

God's Presence

By Wendy Wood



One of the amazing attributes of God is his omnipresence. While this is one of His defining characteristics, it seems to be one attribute that we take for granted and often don't think about. Believers are quick to affirm, "I believe God is always with me", but it sure seems like believers often live like this is not true. Think about your counselees, your family members, friends, and others. Do you see in them an active choice to believe and trust that God is always, constantly, completely with them? Do they live with the confidence, peace, and joy of God Almighty being with them on a moment to moment basis? What would it look like to live like you know and trust God's presence? David and Moses put tremendous weight and hope in the presence of God, and we, and our counselees, can learn much from them.

Moses sees the tremendous difference God's presence makes in everyday life. After Moses receives the 10 Commandments and comes down off the mountain and finds the people worshipping the calf, God sends a plague on the people for their sin. He also commands Moses to lead the Israelites to leave Sinai and move toward the promised land. Moses meets with God, face to face, in the Tent of Meeting. Moses has seen God's wrath displayed toward the stiff necked people who sinned against God, and Moses wants reassurances about leading the people further. Moses doesn't want to set out as the lone leader of this group. But, we see Moses' dependence on God's presence when he continues. Exodus 33:15 says, "Then he (Moses) said to Him (God), "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" Moses sees that God's presence is the distinguishing factor for his people. He knows God's presence is the only hope he has in the calling God has given him to lead the Israelites. He essentially says, "without God's presence, I'm not going anywhere!" As the

conversation between Moses and God continues, Moses asks to see the very nature of God. He says "Please show me your glory." (33:18) Moses is asking God to make him aware of God's presence. Moses is basically saying, "prove you are with me". God's response is "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord'. And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (33:18-20) God's glory is his very essence and God declares that his essence is his goodness. God alone determines what is good and he alone determines when to extend mercy and grace. Moses asks to see God's presence with him, and instead gets the fullness of God explained to him. God chooses to reveal his character and nature when asked to show himself. God is not physical in the sense that we see his body. God is Spirit. God's presence is not something we can experience with our eyes, but we see his presence in his goodness, grace and mercy. Moses desired God's presence with him, probably in the physical sense where the Israelites would see God supporting and backing Moses as leader. Instead, Moses learns that God's presence, his glory, is the display of his works of goodness. After God passes behind Moses, we are told "Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped" (34:8). God's presence is always worthy of worship. He again asks the Lord to go in the midst of the people (34:9). Trusting God's presence allowed Moses to continue faithfully serving as leader for another couple of decades! He simply didn't want to do life apart from the presence of God.

As you consider the emphasis and hope Moses placed on God's presence, do you have a similar view of God's glory? Are you dependent on God to live each day? What about your counselees? Would they say they don't want to do anything apart from God's presence? We'll look at how to build this view further on in this blog.

David also saw the presence of God as the best gift in his life. David understood that life apart from God is joyless and difficult. In Psalm 16, David sings of God's faithfulness and the blessings that come from being near to God. David calls God his "chosen portion" and his "cup" and sings of the inheritance of being in relationship with the Lord. The portion and cup refer to the fullness and satisfaction of being near to God. Life in God's presence is satisfying and content. In verse 11 he says, "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." David sees God's presence as the "fullness of joy". David seems to be referring back to Exodus 33 by using similar Hebrew words and links God's presence with God revealing his very nature to Moses in his goodness, grace, and mercy. As David speaks of God's presence, he is speaking of God's goodness on display. David celebrates that abundant joy and happiness are present when God is with us. God's presence is with us now, and is just the beginning of "forevermore" where God's pleasures and blessings will continue on into eternity as we are in his presence in heaven. David is convinced that there is no better place to be than in God's presence. He says the "one thing" he wants is to be in God's presence (Psalm 27:4). Do you view God's presence as that amazing gift that brings joy, contentment and satisfaction? Or do you take God's presence for granted most of the time? What about your counselees? Do they rest and enjoy God's presence or are they desiring someone or something else more?

How do we grow in appreciating God's presence and value it as Moses and David did?

1. Meditate on God's presence.

Choose a verse about God's presence and read it over and over. Think about the meaning of the words and how God chooses to be present with his people. As you and your counselee spend time with verses about God's presence, focus on enjoying this attribute of God. Give time for your love and treasuring of God's presence to grow in your heart. Consider how you live regarding God's presence? Do you need to make some changes?

- a. What hope is there in God being with us all the time? What encourages you in God being present with you throughout the day?
- b. Where in your life do you live like God is not present? In what circumstances do you make decisions or carry on with life without thinking about God?
- c. What practical steps do you need to take in enjoying the presence of God?

Consider these verses:

Isaiah 57:15

Psalms 139:7-12

Psalms 23:4

Psalms 27:8

Isaiah 41:10

2. Pray about God's Presence throughout the day.

Create a way to think about God's presence throughout the day. You might set an alarm on your phone to go off every hour. You might wear a rubberband around your wrist that is somewhat annoying to you so you notice it throughout the day. You might put sticky notes on your dashboard, computer, mirror, refrigerator, and nightstand so you are reminded to stop and think about God throughout the day. However you choose to remind yourself, stop each time the reminder happens, and take inventory of where your thoughts have been. Have you been aware of God's presence with you this past hour? Take a minute to pray and reset your mind on the wonderful truth that God is with you.

3. Pray before each time you speak or engage in conversation.

When you are about to engage in speaking with someone, make that a time to stop and think about God's presence with you in that moment. As you open your mouth, ask God to help you speak words that encourage, build up, and train in righteousness. Think about what needs to change in your words in light of God's presence? Are there words to stop thinking and using? Are there topics that should not be discussed or ways of communicating that don't honor God?

God's presence is truly a wonderful gift to be enjoyed! Encourage your counselees to give thanks for God's presence and to bask in the beauty of it.