

Practicing the Presence of God

His presence is always with us. We know that and read about it and hear about it. We can know about God, believe in him, believe he is with you.

There's a difference between having **head** knowledge and **heart** experience.

Do you feel him with you?

Are you alert and aware of him with you?

Do you **feel** his love, have you **experienced** him helping and guiding you, have you experienced an injection of strength from him when you've called out?

I'm going to talk about how we go from head to heart experience as a life style, **not just a once** of experience.

Gareth linked spiritual warfare for us this morning with being close to God. In James 4 it says that if we resist the devil he must flee. The way we resist the devil is by drawing close to Jesus.

(Picture of person walking with a lion beside them)

Who is God?

If we're going to talk about practicing being in His presence, I thought let's talk for a minute about who he is. I want to stir a hunger and desire in your heart to be with him.

You might be in the phase with God of thinking I like what I see and hear, but I don't know that feeling of having a deep passion and love that wells up in me when I think and talk about him.

I want to tell you a bit about him...He is the nicest person you will ever know. Think of the kindest, nicest person you know and how nice they are to be around...well he is that times millions!

My favourite attribute of God is his **kindness**. Kindness is that thing that gets to my heart and really affects me and my emotions. He is the kindest person you'll ever meet!

He is **gentle**-he is not harsh with us and exasperated by us, his heart and arms are open towards us.

He is **approachable** and welcoming, not aloof.

He **never changes**-what we read of him in the Bible is who he was and always will be. His emotions don't fluctuate like ours do.

He is **big and strong**- we are safe and protected by him because he controls everything and has power over all things. The devil has no power in comparison.

He is **love**. He died and suffered for you so that you would know freedom from sin and guilt and a future of eternal life with him.

*If the actions of Jesus are reflective of who he most deeply is, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it is the very fallenness which he came to undo that is most irresistibly attractive to him. His deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it. **Gentle and Lowly***

He is **forgiving and merciful**- when we come to him for forgiveness and help we are laying hold of his deepest longing and joy, the thing he gave his very life for.

This is like a drop in the ocean of his amazingness.. We could just talk about this all day and we would not have enough time...

GROUP WORK

1. Talk about your experience of God. Do you feel excited about knowing him or are you indifferent, but want to change?
2. Think of more attributes of God.

What does this mean?

The word practicing could be used in 2 ways.

Practice is a verb. It's something that takes time, it's intentional. It comes from a desire to get better at something.

I love art and want to get better, I have to practice. The more you do something, the better you get and more passionate you become.

Practice is also a noun. JM Comer talks about having a set of practices that we follow to set up abiding in Jesus as the central pursuit in our lives.

SO practicing the presence of God takes practice, we need to train ourselves to be aware of him and it's also making some decisions to do things in your life a certain way so that abiding in Jesus is the most important thing in your life.

Becoming more aware

In practicing becoming more aware of Jesus, we need to think about the things that **draw our attention** away from thoughts of him.

There are many things that **distract** us from being consciously aware of God's presence.

Busyness stops us from being aware of him. The devil is at work to steal our attention. He wants us so distracted with the things of this world, that we forget about this awesome and **amazing God who is walking right beside us!** We become what we give our attention to.

*Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. **1 Peter 5:8***

*Put on all of God's armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. **Ephesians 6:11***

Don't be naïve! He is real and is actively working against you so that you don't enjoy the wonders of a close relationship with Jesus. He knows the power that is in that.

I am a Grade 1 teacher and often don't think of anything other than the chaos around me all day! But I know he is with me in that chaos. There have been many times when I've felt overwhelmed by all that I have to do or feel like I just don't have it in me to stand in front of a class and give it my all. I've gone to my store room and asked God to help me...and he really has.

I've tried to do things that make me more aware of him through the day... (eg, hour chime, verse on a sticky note in my planner, just talking about him through the day as various things crop up.)

*Practicing the presence of God is mastering the art of always being in 2 places at once. Whatever you are doing + being in the presence of God. **John Mark Comer***

What am I going to think about.....

*Let us think of God the most we can. Let us accustom ourselves to this small but holy exercise. No one will notice it and nothing is easier than to repeat often in the day these little **internal adorations**. It is very fit and most necessary for a soldier, who is daily exposed to the dangers of life.
Brother*

Setting up practices or habits

Lets look at some of the practices we can set up in our lives so that abiding in Jesus is central.

*That we should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of God; which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him. **Brother Lawrence***

How do we feed our souls with high notions of him?

- Read your bible!

My testimony

Internal adorations

Grow in love and easy to talk about him

- Be in community, don't isolate yourself. The devil is prowling like a lion. A lion will wait for an animal to be vulnerable and separate from the pack and then he will pounce and devour his prey.

The wonderful thing is that he draw close to us when we draw close to him. He isn't pushy, he wants us to want him.

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come close to God and he will come close to you.

James 4:7-8

Group work

- What can you practically do to become more aware of Jesus' presence in your everyday life?
- What are some of the things that distract you? Where do you need to stand up to him?
- What other things can set up as habits or practices to make abiding in Jesus central?

How does it change us?

- We become more like him Acts 4

Peter and John were brought before the council and questioned for preaching about Jesus. It says they were amazed at their boldness because they were ordinary men, they weren't trained in the Scriptures and clever.

They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. v13

- We will be more fruitful, fruits of the spirit will just grow, don't have to try
Love, joy and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Jesus has bucket loads, we have some on a good day!

- Our perspective on life and the day to day becomes more like his
- We will be more affective Christians affecting those around us, drawing people to Jesus.

*When we abide in Jesus we have an imprint of something divine about our lives. Others are drawn to Jesus in us because we are contented, we have courage in trials and we are people of peace. **Joni Earickson Tada***

- Closeness to Jesus will repel the devil and darkness because Jesus is the light of the world.

Group work

We're going to read John 15. Meditate on it, highlight the things that stand out for you about being in Jesus presence. Then groups and pray for each other.