

WEEK 5

STAY IN THE ROOM

Reading: Chapters 8-9 - Together in His Presence + Stay Present Under Pressure

WEEKLY FOCUS

Biblical community is not just people gathering around each other. **It is people gathering around Jesus.** And the strength of that community is tested when relationships come under pressure. This week brings those ideas together: we practice shared spiritual life, and we learn not to make avoidance our automatic response when healthy relationships become uncomfortable.

THE AIM

Chapter 8 moves the group beyond community as support and into shared worship, prayer, serving, and mission. Chapter 9 then asks what happens when the same people we worship with disappoint, offend, or misunderstand us. The aim is to help the group see that mature community gathers around Jesus and learns to pursue truth, grace, wisdom, and restoration when pressure comes.

BEFORE YOU GATHER

- Read Chapters 8-9.
- Complete the personal Reflection questions at the end of both chapters.
- Review the Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 Discussion Guide sections in the back of the book.
- Come prepared to reflect on your shared spiritual practices and your natural response when relationships become difficult.

LEADER PREPARATION

This week includes both a beautiful theme and a difficult one. Give real space to worship and prayer, not only discussion. Then handle the conflict conversation with wisdom. Chapter 9 is clear that staying present under pressure does not mean staying unsafe. Ordinary relational discomfort and destructive or abusive situations are not the same.

LEADER NOTE

Do not pressure anyone to confront a person in a situation involving abuse, violence, manipulation, ongoing deception, or danger. **Safety matters.** Pastoral, professional, legal, or other appropriate help may be necessary. The goal is to stop running from every healthy relationship that requires work, not to remain in harmful situations.

CONNECT | 10 MINUTES

Begin with the opening question from Chapter 8:

START HERE

Can you remember a time when worshiping or praying with other believers affected you differently than worshiping or praying alone?

Let people tell stories. Listen for ways someone else's faith, prayer, worship, presence, or encouragement strengthened them.

LOOK BACK | 10 MINUTES

Ask: **What stayed with you from Chapters 8 and 9?**

Then ask participants to notice the contrast: Chapter 8 shows us what happens when people gather around Jesus; Chapter 9 asks whether we will remain committed to healthy community when being together becomes uncomfortable.

DISCUSS + GO DEEPER | 30-35 MINUTES

Use the existing Discussion Guide questions for Chapters 8 and 9 as the backbone. Chapter 8 explores worship, prayer, serving, mission, and the corporate dimension of faith. Chapter 9 explores difficult conversations, Matthew 18, assumptions, forgiveness, reconciliation, boundaries, and staying present under pressure.

You do not need to cover every question. Follow the places where the group moves from theory into real relational patterns.

GO DEEPER - LEADER PROMPTS

What changes when faith becomes something we practice together instead of only privately?

How has another person's prayer or faith carried you?

When conflict comes, what is your first instinct: confront, withdraw, avoid, defend, or fix?

Have you ever talked about someone more than you talked to them?

What makes a difficult conversation feel so threatening?

How do we know when a relationship needs a conversation and when wisdom requires distance?

READ TOGETHER

SCRIPTURE - ACTS 2:42-47

Notice how much of the early church's spiritual life happened **together**. They devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, prayer, generosity, worship, and shared life.

Ask: **What does this challenge about the way we sometimes practice Christianity today?**

SCRIPTURE - MATTHEW 18:15-17

Read Jesus' instructions slowly. Notice the movement toward the person rather than around the person.

Ask: **What would change in our churches, families, friendships, and teams if we actually practiced this?**

LEADER EMPHASIS

Biblical community is not proven by the absence of conflict. It is revealed by the way we love one another through it.

The book makes an important distinction: forgiveness does not automatically restore the same level of trust or access. Grace and wisdom belong together. Some relationships can be repaired into closeness. Others may require new boundaries or peace with distance. The goal is truth, health, peace, and honoring God, not forcing every relationship back to what it was.

LIVE IT TOGETHER | 10 MINUTES

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE - PRESENCE WITH GOD + PRESENCE WITH PEOPLE

Practice shared spiritual life.

Do not let this week's gathering end with conversation alone. Worship together. Pray for one another. Consider serving or pursuing mission together outside the meeting.

Then consider one relationship under pressure.

Is there a healthy relationship where you have been avoiding a needed conversation? Pray first. Ask God to examine your heart. When appropriate and safe, take the next biblical step toward the person. Go ready to listen, own your part, seek truth, and hope for restoration.

PRAY TOGETHER | 10 MINUTES

Give this prayer time more room than usual. Chapter 8 specifically calls the group to practice being together in God's presence.

- Pray specifically for one another rather than only offering general prayers.
- Pray for unity around Jesus despite different backgrounds, preferences, and experiences.
- Pray for courage to have conversations that should not be avoided.
- Pray for humility to listen and own our part.
- Pray for discernment to distinguish ordinary discomfort from situations where safety or stronger boundaries are needed.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Remind the group: do not confuse every uncomfortable relationship with an unsafe one, and do not confuse staying present with staying without boundaries. Ask God for the wisdom to know the difference and the courage to obey Him in both.

NEXT WEEK

Read Chapters 10-11: The Reset: Restoring Relational Alignment + What Love Really Looks Like.

Next week moves from staying present when relationships come under pressure to the deeper work of **realignment, repair, and learning how to love like Jesus.**

YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO DO THIS ALONE.