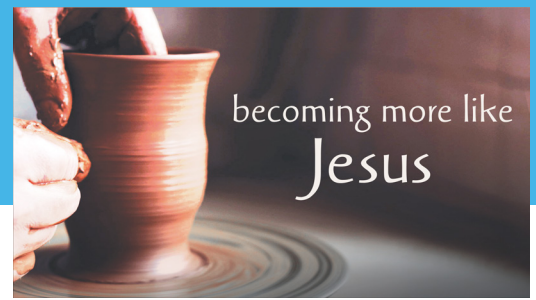


Discussion Questions

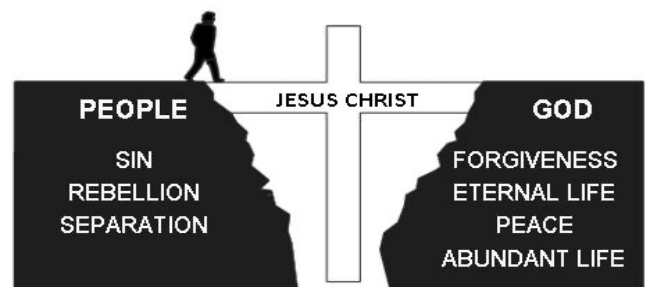
October 26, 2025



Becoming More Like Jesus: Practicing the Presence of God

This week, we explored what happens after our dedicated “one thing” time with Jesus is over. We often fall into a “sacred/secular divide,” viewing our “God time” (church, quiet times) as separate from our “real life” (work, chores, family). The sermon challenged this, showing that God’s ultimate desire, from Genesis to Revelation, has always been withness—to dwell with His people. The goal of our dedicated time with Jesus is to fuel our ability to live a “with-God life” all the time. This is “practicing the presence of God.” It’s not about striving to conjure a distant God, but about attentiveness—awakening our awareness that He is already with us (Emmanuel). Using examples like Brother Lawrence, we learned that we can train this awareness through practical habits, turning even mundane tasks like peeling potatoes or driving to work into acts of love and partnership with Him.

1. In what parts of your life do you feel most aware of God’s presence? In what parts do you feel least aware?
2. Read Revelation 21:3 and Leviticus 26:11-12
 - These verses, from near the end and beginning of the Bible, describe God’s core desire. How would you summarize that desire in your own words?
3. Read Psalm 16:8-9
 - David wrote, “I keep the LORD always before me.” What was the result for David of keeping the Lord before him? (v. 9). How have you experienced (or how do you long to experience) that same gladness and security?
 - If what David is saying is true, how do we account for the ongoing sin in David’s life and some of his horrific actions?
4. Discuss the “Gospel Bridge” Illustration.
 - James critiqued the “Gospel Bridge” illustration, suggesting it can accidentally make Jesus a means (a transaction) to an end (eternal life) rather than the treasure Himself. Have you ever viewed the gospel primarily as a “transaction” to get your sins forgiven?
 - How does reframing the gospel as God’s plan for eternal withness (fellowship) change your perspective on your daily relationship with Him?
5. James shared his “submarine” analogy: surfacing to get “filled up” with God, then diving back into the world to “hold his breath” until the next time. Does this analogy resonate with you in any way? In what ways have you lived like a “submarine”?



6. A key idea was that practicing God's presence is not about "conjuring" a distant God but "awakening" our awareness to the God who is already here. It's about attentiveness, not striving. Why is this distinction so important?

- How does this free you from a feeling of "spiritual failure" when you get distracted?

7. Read the following quote from Dallas Willard and discuss how we can create these new habits of continually pointing our minds & hearts to Jesus.

"Our part in thus practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our practicing, we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north, no matter how the compass is moved. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the polestar of our inward beings."

8. The story of Brother Lawrence peeling potatoes was a central example. He said, "Our sanctification does not depend upon changing what we do, but in doing for God's sake what we normally do for our own sake."

- What's one "mundane" task in your life (e.g., changing diapers, coding, driving, washing dishes) that you could begin to reframe as an act of love for God and with God and what would that look like?

9. The sermon gave three practical "training wheels" to build this new habit:

- Set Reminders: Using an app (like "Pause") or a simple phone alarm/vibration.
- Habit Stacking: Linking God-awareness to a regular habit (e.g., "Jesus, you're here" every time you wash your hands, walk through a door, or sit down for a meal).
- Arrow Prayers: Turning worries, fears, or moments of gratitude into short, conversational prayers ("Jesus, give me your peace," "Thank you for this moment").

Which of these three ideas seems most practical and helpful for you to try this week?

10. James ended with the "GPS" analogy: When you miss a turn (get distracted), the Holy Spirit doesn't yell, "You idiot!" but gently says, "Rerouting."

- Why is this "gentle, persistent returning" to awareness so much more effective than feeling guilty?

- How has God done this for you?

- In what ways can the idea of continual companionship with Jesus change how you approach work, chores, or relationships?

- What are the biggest obstacles you face in remembering God's presence throughout your day?

- What might it look like for you to "reroute" your mind back to God multiple times a day?

Psalm 16:8–9 (NRSV)

I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.

Galatians 4:19 (NIV)

I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,

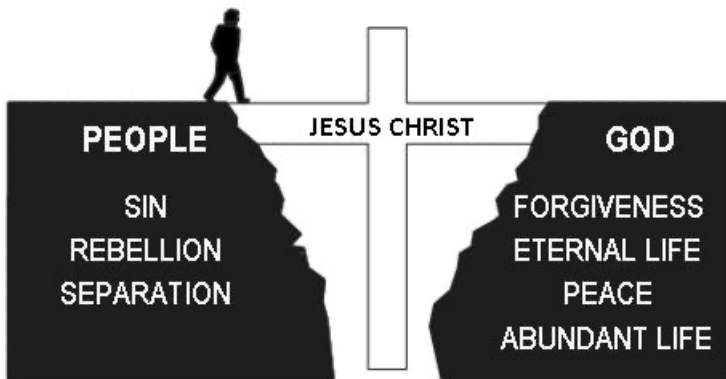
2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.

Romans 8:29 (NIV)

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son

The "with God life" is a life of active, continual, conversational companionship with God, learning to experience His presence and power in the midst of our ordinary, daily existence as apprentices in His Kingdom.

**Leviticus 26:11–12 (NLT)**

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.

John 1:14 (NIV)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Matthew 28:19–20 (NLT)

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NLT)

Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

The Gospel story does not start with our sin; it starts with our sonship. It begins with a God who created us out of Love for Fellowship, delight and "withness." Sin is the tragic chapter that interrupts that story, not the one that defines it.

Revelation 21:3 (NLT)

Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

Psalms 16:8–9 (NRSV)

*I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.*

Practicing the presence of God is not about "conjuring" a distant God, but about awakening our own awareness to the God who is already here. This is not about striving, it is about attentiveness.

The challenge isn't getting God to show up; it's training ourselves to notice He's already here

Acts 17:28 (NIV)

For in him we live and move and have our being.

Colossians 2:9–10 (NIV)

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.

Ephesians 2:6

Seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

1 Corinthians 6:19

A temple of God's Holy Spirit

The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds. David knew this secret and wrote, "I keep the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure" (Psalm 16:8–9). This is the fundamental secret of caring for our souls.

Dallas Willard - The Great Omission

Our part in thus practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our practicing, we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north, no matter how the compass is moved. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the polestar of our inward beings.

Donald Hebb

Neurons that fire together, wire together.

Brother Lawrence devoted himself to two habits.

Cultivate a habit of continual God-Awareness
To do "little things" for the love of God.

Brother Lawrence - The Practice of the Presence of God In Modern English

Our sanctification does not depend upon changing what we do, but in doing for God's sake what we normally do for our own sake. It is sad to see how many people mistake the means for the end,

addicting themselves to religious works, which they perform very imperfectly because of their human or selfish motives. The most excellent method he had found of going to God was to do our normal activities without any view of pleasing men, and (as far as we are able) purely for the love of God.

His prayer was nothing other than a sense of the presence of God. His soul was at such times unconscious of everything but Divine love. When the appointed times of prayer were over, he found it to be no different. He still continued with God, praising and blessing Him with all his strength. In this way he lived his life in continual joy.

There is no sweeter and delightful life than that of continual communion with God. Only those who experience this and practice it can comprehend it... If I were I a preacher, I would preach the practice of the presence of God above all things... Believe me in this matter... Spend the rest of your life in His sacred presence, even if loving him means to be deprived of all other comforts. Begin this task with your whole heart. If you do it as you ought, you can be assured that you will soon see results.

Cultivate the habit of practicing the presence of God

1. A regular reminder throughout the day
 - "Pause App"
 - Vibrating alarms
2. Habit Stacking/Association
 - Link awareness to a regular habit like Washing Hands
3. Arrow/Short Prayer

The goal of this discipline is not legalism or a new spiritual burden. The ultimate goal is friendship with Jesus.

It is about moving from a life of religious monologue about God to a continuous, life-giving dialogue with God. Or what Brother Lawrence described as a "continual exercise of love"