

## Experiencing More of God's Presence

**Video:** Connecting with God (So, are you connecting with God?)

For the next 2 weeks I want to focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of our purpose statement as a church (slide) ...to equip them to experience His presence and demonstrate His power

Today, I want to focus on experiencing the presence of God. (Connecting With God) I believe God wants us to experience more of His presence. WHY?

First, because this is what we are designed for...we long for. (Eternity is n our hearts)

Secondly, the fulfillment of the vision God has called us to cannot be accomplished without His presence. There is no power without the presence of God. There is no transformation without the presence of God. We can't reach the 1000's of unchurched people without God's presence. Unless we grow in our experience with God we will never satisfy our deepest longings nor fulfill the vision He gave to us. Experiencing more of God is essential for us as individuals and as a church.

HOW?

We can experience more of God / connect with God more if we commit to 3 key essentials.

### I. We Have A Commitment To Purity

A. A pure heart is a prerequisite for intimacy with God

*Matt. 5:8 "God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God." (NLT)*

*Ps. 24:3-4 "Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? Only those whose hands and hearts are pure..." (NLT)*

1. In order for us to experience God, purity is a requirement. Now, before you all count yourselves out because you think this is impossible, let's understand what is meant.
2. First, let's understand it does not mean perfection. If this is the case, we're all out of luck. None of us can expect to experience intimacy with God because no one is perfect.
3. The only way we have intimacy with God is through His Son Jesus. (This is why He said in John 14:6 "I am the way, truth, life...no one comes to the Father except through Me.) Jesus is our path to intimacy with God. HOW?
4. Because Jesus was pure / perfect / righteous – Therefore He could be a sacrifice for our sin on the cross satisfying God's justice for sin. Then, when we accept this free gift of forgiveness the righteousness of Christ is placed upon our imperfect lives.
  - The word: Justified – Declared righteous!
5. It is Christ's righteousness / His purity that allows us to have a relationship with God. This is why our salvation has nothing to do with our works but all about what Jesus did for us.
6. This is all great news, but since Christ's righteousness is placed on my life, how come I don't have intimacy with God every day? How come I don't just wake up feeling connected / close / spiritual?
7. What Jesus did makes relationship possible. What we choose to do makes fellowship

possible. Jesus opened the doorway for relationship. Now it is our responsibility to move in a direction that is consistent with the righteousness that is placed on our lives.

B. A pure heart must be maintained for intimacy with God

*Eph. 4:30 "And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.*

*Remember, he has identified you as his own..." (NLT)*

1. It is our sin that damages the fellowship / hinders the intimacy with God. If we are living in a way that brings Him sorrow, we're not going to be experiencing intimacy with God. (Intimacy with God is on His terms not ours!)
2. Since God knows that we are going to struggle with sin the rest of our lives, He has made provision for it. It's called confession.

*Ps. 66:18 "If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." (NLT)*

3. Sin may hinder the intimacy but confession results in forgiveness and restored intimacy with God. In order to maintain a pure heart and experience increased intimacy with God, confessing our sin needs to be the normal practice.
4. **Illustrate:** With the swine flu being a pandemic, the one thing health official are asking people to do more of is "wash your hands". WHY? To maintain health. I'm washing my hands more than I have ever done in my life!
5. Confessing our sin is like this in the spiritual sense. We confess our sin to wash our hearts and to maintain spiritual health! Sin is like a virus. If you don't confess it, it can get in your system and make you spiritually sick / hinder intimacy.

Simple steps to purity

- Become more aware of your spiritual condition (health officials want us aware of what we do / how we feel) Not bad advice in the spiritual realm – Are you living in a way that is bringing Him sorrow? - Ask God to show you areas of your life.
- Practice confessing your sin to God. (daily / hourly / - whenever fellowship is broken – stop waiting until Sunday – or a disaster – choose to maintain it!)
- Receive His forgiveness – We will never experience intimacy with God until we receive the forgiveness that comes with confession. Some of you need to stop asking Him to forgive you...He did the first time. Thank Him now you have it!

**II. We Have A Commitment To Pursue**

- Pursue what? Pursue God!

A. Pursuing God results in intimacy with God

*Jer. 29:13 "If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me." (NLT)*

*II Chron. 15:2 "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him..." (NLT)*

1. Think about all the things we can pursue? We pursue careers / relationships / money and possessions / elk / salmon and steelhead / pleasure / happiness / the list

is endless. All these pursuits take time and resources. We have to commit to them to some degree in order to experience them.

2. Now, what about God? Is He on your list of pursuits? He wants to be! Notice the Scripture says, “If you look for Me wholeheartedly” / “whenever you seek Him...” God is someone we can pursue, discover and experience.
3. Some of you might be thinking how can I pursue someone I can’t see / feel / touch in a tangible way? My response is simply this: Choose to pursue God and He will reveal Himself to you. This is the promise! If we look...we will find. God will never turn away a genuine seeker.
- God knows how to reveal Himself to you in a way that is tailor made just for you. God loves to prove Himself to people if they will only seek Him. (HS World religion class)
  4. We need to understand that God’s greatest desire for us is relationship with Him. The thing He desires most and we need most is greater intimacy with God. Therefore He promises to reward the pursuer!
  5. Imagine experiencing God every day...experiencing His presence...sensing His direction...enjoying His life poured into you...relying on His strength...walking in His peace...seeing His power
  6. Think about all the things you pursue? Can any of these things give you this? We pursue things when we believe they are worth the pursuit. I honestly think most people just don’t believe God is worth this type of pursuit.
- I would love to change that thinking today! My pursuit of God has been my greatest pursuit and my greatest fulfillment in life!

#### B. Pursuing God is an ever increasing lifestyle rather than a destination

*Mark 12:29-30 “Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ (NLT)*

1. Pursuing God is an ever increasing love relationship that grows / expands / deepens / changes over time. We never “arrive”. We never discover or experience enough. God is inexhaustible. We will never stop experiencing new things with God.
2. The only way our relationship with God gets stale / boring / dry / is when we stop pursuing Him. When we stop pursuing God we stop learning and experiencing Him.
3. It like a marriage: The reason so many marriages lose passion / excitement / and basically get boring is because people stop pursuing one another. The mistake they make is only pursuing each other until the wedding. A great marriage is the result of pursuing each other for the rest of your life. (There’s always something new to discover / new to do together / another adventure to experience.)
4. Our relationship with God is no different. Some of you have been believers for years but if you’re honest, you’re bored out of your mind in your relationship with God. C’mom...be honest.

5. There's no passion / no fire / you haven't experienced anything new in your relationship with God for years! I like asking people when they felt the closest to God. The answers I always get are past tense. WHY? Why not today!
6. Experiencing God has been the most exciting / fulfilling pursuit I have ever experienced.

### Simple steps to pursuing God

- Daily tell God you are seeking Him and ask Him to show you Himself. "God let me find you...let me experience you...let me see you...let me feel you" Don't just ask Him for things...Ask God for Himself! "God, I want YOU!"
- Actively look for God daily. Believe God is going to answer that prayer by having the expectation it's going to happen. God may reveal Himself to you in surprising ways.
- Get to know God through His word. It is His word that describes / reveals who He is. The more you know about God from His word, the more expectations you should have about experiencing these things in your life. (His word grows our faith)
- Take an adventure with God (Get out of your comfort zone – serve / mission trip / etc...

### **III. We Have A Commitment To Practice**

A. Practicing a godly lifestyle results in intimacy with God

*Ezra 7:9-10 "...the good hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it..." (NASB)*

- Because Ezra practiced God's word He experienced God's hand upon Him (God's blessing and presence)
 

*Phil. 4:9 "Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you." (NLT)*
- Paul tells the church to practice this lifestyle so that they will experience God's peace.
  1. Practice doesn't make us perfect, but it does result in more of God's presence in our lives! If we make the word of God a priority in our lifestyle, God rewards us with His presence. WHY?
  2. Because the word of God reflects the values and lifestyle of those who belong to another Kingdom. How can we have fellowship with the King if we reject the values of His Kingdom?
  3. For example: When we choose to follow what the word of God says, we experience God being faithful to His word.
    - Take generosity as an example:
    - Take Forgiveness as an example:
    - Take prayer as an example:
  4. The great thing about all these areas of obedience is the more we practice them, the more they become part of our daily lives; the more we experience God. God will not become real to us until we have a commitment to practice His word.
  5. You may have some areas of your life you just refuse to let God touch / refuse to

realign to what God wants. By doing this you're only hurting yourself and creating a barrier between you and God.

6. God's word is not here to make you feel guilty and beat up. God's word is to be practiced so that you can have life and intimacy with God.

#### B. Practicing the presence of God results in intimacy with God

*Ps. 19:1-3 "The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word..." (NLT)*

1. The creation itself is a reminder to us of God, His greatness and His presence. Jesus Himself said: *Matt. 28:20 "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (NLT)
2. I believe that we can actually practice being aware of God's presence throughout the day. This helps foster greater intimacy with God. It is choosing to be aware / choosing to be spiritually engaged 7 days a week not just in Sat-Sun/
3. It's noticing the sunrise / sunset and saying thank you / it's acknowledging the close call on the freeway and saying, "Thanks for your protection". It's staying connected during the day – asking for His help at work / with a co-worker / boss
4. It is choosing to see God's reminders all around you of His goodness / His love / and His presence. Sometimes I think God is speaking loud and clear. We are just so hurried and disengaged spiritually that we can't hear.
5. I challenge you to practice being aware of God's presence this week. The more you practice it, the more of God you will experience.

#### Simple steps to practice

- Take something from God's word each service to go home and practice it this week. This is why I give you notes.
- Be willing to realign your life so that it reflects God's values. If you know you shouldn't be doing something, your hindering intimacy with God.
- Try being more aware of God and His presence with you throughout the week. Look for Him! You just might be amazed what you see and what you experience!

The greatest gift God has that He wants us to experience is Himself. This is what we were designed for. This is what fulfills the deepest longings of our hearts. My prayer is that you would experience God more than ever before.

- That you would have a commitment to purity
- That you would have a commitment to pursue
- That you would have a commitment to practice

And because of these commitments, your life would never be the same!