

## Monday

**W**e learn from Scripture that growing in Jesus is essential. This happens through reading the Bible, praying, worshipping and praising God, fellowshiping with believers, reaching the world through ministry and evangelism, and by practicing God's presence (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-36).

### GOD'S MOST FREQUENT PROMISE

Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, God repeatedly says, "I am WITH you." This is His most frequent promise. In the beginning He was with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:4-3:24). He gave us the weekly Sabbath because He wanted to spend a whole day exclusively with us (Gen. 2:1-3). Even after the Fall, He instructed Israel to build a sanctuary for Him as a symbol of His presence with them (Ex. 25:8).

The greatest reality of God's presence with us is Jesus. Even His name, Immanuel, proclaims that He is God with us (Matt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14). Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus promised that He would be with us always, even to the very end (Matt. 28:20). He gave us the Holy Spirit to abide with, and in, us forever (John 14:16, 17). The climax of the ages is being with Jesus forever when He comes back the second time (Rev. 21:3).

# Growing as a Disciple of Jesus

## Experiencing His Presence

God is with us all the time. We may not feel His presence, but that doesn't make it any less true. "And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:8). This is God's promise to us today.

What does it mean to experience God with us?

### 1. WE ARE LOVED

On a recent flight from Houston to Chicago, I was seated next to an executive for an information technology company. He flew all over the world and was often gone from home. He missed his family immensely and had a phone number exclusively for their use. Normally his calls were screened, but his family could call him at any time, and they knew he would answer. "No voices sound sweeter to me than those of my wife and children," he told me. "I will stop everything to answer the phone and connect with them."

Our conversation reminded me that I also have a direct line to my heavenly Father. "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him" (Ps. 145:18). He never feels like I am interrupting Him when I reach out in prayer. When I am sick or discouraged, He reaches down to comfort me, or direct others to comfort me on His behalf. When I am excited, I can call out to Him. I have a one-to-one connection to God.

For Ellen White, the ultimate reality of the love of God is His

presence with us. “Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour’s life on earth, we see ‘God with us.’”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. WE ARE NEVER ALONE

God’s presence manifests in whatever manner we need. For the orphan, He is the everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6). For the newborn baby, He is the compassionate Mother (Isa. 49:15). For the lonely, He is the omnipotent Companion that is with us always (Ps. 68:6; 69:33). For the sick, for the deserted, for those going through the valley of death, He promises, “I will be with you” (Isa. 43:2).

One of the most exciting things about God’s presence is the joy it brings. “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11, NASB).<sup>2</sup> I know that no matter what I am experiencing, no matter where I am, God is always with me, helping me to face life with confidence and hope.

## 3. MAKING GOD’S PRESENCE A REALITY IN YOUR LIFE

God is constantly seeking to reveal Himself to us in every aspect of our lives. He urges us to seek Him wholeheartedly. He tells us how in Jeremiah 29:12-14: “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord.” Notice there are two conditions: *calling* and *seeking*.

## 4. CALL ON ME

We distance ourselves from God when we are distracted by such things as work commitments and a busy lifestyle. The problem is not on His end—it’s on ours. We can profess the nearness of God, but not really live in the assurance of it. Talk to Him every day about the issues in your life. Share your life with Him. Let Him guide and bless you.

A few weeks ago, I was having a hard time sleeping. A frustrating situation was replaying in my mind. Restless, I got up and tried watching TV, but I kept hearing a voice softly saying, “Call on Me.” I opened my Bible to Acts 2:25, 26: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope” (NIV). A sense of peace and calm came over me. I took my situation to God in prayer. His presence brought joy and hope to me (Acts 2:28), and I soon fell asleep.

## 5. SEEK ME

We are to diligently seek God every day. If I saw my wife or wanted to spend time with her only every few weeks, we would not have much of a marriage. I want my wife to know I am thinking of her. I intentionally schedule time for us to be together. Even though we have been married for more than 40 years, I am still excited to be with her and learn more about her. Likewise, we are to be intentional about seeking God. When we set aside our distractions and

take time to seek God, we will be blessed by knowing Him. We will be transformed by “the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).

Determine to seek God’s presence every day. He is never farther than a prayer away. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

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## Questions for Reflection

1. Think of an incident in which you felt God’s presence in a compelling way.
2. What can you do to be intentional about recognizing God’s presence in your day-to-day life?
3. Chart the highs and lows of your life. How did you experience God’s presence in each one of them?