

Mid-Year Devotion, July 2022

THE PRESENCE OF GOD



But as for me, how good it is to be near God!

I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.

PSALM 73:28 NLT

Introduction

As we take the next week to set ourselves apart for God and His purposes, we are going to be meditating on God's presence with us. Jesus' victory on the cross bridged the gap between us and God, it allowed us to come freely into His presence and for His presence to come freely into us. To be a Christian is to be someone who carries God's presence into the world.

This five-day devotion is meant to orient us toward God's presence. It is meant to give us opportunity to pray but also to practice God's Word. Our hope is that as you go through the study you will experience more of God and will bring more of God into your world.

Being people of God's presence

day 1



Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

JOHN 15:4 (NIV 84)

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

JOHN 17:3 (NIV 84)

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:6-7 (NIV 84)

You have made known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

PSALM 16:11 (NIV 84)

We were designed to be people filled with God's presence. Eternal life is not just something that we look forward to when we die, it is something that we enter into when we come to know Christ. It is a state of being with God, now, in this world, and in the next. Jesus told us to remain in, or abide in, Him. That is to remain aware of His presence with us. It is in this place that our lives become fruitful, meaningful and significant. Everyone longs to have God's presence with them. Most of our depression, hopelessness, relational breakdown, sin and addictions are rooted in a perceived distance from God. Perfect joy, life and meaningfulness come from living lives that host God's presence. That is, living lives that are oriented around, acknowledging and being filled with Holy Spirit.

LET'S PRAY

Lord, we thank you, that through Jesus, You have come close to us. We thank You that we never have to be separated from You again. Lord, help us to orientate our lives around Your presence and to be led by You in all we do.

Amen



THINGS TO DO

- Ask God to show you anything that interferes with your ability to live in God's presence. Repent of what you need to and adjust where you need to.
- Pray for people you know who haven't accepted Christ and therefore don't know God's presence. Ask God to reveal Himself to them and ask for opportunities to share a testimony with them of what Jesus means to you.
- Reading our Bibles helps us to feel connected to God. If you are not already using a Bible reading plan you can get a reading plan on the following link.

[https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/?
version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/?version=NIV)

Discerning God's Presence

What does God's presence 'feel like?' How do we know that the thing we are feeling is His presence and not just our own emotions? Here are some tests we can use to determine if we are experiencing God or not.

a) God's presence always feels loving, accepting, safe and full of grace.

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

PSALM 36:5-9

b) God's presence will always lead you away from sin and into righteousness.

The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love.

PSALM 33:5



c) God's presence always agrees with the Bible.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

MATTHEW 24:35

d) God's presence gives us solutions even in impossible situations. He removes hopelessness.

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

MATTHEW 19:26

e) God's presence increases our faith.


The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.

PSALM 118:6–7

f) God's presence promotes relational reconciliation not discord. You will never hear God slandering someone.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18–19



g) God's presence is redemptive, healing, restorative and powerful.

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

LUKE 8:47

h) God's presence is filled with joy.

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

PSALM 16:11


i) God's presence will lead you to good works.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

(Taken from Living Like Heaven's Here training manual)

LET'S PRAY

A photograph of a mountain range with mist or clouds, framed in an arched shape. The sky is a soft pinkish-purple, suggesting dawn or dusk. The mountains are dark with some orange highlights, possibly from the setting or rising sun.

Lord Jesus, show us what You are doing in our lives and the lives of the people around us. Help us to cooperate with what You are doing. Lord, we ask that You show us how to discern your presence and to acknowledge You in all we do. Cause my Bible reading to come alive and lead me to knowing You better.

Amen

THINGS TO DO

- Go through the list above and remember when you have felt God's presence with you.
- Set your watch or phone alarm to buzz every hour and every time it does take a few minutes to notice God's presence with you.
- Pray with your Connect Group for each of you to feel His presence with you more often.
- Discuss with your Connect Group how reading your Bible helps you to discern God's presence and to feel connected to Him.

day 3

Being led God's presence



Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

ROMANS 8:14 (NIV84)

By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

EXODUS 13:21,22 (NIV84)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth...

JOHN 14:16-17a (NIV84)

“...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:20b (NIV84)

When God brought Israel out of their time of slavery in Egypt, He led them through the wilderness as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. There wasn't a moment when Israel was left alone. God made the way clear by going before them. Jesus promised to be with us always and that He would send the Holy Spirit to be our counsellor. Through these and many other examples in the Bible we can see that one of the primary ways God leads us is with His presence. As we have already seen, God doesn't contradict His Word and so we can check if what we are sensing is from the Lord or not by confirming it with His Word.

For many people God's presence is described as a feeling of peace. That is, they know God is leading them to do something because they feel peace about it (and it agrees with God's Word). Also, God's leading can feel like a prompt or a nudge in your mind to do something like speak to a person about Jesus or do a particular task. It can also feel like a flash of insight or wisdom that enables you to make a decision well. God is in the business of training us to discern His leading and in so doing we become better at bringing His Kingdom in our environments.



LET'S PRAY

Lord, please help me to be led by You today and every day. Give me the wisdom I need to make the right decisions and take the right steps. Help me to sense your nudges and prompts to speak to people and to do things that will reveal Christ to others.

Amen

THINGS TO DO

- When you spend time with God, write down some names that come to mind. Ask God to give you encouraging things to say to them. Call or message them with your thoughts.
- The next time you need to make a decision, ask God to lead you. Check what you are feeling with your Christian friends, leaders and the Bible.
- The next time you are standing in a queue, ask God for a way to start a conversation with the person in front or behind you. In the course of your conversation ask them if there is anything you can pray for them because you believe that Jesus has made a way for us to speak directly to God our Father.

Heaven coming to earth through us



...Christ in you, the hope of glory.

COLOSSIANS 1:27b (NIV84)

“This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on
earth as it is in heaven.

MATTHEW 6:9,10 (NIV84)

As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’
Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive
out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

MATTHEW 10:7,8 (NIV84)

God's desire is for His goodness, power and love to be manifest on earth. He wants the entire world to come under His loving authority so that all the wrongs and injustice of the world can be set right. Through Christ He has made a way for His kingdom (His governance and rule) to come to earth through His church, empowered by His Spirit. We are His ambassadors bringing the will and way of God into the society around us. We bring the light of the revelation of Christ and the knowledge of God to bear on the circumstances around us. We speak of His goodness, demonstrate His power and reveal His truth as we speak to people and exhibit the good works of the Kingdom.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, a second experience after salvation, allows us to carry the power of God with us into our every day life. The gifts of the Spirit follow us as we pray for people and through us people are healed, delivered and saved. If you haven't been baptized in the Spirit, please ask your Connect Group leader or another leader in the church to pray for you.



LET'S PRAY

Lord pour out your power and wisdom on me today. Give me the courage to pray for people who are sick or far from Jesus. Give me the opportunity to see people healed, saved and set free. Show me those I should interact with and give me the words and actions that will reveal You to them.

Amen



THINGS TO DO

- When someone close to you is sick, pray for them before you go to the doctor or reach for medicine.
- Trust God for a miracle in someone's finances. Tell them you are praying for a financial miracle for them.
- Make a list of things in your life or family's life that need a miracle. Pray for them every day for a week and see what happens. If you haven't seen breakthrough in some of the areas after a week, extend the time.



day 5

Practicing God's presence

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts
from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with
all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.
You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon
me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your
presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the
depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the
sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold
me fast.

PSALM 139:1-10 (NIV84)

God is all around us. He knows everything about us and He is pursuing a relationship with us relentlessly. We can grow in our capacity to relate to God by 'practicing His presence'. This is a term coined by ancient Christians for allowing ourselves to notice His presence and to interact with Him on a minute by minute basis. It is a 'practice' because it takes time and repetition to get it right. We are easily distracted and our minds wander from the truth of Him with us, but the more we do it the easier it becomes. Below are two examples of how to practice God's presence.

ACTIVATION 1

Sit alone in a quiet place. Remind yourself of an attribute of God or a phrase that describes Him. Close your eyes to avoid distraction and think about the attribute or phrase you have identified. As you do this, notice that God is with you. This will feel like a sense of peace or joyful energy. It will feel fulfilling and satisfying. Rest in this experience for as long as you can. Imagine that you are sitting with Jesus in your Heavenly Father's presence and notice that you are safe and at peace. Stay here for as long as you can. At first you will only be able to do a short stint in this experience, but as you practice the time will get longer. You will be surprised how spending time like this with God alters your emotions later in the day and gives you a sense of grounding and wholeness throughout the day.



ACTIVATION 2

Whenever you are doing routine tasks like cleaning, driving, showering or sorting, take time to notice God's presence with you. Talk to Him in your mind as you do the tasks and allow yourself to feel His love as you do them. Try to extend the time that you do this to other tasks until you are doing all of your activities during the day with Jesus. Try to notice the kind of thoughts that come into your mind. Reject thoughts of fear, hopelessness, loneliness, shame or blame as not coming from God, recognize thoughts of love, hope, connectedness and forgiveness as coming from God. Magnify the thoughts that come from God and allow those to fill your mind.

LET'S PRAY

Lord, help me to feel You with me every moment of the day. Help me to take my thoughts captive by rejecting those thoughts that take me away from You and to magnify those thoughts that lead me to You. Give me capacity to keep my mind focused on You and Your truth. Thank You that You lead me well and I can trust You.

Amen



THINGS TO DO

- Try to practice God's presence every morning for 10minutes. Try setting an alarm before you start so that you don't have to look at the time while you are doing it. Once you have become proficient at 10minutes, try for longer.
- Ask a friend to join you in practicing God's presence. Compare notes afterwards as to what you experienced. See if you can find what you experienced in the Bible.

