layers of clothes, so you can't feel the cold.

In the same way, if you're layering your heart in sin, it becomes harder to feel God's presence because things are separating us from His presence.

So let me ask you, is there a sin that you've just gotten comfortable with? You've kinda made friends with a particular sin? Maybe you're telling yourself, "Well, at least I'm not doing something worse."

But the reality is you're caught in a prison, and it's meant to keep you there!

III. Maybe God just wants to draw you closer to him?!

Acts 17:26-27 (NIV)

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, even though he is not far from any one of us.

The good news is, He is not far from any of us!

How many have found that sometimes it's the hard times that make you seek him even more than the good times?

Have you noticed how challenges, and headwinds, and suffering often produces the best in you spiritually?

In fact, I would reason with you today that often comfort, ease, and prosperity produces us seeking Self rather than Him!

When you don't feel God's presence, you can choose to go after him all the more.

Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Here's a cool understanding about God: He wants to be pursued. He wants you to choose Him/seek Him.

He's a relational God. He's a jealous God. He wants your heart. He wants your devotion. He wants your passion.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

If you pursue God, he will reveal himself to you.

If you don't feel God, remind yourself just because God feels distant doesn't mean God is absent! Just because you don't feel him doesn't mean he's not there! And the answer is sometimes I must continue to pursue him, because there will be times when he will show up and show off and stun you to where you can't even speak!

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS WEEK 6

- 1.) Share some times when God's Presence felt distant. How did you react to that?
 - a.) How many felt at first that it must be God, it can't be me?
 - b.) How many felt, it must be me, what am I doing wrong?
- 2.) Have any of these three areas been your story? Over-sensationalizing, hardened heart, lack of understanding that I was no longer pursuing God. Discuss your journey.
- 3.) What have been some sin struggles that have kept the presence of the Lord at bay? (Busy schedule, jealousy, fear, TV binging, others?)
- 4.) How do you feel about Pursuing God? Is it something easier said than done?
- 5.) Have you ever felt in a trying time that God wasn't listening, that He didn't care? Re-read Acts 17:26-27 & Jeremiah 29:13. What's the message?
- 6.) Think about some things you might need to STOP doing, and some things you must START doing to engage the presence of God in your Life!