



## Essence Week Two

### Opening Prayer

God, help us to know you are here and present with us. We want this time to be life giving to us.

#### **If you are a new group and this your second meeting:**

- Start things off by sharing your name and your favorite way to spend a day off. Share a little about who you'd spend the day with, what you would do, and what the goal of the day would be.

### Talk It Over

If we are honest with ourselves, we all have tried hard to fit in, prove our worth, find our value or to show we are enough. Share about one of those stories with us — the story can be funny, light, or more serious.

### Read Colossians 2:6-8 (New Living Translation)

There is a repeated idea weaved throughout this letter from Paul we keep looking at: Our core identity is found in Jesus and walking in our core identity is a process we each must say 'yes' to.

- When would you say you accepted Jesus as your Lord? Was it an evolving commitment or a sudden choice? What led to that decision? If you are still in process of saying 'yes' to Jesus, share what the journey thus far has been for you.
- God inspired change comes in various ways. In what ways did accepting Jesus as your God change your life right away? What are some examples of change coming through a process? Is there something that God is teaching you now?

### Read Colossians 2:9-10 (New Living Translation)

God has invited us to find our identity, life, and fullness in him. This doesn't mean we live without longings or striving, but rather that we aren't waiting for something or someone to fulfill who we are at our core. Finding our life in God is about living from a place of understanding who we are in our depths as we consider which of our longings are invitations from God, which longings reveal deep brokenness that desires healing, and even how we live in the waiting and striving.

- In your own words, how would you describe feeling complete? How does living from a place of wholeness look differently than living from a place of trying to find or prove your worth?
- Share a time a longing you had led to something good. How were you able to discern that the longing was a good thing or from God?
- Share a time you had a desire that came from a broken place. How did you come to realize the desire was not from God? What did you learn in that process?

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### **Read Colossians 2:13-15 (New Living Translation)**

Understanding Jesus' desired role in our life as God opens us to being responsive to him and his ways. Jesus' appeal is not that we say 'yes' to some religious behavior modification program, but rather that we say 'yes' to a new life and to become aware of God's presences, voice, love, and victory. To find ourselves alive in God, or awake to God, is to live open and aware to him.

- Do you know someone who is really good at being alive and awake to God? Share what you have observed and appreciated about this person.
- Describe a time in life you were alive, awake, or open to God.

### **Read Colossians 2:16-17 and Colossians 2:20-23 (New Living Translation)**

Paul reminds us that the essence of our identity is that we are free in Christ. We are no longer bound by rules, laws, or religion. Legalism — the attitude that says true spirituality is based on external behavior — is clearly not God's invitation to us. In fact, reading the stories of Jesus makes it overwhelmingly clear that Jesus rejected anything placed between us and God or the idea that we must earn God's love and grace. The message of Jesus is clear, when we are in Christ, we can believe we are saints, complete, alive, and free.

- How difficult or easy is it for you to wrap your mind around the fact that our identity is firmly set in God?
- In what ways do you find yourself drifting towards legalism?
- In what ways would you believing you are complete and free in God change your life?

### **Closing Prayer**

God, help us to understand that we are saints, complete, alive, and free. We want to live life knowing who we are in you.