

His Presence
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Exodus 39 & 40

At the end of the book of Exodus God commanded Moses and the people of Israel to construct the Tabernacle. It was not just a place of worship and repentance; it was a physical dwelling place for God's presence among them. The Israelites had no problem with the awareness of God's presence because His glory visibly descended on that tent in the form of a cloud and a pillar of fire.

- Is the presence of God a concept you accept, or a reality you experience?
- How often do you think about the fact that God is always present with you?
- How often do you make an effort to grow your sensitivity to His presence?

Big Idea: God dwells among His people and through obedience we can develop our awareness of His presence. Living our lives in the awareness of His manifest presence will totally revolutionize our Christian walk!

In Exodus 35 through 39 Moses instructed the people to bring offerings of materials to build the Tabernacle. God gave Moses very detailed directions on each component down to the appearance, the materials, and the finishes and fabrics of this elaborate, mobile dwelling place for God's presence.

Exodus 39:42–43 (ESV)

⁴² According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all the work. ⁴³ And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them.

- Let's pause right there for a question. The people had done all the work "as the Lord had commanded...and Moses blessed them."
- **How does obeying the commandments of God give us pleasure and satisfaction?**

Exodus 40:1–4 (ESV)

The Tabernacle Erected

40 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³ And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. ⁴ And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps.

- Step by step and item by item Moses assembled the Tabernacle.

- Only he could do the final assembly because God has given the instructions only to him.
- **What were the dangers if Moses failed to assemble the tabernacle according to God's directions?**
- **What are the dangers today of failing to follow God's directions?**

Exodus 40:34–38 (ESV)

The Glory of the Lord

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

- The glory of God took up residence among the children of Israel in the form of a cloud. They didn't make a move unless the cloud moved. When God moved, they moved. When God stayed put, they stayed put.
- **Fast-forward to today, how do followers of Christ sense God's presence and direction today?**
- In John 14, Jesus taught how He would "manifest" His presence to us:

John 14:15–23 (ESV)

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

- I was excited when I saw the subject of this week's lesson because of a book I've been re-reading lately, A.W. Tozer's *"The Pursuit of God."*
- A.W. Tozer was a pastor and author in the Missionary Alliance denomination and though he's been in Heaven for over fifty years, his books are Christian classics.
- In the beginning of "The Pursuit of God," Tozer writes:

*"We have almost forgotten that God is a Person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. It is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter."*ⁱ

He goes on to write, *"I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God...The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain."*ⁱⁱ

- In a chapter of this book titled: "The Universal Presence," A.W. Tozer specifically addresses the difference between God's **omnipresence** (the fact that God exists everywhere at all times) and His **"manifest presence"** which is *"...when...we are aware of His Presence."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Tozer again, *"God is here. Wherever we are, God is here. There is no place, there can be no place, where He is not."*

The spiritual is real. If we would rise into that region of light and power plainly beckoning us through the Scriptures of truth we must break the evil habit of ignoring the spiritual. We must shift our interest from the seen to the unseen. For the great unseen Reality is God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This is basic in the life of faith.

The Presence and the manifestation of the Presence are not the same. There can be the one without the other. God is here when we are wholly unaware of it. He is manifest only when and as we are aware of His Presence. On our part there must be surrender to the Spirit of God, for His work it is to show us the Father and the Son. If we co-operate with Him in loving obedience God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face."^{iv}

- Notice a few things in those quotes:
 - If we want to experience more of God's presence we have to ACT on the desire He places in our hearts for His presence.
 - If we want to experience God's presence we can't "ignore the spiritual." We have to shift from "the seen to the unseen."
 - Acting in "loving obedience" to God will cause Him to manifest (make real) His presence to us.
- **What keeps us from being aware of the reality of God's presence?**
- **Why are there days where you really don't feel that "saved," then there are other times when the presence of God through His Holy Spirit is so real you can sense it all around you? Thoughts?**
- Illustration: How often do I ask Susan: "When did you...?"
- Let's look at some scripture about LIVING in God's manifest presence.

1. Remember who lives within us (how sad when we forget His Spirit!)
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:16 ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (Before we can experience that, first we have to experience John 3:16)
 - b. John 14:16 (ESV) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, (emphasis mine)
2. God's manifest presence comes from obedience. (We can only know what to obey by reading and following His word.)
 - a. John 14:21-23 ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.
3. It takes faith in things we cannot see with the human eye! (We say we believe God is there...do we live like it?)
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV) for we walk by faith, not by sight.
 - b. Hebrews 11:6 (ESV) says, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."
4. We need to communicate with God constantly. (Would you ignore another person sitting in the room with you?)
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (ESV) ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
5. Look for God's "fingerprints" on our lives. (Do we stop and pay attention to how He's working?)
 - a. Psalm 138:8 (ESV) ⁸ The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.
 - b. Ever look back on a series of events and realize they have the "fingerprints" of God all over them?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- As we study the great characters of the Bible or look at godly men and women of today, do you ever wonder how they seemed to live on a higher plain in God's manifest presence? Tozer writes:

"...they had spiritual awareness and...they went on to cultivate it until it became the biggest thing in their lives. They differed from the average person in that when they felt the inward longing they did something about it. They acquired the lifelong habit of spiritual response. They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. As David put it neatly, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

“[T]he Presence of God is the central fact of Christianity. At the heart of the Christian message is God Himself waiting for His redeemed children to push in to conscious awareness of His Presence.”ⁱ

- There is another great, short classic book called, “The Practice of the Presence of God,” written by a monk named Brother Lawrence. Listen to his practical thoughts on enjoying God’s manifest presence:

“He does not require a lot from us – just a little remembrance of Him once in a while, a little worship, and sometimes to pray for His grace. Offer your troubles to Him and give thanks to Him for the blessings He has given you and continues to give you. In the midst of your troubles, comfort yourself with Him as often as you can. Lift up your heart to Him, even during meals and when you are in the company of others. The littlest remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You do not need to cry out loud. He is nearer to us than we know.”^{vii}

- God puts the desire for Him and His presence in our hearts. We need to be INTENTIONAL in “seeking His face.”
- This week, let’s focus on PRACTICING our awareness of His presence.

ⁱ Tozer, A.W.. The Pursuit of God (Kindle Locations 85-88). Acer. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ **ibid**

ⁱⁱⁱ **ibid**

^{iv} **ibid**

^v **ibid**

^{vi} **ibid**

^{vii} **ibid**

^{vii} Brother Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God In Modern English* (p. 47). Kindle Edition.