

# The Presence of God

*The One Necessary Thing*



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**"Prayer paves the way of experiencing God's presence. Prayers are tools, but...not tools for doing or getting, but for being and becoming. My hope is that we'd be people who are getting back into His presence."**

- Ian Black  
(and Eugene Peterson)

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## Getting Back Into His Presence

In the midst of a season of prayer and fasting, are we willing to let go of things that have been filling our time for the exchange of encountering the presence of the Lord? This is a question that Pastor Ian posed to us during his message a few weeks ago. He encouraged us that the presence of God is a promise. That God's presence is truth, power and a place where we are transformed and changed by Him.

Do you ever look at your life and feel as though something is missing? Do you have the feeling like there has got to be more to life than this? It's possible that you're longing for the presence of God. The good news is that the Lord "satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things" (Psalm 107:9). Don't be afraid of the call back to His presence. Don't give in to the temptation or the busyness that fills our time and causes us to be distracted. Let's become a people who practice the "one necessary thing" together, get back into the presence of God and allow ourselves to be transformed by His power and love.

# A Kingdom of Priests

## Looking at the History of the Presence of God

The people of Israel experienced a great liberation when the Lord rescued them from Egyptian slavery and promised to bring them into a new land where they would be His people and He would be their God. Not since the Garden of Eden would a people experience the presence of the Lord in the way that the People of Israel were to experience Him. But something happened, and things went awry very quickly. Take a look at the following passages and discuss the question - what went wrong?

Read Exodus 19:1-6

- In verses 5 and 6, how does the Lord refer to His people? What might this signify for the relationship between them?

Read Exodus 19:7-8

- How do the people respond?

## Read Exodus 19:9-13

- Why does the Lord choose to show His presence in this way?
- What boundaries does He put in place when it comes to His presence? Look at verse 13, are they permanent?

### Read Exodus 20:18-21

- How is this response from the people different than their response in Exodus 19:7-8?
- Why do they refuse to hear God for themselves?

Moses proceeds to go to the mountain and encounters God's presence alone. While there, he receives portions of the Law given by God to show the new nation how to live in relationship with Him and in relationship with one another. But Moses is gone for a long time, and the people get restless.

Read Exodus 32:1

- What might have been different if the people had not refused to listen to the Lord themselves?
- How might their experience of God's presence potentially have kept them from seeking other gods?
- As people of God, are there moments in our lives when we are guilty of "sending someone else" into God's presence and then relying on them to communicate what He has said?
- What might we be missing out on if we do not seek, spend time and listen in the presence of God? What might we gain if we do?

*Moses went on to have very powerful encounters in the presence of the Lord. When you have a chance, read all of Exodus 33. Note how Moses speaks to the Lord. Note how the Lord speaks to Moses. What did Moses gain from being in the presence of God? What might we gain from being in the presence of God?*

**"The Lord would speak to Moses  
as one speaks to a friend..."**

- Exodus 33:11

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# A New Thing

## The Re-Introduced Presence

In the Old Testament, Moses experienced the presence of God. With the creation of the Tabernacle (and eventual Temple), priests were able to experience the presence of God. It was limited, and not all people were able to enter into the presence of God. What should have been a kingdom of priests, ended up being a kingdom with a few priests. In Ezekiel 10, the presence of the Lord leaves the temple for good. But that is not the end of the story.

### Read John 1:1-5 & 1:14

- The Word became human and made his home among us - what might this signify about the presence of God?

### Read Acts 1:1-8 & 2:1-3

- Consider the imagery and how it reflects the arrival of the presence of God in Exodus 19.
- What is different here?
- What might this signify?
- What does this experience mean for the followers of Jesus?

## Reflect & Apply

### What changes?

How can our lives be different based upon what we have read and learned today? If the presence of God is freely available to us through Jesus Christ, are we entering into that invitation?

In his sermon, Ian challenged us that "in order to choose the good portion, everything else needs to pale in comparison."

- Are you regularly taking time to experience the presence of God?
- What habits and practices may need to go so that the invitation into the presence of God can be accepted and enjoyed?
- Do you have any fears or anxieties about experiencing His presence? Name those fears and bring them to Him.

*"Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence."*

*- Ephesians 3:12*

*"And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him..." - Hebrews 10:19*

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