

A Quest for More Series
“More of God’s Presence”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
January 3rd, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

We are at the very beginning of our 40 days of fasting and praying as a church. What an exciting way to begin 2010. I’ve got great expectation for this new year. Throughout my lifetime and experiences with God, I’ve often used the phrase, “The Glory of God.” We often use it to define what worship is. Also we have talked about different bible characters like Gideon, Mary, Moses, and Abraham, this phrase has also been used in describing their stories. This phrase that we have so often used is “the presence of God.”

As we have used this phrase over and over, I have left wondering if we really understand what it means, because I don’t think I really know what it means. We use it all the time in the church but what does it look and feel like? I have wondered, “Where can we find God’s presence? I mean, do we even have to look for it? Isn’t it everywhere?” And even more so, “Is it even important for us to seek God’s presence?”

We’re beginning a new series this morning entitled “MORE”. Today, we begin with a desire for More of God’s Presence. So, what does that really mean?

Over the last month or so, I have done a lot of praying and thinking about these questions and God’s presence. Today, I would like to humbly attempt to answer these questions according to what I found in scriptures. The passage that I would like to focus on is **Exodus 33:1-15** then we’ll look at the benefits of walking in God’s presence.

BUT FIRST...

[The Threefold Presence of God](#)

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

The Threefold Presence of God

1. Omnipresent – God is everywhere filling all things - **Psalm 139:7, 8** Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. God is present everywhere whether we realize it or not

2. Manifest Presence – God in action – in Genesis the Holy Spirit is present then God speaks and there is action – this is God’s manifest or active presence as opposed to His brooding or omnipresence

3. Personal Presence – God abiding - God breathed into man – man was created for the personal presence of God – God wants all people to be in this relationship with Him

Since the fall of man God has been preparing a way to restore His personal presence in people. Its through Jesus and salvation that He has done this.

The first place God chose to dwell was in Adam - John 14:16 - The believer has been reconstructed and made a fit dwelling for Almighty God. (Ill. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 - 2 words translated Temple in NT - 1). Ieron - The entire temple precinct, the temple mount. 2.) Naos - The Holy place, the sacred dwelling place of God! The Christian is literally a living, breathing Temple of Almighty God! When you get saved, God moves in! Salvation isn’t about getting man into Heaven; it is about getting God into man. It is about making dead men live.

The Church simply needs to get back to realizing the priority of cultivating our relationship with God, we want His active presence but we don’t realize that His active Presence is always a result of His Personal Presence.

Psalm 91:1

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Dwells comes from the same Hebrew word as habitation – the idea this word conveys is of habits – our habits form our lives – He who dwells in the secret place – a habit of spending time with God from the Hebrew yashab a primitive root; properly, to sit down; by implication, to dwell, to remain; causatively, to settle, to marry:--(make to) abide(-ing), continue, (cause to, make to) dwell(-ing), ease self, endure, establish, habitation, haunt, (make to) inhabit(-ant), make to keep (house), lurking, marry(-ing), (bring again to) place, remain, return, seat, set(-tle), (down-)sit(-down, still, -ting down, -ting (place) -uate), take, tarry.

Abide means to remain in; The secret place – is the personal place of a persons intimacy with God

The shadow of the Almighty – is the Holy of Holies – Ark of Mercy – with the wings of the Cherubim casting their shadow over the Ark. The Ark represents:

- a. Resurrection Power – Aarons Rod
- b. Revelation – the pot of Manna – new everyday
- c. Restoration – the Stone tablets of Law bringing order into disorder

Now... let's look at our text:

Exodus 33:1-15

Our text today, picks up in the middle of a very important and exciting moment in the lives of all the Israelite people. The Israelites, not much more than five months ago, had been freed as slaves in Egypt. Their leader, Moses had confronted Pharaoh with the help of God and some miraculous plagues, which lead the Pharaoh to finally let the people go. During their long journey out of Egypt, their path had stopped at the foot of Mount Sinai in the desert. They had camped there for a little over forty days and now God was ready for them to continue their travels.

Starting at verse 1, ***33:1-3a***

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Depart *and* go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' ² And I will send *My* Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. ³ *Go up* to a land flowing with milk and honey...

Put yourself in the shoes of the Israelites upon hearing this command. How would you feel, after being in the dessert for months to have God come and say it's time to go? Wooooo hooooo! Yea! I would start packing so fast and be dancing and singing in excitement just because we were leaving the dessert for a land that was flowing with milk and honey. That definitely beats sand and...umm more sand!

Not only were the people leaving the dessert, but they were going to the land that God had promised to their descendants. God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that they would be given the whole land of Canaan where their children and grandchildren for generations to come could grow up in safety. God was finally fulfilling his promise! The people would have been giddy in expectation of being able to be the first to step into the Promised Land.

On top of all that, God tells them that he will send an angel ahead of them to drive out all of the people inhabiting the Promised Land. That's pretty cool! They get their own personal body guard that is going to go off and do the dirty work for them. How many people would like to have their own personal angel who went out before you in your day to confront the bully at school or that co-worker or boss at work that you have been having a hard time with?

All of the Israelite people had joy and excitement in their hearts as God shared with them, but all of that changed as God added one more thing. At the end of verse three God adds the following sentence. ***33:3b***

...for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.”

WOAH! That stinks! Now imagine being in their shoes? You might not want to! Why was God so angry? Well, as the people were camped at Mount Sinai, Moses was up on the mountain talking with God. On this mountain is where Moses was given the Ten Commandments. As Moses received these new laws for the people, the Israelites got tired of waiting and decided they were going to make a golden calf to worship. As God was speaking to them, the people were already breaking the first two commandments to not have any other gods before thee God and to not have any idols. God had a right to be angry and, in a sense, jealous because the people had rejected him after all he did for them in Egypt.

In verses 4-6 we read that the people went into a state of mourning. ***33:4-6***

⁴ And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. ⁵ For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the children of Israel, ‘You *are* a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.’” ⁶ So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

(explain ornaments – their jewelry, which were used to make the calf but also was a sign of repentance). The Israelites response to God and God’s frustration and anger shows us two things. First, it shows us that nothing can replace the presence of God! The fact that God was sending an angel with them was not enough. Even though it was a heavenly being, assigned from God, it still did not even come close to comparing with God’s presence. They knew, without a doubt, that the only reason they came out of Egypt and the only reason they had survived out in the dessert was because God had been with them and protected them. It is important that in our own relationships with God, we don’t settle for anything less than God’s presence because there are no substitutes.

Second, it shows us that God’s presence needs to be the first and only thing that we truly seek. I think it is sort of ironic that the Israelites got tired of waiting for God and Moses so they created another god, being the golden calf. When they realized this angered thee God and he threatened to not go with them they went into mourning. In our culture there are so many things that we worship and spend our time with other than God. We look for happiness and comfort in the presence of money, friends and family, school, or even in a sense religion. Those things in themselves are not bad to spend time with and definitely can make us happy, but when they take the place of God’s presence in our lives they become idols and begin to pull us away from our relationships with God.

Verses 12-15, helps us to understand this more as we are able to listen in on a conversation between God and Moses. ***walk through **33:12-15*****

¹² Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' ¹³ Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people."

¹⁴ And He said, "My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest."

¹⁵ Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here.

Moses did not want to go anywhere without God's presence. He knew there were no substitutes and that nothing compared with God. He was not willing at all to settle for anything else! Moses truly understood just how important God's presence in our lives really is.

So, if God's presence is so important, how and where can we find it? Verses 7-11 give us some insight into this process. ***walk through **33:7-11*****

⁷ Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass *that* everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which *was* outside the camp. ⁸ So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose, and each man stood *at* his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. ⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the LORD* talked with Moses. ¹⁰ All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man *in* his tent door. ¹¹ So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Vs. 9: the pillar of cloud – represented God's presence in the Old Testament during the Exodus.

I think there are three important things that we can see in this passage about finding God's presence.

First, God's presence was something that the people had to actively enter into. To go and meet with God the people had to walk out to the tent of meeting and go into it. Later on, the tent of meeting was replaced with the temple. In order for anyone to enter into God's presence and worship they had to go to the temple, and even still, God's direct presence was kept in the Holy of Holies in the middle of the temple and only the high priest was allowed to enter into that.

So what does that mean for us? Do we have to be at church or a temple to find God's presence and worship? Not at all! We today, have something that those in the Old Testament didn't have. We just celebrated Christmas, the birth of Jesus.... In April, as in all Aprils on the calendar, we celebrate Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection, that sacrifice changed the way that we, as sinful humans, can approach God. When Jesus died, Matthew 27:51 tells us that the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple tore in half. This symbolized that all were free to come to God now but also that God's presence was not confined to the temple. Because of Christ's death, everyone in this room has the ability to enter into a relationship with God and to stand in his presence having received forgiveness. Jesus promises to never leave us nor forsake us, like he did with the Israelites in the dessert, because he paid the ultimate sacrifice to cleanse us from our disobediences to God.

Second, verse 10 shows us that the response to God's presence is worship. Worship can be anything from a prayer, a song, a shout, a dance, reading scripture, sitting quietly and listening, repenting, mourning, playing sports or doing your homework. As we enter into God's presence we should respond to it in worship which will ultimately bring us closer and deeper into God's presence. When we do this perfectly, it will create an endless cycle where we grow so close to God that we will never be able to get enough. This is where the concept of the phrase, "When the praise goes up, the power comes down" comes into play. A cycle of praise and power coming forth through God's awesome presence!

Third, I think Joshua found and tasted a glimpse of this cycle. It is important to realize that the author is making a point mentioning that Joshua wouldn't leave the tent. Instead, he stayed and basked in God's presence. I think it is also important to note that when you read the book of Joshua, Joshua is the one that leads the Israelites into the Promised Land. The reason for this is because Joshua obeyed God like no other leader before him. The whole theme of the book of Joshua is obedience to God. Joshua knew God so well and was able to therefore lead the people in knowing God as well. The only way that we can know God deeper is to seek his presence and to sink deeper and deeper into it!

So, what does God's presence look and feel like? As I thought about how to answer this question I have to admit that I can't! I think it is different for each person and situation. Some people feel peaceful, others, like the Israelites, enter into a state of mourning and repentance, others get excited and happy, and others sit and reflect on God as they pray.

God's presence can be different every time but it can't easily be explained. Instead it needs to be experienced.

Nothing is more important than seeking God's presence and there is no substitute that can even come close to what God has for us. Christ's death on the cross has built a bridge between Man and God that all are welcome to walk over into God's arms. It is as simple as praying and telling God that you want to begin a relationship with him. When we have a relationship with God we can enter his presence no matter where we are because he promises to be with us. We can worship him and draw nearer to him as we bask in His presence. God's presence and a relationship with him are better than anything else that we can have on the face of this planet!

We know that God's PRESENCE IS PROMISED to us as believers...

Matthew 1:23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"— which means, "God with us."

John 14:20

At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Now.... The Benefits of His Presence

I. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS PEACE

Isaiah 41:10

"Fear not, for I *am* with you; Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.
I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Acts 18:9 & 10 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision:

"Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I AM with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."

II. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS PROSPERITY

Genesis 39:2-5

The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

Genesis 39:21

The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warder.

III. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS PROMOTION

Joshua 3:7

And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so that they may know that I AM with you as I was with Moses.

1 Peter 5:5-6

God makes war against the arrogant, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves under the powerful hand of God that He may promote you at the proper time.

IV. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS POWER

Mark 16:20

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Isaiah 8:9 & 10

Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

V. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS PROTECTION

Genesis 28:15

I AM with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

2 Timothy 4:17

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

VI. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS RESTORATION

Isaiah 43:5 Do not be afraid, for I AM with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.

Jeremiah 15:20

"I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I AM with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD.

VII. HIS PRESENCE BRINGS CONFIDENCE

...BECAUSE IT IS PERMANENT

Ezekiel 48:35

"And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE – Jehovah Shammah!"

[‘Jehovah Shammah’ – one of the Divine Titles of Jehovah] An Athenian orator writing in the second century to the Emperor Hadrian said; “These Christians who know and trust their God are prepared for anything that comes their way for they believe that no matter what happens to them in the future their God will always be there”. [EDWJ 17.12.00]

Matthew 28:20 And surely I AM with you always, to the very end of the age."

Exodus 3:12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

Joshua 1:5

No-one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Conclusion:

As we go through this Quest in our 40 days of fasting and prayer; on a Quest for More.... More of God.... More of His Presence.... It is my prayer that it will begin in your life with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That's where it all starts. He's there. His presence is with you right now. It's up to you to accept it.

And as you do.... You watch... You wait.... You'll see!