

WARM-UP

- Do you like receiving letters or physical notes from people who are close to you? Why?
- When was the last time you were with a large group of people? What were the things you did and how did being with them make you feel?
- What was the longest time you didn't see a loved one? Tell us about the reunion and how you felt when you finally saw each other.

WORD *⁹For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.*

ROMANS 1:9-12

*Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. **2 JOHN 1:12***

In these passages, both Paul and John expressed their longing to be together with other believers. Something happens when the church gathers together face-to-face to fellowship, pray, and encourage one another. In the last few years, technology has given us new ways to see each other and build connections online. Although this has been helpful, especially when physical meetings were challenging, technology cannot fully replace the connections

at physical and personal gatherings. Today, we will look at what happens, according to Scripture, when we meet face-to-face.

1 | **When we gather face-to-face, we receive impartation and are strengthened.**

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you . . . **ROMANS 1:11**

Paul knew the importance of spending time with the churches he was ministering to. He knew that they needed to be strengthened in their faith, and the best way to do it was to go to where they were so that he could impart spiritual gifts to them. In the same way, we need to receive spiritual gifts that can equip and strengthen us to do what God has called us to do. Why do you think gathering face-to-face is important to receive impartation? What is it able to accomplish that online methods cannot?

2 | **When we gather face-to-face, we are mutually encouraged by each other's faith.**

. . . that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. **ROMANS 1:12**

Paul's longing to visit the church in Rome was not merely to give or impart to them, but to receive as well. Paul knew that in their mutual faith, the believers also had something to give to him. God designed human relationships to be mutually beneficial. When people see God's work in our lives, they are encouraged, just as we are by their lives. We spur each other's faith. How has someone's faith encouraged you to keep believing in God?

When we gather face-to-face, we experience complete joy.

Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. 2 JOHN 1:12

John knew the value of seeing people face-to-face even if there were other ways to communicate and challenges with travel and physical gatherings. We can relate with John when he said that being together will make their joy complete. We look forward to get-togethers and reunions with those we love because life is designed to be shared. Even simple experiences become meaningful when shared with others. When was the last time you were in a gathering with your church community? How did being there give you joy?

APPLICATION

- Do you interact more with people online than offline? Why? What do you think you need to do differently starting today?
- This week, meditate on Romans 1:11–12 and ask God for insights into His word and for opportunities to connect with your church community.
- Identify some church members and friends that you have not connected with for a while. What can you do to connect with them this week?

