

The Restful Life

Created for Presence

We need God's presence more than His power (Exodus 33:1-16). We are made for presence, with one another and with God. Moses was keenly aware of this truth as he was about to lead Israel into the Promised Land. He tells God, "*If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.*" Moses understood that a life of rest, which our hearts long for, is found ultimately in God's presence. Experiencing His presence is having an inner awareness of His nearness, confidently knowing that He is close. We encounter God's presence when we make it a priority to pursue Him and that which pleases Him, which often begins with praise and adoration.

GET THINGS STARTED

When with a friend, family member, coworker, or neighbor, how do you know if they're truly present with you in the moment? What gives you a sense that they're fully engaged with you (or not) in the conversation or situation? Why does physical proximity *not* equal presence?

WATCH THE GROUP VIDEO FOR WEEK 4

GO DEEPER

1. In Genesis 3:8, why did Adam and Eve hide themselves from the presence of God? What were they afraid of? How does our own sin affect or hinder our ability to experience God's presence?
2. According to Psalm 16:11, there is fullness of joy in God's presence, and pleasures at His right hand. What does that mean, and how do joy and pleasure come from being near God in His presence?
3. Psalm 100:1-2 encourages us to *come into His presence with singing*. What is it about praise, adoration, or worship that helps us encounter the presence of God?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

1. How do you understand and respond to the idea of God's *manifest* presence? If you grew up in a church environment, what were you taught about experiencing God?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your own pursuit of God's presence? Have you had that lingering experience of being deeply aware of His nearness, and if so, how would you describe it? Do you believe that nearness is available to you all the time?
3. What is your biggest obstacle to engaging God's presence? What steps do you need to take to remove that obstacle?

PRACTICE IT NOW

Together as a group, take a few minutes to create an environment that welcomes the manifest presence of God into your gathering. Start by just being quiet (and breathing) together for 1-2 minutes, bringing a distinct focus on Him. Then verbally declare your praise and adoration to God in short phrases or sentences. Linger there for a few minutes, possibly with some worship music in the background, and invite God to reveal Himself and to speak. Share with each other what you think He's speaking or revealing.

READING THIS WEEK: Chapters 6 & 7