

How To Seek God's Face - Omnipresence

REVIEW: We are in a series on how to seek God's face. We throw that phrase around pretty easily, "I need to seek God's face," or "You should seek God's face on this." But what does that mean?

Often it is a metaphor for prayer. We seek God's face by praying. The reality is it goes deeper than just prayer. We have access to God at all times (Hebrews 4:14-16). It has to mean more than just prayer.

What we have said so far is that seeking God's face means seeking God. Just like you want to seek the face of a friend, you want to spend time with them, relating to them, talking with them. All of that is building a deeper relationship with them. It helps you to get to know the person on a more intimate level. This is what we are talking about with God. If we are going to seek His face, we want to get to know Him - deeply, intimately.

INTRO: One day, children lined up for lunch in the cafeteria of a religious school. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The teacher made a note: "Take only one; God is watching." At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. (This is my kind of school by the way) A boy wrote a note and set it next to the pile of cookies. It read: "Take all you want; God is watching the apples."

TRAN: This little story tells us some realities about God, but also some realities about ourselves as well. As we learn to seek God's face today, we are going to do so by looking at God being present everywhere. The fancy term is omnipresent.

There are lots of practical things we can take away as we see God as present everywhere. Before we get to that, let's lay the foundation.

I. How is God present everywhere?

A. First, the Bible talks about God being everywhere

1. Turn to Psalm 139:7-12 (p. 621)
2. David is really in praise and awe of God for this attribute of Him
 - a) I can go to the heavens - and You are there
 - b) I can go to the depths - You are there
 - c) If I tried to hide in the darkest of night - so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face - God, You still see me and are right there with me
3. This actually gets very deep when you think about it
 - a) Consider what Solomon said after building the Temple
 - b) "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!"
 - c) Solomon is amazed at how big God is, and yet God is present with us

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4. The fact that God is present everywhere, while being a very deep concept to wrap the mind around, is also very simple - wherever you go, you can say with full assurance that, "God is here"
- B. The Bible also says that God is in His people
 1. The Bible talks about special appearances of God's presence
 - a) In places like the tabernacle
 - b) The Temple
 2. Today, we know that God is present with His people by dwelling in us
 - a) 1 Corinthians 6:19 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own"
- C. Again, the Bible speaks of God being present in heaven
 1. We all know this one - Matthew 6:9 - "Our Father, who art in... heaven..."
 2. There are other verses, but I think that one is pretty straight forward
- D. The last way the Bible talks about God being present is that we would have a conscious awareness of His presence and enjoy Him
 1. We just said that God is everywhere
 2. We just said that all believers have the Holy Spirit living inside of them
 3. Not all believers enjoy the presence of the Spirit in their lives
 - a) This is from one of the books for my classes
 - b) A student of my professor wrote as a prayer request at the beginning of a semester for the professor to pray for
 - c) It said, "Lord, I want to know You in such a way that I miss You when I am not conscious of You."
 - (1) Is that not the most awesome prayer ever!
 - (2) You want the face of God, You want to know God intimately, make this a prayer of yours for the next month and see what happens
 - (3) "I want to know You in such a way that I miss You when I am not conscious of You."
 4. By the way, this is a prayer you can pray for others as well
 - a) Praying that God would be with them in a special way - what a better prayer
 - b) I think some people pray that thinking that is the "prayer language" - be with that person God
 - (1) But when you understand what you are praying, it is an awesome prayer
 - (2) You are asking for God to make His presence felt in a special way for the person you are praying for - that is amazing

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- II. This all assumes that God's presence is good
 - A. I'm not sure all of us believe that
 - 1. Largely because we like some of the activities we enjoy
 - 2. And if God were invited in, perhaps we wouldn't like those things very well
 - B. So is God's presence good? Let me give you what the Bible says takes place in God's presence and you can decide
 - 1. In His presence there is success and enablement
 - 2. In His presence there is God's favor, God's blessing, stability and joy
 - 3. In His presence there is God's help, satisfaction, insight and guidance, strength and beauty
 - 4. In His presence there is refreshment
 - 5. So, is God's presence good, according to the Bible?
 - 6. Do you believe that?
- III. So here is where we get very practical about a big theological concept - what are some of the results of being aware of God's presence
 - A. In other words, we know God is everywhere, we even know He lives in us, but what are the benefits to having an active awareness of His presence?
 - B. This first one is awesome: You are never alone
 - 1. There was a tribe of native Americans that had a unique practice for training young boys into manhood. On the night of their 13th birthday, the boy would be placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then the boy had never spent any time away from the security of his family and the tribe. When he took off the blindfold he was in the middle of thick woods. By himself. All night long.
 - 2. As you can imagine, every twig that snapped in his mind was a wild animal ready to pounce. Every animal that howled had it's sights set on him. Every time the wind blew it hid the sound of something more sinister in the darkness. It was undoubtedly a terrifying night for many boys.
 - a) Can you relate to the boy in the woods?
 - b) Have you ever been scared, alone, perhaps abandoned?
 - (1) Most of us know what that is like, feeling afraid because we feel like we have no one to be with us
 - (2) We feel like the world has abandoned us, or no one would understand
 - (3) But the reality is very different
 - (a) If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are never alone

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- (b) Many of us know the verse - Hebrews 13:5 "I will never leave you or forsake you"
 - (c) It means that you are never alone
 - (d) And developing an awareness of God's presence helps us to know, in those moments when we feel abandoned, we are not alone
 - i) God has not left us
 - ii) Nor will He leave us
3. Oh, back to our young boy in the woods. After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunshine hit the floor of the woods. Looking around the boy saw flowers, trees, the outline of a path. Then, to his astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was the boy's father. He had been there all night.
- a) It is no different with us
 - b) In those moments we feel so alone, when life is dark and we worry about every little thing, our heavenly Father is there in the dark with us - "the darkest darkness is like light" to Him
- C. A second result from developing an awareness of God's presence is being confident when you are with others
- 1. Usually as we go through life, we have a greater awareness of the people around us than we do of God
 - a) That is natural and normal as we can see people here on earth - God we "see" with our faith
 - b) The problem comes in when we allow our awareness of people to affect how we live more than our awareness of God
 - 2. On July 21, 1861 raw Yankee recruits marched toward the Confederate Army camp at Bull Run, 30 miles SW of Washington. The Union soldiers were overconfident and acted like they were going to a sporting event
 - a) Congressmen, ladies and all sorts of spectators trailed along with lunches to observe the fun. But the courage of the Confederates, standing like a stone wall (this is where Thomas Jackson got his nickname, Stonewall) and the arrival of reinforcements threw the Union troops into panic, even though the Union had superior forces.
 - b) One observer wrote, "We called to them, tried to tell them there was no danger, called them to stop, implored them to stand. We called them cowards, denounced them in the most offensive of terms...but all in vain - a cruel, crazy, mad, hopeless panic possessed them."

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- c) Sadly, we are too often like the Union troops. Even though we have the Lord of the universe living in us, His presence with us at all times, we see the difficulties of life, the people in our path, and we become afraid.
- 3. When we develop an active awareness of God's presence in our lives, we live our lives for Him, and are no longer afraid of men
 - a) We can stand and have the courage to witness to our co-worker
 - b) We can stand up for godly values that are so quickly losing ground in this country
 - c) We can stand and perhaps look the fool, knowing that God + one = the majority
 - d) All when we actively seek to develop our sense of God's presence
- D. A third result from developing our awareness of God is a cleansing effect on our lives
 - 1. We have all heard the definition of integrity - it is who you are when no one is looking
 - a) When you are handling a bunch of cash, and no one would ever know if you slipped a little in your pocket, yet you choose to do the right thing
 - b) A current negative example from the news: Brock Turner, a 20 year old young man that sexually assaulted an unconscious girl behind a dumpster
 - (1) Evidently he figured no one was looking, no one would find out
 - (2) So why not
 - 2. This is one of the effects God's presence has on us - we know that we are never alone - with God's presence and our conscience we will not "get away" with anything
 - a) Look for a minute two verses: Jeremiah 23:24 (p. 780)
 - (1) Here is God asking Jeremiah if man can hide from Him
 - (2) The assumed answer is "no"
 - b) Now look at Psalm 90:8 (p. 592)
 - (1) Our sins are set in front of God
 - (2) Our secret sins are in the light of His presence
 - 3. Think about the phrase "God as my witness"
 - a) What you are saying is that God saw you for whatever action you are referring to
 - b) When we develop a better awareness of God's presence, that works in our favor to help cleanse us from sin
 - (1) It should not be viewed as a negative thing

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- (2) It should be a very positive thing - God's very presence is helping us to avoid the sin we should steer clear from anyway
- E. The final result of developing a greater awareness of His presence is contentment
 - 1. This really is a state of rest in God
 - 2. In His presence we are realizing all the blessings He has promised us in His Word
- IV. So what remains is how do we develop a greater awareness, or an active awareness of God's presence
 - A. Like many things in life, start with prayer
 - 1. Ask God to show you ways in which have any rebellion against Him
 - a) Go to James 4:7-8 (1218)
 - b) First we are told to submit ourselves to God
 - (1) Before we can really draw near to God, we have to place ourselves under His authority
 - (2) Rebelling and refusing to be under God's authority will not lead to us having a better awareness of God's presence
 - c) James then tells us to resist the devil
 - (1) Did you realize that nowhere in Scripture are we told to resist temptation
 - (2) Twice we are told to resist the devil
 - (3) If you are merely trying to resist temptation, you are resisting the wrong thing - resist Satan
 - d) Then James gives us what is a bit of a formula
 - (1) Come near to God
 - (2) When we come near to God we must wash our hands and purify our hearts
 - (3) Then James uses the term "double-minded"
 - (a) Being double minded is trying to live for God and trying to live for something else
 - (b) So ask God to search your heart and see if maybe one of these applies
 - i) Your something else is a desire to be popular
 - ii) Or a desire to be your own boss
 - iii) Or a desire to get revenge
 - iv) Or a desire to be rich
 - v) Or a desire to be lustful
 - 2. After asking God to expose any double-minded ways in you, repent of those thoughts and actions

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- a) When God convicts in any area of life, we need to respond to His gracious invitation
 - (1) Conviction is really an invitation to deeper intimacy with God
 - (2) He is pointing out a sinful way in you that is keeping you from better fellowship with Him
 - (3) Because He is a good and gracious God, He is giving us the opportunity to see that, and change our course
 - b) What God is doing is conforming you to the image of His Son, so trust Him in this that He is better than whatever the sin is you have been holding on to
3. Third, continually deal with any disagreements with God
- a) Psalm 73:28 says, "As for me, it is good to be near God"
 - b) David made that personal - "It is good for me to be near God"
 - (1) That means it is good for us to be near God
 - (2) Think of it this way
 - (a) You have two children that you love with all of your heart
 - (b) After they grow up, one takes the path of the prodigal son - wayward, distant from the family, etc.
 - (c) The other maintains a relationship with you, you have grown together, you live close enough to visit, but not so close that either of you is a bother to the other
 - (d) You love them both equally - which one experiences more of your love? The one that is closer to you
 - (e) That is us with God in a nutshell
 - i) When we choose our own path, God does not stop loving us
 - ii) But we don't experience His love the same as another child of God that works to maintain relationship with Him
4. Fourth, learn to quiet your heart and delight in God through prayer
- a) One of the simplest ways to begin to delight in God is to enjoy God in prayer throughout your day
 - (1) Rather than confining prayer to meal times, or bedtimes, learn to pray throughout your day
 - (2) And these prayers do not have to be any more than a sentence
 - (a) As you drive to work - "Lord thank you for giving me a job so I can support myself and my family."
 - (b) As you drive to the big game you are playing in, "God thanks that you have given me health so that I can play and enjoy some fun."
 - (c) When you come across someone in your day that complains about how their children are treating them, "God thanks for the

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loving family I have,” or “Lord, their difficulties remind me of some of the same problems in my family. Please help sort these problems out.”

- b) The point is, the more we use the events of our life to springboard us to prayer (even simple sentence prayers), the more we grow our awareness of God in our lives
5. Get as much Scripture in you as you can
- a) Most people think they cannot memorize Scripture and that is simply not true
 - b) So here is what I recommend
 - (1) Get an app on your phone - assuming you are a tech person
 - (a) Two such apps are “Verses - Bible Memory” and “Scripture Typer” even “Fighter Verses”
 - (b) Then start with a simple goal - 1 verse per month
 - (c) Then start with those verses that you kind of know, but want to really know
 - i) John 3:16
 - ii) Romans 12:1-2
 - iii) Philippians 4:6-7
 - (2) Some of these apps they have now make memorizing fun - they turn it into games
 - (3) As you grow in this, you will start to see how those verses begin to fit into real life more and more
 - (a) 1 Cor. 10:31 “Whatever you do...do it all to the glory of God”
 - (b) Great verse for doing the mundane things of life
6. Finally, be a blessing counter
- a) It goes along with prayer, but count every blessing God graces you with
 - b) We have told you that the only thing we deserve from God is judgment
 - c) So every single thing we receive from Him is an act of His grace
 - d) So let's start counting those blessings, and praising God for all the wonderful things He has given us

CONCLUSION: As we begin to grow in these things, we will start to have a better awareness of God's presence. It will effect our understanding that we are never alone, that we can be confident with other people because He is with us, and it will have a purifying effect on our lives.