

Portview Christian Center

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's presence and understanding our relationship with Him above all else.

Duration: 57:16

Scripture: Exodus 33:15, Psalm 42:1

Topics: "Christian Life", "Intimacy With God", "The Presence of God"

Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of the presence of God in the life of believers, illustrating that true satisfaction and identity come from knowing God rather than merely possessing material blessings. He draws parallels between the longing for God's presence and the relationship dynamics found in the Song of Solomon, highlighting that a genuine relationship with God is essential for spiritual fulfillment. Ravenhill warns against the dangers of focusing on the 'parts' of faith, such as prosperity or doctrine, instead of the whole, which is a relationship with Jesus Christ. He encourages believers to prioritize intimacy with God over worldly desires, reminding them that true distinction comes from His presence. Ultimately, he calls for a renewed hunger for God, urging the congregation to open their hearts and seek a deeper connection with Him.

Transcript

Joy to be with you. As I tell people around the country, it's always good to meet the rest of the family. And whether you like it or not, I'm your brother.

And there's nothing I can do about the fact that you're brothers and sisters of mine. We're all redeemed by the same blood, all part of the same family, all belonging to the same kingdom, all going to the same destiny. And so thank God for his grace.

Let's just look to the Lord in prayer, shall we? Father, we need you this morning. Lord, our confession is, Lord, as we come in agreement with your word, that apart from you, we can do absolutely nothing. And so, Lord, we invite you to come and do what only you can do, Lord, change lives, challenge lives.

Father, you know each and every life that is represented here. You know every circumstance. You're the great shepherd, Lord.

Our very names are inscribed on the palms of your hand. Lord, you know all about us. Those secret things that, Lord, nobody else knows, you know.

And so, Lord, touch lives today, Lord, for your glory. Have your way, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to speak to you this morning on the presence of God. My wife and I raised our three daughters in the City of Christ Church in New Zealand. Any Kiwis here? I guess not.

I haven't made it this far north yet, but Christ Church is the largest city in the South Island of that very beautiful country. And the city is built around an old Episcopal or Anglican cathedral, beautiful old stone building, and the city sort of radiates out like the spokes on a wheel from that central hub. And just a short walk away from that cathedral, there is an old museum called the Canterbury Museum.

Again, an old stone building dating back to the 1800s. And as you walk through the entranceway there in the stonework, there is a verse of scripture, Job chapter 26, verse 14, "'Lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him?' "'Lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him?' I have spent hours in that museum, going down the various corridors, looking in all the display cabinets, taking the kids there on rainy days, and just spending an hour or two looking at all of God's handiwork. I've seen children grab the hand of a parent and point to some reptile, a bird, or whatever it is that they've never seen before, and say, "'Daddy, what's that? Or where does this live? Or where does that come from?' and so on.

And in all the hours I've spent in that museum, I don't ever remember anybody attributing all of that handiwork to God himself. And so that verse is a fitting verse. I've often wanted to do some research, find out who was responsible for putting it there.

It comes from the book of Job, not the most popular book in the world, and hidden away there right in the middle of the book. "'Lo, these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion do we hear of him?' And while that may be a good verse for a museum, it's a tragic verse to put over the house of God. And yet I think we could put it over many congregations.

These are simply a part of his ways, but we don't hear very much about him. I was given a book many years ago by my father, by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, one of my favorite authors, and the book was on the Sermon on the Mount. And in the preface of that book, he makes a statement that I have told seminary students, Bible school students, is worth one semester in any Bible school.

That normally gets their attention. And the statement that he makes is this, there is nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to begin with the parts rather than the whole. Let me say that again, there is nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to begin with the parts rather than the whole.

There is the wisdom of a man of God of many, many years as he studied the Word of God, and I have looked at that statement many, many times. I was in India about 16, 17 years ago now, speaking at a Bible school there for a short period of time, and in the compound of the Bible school, there was a brand new Jeep. And at recess, I noticed all the guys were out there sort of eyeing the Jeep.

You know, ladies, it's a man's thing. But there they were. I could tell, you know, what was going on.

I'd like to get behind this thing, take it for a spin, and so on. Most of them, of course, could not even afford bicycles. A lot of them didn't even have shoes.

And so I assumed they didn't know a great deal about automotive engineering. And I said, suppose I come to the school as a guest speaker, and I was trying to get across the importance again of that statement, there is nothing so likely to lead to error or heresy as to begin with the parts rather than the whole. And so I said, suppose I came to the school as a guest speaker for one entire year, and all I do hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, all I stress is the importance of the carburetor on that Jeep.

And you have to, again, read books about carburetors. I talk about the components that make up the carburetor. I talk about the function of the carburetor.

I talk about the different types of carburetors. I talk about the evolution of the carburetor into fuel injection, and so on. I talk about single barrel, two barrel, you know, four barrel, six barrel carburetors if you're into drag racing, and so on and so forth.

And I mean, they get one solid, consistent diet of carburetor theology. At the end of that year, they spread out all over India, and they establish carburetor churches everywhere. The following year, there's another guest speaker that has a revelation on the distributor, and like the carburetor man before him, all he does is stress the importance of the distributor.

Morning, noon, and night, they get the Greek word for distributor. They get the Hebrew word for distributor. They read all the books about the great distributor developers, and so on.

At the end of the year, again, you have a whole brand new group of churches springing up all over India that have distributor theology as their central and main sort of theme and foundation. Then the next year, there's a man that comes, and the very first day of class, he takes a little thing out of his pocket about three and a half inches long, white at the top, black at the bottom, and he says, listen, I'm here to tell you, without this, it's impossible to please, I mean, start the car. And he speaks about the spark plug, and all he does, again, hour after hour, day after day, he talks about the spark plug.

He says, you can have a brand new Ferrari, that thing may cost you \$400,000, capable of doing, you know, 200 plus miles an hour, 400 horsepower, Pirelli tires, and, you know, Bose stereo system, and so on and so forth, but if you take out this little plug, that car will not even move. And so, I'm here to tell you, the most important part of a car engine is the spark plug. And, of course, they believe that because they've never heard of carburetors, they've never heard of distributors, this man has convinced them that when you lift up the hood of that car, you know, this thing drives the engine, so to speak, or this is the power behind the car.

At the end of the year, again, they go out all over India, and you have the spark plug movement. And, of course, the spark plug movement have spark plug conferences, and they fly in spark plug speakers. Meantime, across town, there's a carburetor conference going on, and never the twain shall meet.

Now, I know that's somewhat humorous, but it's tragic, isn't it? America is famous for its parts. We have entire movements built around faith, entire movements built around prosperity, entire movements built around holiness, entire movements built around signs and wonders, entire movements built around whatever it is, you name it, and we have it. And there is nothing so likely to lead to error or to heresy as to focus on the parts rather than the whole.

If you put all those parts together, you have a person. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. I am the way, not a part of the truth, but I am the truth and the life.

And as I have read and studied the lives of great men and women of God, not only in the Word of God, but down through the centuries, I have come to this one conclusion. They all have one common denominator, and that is an insatiable longing for the presence of God. You find it in the life of Paul that I may know him, not just about him.

Paul knew about him, still confounding the experts as to what he meant when he wrote certain things. Paul says, not only do I know in whom I have believed, oh sorry, what I believe, but he says, I know in whom I have believed. In other words, truth was a relationship with Paul.

It wasn't just doctrine. It wasn't, you know, I know about this and I know about that and so on. It says, I know in whom I have believed and he is able.

It was a relationship. In writing to the Corinthians, he's brought us into the fellowship, the intimacy of his son. Writing to the Colossians, he says that he might have preeminence, first place in everything.

Not faith having first place, not prosperity having first place, not holiness having first place, not even revival having first place, but that he might have preeminence in all things. Jeremiah says, if you boast about anything, he says, don't boast about your wisdom, don't boast about your riches, there goes the prosperity message there, but he says, don't boast about your might, boast in this, that you know and you understand me, saith the Lord. You go into the Psalms and Psalm after Psalm, David expresses this hunger for the presence of God.

As a deer pants, he says, for the water brook, so longs my soul after the Lord, my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God, not just for some revelation about some particular truth, but about a person, a relationship. I was with an older man of God, I'm getting up there myself now, but anyway, this was a number of years ago and he took that verse in a way that I had never heard it explained before. David saying, you know, as a deer pants for the water brook, he said, I can see David as a young shepherd boy sitting on a ledge of rock there overlooking the flock and as he watched them, you know, sort of meander around the meadow down in the valley and he said he would see the deer saunter by in the early hours of the morning and he would see those deer going down and there to the water brook at the bottom of the field drinking their fill and then he said they would disappear into the thicket and maybe repeat the process again the next day and but he said, on this occasion the deer is panting.

He says the deer flies by maybe in the middle of the day and he can hear the panting and the heaving of that deer as it is exhausted. Why? Because there is a predator chasing it, maybe a lion, a bear, or something else that is after that deer and he said the deer knows instinctively there is only one place of protection and that is to find its way into the water brook because there in the water brook the predator cannot pick up the trail of ascent and so the water brook becomes a place of protection but he said not only that the water brook is a place of satisfaction. There in the water brook it can drink in that life-giving water and replenish again that weary, tired, exhausted body and he said I believe David wrote this when he was being pursued by Saul.

Saul is the predator. Saul has made threats on his life and David is running from cave to cave, from city to city, even from country to country and he knows there's only one place of protection. It's to come into the presence of God, find him his way under the shadow of the Almighty and there in the presence of God

then not only does he have the protection that he needs but he has the satisfaction that he needs because the river of God is full of water and he can restore and replenish that weary, tired spirit that has been threatened and so on and he can find again in the presence of God that fullness of joy.

With your right hand the pleasure is forevermore and so David has this insatiable longing. You know a day in your courts he says is better than a thousand elsewhere. I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than dwell in the tents of weakness.

Another place he says who have I in heaven but thee. Then he says and there's nothing on earth that I desire beside thee. What a challenge that verse is, at least it is to me.

You know the first part of the verse is easy to agree with who have I in heaven but thee. My mother's there now, my father's there, some friends and so on but basically it's very easy to say who have I in heaven but thee. The second part of the verse is the challenging part.

There is nothing on earth that I desire beside thee. David was able to look over that vast kingdom with all of its resources and there wasn't a single thing that caused him to sort of covet or lust or desire. He says my only desire is for the living God.

I wonder if you can honestly say that this morning when everything is screaming at us these days, all the advertisements that you've got to drive a certain sort of car, wear certain type of clothes, live in a certain type of community and wear a certain type of watch and so on and so forth and all the things that supposedly will bring you happiness, that you can overlook that and say there's nothing on earth that I desire beside thee. That's quite a challenge isn't it? I don't know if I'm there yet, I hope I'm getting there but David had got to that place where he said Lord you're the only thing that can satisfy. And so time after time he expresses that one thing if I desire the Lord he says and that will I seek after.

Not two or three or four but one thing. He was able to narrow down all of his desires, all of his longings to that one thing. Again like Paul says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

If you have your Bible turn with me this morning to the book of Exodus. Exodus chapter 32 and we want to look at another man that had again an insatiable longing for God's presence. His name of course is Moses and as we turn to this chapter Moses is in the presence of God.

He has been called by God to come up the mountain. The cloud has come down and God is revealing the plan of the tabernacle to him. In the meantime the children of Israel have come become rebellious.

They don't know what's happened to Moses. They're convinced that you know as the weeks have gone by that Moses has died. Some calamity, tragedy has taken place and so they go to Moses brother Aaron and they say listen we need a God that will go before us.

We need fresh leadership and so on. Moses bows to the pressure of the people and gathers all the jewelry from the ladies, the earrings and rings and so on. Throws it into the fire and as he explained it out popped the golden calf.

Wasn't quite that simple but he made a golden calf. Amazing what comes out of our mouth when we get backed into a corner isn't it? But they fashioned a golden calf and Aaron has the audacity if you like to say this is the God that brought you out of Egypt. This is the God that did all those signs, wonders, miracles and so on and there they are involved now not only in idolatry but in immorality.

They stripped themselves naked. Most of the gods of the nations as you know were sensual as they are even to this day. They believe that you know in order for increase to take place that that only came through obviously reproductive methods and so on.

So most of the gods had that sensual nature to them and so here they've abandoned themselves to every sort of base wanton sort of passion and God is angry. He sees the immorality. He sees the idolatry but I think the thing that perturbed God more than anything else was the fact that he had been stripped of his glory and one thing we cannot touch.

God will share his love, his kindness, his patience and everything else that he is with us but he says my glory I will not share with any man and they were taking the glory of God and attributing it to the work of their own hands. Notice there in verse 7 the Lord said to Moses go down at once for your people whom you brought up from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They've turned aside or quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them.

They've made for themselves a molten calf and worshipped it, sacrificed to it and says this is your God of Israel who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and they were attributing all the great power of God, the great miraculous power of God to the work of their own hands and said this is the God that parted the Red Sea. This is the God that turned the Nile to blood. This is the God that could turn all, killed all the firstborn.

This is the God that brought about your great emancipation and so on and God is angry and one of the angriest you ever see God in the Bible and he says to Moses basically get out of my sight, leave me alone. He's fuming obviously a righteous indignation here but he says Moses just leave me alone. He says I am going to destroy this people and then he says and I will make of you a great nation.

I'm convinced that you know Moses could have jumped up and down for joy and said boy God you've finally seen the light. You know I'm sick and tired of these people as well and God was in the cloning back then and he says I will make of you a great nation. In other words they'll act like you, they'll have your DNA and if you know like the temperature they'll like the temperature.

If you like the color scheme they'll like the color scheme. If you like the length of message they'll like the length of message and you would have thought Moses would have said God finally you know you've seen the light of people just like me we'll get along great but no he's a great shepherd and he gets on his face and he begins to pray and we have his prayer at least part of his prayer there in first verse 13. He says God remember Abraham and Isaac and Israel your servants to whom you did swear by yourself and you said I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven.

All the land that I've spoken I will give to your seed and they shall inherit it forever. In other words what Moses is doing here he is reminding God that he is a promise keeper. God what about your promises? What about these covenants? God we've got documents so to speak with your signature on them.

We've got contracts if we put it in today's language. Lord you cannot back out of this contract. We've got you, we've got you know these things have been witnessed and so on.

We've got your signature here. You cannot change your mind. You made promises to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob.

Those are the promises that kept us going for 400 years and now you're talking about backing out on your promises. Now you're talking about changing your mind. If you do that God we'll never know if you mean it

or not when you speak from now on.

We'll never know if your word is reliable. Your word says let God be true and every man a liar. Your word says I am the Lord and I change not.

Your word says all the promises are yea and amen in Christ and Lord you cannot back out on your promises. If you do we can never ever trust you again. God if you're that sort of fickle that you say one thing one day and change your mind the next day, how do we ever know that you mean business again? Lord we can never ever count on your word from this moment on.

God you cannot do what you said you're going to do. That's the essence of his prayer and God says you've got me. Notice he says there in verse 15 the Lord changed his mind about the evil that he said he would do to his people and so on the basis of intercession and bringing the promises of God before God, God backs down on destroying the nation of Israel.

Then we go to the next chapter and in the next chapter now God comes to Moses and he reminds Moses that he has a promise keeping God, a covenant keeping God. Verse 1 the Lord said to Moses depart from here you and the people that you brought out of the land of Egypt to the land which I swore to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob saying to your descendants or your seed I will give it. So the Lord comes and he says listen I am a promise keeper.

I did make covenants with Abraham with Isaac with Jacob and I am going to fulfill those covenants. I want you to rally the troops so to speak and I want you to begin to proceed towards the promised land. Go into the promised land.

It's a land that flows with milk and honey. God had set aside again this land this beautiful land. He promised them houses and lands and vineyards and olive trees all of those things you can read about it in Deuteronomy chapter 6 there where he says when you enter the land you will enter into great and splendid cities and then he adds a PS which you did not build.

Boy what a great promise that was. I mean you see they had spent their entire lifetime from the moment they were little kids at least that last generation building cities for Pharaoh. In fact the Psalmist says I've relieved your shoulder of the burden.

In the margin it says literally I've relieved your shoulder of the brick load. This was a nation that was stooped down because of the incredible weight of these bricks. They carry them day after day after day, month after month, year after year, generation after generation.

It was a nation just bowed down and God says you know I am going to take that burden off your shoulder and he did that and Moses said listen God is no man's debtor. He's going to give you back cities, great cities, splendid cities and you don't have to build them. Wow I can imagine a sigh going up you know.

God thank God I couldn't build another city even if I were to live in it myself you know. I don't have the strength and so on and then he says houses full of good things which you did not fill. In other words not old houses that need to be refurbished and you know torn apart and remodeled and so on but houses loaded with good things which you don't have to fill.

What we would call today the American dream. Isn't that right? I mean after all the American dream is that you know you get your kids through college you still got enough life and vitality left in you. Hopefully a little

nest egg so that when all the kids are finally off your hands you can refurbish the house now the way you've always wanted it.

You know get that Steinway piano or whatever it is and put in the swim pool and and so on. Trouble is the grandkids then come and mess it all up again but anyway but you know and you've got a house there on a few acres with your vineyards or olive trees or whatever the equivalent is you know some apple trees or something and you know your little plot of land and that house is full of all good things. I mean it's refurbished the kitchen's redone the way you've always wanted.

You've got that media room or whatever it is that you've always wanted to have. I mean that's the American dream and God says listen it's all there go in and possess the land. Now can you imagine the excitement as that word began to filter out amongst the camp of Israel the people of Israel as the word began to spread.

Listen we we really are we're finally going in. I mean it really is God is going to keep his promise we're no longer going to be paupers and slaves and so on. You know we're going to have houses and lands and vineyards olive trees wells cisterns he said that you did not dig and then God drops a bombshell and he says I'm not going with you.

I have no plans to go with you. Notice there in verse three go up to a land flowing with milk and honey for I will not go in your midst because you're an obstinate people and lest I destroy you along the way. God is still angry he says listen I will keep my covenant but you can't have my presence.

I think there's a lot of groups that have settled for the covenant blessing of God. They know the prosperity they know the healing they've twisted the arm of God they've reminded him he's a covenant keeping God he can't back out of his promises and they've extracted from God on the basis of his covenant what they want but they don't have the presence of God. One of the most frightening things in the world to me is the fact that you can go in and you can possess the promised land if you like and not have the presence of God and you can have the house of your dreams and you can have all the prosperity in the world but not have the presence of God and God has provided it and God has kept his word God has given it to you and you can testify to the fact that God has given it to you that he's a faithful God but something is missing.

The presence of God and so Moses now is faced with a major choice what do I do? Choice A of course is to proceed ahead here you have a beautiful land and these beautiful magnificent cities houses and vineyards and olive trees and all of that and that's choice A. Choice B is to stay where you are let me describe where you are a waste howling wilderness waste because it's not a single thing there's no cities howling because the winds would just tear through that land and pick up the sand it would be like sandpaper you wake up in the morning your sleeping bag or whatever they slept in full of sand ladies talk about having a bad hair day your hair is full of sand when you wake up you know guys you got to make your coffee and the coffee pot's full of sand I mean you're in a waste howling wilderness not exactly the American dream no shade no tree no vegetation no rivers no source of life at all the only provision of course was a supernatural provision of God that's choice B.

Now what would you choose? Oh by the way with choice B is the presence of God. Choice A is the house of your dreams every material thing you've ever wanted and I know it's Sunday morning and you know I'm supposed to be a guest speaker and there's supposed to be a special sort of a Sunday so to speak and so you know I don't want to be too carnal so let me sweeten choice A for you a little bit.

Verse 2 I'll send an angel before you I'll drive out the Canaanite the Amorite the Hittite the Perizzite the Hivite and the Jebusite so God says I'll send an angel not a demon an angel that angel will do signs wonders miracles that angel will take care of all your needs that angel will tear down again all the you know giants in the land if necessary and allow you to obtain your inheritance and so you know we need to put a little dab of spirituality in there along with all the carnality so now now you know makes the choice maybe a little more difficult doesn't it I mean after all angels have got their own tv program these days and you know we're sort of into angels and so now you've got the house of your dreams the land the vineyards everything else but you've also got an angel signs

wonders miracles but still no presence of God so now you have to cash your ballot on the way out what do I choose this is a choice now that Moses made now Moses of course had an advantage that nobody else had and the advantage that he had was as we say these days I've been there and done that you see Moses was raised the son of Pharaoh's daughter he was a king's kid he was raised in the finest home in all of Egypt he had the finest clothes the latest model chariot he had everything going for in the finest education he was eloquent in word and deed the Bible says when he spoke he was very articulate he had every advantage that anybody could possibly have but somehow it didn't satisfy and one day the Bible says he chose to suffer affliction rather than all the treasures and pleasures of

Egypt and he turned his back on all of that because there was an emptiness that can only be satisfied with the presence of God and he gave it all up and so now he's back there and of course the nation of Israel have never had all those luxuries and I'm sure they're convinced that this is the thing that will bring me satisfaction that home will really bring me the satisfaction I want you know those vineyards will bring me the satisfaction the olive trees and all that I mean that's really what life is all about we're trained that way aren't we groomed that way from the moment we're born this world again tries to squeeze us into its mold and make us believe that those things will really bring satisfaction but Moses knows better and so he begins to pray again we pick up his prayer in verse 13

now therefore I pray thee if I found favor in your sight let me know thy ways that I may know thee so that I may find favor in your sight consider too that this nation is thy people what a strange prayer I say it's a strange prayer given the circumstances that Moses never mentions houses and lands and vineyards he never mentions olive trees he never mentions great and splendid cities he gets on his face and he says God I want to know you here is a man crying out Lord it's all about knowing you let me know you let me know your ways Lord the Bible says deep calls unto deep you see my prayer would have been different than this my prayer I if I was honest would be something like this God let's reason together I'm going to take you up on that offer the Lord says what offer you know let's

reason together I said okay you know let's let our hair down let's be man let's uh you know talk here close the door let's be real you know Lord you're talking about us being a little stubborn but if you don't mind me saying so and I say it reverently I think you've been a little stubborn yourself on this point Lord there's a part of me that has always wanted you know that particular house and to live in a particular sort of city like one of those cities that I've heard about in the promised land there and I've always wanted my own you know vineyard and olive trees and then so on but Lord there's a part of me that wants your presence as well and so isn't there some way we can sort of strike a deal here Lord I know you know we get on your nerves I can tell body language is still a little

upset from the other day but Lord you know we say things when we get mad and we regret it later and now that you've had time to you know settle down a little bit let's be more reasonable you know Lord I'm

here to tell you something I know you know this but from our perspective we we don't need you most of the time you know we get along pretty well six days a week we feign like we need you on Sunday morning with great gusto we sing but you know we never really open your word the rest of the week we never really pray and seek your face much and and so on I don't know you know that Lord so you know I'm not asking you to hang around us all the time but it'd be nice if you showed up at you know some of the great feasts after all those are supposed to be the family gatherings the sort of the

thanksgivings of the Old Testament you know where we get together and dance and celebrate and meet people and so on so forth be nice if you showed up then and came on the Sabbath occasionally and especially when there's a but you know I mean that would be my prayer it would be some sort of compromise situation and Moses never mentions houses lands vineyards Lord I just want to find favor with you that I might know your ways I want to know you and God responds and I think if we had all the thoughts of God there Moses if you want me that badly how can I resist and he says in verse 14 my presence will go with you and I will give you rest and Moses said if your presence does not go with us we're not going Moses had already settled it in his mind God if I can't convince you to go then we're

going to stay because what shall it profit a man if he have houses and lands and vineyards and olive trees and no relationship with God on the other hand having nothing and yet possessing all things Paul said I may not have a house I may not have lands I may not have vineyards I may not have olive trees I may not have great and splendid cities I may just have a waste howling loneliness but if I've got the presence of God I have everything and having nothing and yet possessing all things Paul said what an incredible state that is to get to spiritually Lord I don't care you can take everything from me but I still have everything if I have you that's why God said to Moses I am your shield and your exceeding and great reward Moses or Abraham rather I'm your shield I'm your reward and then

Moses makes this statement verse 16 one of the most beautiful verses I think in the Bible how can it be known that I found favor in your side I and thy people is it not by thy going with us so that we I and thy people may be distinguished from all the other people who are on the face of the earth Moses said there's only one thing that makes us unique only one thing that separates us only one thing that distinguishes us it's your presence Lord it's not our long sideburns it's not our kosher food it isn't even our tabernacle it isn't even our ten commandments it's not even our tribe of Levi that's being set apart for the ministry none of those things really make us unique I'm sure Moses is thinking you know all the other surrounding nations they've got their equivalent of a tabernacle

temple they've got their priests they've got their sacrifices they've got their holy writings they've got their songs they've got their feast days but they don't have the presence of God and he said Lord there's only one thing that makes us unique as a people it's your presence and if you withdraw your presence Lord we're no different than that religion or that religion or that religion no different we just have a form of godliness we go through the mechanics we go through the ritual but there's no awareness of your presence there's no marriages being put back together again nobody's getting saved or transformed it's just religiosity having a form of godliness but there's no power there's no reality Lord if your presence withdraws we just go on again doing the sort of the ritualistic

things of religion so Lord if your presence doesn't go don't take us because we're going to be no different than anybody else turn with me to song of Solomon you see so far we have been looking at men chasing God I am so grateful for Tommy Tenney's emphasis on the god chasers but there is another side there is a god that chases and long before there was ever any god chaser movement there was a god that chased

and he's still chasing and we need to have the other side of the coin you see it's hard to have a relationship with somebody unless they want to have a relationship with you isn't it you know you as a young guy may have your eye on one of the young girls in the church here and everything about that girl lights up your life and you know you sort of make some inquiries and you know

your sister says oh I know her she's a good friend of mine and they say really you know all of a sudden sister becomes a valium and uh next day you know they're sitting down at the cafeteria and sister says hey guess what I found out about you my brother's crazy about you really you know and uh didn't know you had a brother not a good beginning but uh says yeah you know he's that tall lanky guy plays the saxophone there on church you know you can't miss him he's you know only saxophone player that's your brother I said don't tell him this I can't stand that guy it's sort of hard to have a relationship with somebody that's not interested in you isn't it and it's hard to have a relationship with God unless he's interested in us and song of Solomon of course gives us the other side of the

story this beautiful love story really some of the orthodox Jews would not permit their young people to read this book they felt it was too intimate it was sort of considered almost pornographic unless you were approaching marriage or married but it's a very intimate story of the bride and the bridegroom typifying our relationship with the Lord it begins there in chapter 1 verse 2 where she says kiss me with the kisses of your mouth for your love is better than wine in other words she's find something she's found something that stimulates and exhilarates and satisfies more than wine wine of course is a coping mechanism for the world isn't it you know when you get diagnosed with cancer or you have a car accident lose your job somebody dies or whatever the world has no rock to go to no high

tower to run into and so all they have is the bottle and they take the wine the alcohol drown their sorrows it takes the edge off you know the depression that they're feeling and so on and so forth but she says listen I found something better than anything the world has to offer just kiss me again with the kisses of your mouth she just wants to be with him she wants to know his embrace and so begins this beautiful romance verse 15 you're beautiful my darling and how handsome you are my beloved and so they express their love to each other you know he takes her into the banqueting table and he's got hallmark you know first hallmark card my banner over you is love there you know it's all there and they begin this relationship and then we come to chapter 5 and in chapter 5 we have a little

setback verse 2 I was asleep but my heart was awake a voice my beloved was knocking open to me my sister my darling my dove my perfect one my head is drenched with dew my locks with a dampened night here she is she's gone to bed and she's washed and you know done everything that needs to be done and put on her makeup for the night and so on and she's there and she's almost in a deep sleep and here he comes pounding on the door and she sort of stirs and she hears him and he's wanting to be with her after all this is one that he's singled out this is one that is the one that he's placed all his affection upon he wants to be with her he wants to deepen this relationship and can't wait to spend time with her and she's in bed already and so she has a decision to make what do I do and we have

the thoughts going on I believe in her mind in verse 3 I don't think she verbalizes this I think this is sort of you know just going on inside her head I've taken off my dress how can I put it on again I've washed my feet how can I dirty them again in other words boy you know what do I do you know do I get up if I do you know I've just got ready for bed I've taken off my dress I've washed my feet you know if I get up I'm gonna have to get dressed again you know I have to open the door spend some time with my you know my fiance my boyfriend here and after he goes then I'm gonna have to wash my feet get ready for bed is it

worth it I don't know and you know all of this is sort of going around in the mind and verse four my beloved extended his hand through the openings my feelings were

aroused for him there he is trying to get in seemingly through the lattice work or something he knows that she's in there and maybe he thinks she somehow hasn't heard him or something and you know he's trying to reach in there and one of the things I don't like about the word of God is we don't have the time element you know you can read this in literally a matter of seconds this whole sort of transaction that's going on but you know here is a lady I'm sure no different than most ladies that she's got to get ready and that would be anywhere from the men are all smiling now you know five minutes would be you know Guinness Book of Records but you know 10 minutes 15 minutes who knows maybe an hour after all you know she's maybe the sort of gal that every hair has got to be in place and you

know all that's got to be put on has got to be put on and that's the process that takes time and he's standing there patiently and maybe he's been there before and the minutes go by and nothing happens and the minutes go by and the minutes go by and he's patient he's waiting and finally verse five I arose and I opened to my beloved my hands drip with my fingers with liquid myrrh on the handles of the bolt I opened to my beloved but my beloved had turned and had gone she's grieved him she's hurt him she's wounded him she's quenched the spirit of God why because she's sort of dilly-dallyed she's hesitated she hasn't answered very quickly and he's patiently waited waited waited waited and yet there's no response and you know what it's like when you don't have the information you sort of

manufacture it don't what's going on you know we kiss we say good night she called me darling and so on but is there somebody else you know something cooled down in our relationship you know it's been 24 hours I mean there's somebody else come in I mean what's going on she's never hesitated like this before I know she's in there you see the one that is capable of loving you the most is also capable of hurting you the most and especially that tender stage when you're in love and maybe the marriage has not taken place yet and you know what it's like when your boyfriend girlfriend says something with a little bit of a bite to it a little bit of an edge to it it's like somebody taking a knife and thrusting it in your chest isn't it and there he is my darling my dove my perfect one open I want

to come in I want to be with you and she stalls and hesitates and she doesn't respond and then finally she does but he's gone the thing I love about this story is she realizes how much of a mistake she's made and she starts looking for him my heart went out to him verse six as he spoke I searched for him but I did not find him I called and he did not answer me you see a few minutes ago she could have opened the door and there he was and very easy to invite him in his presence was so real and yet she's grieved him she's quenched the spirit of God and he's now gone into hiding and God says he goes into hiding he says of Hezekiah God withdrew himself and sort of hid himself to see what was in his heart sometimes God will hide himself to see how desperate we are whether we're willing to fast

and pray to restore that broken relationship we once had and so he's not answering the watchman who make the rounds of the city found me she says verse seven they struck me and wounded me the guardsman took away my shawl now here she is in the middle of the night after all the rain is coming down the sort of weather I guess and you know it's midnight in Jerusalem or past midnight and she's out there all alone looking searching the guardsman find her beat her up she's wounded we don't know if she's got a black eyed bloody nose of whether she's limping the guardsman take away or the watchman and then the guardsman take away her shawl so now she's exposed to the elements of the night and yet she still keeps going and she comes across in verse eight the daughters of Jerusalem I adjure you I

ask you oh daughters of Jerusalem if you find my beloved as to what you'll tell him for I'm lovesick in other words if you find my beloved tell him I'm lovesick tell him listen please let him know I blew it tell him I'm so repentant I'm so sorry I can't I can't believe that I stood him up the way I did I can't believe that I didn't respond when he knocked could you get across to him listen if you see him please tell him I'm desperate to find and restore this relationship I can't live without him would you let him know that and their response is what's so special about this guy verse nine what kind of beloved is your beloved oh we have it sort of in a little Elizabethan sort of setting here but what kind of beloved is your beloved what's so special about this guy oh most beautiful among

women what kind of beloved is your beloved but thus you adjure us in other words why are you begging us about this thing I mean what's so special about this guy now you've got a picture the scene a night scene no neon lights no flashing lights and or advertising anything just uh Jerusalem several thousand years ago maybe an oil lamp somewhere maybe a full moon filtering you know through the rain and the drizzle and here is this girl all agitated and even in the condition she's in she's incredibly beautiful and their response is hey what's so special about this guy now what would you think if you met a lady like that in the middle of the night with a black eye bloody nose or something limping oh I know what I would think another case of domestic violence she's married to some guy or

they're living together and he's come home drunk high on drugs or something got in an argument he's beat her up big word these days co-dependency can't live without him she's out there trying to get him back I mean what's so special I mean so here's this scene she's all agitated you know mascara's running everywhere hair's matted and so on yet despite all of that she's incredibly beautiful and basically they're saying listen you are one of the most beautiful women we've ever seen in other words implying you could have any guy what's so special about this guy why don't you forget this guy if that's the way he treats you just go home forget about him lady you've lost all you know awareness of your own self-image and how beautiful you really are you know pull your act together you could have

any guy you want I mean that's the essence of what they're saying so what's so special about this guy and all of a sudden now she opens up in verse 10 my beloved she said is dazzling and ruddy outstanding among 10,000 she said listen if you had 10,000 men all eligible bachelors and you went throughout all Jerusalem and you got 10,000 of them put them in a lineup my beloved is he would eclipse all of them he's striking he's stunning everything about him he won't even notice the rest he's the fairest of 10,000 his head is like gold like pure gold his eyes are like doves his cheeks like beds of balsam his hands like rods of gold his abdomen is like carved ivory his legs like pillars of alabaster and I notice she begins to describe him not his assets or she doesn't say have you ever heard of

Bill Gates and Donald Trump my beloved would make those guys look like paupers you've seen that mansion of a house out there on the bluff overlooking the lake you know that's my beloved and when we get married that's where I'm going to live you know all you know 30,000 square feet of it he's got so many servants he's got so many riches you know I'll have all the silks and linens and fineries I've ever wanted I mean you know I can't wait until you know we get married and I'm going to be able to just live the life of luxury I mean he's one of the wealthiest men on the face of the earth and so on no it's not about his assets it's about him let me tell you about him let me tell you about his hair his eyes his hands she studied him she knows him and then she says in verse 16 as she sort of

wraps it up here his mouth is full of sweetness he's wholly desirable everything about him is desirable never faulted him never found a blemish never found a single thing where he's disappointed me oh we've

been going together for years and there's not a single thing I can fault in it what a beautiful picture everything about him is desirable the more I know him the more I want to know him this is my beloved and this is my friend oh daughters of Jerusalem listen I've lost my best friend this is my friend oh you know he's a king you know and when I first started and going with him when we first met each other you know I had him up on a pedestal and please don't get me wrong I still revere him and honor him I know he's a king the king of kings but you know he noticed one day that our

relationship was almost like a master and a slave relationship and he said to me one day no longer do I call you servant but I call you friend and she said something changed in our relationship and he's become the very best friend I've ever had I've never had a friend like this friend he's wonderful he's wholly desirable then notice the change chapter 6 and verse 1 where is your beloved gone oh most beautiful among women where is your beloved turn that we may seek him with you just wonderful as you describe him to be I mean we've got to meet him I mean is there a chance I know I'm asking a lot but do you mind if we we go with you I mean would you introduce us as any chance your friend could be my friend that's what it's all about isn't it that really is what God is looking for I believe

in these days as we come down to the sort of finishing line if you like of history it's all about the bride and the bridegroom it's all about a love relationship a passionate relationship where the world is going to look on at least I believe it's God's intention and the world is going to look on say listen I want what you've got you've got a relationship you've got a joy you've got a peace and it's more than doctrine it's more than just building it's I mean the you you what what is it that's what it's all about isn't it you see the problem with this lady here in this chapter at least was this she was clean but she was also comfortable she was clean I've washed myself I've taken off my dress I've washed my feet Jesus said if your feet are washed all of you is washed but she was also

comfortable just leave me alone not now I'm just comfortable the way I am I don't want to pursue God anymore I know I'm saved I know I'm born again I know that you know if I die tonight I go to heaven oh yeah I used to pray a lot more I used to pursue God a lot more I had a far greater passion and fervor at one stage but you know I've just sort of cooled off oh I haven't excellent totally I'm clean I haven't been dabbling in anything I know I shouldn't be dabbling in I can honestly say my life is right before God but you know the love of many will wax cold and not now it's not convenient you know we're just getting the business off the ground and you know I'm just going into college and you know we've all got our excuses as to why we don't respond when he knocks I'm clean I'm comfortable

this story of course is told one more time in the bible in the new testament find in the book of revelation chapter three behold I stand at the door and knock I want to come in I want to sup with my bride the one that I've singled out the one that I've given my life for the one I've shed my blood for and I want to come in I want to spend time with you I want a relationship with you I want intimacy with you would you open the door and let me in and of course the church says no lord we're rich you know we're increased with goods we have need of nothing not even you we're comfortable just the way we are you know we're lukewarm oh they didn't say that but that's what the lord said I would I would that you were either hot or cold but you're just complacent you're just indifferent you're just

neutral how about restoring that relationship the relationship you used to have maybe three years ago maybe 30 years ago maybe three months ago would you open the door and let him come in we need the presence of god don't we it's all about a relationship an ongoing relationship a growing relationship an intimate relationship and I believe that he's standing this morning he's knocking open to me my darling my

dove my perfect one and we can stall and hesitate and say well not today and then we have to spend time pursuing him or you can open the door and let him in let's close in prayer father we thank you this morning for your word lord we believe this morning that you're standing here lord longing again for greater intimacy longing for greater access to our lives lord lord wanting to come

and reveal yourself and disclose yourself to us in a way that we've never seen you before and never known you before you said the path of the just is a shining light it shines more and more unto the perfect day and so lord I pray that even today lord we would press in afresh or forgetting those things which are behind lord all the successes maybe all the failures but lord we press on to know you and father I pray that even as you knock today that lord there would be that response lord not one of passivity not one of lukewarmness not one of indifference but lord a quickness to open the door and lord to find your embrace and to find again that love relationship lord as that little chorus says awaken my heart to love and adore you oh my lord father awaken us this morning father bring us

again closer than we've ever been before put within us lord that burning passion to pursue you lord to forget the other things lord to be weaned again from all the things of the world and lord just to cling to you that I may know him and the power of his resurrection like David this one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind lord that I may dwell as the psalmist said lord in the house of the lord just to behold the beauty of the lord all the days of my life lord give us that hunger give us that cry give us that longing we pray just to sit and bask in your presence lord lovers love to be alone lovers love to be together father we want to be a loving church we want this community lord to see how great a love we have not only one towards another but lord our love with you but

lord this community would look on and say can I pursue him with you is it all right if we go with you you've got something that we want father bring us into that place we pray in Jesus name let's just stand this morning as we close and going to open these altars if you need to come why don't you just come find a place open your heart just come to the lord don't come to a counselor I'm getting away from altar calls with counselors because I think sometimes we come to a counselor instead of come to meet with them why don't you come just open your heart to the lord say lord touch me I'm not where I should be lord I had a relationship weeks ago months ago years ago and I want it restored lord I can't go on without you but I can't go on unless you touch me afresh lord I'm sorry for being

caught up like Martha cumbered about with so many things maybe good things maybe religious things but lord I haven't taken time to sit at your feet I haven't taken time just to listen to your voice I haven't taken time lord to tell you how much I love you lately though there was a time when I love to get alone in my bedroom get on my face turn on some music and just be alone in your presence but lord those days are long gone lord awaken my love again this morning give me that desire again this morning touch my life lord this morning renew a right spirit within have your way in Jesus name just reach out to lord just where you are let him know he's the one that you need to do transaction with do business with all it takes is a moment of honesty lord you know my life anyway I can't fool you

the lord I'm asking you to come this is we turn the meeting over let god have his way we're just doing a little chorus here that says in the presence of Jehovah you know this is is a perfect moment for us to respond to god and even if there's not enough room down front here just you know just important to make some kind of a move to regard just step out in an aisle just move say god that's me I need I need your presence and that's your presence goes with me I'm not leaving here I'm not leaving here this morning till I know you're going with me because I can't live without you I can't live without you and his presence this

morning is the answer for everything in the presence oh come on he's knocking right now say yes me and he's oh hearts

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