



# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

May 21, 2017

## Discussion Guide

### FAITHFUL PRESENCE

#### CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

#### GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DO YOU SEEK TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE? HOW MIGHT YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PURSUIT OF GOD'S PRESENCE? WHY MIGHT YOU PURSUE GOD IN THIS MANNER?

#### DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE NATURE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AS THE DOMINANT THEME OF SCRIPTURE.

- ACCORDING TO THE PSALMIST, WHAT EXPERIENCES ARE POSSIBLE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE?
- WOULD YOU SAY THAT MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THESE EXPERIENCES ARE POSSIBLE AND AS A RESULT PURSUE GOD'S PRESENCE? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT REAL LIFE IS FOUND ONLY IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. CONSIDERING WHAT THE PSALMIST SAYS, HOW MIGHT YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?
- THE PSALMIST ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE GOD WHO MAKES THE LIFE HE DESCRIBES POSSIBLE IS NOW PRESENT AND AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE (PSALM 46.7,11). CONSIDERING THE LARGER STORY OF SCRIPTURE, HOW MIGHT YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS ASSERTION?
- IF GOD HAS TRULY MADE HIMSELF AVAILABLE AND PRESENT, WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO LIVE IN HIS PRESENCE AND NOT JUST LIVING EXPERIENCING SNIPPETS OF HIS PRESENCE?
- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, MIGHT KEEP SOMEONE FROM PURSUING A LIFE LIVED FULLY IN GOD'S PRESENCE? WHAT DIFFERENCE MIGHT THIS KIND OF LIFE LIVED MAKE?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY SPENDING TIME IMAGINING WHAT IT MIGHT BE TO GO ABOUT THE NORMAL ACTIVITIES OF LIFE, ALL THE WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S PRESENCE. YOU MIGHT DESCRIBE THIS LIFE YOU HAVE IMAGINED TO YOUR GROUP MEMBERS. YOU COULD THEN PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER, THAT GOD WOULD GIVE YOU THE GRACE NECESSARY TO LIVE THIS KIND OF LIFE.

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

### WITH-GOD LIFE

THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG PEOPLE, SHARING LIFE TOGETHER IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THEMES OF SCRIPTURE. ONE MIGHT SAY IT IS THE NARRATIVE THREAD AROUND WHICH ALL OTHER THEMES ARE WOVEN. SCRIPTURE BEGINS WITH GOD PRESENT IN HIS CREATION, TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE (GENESIS 1.2) EVEN CHOOSING TO WALK AMONG AND SPEAK WITH THE PEOPLE HE HAD CREATED (GENESIS 3.8). HOWEVER, THIS DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE WAS SEVERED THROUGH PEOPLE'S DISOBEDIENCE, THE OUTWORKING OF THE CURSE BROUGHT UPON CREATION BY PEOPLE'S DISOBEDIENCE (GENESIS 3.23-24). THE LOSS OF GOD'S PRESENCE WAS A SEVERE BLOW TO HUMANITY. HUMANITY LONGS TO EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, A LONGING WHICH WE SOUGHT TO FULFILL BY MAKING A WAY TO JOURNEY TO HEAVEN SO WE MIGHT BE WITH GOD (GENESIS 11.1-9).

IF THE FIRST THREE CHAPTERS OF GENESIS ALONG WITH PEOPLE'S PURSUIT OF THAT PRESENCE IN GENESIS 11 WERE THE ONLY REFERENCES TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG PEOPLE, SHARING LIFE TOGETHER, THEN WE WOULD HAVE AN INTRIGUING BEGINNING TO THE DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE BUT PERHAPS NOT A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THIS DRAMA. HOWEVER, SCRIPTURE NOT ONLY BEGINS WITH THIS IMAGE OF GOD AND PEOPLE SHARING LIFE TOGETHER. IT ENDS WITH THIS SAME IMAGE, THE VERY LONGING OF PEOPLE SATISFIED. AS THE BOOK OF REVELATION DRAWS TO AN END, PORTRAYING THE CLIMAX OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE WORK, THE PRIMARY ASPECT OF THIS WORK HIGHLIGHTED IS GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG PEOPLE. GOD IS PORTRAYED AS DWELLING WITH PEOPLE (REVELATION 21.3) IN SUCH A WAY THEY CAN SEE HIS FACE (REVELATION 22.4) BECAUSE THE EFFECTS OF THE CURSE HAVE BEEN REVERSED BY GOD'S REDEMPTIVE WORK (REVELATION 22.3). IN GOD'S PRESENCE, LIFE IS RESTORED TO IT INTENDED STATE (REVELATION 21.4) AS IS CREATION ITSELF, FOR WE SEE CREATION RENEWED IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT RESEMBLES EDEN ONCE MORE COMPLETE WITH BOTH A RIVER (GENESIS 2.10; REVELATION 22.1) AND A TREE OF LIFE (GENESIS 3.22; REVELATION 22.2).

BECAUSE SCRIPTURE BEGINS WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG PEOPLE, A PRESENCE WHICH IS SUBSEQUENTLY LOST, AND ENDS WITH THIS PRESENCE RESTORED, THE VERY DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE IS ABOUT THE MOVEMENT TO RESTORE WHAT HAS BEEN LOST BY PEOPLE, LIFE WITH GOD, IN HIS PRESENCE. THAT THIS LIFE IS INTENDED FOR PEOPLE IS UNDERScoreD THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT WITH REFERENCES TO THE

CITY OF GOD AND PEOPLE'S LONGING TO EXPERIENCE GOD IN THE PLACE OF HIS DWELLING (PSALM 42-43). IN THESE REFERENCES, FOUND THROUGHOUT THE PROPHETS BUT CONCENTRATED IN THE PSALMS, GOD'S PEOPLE ARE PORTRAYED AS LIVING TOGETHER IN A CITY WHERE GOD DWELLS, AND IN HIS PRESENCE THEY FIND PROTECTION, STRENGTH, AND LIFE (PSALM 46; 65; 68; 76; 84; 87; 99; 122; 125; 132-134; 137). WHILE THE OLD TESTAMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT LIFE IS MEANT TO BE LIVED WITH GOD, IN HIS PRESENCE, IT DOES NOT FULLY EXPLAIN HOW THIS LIFE IS TO BE RESTORED, THOUGH ISAIAH HINTS THAT IT WILL INVOLVE THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE (ISAIAH 7.14; 40.1-5). IT IS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT GOD'S PLAN TO RESTORE THE EXPERIENCE OF HIS PRESENCE IS REVEALED. IN JESUS, GOD APPEARS AND LIVES AMONG PEOPLE AND THUS BEGINS A REDEMPTIVE PROCESS OF REVERSING THE EFFECTS OF PEOPLE'S DISOBEDIENCE (JOHN 1.1-14). INTERESTINGLY, GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN INVOLVES HIS PRESENCE.

GOD'S MEANS OF RETURNING LIFE TO WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO BE, A WITH-GOD LIFE, INVOLVES NOT JUST HIS EXPERIENCE FOR A SHORT TIME BUT A WILLINGNESS BY PEOPLE TO PURSUE AN ONGOING LIFE WITH HIM IN THE PRESENT. THOSE WHO WISH TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S REDEMPTIVE WORK ARE INVITED TO LIVE IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS WHO IS PRESENT WITH THEM THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT (JOHN 14.15-20; 15.1-8; MATTHEW 28.20). IN SHORT, GOD'S PLAN TO RESTORE PEOPLE TO A LIFE MARKED BY HIS FULL PRESENCE INVOLVES THE PROVISION AND EXPERIENCE OF HIS PRESENCE IN THE PRESENT. THUS, SCRIPTURE BECOMES NOT JUST A DRAMA ABOUT PRESENCE LOST AND GAINED, BUT A DRAMA ABOUT HOW THAT PRESENCE MIGHT BE EXPERIENCED EVEN IN THE PRESENT MAKING IT THE DOMINANT THEME OF SCRIPTURE.

## THE TEXT

### PSALM 46: *THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE*

A LIFE LIVED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE DOMINANT THEME OF SCRIPTURE, THE VERY IMPETUS BEHIND GOD'S REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT IN CHRIST. THROUGHOUT THE PSALMS, WE FIND EXPRESSIONS OF GREAT LONGING FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF THIS LIFE LIVED IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT SUCH A LIFE ENTAILS. OFTEN THESE DESCRIPTIONS ARE FILLED WITH METAPHOR AND INVOLVE PROPHETIC IMAGERY WHICH DESCRIBES A LIFE WHICH WILL BE RATHER THAN THE LIFE WHICH IS. SUCH IS THE BENT OF PSALM 46. IN THIS ANCIENT HYMN, THE AUTHOR DESCRIBES VARIOUS ASPECTS OF LIFE IN GOD'S PRESENCE WHICH MAY BE ROOTED IN SOME HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE, THE MOST LIKELY BEING THE INVASION OF SENNACHERIB AND HIS DEFEAT

OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM IN 701 B.C. (2 KINGS 18.17-19.37). HOWEVER, THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS LIFE ALSO LOOKS TO THE FUTURE, EVEN IN THE RECOUNTING OF SENNACHERIB'S INVASION, TO WHAT LIFE WITH GOD WILL BE LIKE AND THE WORLD THIS WITH-GOD LIFE CREATES, WHICH IN SOME WAYS RESEMBLES EDEN. THE PSALMIST THEN ISSUES A REFRAIN WHICH REMINDS THOSE HEARING/SINGING THE HYMN THAT THIS GOD IS NOW PRESENT AMONG PEOPLE, AND AS SUCH HIS PRESENCE MAY BE EXPERIENCED.

THIS ANCIENT HYMN HAS THREE STANZAS, EACH PROBABLY ENDING WITH THE REFRAIN ABOUT GOD'S PRESENCE (PSALM 46.7,11). HOWEVER, IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THAT A COPYIST ERROR RESULTED IN THE LOSS OF THIS REFRAIN AFTER VERSE 3 WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE THE HYMN PERFECTLY BALANCED WITH THREE STANZAS, EACH FOUR LINES LONG. HOWEVER, IN THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE, WE TAKE SCRIPTURE AS WE HAVE IT, NOT AS WE IMAGINE IT SHOULD BE. THEREFORE, WE DO NOT INSERT THIS REFRAIN AFTER VERSE 3, NO MATTER HOW HIGHLY LIKELY ITS ORIGINAL PLACEMENT IS.

THE FIRST STANZA IS A POWERFUL STATEMENT OF FAITH IN THE GOD WHO IS PRESENT AND ABOUT THE LIFE SUCH A PRESENCE MAKES POSSIBLE. THE PSALMIST BEGINS BY NOTING THAT GOD IS A REFUGE, STRENGTH, AND HELP TO PEOPLE. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE PSALMIST DOES NOT SAY THAT GOD PROVIDES THESE THINGS BUT RATHER THAT HE IS THESE THINGS, AND THAT THESE THINGS ARE EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE IN HIS PRESENCE, WHICH THE PSALM ASSERTS IS NOW AVAILABLE. THE PSALMIST THEREFORE CONCLUDES THAT IF GOD IS THESE THINGS AND IF HIS PRESENCE IS AVAILABLE, THEN THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE SUCH A PRESENCE HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR THOUGH THEY EXPERIENCE THE GREATEST OF CATAclysms, THE VERY UNDOING OF THE EARTH ITSELF. THE MENTION OF THE CHURNING WATERS MAY BE A DIRECT RESULT OF THE MOUNTAINS FALLING. HOWEVER, IT IS MORE LIKELY A REFERENCE TO THE PRESENCE OF EVIL AND CHAOS AS THE SEA REPRESENTED THESE IN THE MIND OF ANCIENT PEOPLE. THEREFORE, THE CATAclySM DESCRIBED IS NOTHING SHORT OF THE UNDOING OF EARTH/LIFE AT THE HANDS OF GREAT EVIL. EVEN IN THIS, THOSE WHO LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR. LIFE IS SECURE AND SAFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

THE SECOND STANZA TURNS TO DESCRIBE HOW THE PSALMIST HAS EXPERIENCED THIS TRUTH IN HIS OWN LIFE, THE BESIEGING OF JERUSALEM, PROBABLY BY SENNACHERIB. HOWEVER, THE PSALMIST DOES MORE THAN PROVIDE A HISTORICAL RECOUNTING OF HIS EXPERIENCE. HE USES HIS EXPERIENCE TO POINT TO A FUTURE REALITY, A LIFE IN GOD'S PRESENCE WHICH ONE DAY WILL BE POSSIBLE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BY MELDING

IMAGES OF THE FUTURE AND PRESENT, THE PSALMIST IS NOT ONLY DESCRIBING WHAT WILL BE BUT WHAT CAN NOW BE, A REALITY HE KNOWS TO BE TRUE BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

THE PSALMIST BEGINS BY DESCRIBING A RIVER WHICH MAKES GLAD THE CITY OF GOD. THE CITY OF GOD IS A COMMON WAY OF REFERENCING JERUSALEM BUT ALSO LIFE WITH GOD IN A FUTURE RESTORED WORLD. THAT THE PSALMIST HAS THE LATTER IN MIND IS EVIDENT WITH HIS REFERENCE TO THE RIVER. NO RIVER RAN THROUGH JERUSALEM. HOWEVER, A RIVER DID RUN THROUGH EDEN (GENESIS 2.10) AND IS PART OF THE NEW JERUSALEM DESCRIBED IN REVELATION (REVELATION 22.1). THEREFORE, THE PSALMIST IS MOST LIKELY DESCRIBING A FUTURE LIFE WITH GOD. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THAT THIS LIFE IS ONE MARKED BY GLADNESS. FURTHER, THIS LIFE IS VERY SECURE. WHILE ONE MIGHT NOT IMAGINE A FUTURE LIFE WITH GOD INVOLVING THE EXPERIENCE OF A BESIEGED CITY, THE PSALMIST HAS EXPERIENCED THIS AND SEEN GOD'S DELIVERANCE. THUS, HE USES THIS IMAGE TO DESCRIBE THE GREAT SECURITY OF THIS LIFE WITH GOD. THE GOD WHO IS PRESENT WILL NOT ALLOW HIS PEOPLE TO FALL, BUT HE IS A HELP. NOTHING CAN RESIST HIM, NOT EVEN RAGING NATIONS BECAUSE ALL HE HAS TO DO IS SPEAK AND THE EARTH MELTS. THIS IS THE LIFE WHICH THE PSALMIST HAS EXPERIENCED AND KNOWS WILL ONE DAY BE EXPERIENCED IN ITS FULLNESS. HE CONCLUDES THIS STANZA WITH A REFRAIN NOTING THAT THE GOD HE HAS JUST DESCRIBED IS NOW PRESENT AMONG PEOPLE.

THE FINAL STANZA IS AN INVITATION TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE TO WHAT GOD IS GOING TO DO FOR THE PURPOSE OF DRAWING THE WORSHIPER TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE PRESENT. THE STANZA BEGINS WITH AN INVITATION TO COME AND SEE WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE. AT THIS POINT THE TEXT READS AS IF THE ACTIONS TO BE DESCRIBED ARE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED, BUT UPON FURTHER READING IT IS APPARENT THEY HAVE NOT. WHAT WE FIND HERE IS COMMON TO THE PSALMS, PROPHETIC SPEECH WRITTEN IN THE PAST TENSE BECAUSE OF THE CERTAINTY OF THE PSALMIST THAT GOD WILL ACCOMPLISH WHAT IS DESCRIBED. WHAT IS SEEN IS AN ENDING OF ALL WAR AND THE REMOVAL OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF WAR THROUGH THE DIRECT ACTION OF GOD. IN SHORT, THE VISION PORTRAYED IS THAT OF A WORLD AT PEACE. FURTHER, THIS WORLD IS ONE IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE COMMANDED TO STOP STRIVING (WARRING) AND TO COME AND KNOW GOD IN AN EXPERIENTIAL MANNER BECAUSE GOD INTENDS TO BE KNOWN AND EXALTED AMONG ALL IN THE WHOLE EARTH. THE PSALMIST ENDS HIS HYMN WITH A REFRAIN THAT THIS GOD, THE ONE WHO IS MOVING ALL TO THIS FUTURE, IS NOW PRESENT WITH PEOPLE.

IN THIS ANCIENT HYMN, THE PSALMIST DESCRIBES LIFE IN GOD'S

PRESENCE AND WHAT THIS LIFE WILL BE LIKE ONE DAY. HOWEVER, HIS REFRAIN DRAWS THE WORSHIPER BACK TO THE PRESENT, TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN THE PRESENT. THIS POWERFUL GOD WHICH WILL RESTORE THE WORLD AND CREATE A PEACEFUL LIFE CAN BE EXPERIENCED TODAY AND THE WORSHIPER IS INVITED TO ENTER INTO THIS RELATIONSHIP TODAY WITH THE IMPLICATION THAT THE LIFE DESCRIBED CAN BE EXPERIENCED, IN PART, IN THE PRESENT THROUGH GOD'S PRESENCE.

## REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

LIFE WITH GOD. IT IS THE CORE OF THE DRAMA OF SCRIPTURE, THE ESSENCE OF THE LIFE GOD IS SEEKING TO RESTORE IN AND THROUGH CHRIST. THE STORY OF SCRIPTURE BEGINS WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD. IT ENDS WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD. ITS MIDDLE IS SATURATED WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD. IT IS HARD TO MISS THE POINT. WE ARE MEANT TO LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE, A WITH-GOD LIFE. I THINK I GRASP THIS. . .FOR THE MOST PART. HOWEVER, I OFTEN SEEK TO LIVE WITH GOD IN SNIPPETS RATHER THAN TO LIVE A WITH-GOD LIFE. THERE REALLY IS A DIFFERENCE.

LIVING WITH GOD IN SNIPPETS IS SEEKING GOD'S PRESENCE IN MY "QUIET TIME" OR MOMENTS OF PRAYER OR WORSHIP BUT THEN LIVING THE REST OF MY LIFE ON MY OWN. IT IS NOT THAT I DON'T KNOW GOD IS THERE, WAITING TO HELP ME SHOULD I BE IN NEED AND CALL OUT TO HIM. IT IS JUST THAT I DON'T SEEK TO LIVE WITH AN AWARENESS OF GOD'S PRESENCE, INTERACTING WITH HIM IN MY DAILY COMINGS AND GOINGS. TO INTERACT WITH GOD IN ALL OF MY COMINGS AND GOINGS, TO SEEK AN AWARENESS OF HIS PRESENCE EVEN WHEN I DON'T NEED ANYTHING, THAT IS A WITH-GOD LIFE. UP TO THE PAST FEW YEARS, I DIDN'T FEEL ANY GREAT SENSE OF URGENCY TO SEEK THE LATER OVER THE FORMER. IT SEEMED TO BE A MATTER OF PERSONAL PREFERENCE MORE THAN NECESSITY. I HAVE COME TO CHANGE MY MIND.

I HAVE COME TO THE POINT IN MY LIFE WHERE I REALIZE THAT LIFE IS MEANT TO BE LIVED WITH GOD, IN HIS PRESENCE. THIS IS HOW WE WERE CREATED TO LIVE AND HOW WE WILL ONE DAY LIVE. IN FACT, MUCH OF WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE WORLD IS THAT WE DO NOT LIVE IN THIS WAY. WE ARE EXPERIENCING A LIFE SEPARATED FROM GOD, A LIFE BROUGHT ABOUT BY SIN. HOWEVER, REAL LIFE IS FOUND; LIFE THE WAY IT IS MEANT TO BE ONLY IN GOD'S PRESENCE. HERE IS THE THING: THIS PRESENCE IS AVAILABLE TODAY. WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT TO EXPERIENCE LIFE AS IT IS MEANT TO BE BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR GOD TO SHOW UP AND MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE. HE ALREADY HAS IN THE PERSON OF JESUS NOW PRESENT TO US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. THIS MEANS THAT LIFE, REAL LIFE IS AVAILABLE, BUT NOT AS SO MANY OF US HAVE BEEN SEEKING IT. REAL LIFE IS NOT GOING TO BE FOUND IN OUR SELF-HELP STRATEGIES OR IN OUR STRIVING TO FIGURE THINGS OUT AND TRY HARDER. REAL

LIFE IS ONLY FOUND IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND THAT LIFE IS AVAILABLE NOW. SO, I THINK I WILL SEEK GOD'S PRESENCE.

## REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

LIFE WAS CREATED TO BE LIVED WITH GOD AND LIFE WILL ONE DAY BE LIVED WITH GOD. THE FACT IS THAT LIFE, REAL LIFE CAN ONLY BE EXPERIENCED IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, A LIFE LIVED WITH HIM. I THINK WE KNOW THIS BUT ARE CONVINCED THAT SUCH A LIFE IS NOT POSSIBLE. WE MUST WAIT FOR IT. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO US NOW IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND WE CAN LIVE WITH HIM NOW. WE CAN LIVE A WITH-GOD LIFE NOW. IN FACT, JESUS INVITES US TO LIVE THIS VERY LIFE SAYING WE WILL NOT FIND LIFE ANY OTHER WAY (JOHN 14.6; 15.1-8). HOWEVER, MANY OF US CONTENT OURSELVES WITH BRIEF SNIPPETS OF GOD INTERSPERSED THROUGHOUT OUR DAILY LIVES. WE SEEK HIM IN PRAYER HERE, OR IN BIBLE STUDY THERE. WE LISTEN FOR HIM THROUGH A SERMON OR SEEK TO FEEL HIM AS WE WORSHIP IN SONG. BUT, MOST OF OUR LIVES ARE LIVED APART FROM GOD, WITHOUT A FULL AWARENESS AND CONNECTEDNESS WITH HIM. BUT THIS IS NOT THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE NOR IS IT THE WAY IT HAS TO BE. WE REALLY CAN EXPERIENCE GOD NOW AND LIVE WITH HIM NOW. TO DO THIS, WE MUST FIRST DECIDE THAT WE INTEND TO LIVE WITH GOD. WE THEN BEGIN TO MOVE THROUGH LIFE, GOING ABOUT OUR DAILY DUTIES ALL THE WHILE MAKING OURSELVES OPEN TO GOD, SEEKING TO ACKNOWLEDGE HE IS PRESENT WITH US. THIS DOES NOT TAKE WORDS OR DEEP THOUGHT, SIMPLY OPENNESS AND AWARENESS. HOWEVER, AS EASY AS THIS SOUNDS, IT IS OFTEN QUITE DIFFICULT, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE ARE JUST STARTING. WE WILL OFTEN GO FOR LONG STRETCHES OF TIME, SOMETIMES DAYS AND THEN SUDDENLY REALIZE THAT WE HAVE NOT SOUGHT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S PRESENCE. WHEN WE REALIZE THIS, WE SIMPLY ASK GOD TO FORGIVE US AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT APART FROM HIS GRACE WE ARE UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING OTHER. WE THEN MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT DWELLING UPON OUR "CLOSEDNESS" TO GOD AND SEEK, BY GOD'S GRACE, TO LIVE OPEN TO HIS PRESENCE. YOU MIGHT SEEK TO LIVE THIS WAY OVER A NUMBER OF WEEKS AND CONSIDER JOURNALING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE.



SENIOR  
PASTOR  
**BLAKE**  
SHIPP

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