

JANUARY 27, 2013

INTIMACY WITH GOD THROUGH PRACTICING GOD'S PRESENCE 2

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4: 4-7;9

Knowing something – knowing it. Or understanding a concept when important can also be useless if not put into practice.

Theory and practice must marry so that it can be translated into an action that can lead to transformation. With this in mind, we now know that understanding and knowledge of discipleship is useless unless we put it into practice – meaning we have allow ourselves to go through and experience the process of discipleship. This is our calling, our marching orders commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20.

Understanding God's presence through the life of Jacob.

"The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God."

Nicholas Herman

1. God's presence is a gift, it is grace.

Jacob if you remember, was so named because he was a supplanter, a deceiver. He had cheated Esau out of his birthright and deceived his father to get his blessings. (Gen 28) Because of what he had done, he was forced to flee to Haran. When he got there, he had asked Laban for Rachel in exchange of 7 years of service, but at the end of that time, he got a dose of his own medicine when he was given Leah instead. And so we had to work another seven years for Rachel then another nine years for his wealth

All this time Jacob remained in the favor of God. His first personal encounter with God was in Genesis 28:13-14. At that time he had not yet established a relationship with God – that is why God introduced himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac. But despite the fact he still did not have a relationship with God, God had promised him that he would keep his promise Abraham and Isaac through him. This blessing, this fulfillment of his promise, this acknowledgment of protection was undeserved. This was grace - unsolicited and unmerited.

Like Jacob, we might be claiming relationship with God through the merits of others and not because of our own experience with Him. Maybe we have not yet realized that God's presence in our life is a personal gift we need to accept, that it is given freely, unsolicited and unmerited.

A personal relationship with God can be best cultivated in discipleship.



380 S. Rosemead Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91107

Sundays
945 AM
Heart
Preparation

1000 AM
WORSHIP

Dgroup Schedules

Tuesdays
700 pm
1102 E Swanee Lane
West Covina, CA

Thursdays
730 pm
2617 N Parish Place
Burbank, CA

Fridays
700 pm
5124 Ashworth St
Lakewood, CA

Fridays
730 PM
4706 Ivar Ave
Rosemead, CA

Please contact Rey Bejerano at
6263545717 for venue changes

2. God's presence is often unrecognized.

Often times we cannot recognize God's presence in our life, in verse 16 Jacob says *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."*

We all have times in our life that we keep shouting out to God for Him to be with us. . . And yet all the time, He was right there we just didn't know it because we have not opened our eyes and look around. We have put God in a box expecting Him to answer our prayers in specific ways, and when He doesn't we cry out and complain. But in all those times, He was always there only that He was leading us in another direction and not in the way we had wanted Him to.

When we are not sensitive to look for God in our circumstances, we miss out on the opportunity to bask and enjoy the presence of God we tend to focus on everything and anything but nothing of what really matters. Hebrew 12:15 says *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Spiritual growth is defined as the increasing awareness of God's presence and responding accordingly.

Despite being aware of God's promise Jacob still did not take refuge in that he continued to say *if God will...*

Many times we too fall into this trap treating our relationship with God as a conditional transaction not believing in God's covenant to us. When we fall into this trap we are not allowing ourselves to be in the presence of God and to experience his hand in our life. God will fulfill his promises to us we only need to be faithful no matter what

3. God's presence is our security.

Jacob went through a lot of problems as he tried to build his family and his wealth. In Genesis 30-31, Laban convinces Jacob to continue to stay for his benefit and offered Jacob irresistible deals so that he will choose to stay. As time went on however, Jacob noticed that Laban had not kept his word constantly changing his wages and his attitude towards him had changed.

At this time Jacob is only starting to recognize God's presence in his life . . . he is now beginning to see God's protection.

This reminds us that God does not exempt his children from trials and adversities but that amidst the hardship we will find comfort and security in His presence

4. God's presence is life transforming.

Before God changes circumstances, He wants to change our hearts. If our circumstances change for the better, But we remain the same, then we will become worse. God's purpose in providence is not to make us comfortable, But to make us conformable. "conformed to the image of His Son".
Warren Wiersbe

As Jacob's story continues, he begins to recount all that Laban has done to him, now realizing and acknowledging God's intervention and protection . . . And finally he acknowledges a relationship with God. So that in Genesis 32, when he wrestles with God, he did not let go until he received God's blessing. This was the final life transforming event in Jacob's life. . . And he carried that reminder, his limp, all the days of his life.

It is only when our life begins transforming that we will begin to feel and completely experience God's presence. Until we can claim a personal relationship with Him, we can not enjoy His protection and provision.

All throughout his life, God had constantly promised Jacob, "I will be with you", but Jacob did not see it until he opened his eyes and claimed a personal relationship with God. In the same way, God has promised us "I will be with you" — but have we allowed ourselves to see His presence and His power in our lives? Have we accepted His invitation to a relationship?

Discussion Questions:

1. How will practicing God's presence affect your daily life? Be specific.
2. What spiritual legacy will you leave behind to your loved ones?

Works: Journaling task

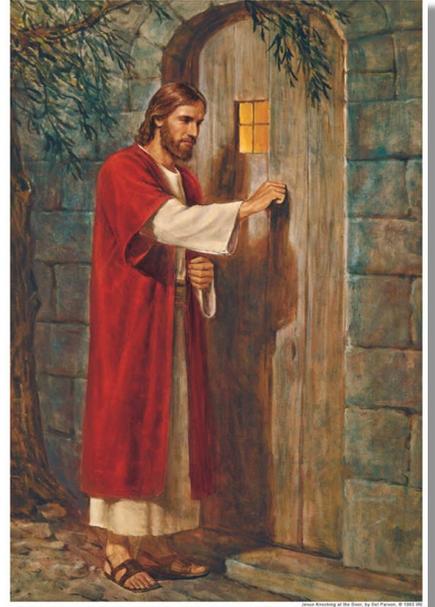
Reflect on these questions:

1. Can I really claim a personal relationship with God?
2. Do I recognize God's hand in my life?
3. Do I find security in God's promises?
4. Has my life been transformed by the presence of God?
5. Have I limited myself to a conditional transaction with God? What are my "If God will . . ." statements?
6. Do we have Laban's in our life? How have you dealt with it? What is God's message to you in this situation?

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says ***Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.***

This is His personal invitation to us to spend time with Him, to interact with Him, to enjoy a time in His presence. God wants to be intricately involved in our lives, but often times we are reluctant to open the door and allow Him to come in. Or maybe we have opened the door, but we have chosen not to dine with Him. Every day He renews this invitation. Every day He renews His promise that He will always be with us.

How have we responded?



How has this message made me grow in the process of Discipleship in terms of:

SUPREME LOVE OF GOD

STUDY & DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

SELF DENIAL

CHRIST-LIKE LOVE
