



## Community Group Leader Guide

For the Week of September 29 – October 5, 2024

**Sermon Series:** *Ever Wonder Why?* — Week 3

Watch the Leader Video and find all your resources online at

<https://clifec.com/community-group-resources/>

Need to watch the sermon? Check out our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@CommunityLifeChurch>

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### **Iron Church Men's Night of Worship**

Men, mark your calendars! Join us for an unforgettable Iron Church Men's Night of Worship on October 7, 2024, featuring guest speaker Tierce Green. This will be a powerful night of worship, fellowship, and inspiration you won't want to miss. Cost \$15

Register now at [clifec.com/men](https://clifec.com/men) and invite your friends to experience this transformative evening together.

#### **Blakes Run**

On Saturday, November 16, 2024, we're hosting Blake's Run, our annual 5k/10k fun run! The race will be chip-timed for everyone who wants to compete but if you aren't competitive, no worries. Just run or walk for fun! Any way you participate is helping us achieve our mission of telling the world about Jesus. Register at [clifec.com/blakesrun](https://clifec.com/blakesrun).

### SHARE

#### **Icebreaker:**

If you could trade places with anyone for a day to see how they live, who would it be and what would you do?

#### **Quick Review:**

We're three weeks deep in a series called *Ever Wonder Why?* that is all about addressing the hard questions that we all tend to think of as we journey through life. This week, the big focus was on the question, "Why does God feel distant sometimes?"

We looked at three potential reasons why God might feel far away: over-sensationalizing encounters with God, a hardened heart due to sin, and the possibility that God wants to draw us closer by encouraging us to seek Him more earnestly. Through biblical examples, such as Psalm 88, the life of Jesus, and the prophet Elijah, we can understand that feeling distant from God is not uncommon, but it doesn't mean God is absent.

### **Make It Personal:**

1. Have you ever felt like you needed to “feel” God’s presence in an overwhelming way to know He was with you? Discuss this statement from the sermon: “Maybe you have over-sensationalized what it means to be close to God.”
2. In what ways do you think modern culture and media might influence us to expect emotional or grand encounters with God?
3. Read Acts 17:26-27. Paul explains that God created us to seek Him and that He is never far from us. In seasons when you feel distant from God, how can you practically pursue Him? What does “seeking God with all your heart” look like for you?

## **STUDY**

### **Go Deeper:**

1. **Read Psalm 88:13-14.** The Psalmist cries out to God, asking why He seems distant. Have you ever experienced a season where God felt distant? How did it affect your faith, and what did you do during that time?
2. **Read 1 Kings 19:11-12.** Elijah looked for God in the wind, earthquake, and fire but found Him in a whisper. Why do you think we often expect God to show up in dramatic ways, and what can we learn from God’s “whispering” presence?

### **Action Steps:**

1. **Examine your heart for hardened areas.** Take time to reflect on areas of your life where sin, bitterness, or disappointment may have hardened your heart. Identify these areas and surrender them to God, asking for softening and renewal.
2. **Seek God with intentionality.** Engage in spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, Bible reading, or quiet time, with a focused heart. Pursue God with new fervor, especially when you feel His distance.
3. **Look for God in the whisper, not just the fire.** Recognize that God often speaks in subtle ways. Practice listening for God’s voice in the small, quiet moments of your life rather than only expecting big emotional experiences.
4. **Confess and turn from ongoing sin. If you’ve become comfortable with sin in your life, confess it to God. Make a conscious decision to walk away from any ongoing patterns of sin that might be creating distance between you and Him.**

## **PRAYER**

1. Pray that you (or others) would sense God’s nearness in times of silence. If God doesn’t grant a “feeling” of nearness, perhaps you can pray for strength to endure.
2. Pray for the maturity of our church. That we wouldn’t always need a “feeling” to guide our relationship with God and that we would trust and obey him regardless of our perception of His proximity.

## **BONUS CONTENT FOR LEADERS**

### **Model vulnerability.**

As a leader, share your own struggles with spiritual distance, hardened areas, or performance-based faith. This can set the tone for a more open, authentic discussion in the group.

### **Stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit.**

Listen to where the Holy Spirit is leading during discussions. Sometimes the group may need to pause for extended prayer or allow individuals to share more deeply than planned.

### **Follow up with group members.**

Check in with group members individually throughout the week to see how they're processing the sermon and if they've taken any steps to soften their hearts or draw closer to God.

### **Celebrate small wins.**

When someone shares a breakthrough or a small step toward overcoming sin or hearing God's voice, celebrate it as a group. This fosters encouragement and shows that spiritual growth is a journey.

### **Encourage persistent prayer.**

Remind the group that closeness to God often requires perseverance. Encourage them to keep seeking, listening, and praying even when the results aren't immediate. Help them see that the journey is as important as the destination.

### **Further Reading.**

Study the "400 years of silence" during the intertestamental period as a roadmap for how God was quietly at work while the nation of Israel had no idea of his presence. God was putting all the pieces in place for the appearance of Jesus Christ at the perfect moment in history.