

# Cultivating the Presence of God

by Michael Durham

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*Cultivating the presence of God is essential for experiencing strength, comfort, and a sense of security in times of fear and uncertainty.*

**Duration:** 48:40

**Topics:** "Presence of God", "Experiencing God", "Cultivating God's Presence"

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## Description

Michael Durham emphasizes the importance of cultivating the presence of God in our lives, drawing from Psalm 16:8 where David expresses his commitment to always set the Lord before him. He highlights that knowing God is not just about doctrine but about experiencing a personal relationship with Him, which is essential for overcoming fear, materialism, and spiritual dryness. Durham encourages believers to actively seek God's presence through determined will, method, routine, and focus, asserting that this practice leads to an unshakable spirit and a deeper intimacy with God. He concludes by urging the congregation to recognize God's desire for a relationship and to cultivate it daily, ensuring that they are aware of His abiding presence.

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## Transcript

The text we pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us from here this evening. It's from Psalm 16 verse 8. Psalm 16 verse 8. I want to speak tonight on the theme cultivating the presence of God. Cultivating the presence of God.

Psalm 16 verse 8. This is a psalm of David and he, the psalmist David writes, I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand. I shall not be moved. This is one of the most important verses that you'll ever find in your Bible.

It's most important because it deals at the very heart of what Christianity is really all about. A relationship with Jesus Christ. As I travel abroad and domestically I come across increasingly pastor after pastor after pastor who has to confess to me I don't know how to maintain fellowship with God.

I don't know what you mean when you talk about experiencing the presence of God. And one of the things that grieves my heart is that the Reformed movement ought to be the most experiential aspect or part of Christianity there is but it seems that we have become the least experiential. Do you know what I mean by experiential? The experiencing of the doctrine that we had told to adhere.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said he spent half of his time stressing the importance of doctrine the other half the time telling them that the doctrine isn't everything. It's only part of it. And it's true.

There is another aspect of the Christian life rather than just the doctrine but also the experience, the reality of that doctrine, those truths that we learn from the Word of God. God didn't give you a Bible in order to make theologians out of you and scholars. He gave you a Bible that you might study God, theologian, and that you might know God personally in relationship and experience.

And here we have before us David the psalmist, the man after God's own heart who knew how to walk with his God. And he gives you an insight to his heart and to his practice of walking with God and cultivating the presence of God. And so tonight I want to be more practical than I was this morning.

I want to be able to do teaching as well as preaching on this subject. How do I cultivate? How do I walk with my God? How do I fellowship with him? And of course this will not be exhaustive. I can't do that in just a few minutes this evening.

But I hope to give you enough that you'll be able to begin practicing as soon as you leave this place from this blessed psalm that has been such a blessing to me. The importance, oh the importance of being aware of God's presence. I cannot emphasize this enough.

You cannot live the Christian life as Jesus intended you to do so without being conscious and aware of his abiding presence. The doctrine of the omniscience of God, the doctrine of the eminence, immanency of God, God's nearness, is not just to be something that you can impress your friends with. That you can say, listen I know about God's eminence and I know about his omniscience and his omnipresence and all of these wonderful attributes.

But they are truths by which you can experience him. Now why is it so important that you just not know that God dwells with you but that you experience his presence? Well I would say number one it's the antidote to fear. It's an antidote to fear.

David said in Psalm 23 in verse 4, yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. Why? Why would he fear no evil? For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

It was the abiding conscious presence of God that drove the fear away from this servant of the Lord when he was in dangerous places in the very shadow of death. To Joshua the Lord said have I not commanded thee be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid neither be thou dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

It is the conscious awareness of the presence of God that drives away the fear. The tendency of our heart to be afraid when we're faced with challenges that we cannot overcome. But not only is it an antidote to fear it's an antidote to materialism.

If you do not want to be covetous, if you do not want to follow the stem and tide of most Americans even in churches like this, materialism grip your heart then you need to know how to cultivate the conscious awareness of his presence. Listen to what Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 5 says Hebrews 13 5. Let your conversation, that is your lifestyle, your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things as he hath for he hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. It's his presence with us that is the provision we need for he is our provider.

When I know that God is with me and that he's promised to meet my every need the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. Well then my heart is curbed in its appetites and there's a restraint self-imposed because I know my God will meet all of my needs according to his riches and glory. It's a great antidote to materialism.

A covetous person is a person who's not aware and conscious of God's nearness. Number three, it's so important because it's the manifested presence of our God that is the provision of power and strength we need to do the Lord's will. There's a verse that I always recite to myself and believe before I step to a pulpit.

You know what that verse is? I've told you before. This is homework. I want to see how well you pass.

Anybody remember Isaiah chapter 41 and verse 10? Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee.

Yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with my righteous right hand. I recite that before I move to the pulpit.

Why? Because he's the power and the strength that I need to do what I'm doing now. Do you think that I think I have the gifts and the abilities by natural giftedness to move you to God? To tinker with your heart and to apply the application that you need to solve the issues of the heart. Well, no I don't.

I know better than that. I've been doing this way too long. I know that human power, human giftedness and all of these things are not sufficient to touch a person where they need the power of God the most.

The soul, the spirit of a man. Only God can touch that area of your life. And so as I come to do what I am not sufficient to do, I call upon the presence of God who promised I'll never leave you.

I'll never forsake you. I'll be with you. I'll uphold you with my righteous right hand.

And so as David said in the Psalms, I have set the Lord always before me. Asaph said something that I really like in Psalm 73 verse 28. But it is good for me to draw near to God.

I exceptionally love the Holman Christian Standard Bible, now known as the Christian Standard Bible's translation of this verse. You know what it goes? How it goes? Here it is. But as for me, God's presence is my good.

Isn't that wonderful? As for me, God's presence is my good. Yes, sir. You need the conscious awareness of his presence.

He didn't save you just so you could get the ticket into heaven. He saved you to fellowship, to walk with you, to know you, to interact with you, to have relationship with you. But you say, yes, I know that God is with me.

God is everywhere. He's omnipresent. Well, this is not a study on the attribute of God's omnipresence.

What David is talking about here in our text is the manifested presence of God. It is to be consciously aware, to sense, to feel, if you please, for a lack of a better word, to be able to feel the presence of God. And when I use that word feel, I don't want you to think necessarily emotions, but there is a reality that grips you, that abides with you, that gives you comfort, that you are not alone ever.

That's what we're here to talk about. It's exactly what Jesus promised his own disciples and to those who loved him in John chapter 14 verse 21. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them is he that loveth me, and he that loveth me my father shall love him.

He shall be loved of my father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him. That's the promise of God. Christ has promised to make himself known to you.

Yes, we know God is omnipresent, but the fact of his omnipresence has little impact on most of our lives. We hardly ever think about it. Well, so you know the doctrine.

You know, well, you could explain it to someone else. Yes, but are you aware of his presence, my friend? I'd rather experience the presence of God than to be able to define omnipresence. This is a case where I often say that the number one problem among Christian is what? They don't know what they know.

I read of a well-known Christian leader who underwent a severe loss and as a result learned something about himself that he didn't previously know. His discovery led him to pray. Here's what he prayed.

I know you're all I have, but I don't know you well enough for you to be all that I need. This is a man that if I mentioned his name, you'd know it, most of you. I know you're all I have, but I don't know you well enough for you to be all that I need.

And that's what we need to cultivate, beloved. We need to cultivate the knowledge of God so that we do know him so intimately, so well, that he's all that we will ever need and ever want. A. W. Tozer said, the world is perishing for a lack of the knowledge of God, and the church is famishing for the want of his presence.

What made today so special? Because I was here? Absolutely not. I will take offense if anybody thinks that. I tell you what made this day special.

God's presence was manifested in our midst. He was here when I got here. Duncan Campbell, the great revivalist Presbyterian of the Hebrides revival of 1949 to 53.

After that event, people have invited them to his church thinking that he carried revival in his hip pocket and he had to tell him, I don't. No, it's not the presence of an evangelist or a preacher that we need. No, it's the abiding presence of almighty God.

And you need to cultivate that. You need to know that you need to be aware of that. And you need to know how to cultivate that.

But one question before we get into the text, this is all introduction. Thank you, Donnie. I heard you laugh.

How does invisibility become manifest in a visible world? God is spirit, the immortal, the invisible God. How does the invisible become manifest in a visible world? How does an immaterial being manifest himself in a material world to a material being you and me? Well, you've got to learn how to discern his real but invisible presence. It said of Moses that he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

Paul said, while we look not at things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. He also said, we don't walk by sight, but by faith. You see, faith is the organ of sight and hearing and taste and touch for the spiritual man.

When a Christian is behaving carnally, I know for what it's for one reason. It's because he or she has resorted back to the physical sense of seeing to the physical senses. That's how they're living by their own senses.

And they refuse the spiritual site of faith. Therefore, we've got to learn how to develop the vision of faith so we can see and experience the manifested presence of Christ. This is not mystical.

This is not something out in left field. This is biblical spirituality that I want to communicate to you. Well, you say yes, but why must we learn? Why must we learn to act or do something in order to experience his presence? Why can't the Lord just make himself manifested to us? Why do we have to do something? Cultivate his presence, learn how to be aware of his conscious presence.

Well, there's two reasons. Now, my introduction is a little lengthy, even more than normal, but you see the necessity, do you not? The first reason why God just doesn't make himself known. If the Lord made himself overwhelmingly present with you, you couldn't live and function as you ought in this world.

I'm sure that all of us have had those times when the Lord forcibly made himself aware to you when you're praying in your closet or even maybe in a church service like this today. And you just knew that you knew God was right there. You could, the air was so electrified.

You could almost taste, yes, literally taste and see that the Lord was good. And those are blessed memories, are they not? Seasons of great ecstasy. But just like the blessed experience that Peter, James, and John had on the Mount of Transfiguration, they could not nor can you perpetually live in that kind of environment or atmosphere.

But we can live in a climate where we are continually aware of his presence. And it is the perpetual awareness that David is speaking of. I have set the Lord always before me because he's at my right hand.

I shall not be moved. But there's a second reason why God just doesn't pop out and make himself known to you. The Lord, if I can say this reverently, with all seriousness and sobriety, the Lord wants to be wanted.

He doesn't need it. He's self-sufficient, but he wants to be wanted. Personal relationships develop not because someone forces themselves upon another.

Those relationships won't ever work. But because both parties move towards each other, you can have as much of the Lord Jesus as you want. And he's done everything to show you that he wants a relationship with you.

And he has done everything to make it possible. Now it's up to you. You have your responsibility in this relationship.

And that's to seek him, to desire him, to want to be aware and interact with his presence. All right. Let us move now to the text.

Here, I want to give you just a brief outline of how you can develop and cultivate a conscious awareness of the presence of God. Number one, a determined will must be in place. A determined will.

Notice the words, I have set the Lord before me. I, he was determined to live in the conscious awareness of the presence of God. David, this man after God's own heart would not be satisfied with anything less.

My heart pants after thee, as the heart pants after the water brooks. When shall I come and appear before my God? You hear this kind of language from David all the time. Early will I seek thee, as my soul longeth after thee.

My flesh desires you as in a dry place. This is the language of a lover, a man who's in love with his God, who's not just satisfied to know that he's right with his God, but that he wanted to experience this God. He wants to have communion and fellowship with this God.

And so his will was determined. Is your will determined that you will know God and you will experience his presence, that you will not leave it up to the preachers of this fine church to stimulate and stir your soul so you have some kind of sense of God's presence when they preach, but that you will carry that with you into your own prayer closet, to your own times of being alone with God, where you meet with him who is in secret, and he who is in secret will reward you. How? With the manifestation of his presence.

Hebrews 11, 6 says that those that come to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. What is the reward if their diligent seeking him can be none other than him himself, God? Is this the determination of your will? I want to know my God. I know him, but I know him only so little.

Do you not mourn? Is there no grief about you that you should be further along than you are? I feel that way all the time. The older I get, the more I read and learn about my God, the more I experience him. I moan the fact that I've wasted so much time.

Oh, God. Why was David like this? And if you look at David, you see that he's simply a type of the Lord Jesus Christ here. This is what God, our Lord Jesus, did.

Why was he up late at night praying? Why would he spend the entire night in prayer, get away before the dawn and before the disciples were awake, and get alone and pray? Why was this? Why? Because he loved his father, and he loved his father's presence. He enjoyed being consciously aware of the fellowship of God. He just didn't get alone and memorize scripture and just say, well, there, I've got that scripture memorized.

Now it's done. That's all I needed to do. No, he let the scripture and the wind of the Spirit make the presence of God real to him.

And so must you and I. There must be a determined will to do this, to live in this kind of awareness, because it is possible. One of the toughest jobs I've got tonight is to make you believe that such as possible. Some of you have been Christians for many years, and there are rare moments where you experience the presence of God.

Some of them are almost a fog, foggy memory. Now, my dear friends, it shouldn't be a foggy memory should be something you can recall just recently, maybe like this morning. I experienced the presence of God, and I'm not boasting.

I'm just trying to convince you this is a reality that's not just for preachers. It's for any one of you. God doesn't love us anymore.

He loves you. We're just a member of the body of Christ like you are. We're a sinner saved by grace, just like you are.

We have a function in the body, just like you have a function. It's different, of course. It's certainly crucial to the body, but it's not more special.

Yesterday morning, I experienced the presence of God early in the morning. So real that my body literally basked in the physical pleasure and joy of being in the presence of God. I could feel it.

It's nothing like it to know that you're in God's presence and he's right there and his smile is upon you. You talk about making a man ready to run through a troop and leap over a wall. When you know the presence of God is abiding with you at my right hand, my friend, why? Who should I be afraid of? A determined will.

Secondly, a determined method. Look at the word set here. I have set the Lord before me.

David did something. You could use another word. I have established the Lord's presence before me.

This word set is used in other places in the Bible. Do you remember one key place where the word set is recorded? It's in the New Testament, Colossians chapter three, set your affection on things above, not on the earth below. And here David is exactly saying the same thing.

I have set, I've taken my heart and its affections and I'm focused upon God. And I've made it as if God is right here before me. He sets the Lord, perhaps a crude illustration.

What do you do when you determine you want to get up at a certain hour in the morning? What do you do? You set your alarm clock. The setting of the alarm is a determined method of waking at the desired hour. My dear friends, we must have a determined method.

There must be a method by which you cultivate the presence of God. David said, I have set the Lord before me. What is that determined method? And I have studied the scriptures.

I have sought the Lord for many years to come to this understanding. And there's only one thing. It is a deliberate meditation on the word of God.

So this is not mystical after all. And yet it's just as real and experiential as anything you could ever experience. A deliberate meditation on the word of God, specifically on the promise of God's presence.

This is how you set the Lord before you. You meditate on the promise of God's presence. What did Jesus say as he ascended back to the father? I am with you all the way, even until the end of the age.

What a blessed thing to think about. Before you do your devotions, before you open your Bible in the morning to pray or whenever it is, you read your Bibles. Stop.

Don't read your Bibles. You'll never hear another preacher say that probably. Maybe Kyle because he's heard me say it.

Don't read your Bibles. Quit reading Bibles. Writing Bibles is not what the Bible told you to do.

Some of you are looking like me. I knew there was something wrong about you. You'll never find, all you want, Genesis and Revelation.

There's not one command that tells you to read. But there's numerous ones that tells you to study and to meditate on the word of God. Quit reading your Bible to get through the chapter a day or exchange reading plan or whatever program you're using.

Read your Bible to experience God. Read your Bible to experience the reality of His presence and His promises. Read this book as if it's God's personal word to you and meditate.

And God has made you a promise, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. And so before you read this book, in order to experience His presence, you need to stop and believe that His presence is with you. Meditate.

You set the Lord before me. How do you do that? You simply take the promises, God you're with me, you're in this room right now, I'm not alone. And you believe it.

You believe it. It's not having that scripture memorized that's going to give you the awareness of His presence. It's believing that promise.

You're in this room with me. Why? God is in this room right now. The Almighty Lord, the one who walked on the Sea of Galilee, the one who stopped the bear, the funeral bear at Nain and raised that boy back to life.

He's here. The one who broke the bread and fed the 5,000. He's in this room.

The one who by the blast of His nostrils caused the Red Sea to heap up like walls. He's here. He's in this room.

We're not alone dear friends. And the more you believe that promise, I have set the Lord always before me. You begin to sense.

Because it's faith that sees the invisible. It's by faith, taking God's word, believing what it says, that you get the sense of reality. Now please, please be careful with me and listen intently and purposely.

I'm not after you getting a bunch of emotions or feelings, even though I use these words. I'm not after that. That's not really what I'm after.

I don't think that's what God would be pleased for you to pursue. Because the devil can give you any feeling or experience you want. What we're after is the sense of reality.

There are times when I know that God is with me. I, by faith, believe it. I don't necessarily feel anything tingly or warm or wonderful.

But there's something in my heart that stands at attention. Something in my heart that's aware that He is there in that room with me. That I am not alone.

And it's with that awareness that I enter into the word of God and begin to read. Knowing that God is speaking to me through this book. And my prayers are nothing more than my response to what He has said in this book.

That's the deliberate method. That's the determined method of cultivating the presence of God. Well, number three.

There is a determined routine. A determined routine. I have set the Lord always before me.

Notice the word always. This is something you continually do. You do this whether you feel it or not.

Now, I was sharing this with a group of young men the other day. And I said to them, sometimes when I do this. Before I open my Bible and begin to pray.

As I meditate upon the presence of God. That He is there with me. I don't sense anything.

I don't have no sense of reality. That may go on for five minutes. It may go on for 30 minutes.

But I don't open this book and start reading. Until I am, by faith, seeing and experiencing the presence of His person. Because why read this? This holy word of God.

You will not have understanding apart from His help. All you're going to do is read for information. Because that's what you've been trained to do all of your church lives.

You're going to read and hopefully you'll find a verse that might give you some comfort. Or some peace or some joy. But you're going to read.

And after you've done so, you'll close your Bible. And you probably can't remember by 10 o'clock what you read at 7 a.m. No, no. Don't waste the word of God like that.

Get your heart ready. Get it warm. To the presence of God.

And then when you begin to read. You will find you'll have to reach for a Kleenex box. Because you'll see your eyes will begin to be moistened.

Because you know God is speaking to you through the word of God. But it's something you always do. When I don't feel, cannot be consciously aware of His presence.

I don't say, well, tomorrow morning we'll give it another try. No, sir. I've learned I can't wait till tomorrow morning.

Because if I wait till tomorrow morning. Something's going to come up to deter my heart. And my heart will be even duller.

And I'll want to do it even less. No. That moment is the moment you do business.

That's the moment you don't leave until you get the conscious awareness of His presence. Otherwise, you're on a downward spiral, my friend. Deal with it immediately.

A determined routine. If you please, you can just simply say, practicing the presence of God. This is what we're talking about.

This is what David is teaching us here. He consistently practiced throughout his day the presence of God. A determined routine.

Oh, how we need God. You say, but I know. I'm saved.

I have God. Oh, yes. But we're not talking about the knowledge of your salvation.

We're talking about the knowing that He is with you. And His abiding presence is with you. Number four.

A determined focus. A determined focus. I have set the Lord always before me.

Before me. He says, I put the Lord right there before me. I act as if God's right there in front of me.

What does He mean by that? Well, I think He means this. A mind fixed upon the Lord. He has set His mind.

He has fixed, focused His mind upon the Lord. Isaiah 26.3 You will keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee because He trusts in You. So what is your mind fixed upon mostly? You answer the question right now.

Please, answer it to your own self. What is your mind mostly fixed upon? If you don't fix your mind, the world will fix it for you. It will focus it for you.

The world, life, trials, living, work, relationships, children, spouses. All of these things will begin to determine the focus and the attention of the mind. No sir, you've got to be determined here.

There has to be a determined will, a focused mind. I'm going to set my mind on the Lord and His presence, that He's with me always. Friends, I'm not speaking to the elders in this church only.

I'm speaking to all of us. This is your God called responsibility. You are as responsible as I am to exercise this kind of determination.

No wonder most of us are weak. No wonder the enemy has his sway and power over us. We're not doing the very essence of what Christianity is.

We're not practicing relationship with God. We have a relationship and therewith we're happy. But friends, what kind of marriage would work that way? I've got the license, we live together under the same roof, we're married, we're related.

No, no, no. No, that relationship has to be continually cultivated. We've already heard what happens.

It can happen over a space of time and over the years. You drift apart if you don't actively, determinedly fix your mind upon one another and cultivate the relationship. Oh, I see it among Christians all these years.

I've grieved as I've watched Christian couples grow apart because they don't cultivate the relationship. How in the world do you believe you can know God and walk with God if you don't cultivate this? It's impossible. Herein is our problem.

Well, we're reformed. We believe in the sovereignty of God. God takes the initiative.

Yes, He does. He is the pursuer. He's the suitor.

But as the bride, we have a reciprocal responsibility as well. The sovereignty of God does not eliminate my responsibility. And according to my effort in this relationship, to that degree I will experience the conscious presence of God.

It's not the blame of the Lord. It's not His fault that our relationship is weak and we know Him so little and we experience His power so, so little. No, it's because we've not done what we should do in the relationship.

What is your fine mind fixed upon? This is where the Word of God is absolutely essential. You've got to fix your word upon the truth. How do you think of God? How do you think when you think about God? It's

been said that what comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.

The most important thing about you is what you think when you think about God. When God comes to your mind, does He come to you as a being very present, very near? A being at your right hand, as David said? Or do you think of Him in heaven, wherever that is? Tell me, what do you think? When you think of the Lord God, do you sense His nearness? Do you believe He's right here at your right hand? Or do you see Him with the pastor? Or the place where the saints gather? Or do you feel as if He's some million miles away? What do you think about God when you think about Him? The Puritan Thomas Watson wrote, The first fruit of love. The first fruit of love.

If you really love Jesus, here is the first fruit of that love. It is the musing of the mind upon God. In common modern vernacular, the first evidence of a true love for God is that the mind meditates, contemplates, studies, thinks about, daydreams about God.

That's what He's saying. He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God.

When I awake, says David, I am still with thee. God said to the psalmist, when I am awake, I am still with thee. God is the treasure and where the treasure is, there is the heart.

And by this way we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon? Can we say we're ravished with delight when we think about Jesus? Have your thoughts got wings? Do they fly away and get distracted onto something else? Do you contemplate Christ in His glory? A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God unless with horror as a prisoner thinks of the judge.

Oh, my friend, how do you think of God? And do you? Do you? Well, there's a determined result here. It's the last half of this verse. Because He's at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

An unshakable spirit is the result of a person who's cultivated the practice of the presence of God in their lives. An unshakable spirit. We don't know what may happen to us.

Not even before this night is over. And we certainly can't predict tomorrow. Your calendar may be full, your schedule is brimming.

But you still can't predict what's going to happen tomorrow. But the Christian who's learned to cultivate the presence of God doesn't need to know. Doesn't need to know at all.

He or she has this firm and resolute spirit. They're unshakable because He's at my right hand. I shall not be moved.

And he or she can face whatever tomorrow brings. Why? Because they know God will be with them. An unshakable spirit.

How are you, my friend? Any least bit of troubling news causes your heart to tremor? Are you easily disquieted when things don't go your way at all? It proves one thing. You have not a mind who's set on God and you're not practicing His presence. Not only is there an unshakable spirit, but an unquenchable power.

There's a power when you're conscious of the presence of God. I need Thee every hour. Stay Thou nearby.

Temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh. It's kind of hard to sin, to give in to temptation when you know God's right there at your right hand. And you're really conscious of that.

Now there are some signs of not cultivating the presence of God. What are they, number one? Just the opposite of everything I've said. Anxiety, worry, and doubt.

Are you a person given to anxiety, worry? Then, my friend, you're not practicing the presence of God. The person who is practicing the presence of God, the news may be terrible, but they immediately go to God because God is their environment. They live and breathe in His presence.

Another evidence that you're not practicing the presence of God is that there's dryness in your service to God. You do what you're supposed to do because you know better. You know you need to do so.

But there's no life in it. It's dry. It's dull.

You're going through the motions. I told you about the pastor this morning who said his ministry had just turned into going through the motions. And what was the reason? And the reason was that in his time on the loan, he was just going through the motions there as well.

There was nothing vital. There was nothing vibrant. Nothing alive.

No sense of God in that closet of prayer. Dryness in our service. Another evidence that you're not cultivating the presence of God is you only turn to the Lord when you're in trouble.

It's the only time you get really serious with God is when the heat's turned up. But brother, I want to say to you, if you want to find the Lord in the time of trouble, and don't we all, we need Him. If you want to find Him in that hour of trouble, set Him before you when you're not in trouble.

Because if you wait until you're in trouble, you'll not do it. You're just not doing it. I've watched this.

I've seen this in my own life as well as others' lives. It's been confirmed over and over. When you do not practice the presence of God and not walking in His presence, conscious of Him, well, when trouble comes, you then are immediately beset with a hundred doubts.

I can't call upon God now. You haven't been walking with Him. You're just playing the role of a hypocrite.

Why would He listen to you now? And you're further depressed. I can't depend upon the Lord because He can't depend upon me. And Satan will do everything he can to keep you from acknowledging the presence and the help of God.

No, no, that's not the time to do it. Beforehand, practice it, learn to do so now, so that when the hour of trial comes your way, oh, you will not be cast out, but you will know that God's help is immediate and certain. Well, there's one great objection to all of this that I always hear when I talk to people about practicing the presence of God.

Do you know what that objection is? How can I focus my mind on the Lord when I must be focused on my work, my job, my task at hand? It takes all my powers of concentration to do my work. How can I practice

the presence of God? Well, David answers the objection. It's right there in your text.

He knew what you were going to object and say. Therefore, he has the argument ready. David answers the objection by saying, because he's at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

In other words, I live as if God is bodily right here at my right hand. Therefore, I engage him in all that I do. Whether I'm at work, I acknowledge his presence and say, Lord, what do you think we ought to do here? When I'm confronted with a difficult situation, a terrible phone call, I've got to give an answer.

Lord, you're right here. What do I do? What do I say? You promise wisdom. David is saying, no matter what I'm doing, I work and labor and function as if God's right there with me.

I engage him. What if Brother Kyle or Brother Brian went to work with you tomorrow? They had gained the permission of your employer. And so they hang around just to watch you, just to observe you.

Because they want to get better acquainted with you and see what you do. Because you spend eight hours at least a day, every day at work. And so they want to get a better idea of what you have to face.

And so there they are with you. Do you think you'd never say a word to them all day long? Do you think you'd never engage them in conversation at all? Do you think you'd never look at them and say something or even wink at them? Acknowledge them at all? Of course not. You would converse.

You would acknowledge them. You would talk. You would engage one another.

Well, my dear friends, greater is He who's with you every single moment of the hour than any of us. He abides with you. He promised, I'll never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

I am with you always. He is there. And He's watching you.

He covers you as a shield and a buckler. He spreads His wings, and under His wings you do abide and dwell. Can you not acknowledge that? Will you not speak to Him? Will you not engage Him in your daily activities? Because He wants to be.

He wants to be your partner. He wants to be your co-laborer. Come unto me, ye who are heavy laden, burdened and heavy laden.

I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. He wants to be there.

Because He loves you. This is the most incredible thing. That the God of the universe, this wise, omnipotent, omniscient God, would delight that He'd want to be with me.

I know He loves me. But you know, I also know He likes me. Because you never like to be around somebody you don't like.

You can love them, but you don't necessarily like them. But God loves you, and He likes you, because He wants to fellowship with you. My dear friend, what I have talked about is not a dream.

It's not for the spiritually elite. It is your potential. It's your promise.

It's your birthright. It's your inheritance. Live it.

Enjoy it. Experience it. God has saved you to walk with you, to talk with you.

That you might know Him in intimacy and in love. Cultivate the presence of God. I have set the Lord always before me.

Because He's at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Amen. Our Father and our God, we are grateful to you tonight for your help.

And I pray that we will not forget this message. Take this mere introduction into this wonderful subject. And may the days to come develop it, Lord, in their hearts.

Make this a church that comes together and experiences the overflow of everyone else's personal relationship with you. Lord, these worship services are not designed, it seems to me, to pump us up, to encourage us, to lift us up, and enthuse us so that we can go out and live the Christian life. That they should be more or less places where we overflow and spill out of our personal walk with you of this week.

And thereby we are encouraged. Oh, help us, Lord, to experience what you died for. Reconciliation with you.

You, the same God that would come in the cool of the evening and commune with Adam and Eve. The same God who walked with Enoch. Called Abraham friend.

Talked to Moses face to face as a friend. Oh, Lord, we delight in you. We want to know you more intimately.

We pray, Lord, that whatever the barriers are that keeps us dull-witted and cool-hearted towards you, you'd help us to remove them. The veil, Lord, has been torn in Christ. Access has been made by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

Oh, set us at liberty, Lord. Let us know the privilege that is ours. Starting even this night, I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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