

# (Clip) Are You in the Inner Circle

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking and valuing the presence of Christ in our lives, using the analogy of concentric circles where those closest to Christ experience His presence more intimately. It challenges believers to press on until they find God, not settling for a superficial faith but desiring a deep, personal relationship with Christ. The sermon highlights the different levels of closeness to Christ and encourages listeners to be like those who are constantly aware of His presence, His power, and His voice in their lives.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:8, John 15:5, Colossians 3:1, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:10, Psalm 27:8, Isaiah 55:6, Revelation 3:20

**Topics:** "Intimacy with Christ", "Pursuing God's Presence"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Several years ago, actually, when I was in this portion of Scripture, maybe a verse or two removed from where we are right now, I first brought up this picture praying Edward Payson. I'm going to his hometown. I've seen his grave.

I'll be heading there in August. In Payson's works, you remember the concentric circles. He basically paints a picture.

Imagine the sun in the middle. Concentric circles moving up. Concentric means they all have the same center.

Concentric circles moving outward like the orbit of planets in the solar system. Christ is in the middle. And you know what? The tighter the diameter, the more real, the closer that Christ is dwelling.

And listen, Payson paints the picture like this. He says those that are closest in, closest to the sun, he says they're the ones who value the presence of their Savior so highly that they cannot bear to be at any

remove from Him. Even their work, he recognizes they need to work.

They can't be in prayer all day or just sitting in their Bibles all day. But even in their work, they will bring up and do it in the light of His countenance. They're knowing His presence right there.

And they're mindful to find that presence. Some of you have heard how Wesley said he was determined to pray until he prayed. He was willing to pray until he found God.

That's the kind of Christianity you want. You want it to where you are going to press on until you find Him. These people, they don't want to ever lose Him.

They don't want to lose one ray, one beam of His light. Now, he takes us out to the next concentric circle. He says, others who to be sure would not be content to live out of Christ's presence, but they're yet less wholly absorbed by it than those on the inside.

And it may be seen a little farther off. Engaged here and there in their various callings, their eyes generally upon their work, but often looking up for the light which they love. But they're just not as sensitive.

Then he says there's a third class. A third circle. A bigger, broader diameter.

Further away. It's beyond the first two. But, it's yet within the life-giving rays.

They're Christians. It includes a doubtful multitude. And by doubtful, he doesn't mean doubtful whether they're saved.

He says they are within the light-giving rays. They're doubtful about what they really want most in life. Many of whom are so much engaged in their worldly schemes, they may be seen standing sideways to Christ.

Brethren, if the truth be known, how many of us are sideways standers to Christ? Looking mostly the other way. Only now and then turning their faces towards the light. Now he goes further out.

Yet farther out amongst the last scattered rays of the sun. So distant that it's often doubtful whether they come at all within the influence of those light beams. They may not be real.

It's a mixed assemblage of busy ones. Some with their backs wholly turned upon the sun. Most of them so careful and troubled about their many things as to spare but little time for their Savior.

The reason why the men of this world think so little of Christ is they do not look at Him. Their backs being turned to the sun, they can see only their own shadows and are therefore wholly taken up with themselves. While the true disciple, looking only upward and inward, sees nothing but his Savior and learns to forget himself.

I would say this, if Christ does not settle down, this is the prayer, that Christ may settle down in your heart through faith. If Christ doesn't settle down in you, what do you have? If you're in there by yourself and you look around and it's just you, your will, your desires, what do you have? What loneliness, what emptiness? Are you there alone? Or is the presence of Christ's own self there with you? His personal presence, His power, at the center of your being, the center of your consciousness, living there. What the height of foolishness to say, well, I believe.

So whatever you're talking about, it must be real. What the height of foolishness to be content with that. Look, you want to be like these people who look up and there He is.

There are the beams of His light, of His glory that radiate. And you have a sense, I'm not alone. He's here with me.

I'm not alone. His blood has covered me. I'm not alone.

His voice speaks to me. I'm not alone. I smell the fragrance of His presence.

I feel Him here. I feel Him on my conscience. I feel Him in my thoughts.

I feel Him in my desires. I feel Him in my hungering and thirsting. I hear Him.

That voice. You don't want to just say, no, it's not true, but I'm a believer. And so it must be true, and you try to persuade yourself of that.

The question is this, is Christ a living reality? And you know what it seems like to those who say, yes, He is. Those are the ones more desperate to get more.

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