

Essential: God's Presence

Study Guide for Small Group Discussion and Personal Application
Lynn Haven UMC – June 21, 2020 – Pastor Craig Carter

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As our regathering and rebuilding process as a church continues over the summer, we are discussing what is **essential** to our existence as a congregation. In previous weeks we have identified the most basic ingredient needed is God Himself, and also that we need each other. Last week we explored the need for God's Perspective, and this week we consider how God's Presence is essential.

Discussion Starters:

⇒ As a parent, have you ever had your children disobey or disregard your teaching? Have you ever heard them complain? Have you ever caught them doing something they shouldn't be doing, especially when they've been left unattended for a while? Why do kids act differently if a parent is present?

¹²One day Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You have told me, 'I know you by name, and I look favorably on you.'¹³If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people."¹⁴The Lord replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you."¹⁵Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place.¹⁶How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth." (Exodus 33:12-16 NLT)

Key Sermon Points:

Moses was unwilling to continue the journey without the presence of the Lord. God's presence is essential because He brings four key things:

1) Comfort (v. 14)

Having someone with us when we are going through a tough time is very comforting. In tough times we often do not need answers or advice, we just want someone to be present with us. God is a source of comfort for us too.

⇒ How have you been comforted by the presence of friends during a tough time? How have you been able to comfort others? How have you experienced God's comfort during a difficult time in your life?

2) Confidence (vv. 12, 14)

As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous...Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:5b-6a, 9b NIV)

God is a source of confidence and courage for us.

⇒ Who are the people that inspire you to be confident? Who is affirming and supportive for you? Who do you need to support in a similar manner? How does knowing God is with you bring you a sense of confidence?

3) Conviction

Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips..." (Isaiah 6:5 NLT)

And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin... (John 16:8 NLT)

The presence of God also brings conviction. We become aware of sin and how we are not worthy in His presence, and this leads us to make an effort to live more godly lives.

⇒ If we believed God was our constant companion, how would we behave differently? What would God say about your behavior, your language, your thoughts? Do you feel conviction of sin in your life? How can you live differently?

4) Conquest (v. 16)

God is undefeated, and His presence brings us victory over any and all enemies. In the Lord we are "more than conquerors" and His supernatural power breathes life into us individually, as a community, and in power to do ministry.

"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference." (A.W. Tozer)

⇒ Do you feel a need for God the Conqueror in your life? What victory are you seeking? How can you pray for that victory and live into it?