

## Living in God's Presence

In **Leviticus 26:11-12** the Lord says, *"I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be My people."*

What is the greatest promise in the entire Bible? The greatest promise in all the Bible is the one that we take the most for granted. It is the promise of God's presence. Many read the Bible but not to hear God's voice. Many pray but not to bask in God's glory. Many come to Church but not experience the supernatural.

What is at the centre of being a Christian? It is utterly and completely abandoning ourselves to God's overwhelming and satisfying presence. We are all too often abandoning ourselves to things that end (are temporal), instead of things that endure (things that are eternal). Here, in this passage, is a wonderful promise from God... *"I will live and walk among you, and I will be your God."* The truth of this statement is seen again and again in the Bible. Jesus Himself said, *"I will never leave you or forsake you"* (**Hebrews 13:5**). The Lord God Almighty decided to come and live among His people. That means His divine presence is intended to be with us always! But how aware are we that God wants to live and walk among us - and be our God? Our opening scripture implies that we cannot be His people until we walk in this truth. *Living in God's presence* is what it all about. It is probably the most important acknowledgement we can take to heart.

The presence of the Lord could arguably be considered the most dynamic part of our lives. While in a sense, it is always with us and we cannot live without it, we find ourselves hungering for God's presence more and more. God is omnipresent, meaning that He is everywhere, at all times. David said in **Psalms 139:7**, *"Where could I go from Your Spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence?"* He concludes that there is no place that we can hide from God's presence - He is everywhere and sees everything. Because of this we can know that we are never alone and that He shall never leave us nor forsake us. As well as being omnipresent, God also dwells in us. The indwelling presence of God is given to all who believe. *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit has His permanent dwelling in you?"* (**1 Corinthians 3:16**)

However, His omni-presence, and the indwelling of His Spirit, does not stop us from longing after the Presence of God. How can we long and hunger for something that is already all around us and dwells within us? When we talk about experiencing the presence of the Lord, we are really talking about the realisation of abiding in God's presence - of being able to perceive His presence and becoming conscious of Him. It is as much a case of increasing our awareness of His presence as it is an increase of His presence itself.

Although God is always with us, it is obvious that there are times when His presence is with us in greater measure, and we experience God's intimate presence in a greater capacity. The manifest presence of God is what brings power. God's manifest presence is what changes lives and reveals the glory of God. God reveals Himself to those that earnestly seek Him (**Deuteronomy 4:29**). If we want to walk in the presence of the Lord, then we need to be practicing the **presence of God**. One of the major ways we can do this is through worship. By placing ourselves before Him in a place of adoration, we make room for Him, and through focusing our attention on Him, increase our awareness of being in the Presence of God in our lives. Learning how to soak in God's presence through worship is one of the most valuable things we can do.

God has promised that as we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us and we will experience Him with us in ever increasing measures. This how to abide in the presence of God, by abiding in worship.

Another way to abide in the presence of God is to practice abiding in His Word. Jesus said, *"If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, you will ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you."* This is because abiding in Him means we will ask according to the Father's will. Jesus is always present with His Word. Abiding in the word of God will always bring an increase in the sense of His manifest presence. After we have accepted and embraced this truth there are certain things we need to do in order to 'continue' in the presence of God. Living in God's presence begins when we abandon ourselves to God, and as we've just noted, that means taking Him at His word.

Why don't you trust, why can't you take God at His word? Because the kind of confidence that allows us to place our lives in God's hands comes from intimacy with Him. Did you know you can be in someone's presence but not be intimate with them? Husbands and wives get divorces at an alarming rate today because there is no intimacy. Do you know why? Intimacy is not merely physical. It must be whole abandonment of the self to another. The percentages show that we have a tendency not to take God at His word because a lack of abandonment. The question you have to ask yourself is this, *"Do you know God enough to completely abandon yourself to Him?" "Do you have complete confidence in God's word to you?"* You ask how can I know? Complete confidence in God will cause your life to be framed with submission and obedience. Consequently, no good thing will God withhold! So what is holding you back in your relationship with Jesus? Do you really trust the Lord with all your heart? What does that mean? It means that there is no plan B. I often abandon myself in complete confidence and obedience to God, Therefore, wherever He guides me and whatever He tells me in His word to do, I am ready to respond with, *"Lord, you lead and I will follow. You speak and I will obey!"*

Remember, if you take God at His word you have the opportunity to take advantage of God's promises. And what is the greatest promise in scripture? God's presence in your life. So how do you appropriate or take hold of the promises, gifts, guiding, and empowering of God? Prayer! Prayer has been called "practicing the presence of God." I like that very much! Prayer is investing in your relationship with God. Why don't we pray? Because we don't really take God at His word!

***"Lean not on your own understanding."*** The Hebrew word used here means don't support yourself with your own understanding. The things that God is calling you to do cannot be done with your own understanding. Yes, you cannot trust your insights or imaginations. You can't trust what you have come up with unless you have the mind of Christ. Acknowledge Him in all your ways. But to acknowledge Him means to acknowledge His presence! Thereafter, to consult Him, seek His direction, and recognise His authority.

God is sending you down a specific path. He has promised to walk with you all the way, and be your God. So trust Him, and confidently accept His word for you. Take seriously His direction. God is leading the way, He is opening doors for you that no one can shut. Can you sense His divine presence? Listen again to His awesome promise....

*"I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be My people."*