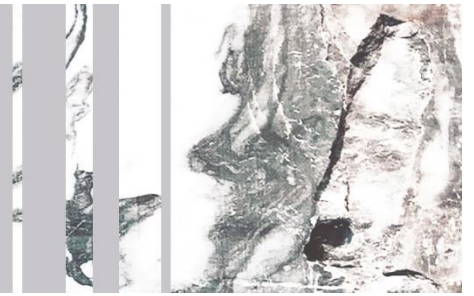


# EXODUS

## Daily Devotions Week 18



### PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

(from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun)

Through the last few chapters of Exodus, we've focused on desiring the presence of God. As the Israelites finished building the Tabernacle, we see them continue to wait for the presence of God to guide them. We long for the same in our own lives. There will be a simple practice in each of the daily devotions to help you cultivate an awareness of Emmanuel—God WITH us.

### DAY ONE

Inevitably every Christmas season we hear Bruce Springsteen's raspy voice belting out, "He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good. You better be good for goodness' sake." We know Santa isn't really keeping track of when we're bad or good. He's not capable of that as a mythical creature.

Because God is omnipresent (always present everywhere), his presence is always near us. He's not using his omnipresence to keep a record of our good and bad. When we are in Christ, there is no condemnation for us.

We have access to God's presence in any moment, especially because of Christ's indwelling presence in each of us through the Holy Spirit. When we believe in and accept Christ and are baptized into him, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Sometimes, though, we all miss the presence of God. We crowd our days with distractions that keep our focus in places other than the movement of God's presence among us. All the while, God is waiting to lead us and love us well.

Through the last chapters of Exodus, we see the Israelites longing for the presence of God. In fact, the closing verses of Exodus show us how much the Israelites depended on God's presence to guide them.

**Read Exodus 40:34-38 in your own Bible.**

**Take a moment to write out these verses below:**

As you read over the verses you've written above, what stands out to you?

In these verses we see the Israelites are guided by the presence of God. When God lifted the cloud from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would break camp and begin to move. Exodus 40:36-37 says, "Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up" (ESV). It seems rather simple. They wouldn't move until God led them to move. *They waited on God before they made a move.* If God moved, they moved. If God didn't move, they didn't move.

So simple to say. Really difficult to do.

When have you had to wait on God? What was it like?

Have you ever moved knowing God was asking you to wait? What was that like?

What are you currently waiting on God for? What would you like to say to God about that waiting?

Write a prayer to him today, inviting him into what you're experiencing as you wait.

### **Prayer for the day:**

*Loving Father, I pray for the patience to wait on you to move before I do. You know where my resolve to wait is thin. Strengthen me through your Holy Spirit to wait on you before I move. Speak to me. May your voice be louder than any other voice I hear. Remove distractions. Fix my mind, heart, eyes, and ears on you, Jesus. Amen.*

### **Practicing the presence today:**

*As you go about your day today, notice how easy it is for God to get your attention. When are you best able to hear God's still, small voice? Take some time to invite God into the ordinary tasks of your day. Say a small prayer before a phone call. Pause before you talk with a family member and invite him into the conversation. Take a breath before you do a portion of your work today, thanking God for the ability to do the task and invite him to be with you in it. At the end of the day, write down your observations. Was this difficult for you? Easy? Don't be discouraged when you stray from your intention to live in his presence. Just turn toward God and begin again. God loves when we invite him into our everyday lives.*

## DAY TWO

Children and Christmas Eve seem to paint a perfect picture of the definition of desire and longing, don't they? There is such anticipation in the heart of a child as they wait to awaken Christmas morning to see what is wrapped for them, sitting under the tree. They've been asked what they want most and the hope is they will find the exact thing their heart desires in their hands on Christmas Day.

Today we're going to read the words of David in Psalm 63. These words capture his heart's desire for God's presence. David longed for God with all of himself. Can we say the same of our hearts, minds, and souls?

**Find a quiet place to read through Psalm 63. Take a moment to invite God into your reading. Ask his presence to guide you as you take an inventory of your life through the lens of this Psalm. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read in your Bible or write them in the space below or in your journal.**

**Read the words of Psalm 63 below.**

*You, God, are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
I thirst for you,  
my whole being longs for you,  
in a dry and parched land  
where there is no water.  
I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.  
Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.  
I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.  
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.  
On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.  
Because you are my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.  
I cling to you;  
your right hand upholds me.  
Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;  
they will go down to the depths of the earth.*

*They will be given over to the sword  
and become food for jackals.  
But the king will rejoice in God;  
all who swear by God will glory in him,  
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.*

**Read the passage again out loud.**

Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down. How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

**As you read the text for the third time, ask yourself these questions (you can write your answers here, or journal your answers):**

How is God inviting me to respond?  
What does he want me to learn from this?  
What am I noticing?

**Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:**

Why is God showing me this now?  
What does this mean for my life?  
How do I need to live differently?  
How do I need to respond to God's invitation?

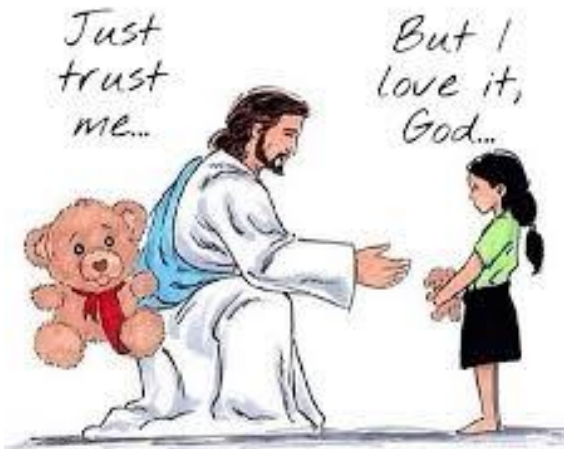
**Take a moment to write a prayer for this day in response to what you've experienced below:**

**Practicing the presence today:**

*Today choose some task you are doing and dedicate it to the Lord. Talk to him about the task before you begin and again when you are done. Do you become any more aware of God in the process? How?*

**DAY THREE**

Several years ago, an image was floating around social media. A picture of Jesus with a little girl, inviting her to surrender her teddy bear to him. Maybe it looks familiar to you.



How true is this at times? What God offers us is much better than what we choose to hold onto. We can't always see the immediate trade, or we'd let go of the lesser version quickly. God invites us to trust him as we let go and lean into life *his way*.

Inviting God's presence to lead us can be illustrated in the same way. The smaller teddy bear we hold represents life on our terms—us being in control of our own choices and future. We get to choose when we move and what we do. And, wow, do we love it at times!

But Jesus asks us to trust him. To lean into his lead. To wait on him like the Israelites waited. To move only when he says to move. To follow him in full surrender. To let go of our smaller version of living *before* we can see the tradeoff.

When in your life has God invited you to surrender something to him that you didn't want to surrender? Was his way better than yours? How?  
What is Jesus currently inviting you to surrender to him? Can you see how choosing Jesus' way would be a better way? How?  
How does this picture illustrate life with and without God's presence? Do you see God's presence as the greater gift? What keeps you from trading for it?

The Israelites knew what it was to choose their own way. In Exodus 32 the Israelites fashion the golden calf and choose to worship God in the way *they* wanted, not how God desired. As a result, God says they can have the Promised Land, but not his presence (Exodus 33:3). They almost miss the greater gift God has to give.

Then we see the Israelites crafting the Tabernacle, giving beyond what is needed as a result of their gratitude to God. They knew what they almost lost and were grateful to God for his mercy.

David pens a Psalm that captures a similar heartbeat. He understood what it meant to choose his own way and then be restored to God's heart.

**Read Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12.**

What stands out to you in this passage?

Do you share David's longing for the presence of God? Why or why not?

Share your thoughts in prayer with God.

**Read Psalm 27:4 in the Passion translation:**

*Here's the one thing I crave from God,*

*the one thing I seek above all else:*

*I want the privilege of living with him every moment in his house,*

*finding the sweet loveliness of his face,*

*filled with awe, delighting in his glory and grace.*

*I want to live my life so close to him*

*that he takes pleasure in my every prayer.*

If you could seek one thing above all else from God, would it be his presence? If not, what would it be?

What would it look like for you to intentionally seek deeper intimacy with God?

Invite God to show you how his presence would be better than anything else you could choose—much like the picture above.

**Prayer for the day:**

*Lord Jesus, I want to desire your presence above everything else. Show me how to invite you in. Change the desires of my heart. Help me to make space for your presence in my life. Amen.*

**Practicing the presence today:**

*Practice the presence of Christ in interruptions today. Throughout your day—perhaps every time you are interrupted—tell God, "I am here." Remind yourself that you are in the presence of Jesus, who had time for people who questioned and interrupted. Remember that some of Jesus' most gracious miracles occurred when he was interrupted. What is it like to offer yourself to be present to God during interruptions? To invite him in?*

**DAY FOUR**

Have you ever seen a young daughter dance with her feet on her father's? It's a heartfelt scene to watch as she moves her feet in sync with her father's. The father's strength picks her legs up with each step, allowing her to move *exactly where her father moves*.

Inviting the presence of God to lead us looks quite similar to this dancing scene. We only move where the Spirit goes and in his strength we get there.

So, what does it look like to practically walk in step with the Spirit? Paul shares what it looks like in Galatians 5.

**Find a quiet place to read through Galatians 5:16-26. Take a moment to invite God into your reading. Ask his presence to guide you as you take an inventory of your life through the lens of this Psalm. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read in your Bible or write them in the space below or in your journal.**

**Read the words of Galatians 5:16-26 below:**

*<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever<sup>[a]</sup> you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (NIV)*

**Read the passage again aloud.**

**Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down.**

**How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?**

**As you read the text for the third time, ask yourself these questions (you can write your answers here, or journal your answers):**

How is God inviting me to respond?  
What does he want me to be learning from this?  
What am I noticing?

**Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:**

Why is God showing me this now? What does this mean for my life?  
How do I need to live differently?  
How do I need to respond to God's invitation?

**Prayer for today:**

*Holy Spirit, I long to walk in step with you. Give me courage to look honestly with your loving gaze at where my life isn't in line with your best for me. Help me to walk in your ways with your strength. Guide me with your grace and your love. Amen.*

**Practicing the presence today:**

*Today, set an alarm at a regular interval (hourly or so) to remind you throughout the day of God's presence. When the alarm goes off, spend five minutes reading Scripture, praying, or just being with Jesus. Notice what this is like for you. Do you invite the times of prayer or is it difficult? Invite the Holy Spirit to meet you either way.*

DAY FIVE



As you begin your time with God today, pause and listen to the song “Fade Away” by Passion. You can find it [here](#).

Read through the lyrics as you listen.

### **Fade Away**

*Speak to me*

*You're the only voice I want to hear*

*Walk with me*

*Show me who you are as I draw near*

*If you're not in it*

*Then I don't want it*

*Let all else fade away*

*Take the whole world*

*Give me Jesus*

*Let all else fade away*

*Satisfy*

*You're the only one I'll ever need*

*Holy fire*

*Burn away the old that stands between*

*If you're not in it*

*Then I don't want it*

*Let all else fade away*

*Take the whole world*

*Give me Jesus*

*Let all else fade away*

*('Cause) Your name is the only name that matters*

*And your heart is all that I desire*

*And not my will but yours alone forever*

*Here's my life have your way*

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As you listen to this song, what is your heart response? What stands out in this song?  
What other voices are influencing your life right now other than Jesus?  
What needs to fade away in order for you to really see the presence of Jesus in your life?

**Read Exodus 33:14-18 and Exodus 40:34-38.**

The Israelites were led through the wilderness by the presence of God—the very thing that distinguished them from all other nations and people.

How does the presence of God distinguish you from the culture around you?  
If you were to invite God to lead you—only moving when he said to move—what would look different in your life right now? What do you need to lay down in surrender to King Jesus so he can lead you with his presence?

**Prayer for today:**

Lord Jesus, if you're not in it, I don't want it. Help me to see what else needs to fade away in my life. I want to be different than the culture around me. I want others to see *you in me*. *Be the difference in me. Open my heart to your presence more and more in this day. You are worth it. Amen.*

**Practicing the presence today:**

*When a song comes to mind today, pay attention to it. Could this song be a word of God to you? If it is, tell God what it means to you to have him come near you in this way.*