

In Jesus Steps

Disciples for Life

Unit 2: Christian Leadership

How to positively influence the attitudes and actions of others for Jesus Christ.

Lesson 4

The Presence of God

Day One

Trusting God

One of the best ways to develop the four kinds of fruit (*Character, Deeds, Making Disciples, and Praise*) discussed in lesson 3 is to spend time in the presence of God. To be in God's company is to be in contact with love, righteousness, perfection, and holiness. As we dwell in Almighty God's presence, He develops and molds us into holy leaders with hearts like His, and a passion to see His kingdom come to fruition (completion, culmination).

Moses was one of the great leaders of the Hebrews, and his story is told in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. He was an ordinary man whom God used for extraordinary purposes. About 1446 B.C. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush to face Pharaoh, the king of Egypt and the most powerful man on earth at the time. Not only was Moses to face such a ruler, but he was also to demand the release of over two million working slaves, all descendants of Isaac and Isaac's forefather, Abraham. By himself Moses lacked the personal strength and knowledge to complete this assignment. He had to trust and rely on God each step of the way; first, to face Pharaoh, and second, to lead the Israelites out of bondage.

Great leaders like Moses continually trust and depend on God. In Exodus 5–10, when Moses was seeking the Israelites' release from captivity, God sent ten plagues before Pharaoh finally allowed them to leave Egypt. A lesser leader might have become discouraged with the seemingly lack of progress after each plague. Think about our society today. We expect fast solutions as well as fast food. We want God to work within our time schedule. If He does not, then we are tempted to try and run things ourselves or just run away from our assignment altogether.

Read Exodus 13:17–18 and answer questions 1–2:

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." ¹⁸So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. Exodus 13:17–18a

1. Was there another, shorter route to the Promised Land (v. 17a)? Yes No (Underline One)
2. Why did God lead the people around by the desert road and toward the Red Sea (v. 17b)?

Read Exodus 14:1–2 and answer questions 3–4:

Then the LORD said to Moses, ²“Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon.”
Exodus 14:1–2

3. To whom was the LORD speaking and giving leadership directions (v. 1)?

4. What do these verses indicate about God’s communication and presence with Moses?

The Lord was speaking directly to Moses and making His presence known. Moses acknowledged God’s presence by obeying His orders and directions. However, those orders placed Moses and the Israelites between the sea and the approaching Egyptian army. Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting the Israelites go and sent his chariots and horsemen after them. It certainly appeared that they were trapped for capture or slaughter!

Read Exodus 14:12 and answer questions 5–8:

“Didn't we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” Exodus 14:12

5. Describe the Israelites’ attitude toward their great leader Moses.

6. Share a time when you thought you were caught between “the devil and the deep blue sea” (i.e., you were facing two risky alternatives or choices).

7. Regarding your answer for #6, how was your attitude similar to, or different from that of the Israelites?

8. If there is anything happening in your life right now that makes you nervous or afraid, please explain and share how your discipleship team can pray for you.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #6–8 with your discipleship team next week.

9. Read Exodus 14:18. Name another reason God led the people into their current position between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea.

"The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." Exodus 14:18

10. Read Exodus 14:21–22. What miracle had God planned and executed with perfect precision and timing?

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²²and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.
Exodus 14:21–22

11. Read Exodus 14:28. What happened to the Israelites' enemies?

The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. Exodus 14:28

12. Read Exodus 14:31. How did the Israelites' attitude change?

And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. Exodus 14:31

God's plan was to bring the Israelites into relationship with Him. He had chosen them to be His people and to experience His presence. However, a relationship with God begins with trust. God wanted the Israelites to trust Him completely, no matter the circumstances.

God is dependable, reliable, faithful, and truthful. He is also loving, merciful, holy, and all-powerful. God was not only worthy of the Israelites' trust, but He is worthy of our trust and the trust of every human being: past, present, and future.

Definition: *Trust* in God is the solid belief in His reliability, truthfulness, ability, and strength. It means that we feel safe and have full confidence in God, no matter the situation or condition of our lives. In the same way we are commanded to *trust* in God, we are to *trust* in Jesus (John 14:1).

13. Read Isaiah 26:4. Why do you think the LORD commands and values your personal trust in Him?

Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal. Isaiah 26:4
(Rock signifies strength, protection, endurance, and refuge.)

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #13 with your discipleship team next week.

We covered five of God's attributes in *Unit One: Who Is God?* (God is good, merciful, loving, sovereign, and holy). God wants to be desired for who He is, and that takes faith. We cannot see God, but we still trust He is completely good, merciful, and loving.

When we do not treat God and His word as truthful and reliable, we are attributing falsehood to God. We are placing God in the same category as the devil, the father of lies (John 8:44) or humans, who are prone (likely) to lie (Numbers 23:19). This is a grievous (serious) sin—it is rebellion.

Even though the Israelites had seen God's mighty miracles in their release from slavery and deliverance by the parting of the Red Sea, time proved that they still did not trust Him. When they initially reached the Promised Land, God told Moses to send spies to check out the land. Joshua and Caleb were two of the 12 spies who explored the land for 40 days. These two men trusted in the LORD.

Although it was a good land, ten of the spies did not trust God. They were afraid of the current inhabitants and stirred up fear in the Israelite camp. The people trusted the rebellious ten rather than God.

14. Read Numbers 14:9 (shown below), the words of Joshua and Caleb upon their return. How did these two men honor and trust in the LORD?

"Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."
Numbers 14:9

15. Next read Numbers 14:11. Why was the LORD angry with the Israelites?

The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them?"

Numbers 14:11 (Contempt means to disregard, disrespect, or scorn.)

God had revealed Himself to the Israelites through miracles, signs, and wonders. He had shown Himself faithful and true by delivering them from the most powerful army in the world at that time. Yet, they still disrespected God by not believing He could give them victory over lesser opponents. This is the reason that they were made to wander in the desert for 40 years before returning to the land. It was one year for every day the spies explored the land.

God had every right to be angry and dole out consequences for unbelief. Even Moses had issues with trust at times and suffered God's displeasure. So, let us take note and not become proud, thinking, *If I had seen God part the Red Sea, I wouldn't have rebelled like they did.*

16. Read Numbers 20:12. What was the reason God gave to Moses and Aaron for not allowing them to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land?

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."
Numbers 20:12

How had these two seemingly faithful leaders failed to trust God? At one point during their desert journey, God told Moses and Aaron to speak to a rock and it would pour out water for the Israelites to live (Numbers 20:8) and not die of thirst. Instead, after they had gathered the assembly together, Moses spoke angry, rash (thoughtless) words and struck the rock twice with his staff. According to Scripture, Moses had rebelled against the Spirit of God by these words and actions (Psalm 106:33).

There may be a tendency to think, *poor Moses!* He had followed God and put up with so much whining and rebellion from the people. His few harsh words and his striking the rock does not seem so bad. But yes, it was a serious transgression.

First, remember the miraculous way that Moses was called into service from a burning bush (Exodus 3:1–10). *Second*, God sent His Spirit to be at Moses' right hand and thus provide a spectacular departure from Egypt with the parting of the Red Sea (Isaiah 63:11–14). *Third*, the Spirit of God was working supernaturally in and through many people and circumstances during Moses' desert trek (Exodus 31:3; Numbers 11:17; Nehemiah 9:20–21).

Moses had an amazing history with God and His presence. Both he and Aaron were held to a higher standard of obedience. In fact, all leaders are held to a higher standard of obedience and righteousness.

Moses' disobedience was a plain case of rebellion. Trusting and obeying God is not a partial or part-time commitment. It is complete and full-time allegiance. Moses had been following God for many years and had been used in extraordinary ways. He had no excuse for disobedience. And in Jesus Christ, neither do we.

We also need to understand that Moses' past faithfulness did not give him the right to stop obeying and trusting God. *He never earned the "right" to alter or change the instructions God gave to him.* In fact, because of not following God's specific instructions with the rock, Moses' consequence was being kept from leading or entering the Promised Land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 32:48–52). He was not allowed to participate in the fulfillment of his lifetime mission.

God will give you opportunities to mature through various circumstances as you are tested. I pray that you will embrace and trust God in every situation! Watch out for the sin of self-reliance or independence from God. There may be a tendency to depend on *yourself* or *others*. Guard against relying on your own personality, abilities, and resources or those of other people.

Acknowledge the Lord each day as the source of all that you have and all that you are, including natural talents and spiritual gifts. Always be thankful and give God all the glory. Amen.

Personal Action Steps

(These steps are designated personal since they are not meant to be shared with your team. However, if by examining your motives, you would like prayers in a certain area, please ask your discipleship team.)

17. Pray and examine your own motives. Confess any wrong motives as the Spirit leads and convicts. Ask God to forgive you. Pray.

- a. I like being the center of attention. Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)
- b. I want to command others and be served by them. Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)
- c. I take credit for being strong, nice, smart, generous, or fun. Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)
- d. I am proud of my self-reliance and independence. Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)
- e. I depend on other people rather than depending on God. Yes No Sometimes (Underline One)
- f. I prayed the following prayer: Yes No (Underline One)

My Lord and my God, I am so sorry for all selfish motives (list as the Spirit leads). Please give me pure motives and radically holy thoughts. I desire to love, trust, obey, and serve You fully in Christ. May I give You all the credit and recognition that You deserve. Amen.

Action Step

18. Memorize Proverbs 3:5–6: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*
Proverbs 3:5–6

Accountability: Be prepared to share your memory verse #18 with your team next week.

—End Day One—

Day Two

The Temple of God, Part A

Leadership is not for the weakhearted. It was certainly not an easy task moving a stiff-necked (stubborn and arrogant) people across the desert for 40 years! The people continued to sin. They continued to grumble and complain. They continued to be ungrateful and unappreciative. How did Moses keep his peace during this hard, hot, and hectic journey?

Read Exodus 33:13–14 and answer questions 19–20:

“If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” ¹⁴The LORD replied, *“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”* Exodus 33:13–14

19. Why did Moses want the Lord to teach him His ways (v. 13)?

Underline “favor” in verse 13. The Hebrew word that the NIV Bible translates favor is *hen* (חן). Another way to translate *hen* is “approval or affection for someone.” It also can mean grace. Moses knew God was with him and he did not want to lose His presence through ignorance. He wanted God to continue to accept and approve of him. Moses knew for God to find satisfaction and even pleasure in his activities, he must understand God’s ways and follow Him. The human will (choice) is only meaningful as it follows the Lord’s will (choice).

Notice that Moses totally identifies with his people. He asks God for His favor or approval to lead in the challenging task ahead. Look in verse 13 where Moses reminds God “this nation is Your people.” Of course, God does not need to be reminded of anything, but He is pleased to relate or communicate with us on our level.

Moses wanted to understand and recognize not only who God was, but how He viewed people and circumstances. Moses desired wisdom to distinguish between the right way and the wrong way, between God’s way and people’s way. Moses was seeking God for the right purposes. He was not seeking God for arrogant or selfish reasons.

Although Moses had heard God’s voice, experienced His miracles, and was used to free two million people, he was not satisfied. Moses still wanted more of God! A leader like Moses is *constantly* and *persistently* seeking and, thus, finding more of God.

20. What was God’s reply to Moses (v. 14)?

If Moses did not know God, he would not have been able to lead the people in the right way for their spiritual good. The Israelites needed a leader who truly heard and obeyed God. They did not need a leader who just pretended to know God.

Moses wanted the satisfaction and peace of knowing that he was in God's will. He desired to follow God's plan and purpose for himself and for the people he was leading. He needed God's direct supervision. God understood what Moses was asking and said: "*My Presence will go with you.*"

The word in Hebrew that the NIV translates presence is *panay* (פָּנָה), which literally means "face." The same word is used in the Aaronic or priestly benediction of Numbers 6:24–26. When God turns His face toward you and gives you peace, you have been blessed with His acceptance and attention. God is with you.

Definition: A *benediction* is a prayer for God's blessing or an affirmation that God's blessing is at hand.

Definition: The English noun *presence* is to be present. It means that someone or something is in the immediate vicinity or area at the current time. When we speak of God's *presence* we usually mean we can feel God is near to us and influencing us in some way. This is one of the ways God expresses or involves us in relationship.

God's presence was with Moses and to a lesser extent with Aaron, Miriam, and other prophets (Numbers 12:2, 6–8; Micah 6:4). However, God wanted all the people to experience His presence, which included the two million plus people under Moses' care. *They were God's people and He desired to be near to them.*

Read Exodus 25:8 and answer questions 21–22:

Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Exodus 25:8

Definition: A *sanctuary* is a holy place designated for worship and meeting with God.

21. What did God want the Israelites to make for Him (v. 8a)?

22. What was God's promise to them after they built the sanctuary (v. 8b)?

The Lord gave Moses specific directions for the Israelites to build a sacred and holy place for Him to dwell or live among His people (Exodus 25:10–40). God loved His people and He wanted to bless them by His presence. By dwelling among the Israelites, He was calling them into relationship. He was giving them an opportunity to know and obey Him. God was using Moses as His leader to bring all the Israelites into relationship with Him.

God gave Moses specific directions (the Law) on how the Israelites were to live in order to stay in a right relationship with Him. When they did not follow the Law, they sinned; they were guilty of wrong actions against God and had to be punished.

23. Read Exodus 25:17. What was made of pure gold?

“Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.” Exodus 25:17

Definition: The word translated *atonement cover* in the NIV Bible is the Hebrew noun *kaporte*, (כַּפֹּרֶת), meaning propitiatory and to cover over sin. The NAS and NKJ Bibles translate the word *kaporte* “mercy seat.”

Definition: *Atonement* in English means reparation, reconciliation. An easy way to remember the term is to break it apart—“at-one-ment.” It is the act of bringing together into harmony those who have been separated, such as enemies. In this case, *atonement* means to be at one with God.

Definition: *Propitiation* is defined as the removal of wrath or anger by the offering of a gift.

When the Israelites sinned, they were separated from God and His presence. The atonement cover was the place where the blood of approved animals would be offered to God as a gift for sins committed. Without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22). There at the mercy seat, the Israelites' sins would be forgiven, and relationship restored.

Read Leviticus 16:14, 17:11 and answer questions 24–25:

He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. Leviticus 16:14

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Leviticus 17:11

24. Where does the priest sprinkle the blood of the sacrificed bull (v. 16:14)?

25. Why was slaughtering innocent animals and sprinkling their blood on the atonement cover necessary (v. 17:11)?

God was, is, and always will be holy (pure, sacred, set apart). He does not dwell among sinful people. Instead of abandoning His sanctuary or dwelling place from among the Israelites when they sinned, God designed a method of sacrifice. In this way, the sins of the person(s) were passed onto the innocent animal. The animal was killed for the offense. By this system God proclaimed that sin is hideous, and rebellion demands death.

Graciously, God took the lives of animals rather than the lives of human beings. The life of the creature is in the blood, and it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. Thus, animals were offered repeatedly as people continued to sin.

No matter how cute or sweet an animal may be, it is never more important than a human. We enjoy and care for animals as the Lord's creation, but only man is made in His sacred image. (If you are interested in learning more about the sanctuary and sacrificial system of the Old Testament, read Exodus and Leviticus.)

God's presence is both real and holy. He carefully lays out the requirements for His presence for a divine purpose. He wanted a relationship with the Israelites, and He wants a relationship with us and the people we are influencing.

Humanity desires relationship with God also, whether they know it or not. God made us for relationship with Him and we are not complete without Him. In the words of Augustine of Hippo from his book, *Confessions*: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

The whole of God's Word is about bringing us back into relationship with Him. God's promises and covenants are centered on His presence and bond with humanity (Haggai 2:5-7). The pinnacle of God's presence and relationship is Jesus Christ becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). God sent His Son to pay our sin debt so we can be in His presence forever.

Action Steps

26. Memorize Exodus 33:13-14.

"If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." ¹⁴The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

27. Ask God to speak to you through Exodus 33:13-14. What did God say or impress upon you?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your memory verse #26 and answer #27 with your team.

—End Day Two—

Day 3

The Temple of God, Part B

28. Read Exodus 40:34. How did the Lord manifest (make known) Himself to the Israelites?

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
Exodus 40:34

All these words—*Tent of Meeting, tabernacle, sanctuary,* and *temple*—describe a holy and sacred dwelling place of God. God is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7) and not limited to a specific place. He can be everywhere in time and space concurrently (at the same time). Nevertheless, God is gracious to make His presence known in a way that people can embrace, understand, and live through. As God told Moses, no one may see His face and live (Exodus 33:20).

29. Read Exodus 40:38. How did the Israelites see and feel God's presence?

So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the Israelites during all their travels. Exodus 40:38

The tabernacle was portable because the Israelites were a nomadic people at this time in history. A nomad is a member of a tribe that roams from place to place, seeking pasture for its animals. But even after the people entered the Promised Land and did not have to roam from place to place, God's sanctuary remained enclosed by a tent. It would be hundreds of years before David became king of Israel and wanted to build a royal house for God, one worthy of His glorious appearance.

30. Read 2 Samuel 7:11–12. What was God's response to David's desire to build a royal dwelling for Him (v. 11)?

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹²When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.” 2 Samuel 7:11–12

When David said that he wanted to build a house for God, God turned the tables and said He was going to establish a house for David. We will look more closely at this house, but note the LORD *did* agree to have a royal house or temple built for His purposes. However, David would not be the one to build it because he had shed blood (1 Chronicles 28:3). Instead, that honor was given to David's son Solomon who did build it in Jerusalem (circa 960 BC). The contents of the first sanctuary were placed into this second sanctuary, the Temple. Then the people traveled to this specific place to worship in the LORD's holy presence.

Definition: A *house* in the normal usage of the word is a physical dwelling place where family or related people live together. *House* in the context of 2 Samuel 7:16 means a royal family line,

including ancestors (born before David) and descendants (born after David). God is not talking about a physical building but physical people.

31. Read 2 Samuel 7:16. Who ultimately fulfills this promise of God to David (Psalm 89:3–4; Matthew 1:1–16; Luke 1:31–33)?

“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.” 2 Samuel 7:16

The House of David, also known as the Davidic line, was established and God’s promise (covenant) was ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. David’s descendants, Mary and Joseph (stepfather) were the legal, earthly parents of Jesus. God sent His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary through the power of His Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34–35). Jesus is fully God and fully man; He is the King who reigns forever. David’s earthly kingdom (house) and God’s heavenly kingdom merge (join together) in the person and heart of Jesus Christ.

It is in this union of earthly and heavenly kingdoms that we rejoice! Jesus makes it possible for us to be part of this holy heritage (birthright). As believers we are members and sons of this royal house and kingdom (Galatians 3:29, 4:6–7). What does this mean for us and our future?

32. Read Revelation 21:3. Where will God dwell (reside) and make His presence known?

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.” Revelation 21:3

Read Revelation 22:4–5 and answer question 33–36:

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. Revelation 22:4–5

33. Will you see God’s face (v. 4)? Yes No Maybe (Underline One)

34. Will there be night (v. 5a)? Yes No (Underline One)

35. Who will give His people eternal light (v. 5b)?

36. How long will they (Believers) reign or rule with Christ (v. 5c)?

For Christ’s followers the future is dazzlingly bright! We are God’s people and will have the fullness of His presence. We will see His face and have perfect fellowship with our triune God. We will be a kingdom of priests and reign with Christ forever (Revelation 2:26, 5:10, 20:4). Plus,

there will be no more death, mourning, pain, tears, or sadness of any kind for *the old order of things has passed away* (Revelation 21:4).

We looked at the past and the future of God's presence, but how does it work in the present? God's presence is made a reality in a believer's life through Christ. The atonement cover in the Old Testament pointed to Christ, whose blood sacrifice on the cross permanently takes away sin (Hebrews 9:21–28, 10:1–18). We are now free from our transgressions (wrongdoing) and can be in relationship with our holy God.

37. Read Acts 2:38. How do you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 and answer questions 38–41:

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

38. Where does God dwell through His Holy Spirit (v. 19)?

39. What is the price *you* were bought with (v. 20; 1 Peter 1:18–19)?

Action Steps

40. Think deeply on God being present in you by His Spirit. What is one thing you will do differently because of this truth? Verses you may read and consider in conjunction with your answer: 1 Corinthians 9:27, 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; James 3:9–10.

41. Think about what it means to honor God with your body. Verses to read and consider in honoring God with your body: 2 Corinthians 4:10–12, 5:19–20. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a specific opportunity to honor God with your body. What happened?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your Action Steps #40–41 with your team.

—End Day Three—

Day 4

Fearing God's Presence

Read from your Bible Psalm 51:10–11, 66:18, Isaiah 1:15–16 and answer questions 42–44:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Psalm 51:10–11

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Psalm 66:18

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! ¹⁶Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Isaiah 1:15–16

42. When we have habitual sin in our lives or hearts, what is something God might not do?

43. How would *not* having prayers answered affect a Christian leader?

44. How do Christian leaders get back into a right relationship with God when they have sinned and grieved the Holy Spirit (See 1 John 1:7–10)?

God may withdraw Himself from relationship with us because of sin or He may allow us to see or feel His displeasure. The Bible does not give a set formula as to whether God will withdraw or actively discipline. The important thing to remember is that God acts perfectly in every situation.

Therefore, as living sanctuaries or temples of God, we should live our lives in holy fear. It is a holy fear because it is a healthy fear. It enables us to turn from sin and choose right attitudes and godly behavior. A holy fear leads us to joy in God's presence. Scriptures to consider on fear are Jeremiah 5:22–25; Ezekiel 38:20–23; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 19:5.

Believers never get to a place where our actions or thoughts do not matter. As Christian leaders we should always be on guard against our own sinful natures as well as the devil's schemes (1 Peter 5:8). Recall from *Day One* of this lesson that Moses sinned against God after 39 years of ministry leadership. He had been in the desert all that time with the Israelites when he failed to follow God's instructions. God still held him accountable.

45. How do you think God's disciplinary action with Moses affected the other Israelites?

46. How does God's disciplinary action with Moses impact *you* today?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #45–46 with your team.

In Christ our sins are forgiven, but God will still discipline or punish us for corrective purposes while we are here on earth (Hebrews 12:5–11). Leaders are even more apt to be disciplined as they are being trained for kingdom responsibility. Lives are at stake.

In the Old Testament a watchman's duty was to protect lives. He was called to watch for danger by standing in the tower on the walls or at the gates of the city. "He also patrolled the streets and, besides protecting the city and its inhabitants from violence, he was required to call out the hours of the night."¹ Israel's prophets were the *spiritual* watchmen. Their duty was to watch for and listen to God. Then they would communicate His words of warning and hope.

Among the messages the prophet Ezekiel communicated to Israel was that each man and woman is responsible for their own sins. He also told the people they would be held accountable for not warning or helping other Israelites stay in a right relationship with God.

The apostle Paul takes up this truth and is diligent about proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. He faithfully warns his listeners of life and death without the Savior. In neither the Old, nor the New Testaments does God hold anyone accountable for the *outcome* (result) of His message. He does hold us responsible for giving or sharing it. In other words, you cannot make or force people to change their ways. Your duty or charge is only to give out the heartfelt message of *turning to* and *staying in* Christ.

Both the "occupational" watchmen and the "spiritual" watchmen (prophets) were concerned about the people. They wanted to protect them and keep them safe. Watchmen identify with those in their care and speak warnings out of love and compassion. A Christian leader is a watchman or watchwoman for Christ.

Read from your Bible and ask God to speak to you through Ezekiel 3:16–23; Acts 18:5–6, 20:25–31 and John 10:1–11. Answer questions 47–48:

47. What is God teaching or impressing upon *you* through these verses?

48. As a Christian leader, how do *you* feel about being a watchman or watchwoman for Christ?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers #47–48 with your team.

¹ "Watchman," *New International Bible Dictionary*, Merrill Tenney and J. D. Douglas, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 726.

The prophets heard from God, and they were blessed with His presence. They were also blessed with grave responsibilities which required their full obedience. Similarly, Jesus tells His disciples in Luke 12:48: *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*

The prophets had challenging lives and we can expect the same (Matthew 5:12; 2 Timothy 3:12). Christian leaders may face challenges, hardships, and persecution. But as the prophet's reward from God was great and His presence real, so our rewards can also be great and His presence real (John 14:19–26, 16:7; Hebrews 11:26; Revelation 3:12, 21).

Definition: *Fear of the Lord* is defined as a mix of reverence, dread, and wonder. It is complete awe of the reality of God's holiness and power. It is trusting, serving, and worshipping God with all our hearts, while recognizing our accountability. It is fearful veneration or respect. Its archaic (ancient, old) use meant it was the power to inspire reverence or fear.

Definition: *Fear* is the feeling or condition of being afraid. It is a distressing emotion caused by an awareness or anticipation of danger.

Read from your Bible 1 Samuel 6:19–20; Ezra 9:13–15; Psalm 90:7–9; Luke 5:6–11; Revelation 1:17–18 and answer question 49:

49. What are some reasons to fear the Lord's presence?

Action Step

50. Review today's lesson. Do you still want to be a Christian leader and affect others for Jesus Christ? Yes No Maybe (Underline One).

51. If you still want to be a Christian leader, how will studying and meditating on the fear of the Lord help you lead?

52. If you are not sure or do not want to be a Christian leader, meditate on Genesis 1:26; 1 Corinthians 6:2–3; Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 2:26, 5:10, 22:4–5. How do these verses affect your answer?

Accountability: Be prepared to share your Action Step #50–52 with your discipleship team.

—End Day Four—

Day 5

Joy in Union

53. Read Matthew 10:28. Who does Jesus tell us not to be afraid of, and who to be afraid of?

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28

54. Read Matthew 10:32–33. Why does Jesus say *not* to be afraid (vv. 29–32)?

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. ³²"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven." Matthew 10:29–33

55. Read Luke 10:20b. Why should you not be fearful and rejoice?

... but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20b (Rejoice is to be glad, celebrate, and express joy.)

Christ-followers should be rejoicing each day because our names are written in heaven. We will be in God's full presence for eternity and see Him face to face! We do not fear complete separation from God like sinners banished to hell. Nor do we fear eternal punishment, because Christ's death on the cross paid the full penalty for our transgressions (sin, wrongdoing).

We are not afraid of man or circumstances because God is in complete control. Through Christ, God is using all situations in our lives to make us more like His Son. God will use even the most shocking events for our eternal good and for His glory.

Fear of God is acknowledging His power, majesty, and holiness; it's aligning (bringing into correct position) our lives with this reality. Thus, we revere, worship, and stand in awe of our Creator. We *do* fear disobeying or disappointing Him by our words, attitudes, or actions. *Fear of God* originates in love. We care for God so much that we truly desire to serve Him; we experience pain and anxiety when we do fail Him.

Christian joy and fear of God are not mutually exclusive (contradictory, unable to be true at the same time). God's presence through His Holy Spirit brings both the right holy fear and joy. When we have the proper fear of God (Proverbs 1:7), we understand what Christ has done for us. We have been saved from God's righteous wrath over our disobedience and sin. Our names are written in heaven; therefore, sing and rejoice! The fact that the Supreme Ruler has chosen us for Himself causes us to fear Him, not fear man, and *rejoice!*

Read Exodus 33:15–18 and answer questions 56–60:

Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?” ¹⁷And the LORD said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.” ¹⁸Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”
Exodus 33:15–18

- 56.** What distinguished Moses and God’s people from all others (vv. 15-16)?
- 57.** What should also distinguish Christians from other people (v. 16; 1 Corinthians 3:16)?
- 58.** Ask God for His presence to go with you wherever you go. What was God’s reply to you?
- 59.** If you have ever moved ahead in a plan or project without God, explain what happened and what you learned:
- 60.** How did Moses seek even more of God’s presence (v. 18)?

Moses entered God’s presence with humility. He did not have a list of demands or gripes, nor was he seeking God for his own greatness and fame. Moses wanted to know God so he could follow Him appropriately.

Moses desperately wanted to be in relationship with God. He pleaded with God not to send him and the Israelites anywhere unless He was going to be with them. Without God’s presence, they would be like everyone else on earth—not God’s unique and distinct people. In addition, Moses would not be an effective leader and it would appear as if God had abandoned them.

God agreed to go with Moses. But Moses did not stop pushing for more. We should take a lesson from Moses and never give up in desiring more of God. Even though Moses communicated with God and experienced wondrous miracles and visions, Moses was not satisfied. He asked to see God’s glory. He wanted to see the Divine Majesty in all His holiness and splendor. Moses was willing to risk the terror of God’s holiness for this new revelation.

God was pleased with Moses’ desire and persistence. However, it was too dangerous for Moses to see God in His fullness (Exodus 33:20) and God denied the request. Concerned about Moses’ safety, God answered his prayer in a unique way. He gave Moses a new experience of His name and character (Exodus 33:19). God placed Moses in the cleft of a rock and allowed him a partial view of His glory (Exodus 33:22–23).

61. How would you rate your desire for God's presence in your life? Low, Medium, Medium High, High (Underline One)

62. Explain your desire to know God in #61.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answers to #61–62 with your discipleship team.

63. Read Matthew 1:23. What is another name for Jesus?

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). Matthew 1:23

Read Romans 5:8, 6:23, 8:1–4; Galatians 3:26–4:7; Jude 1:24 and answer question 64:

64. How do you know God is pleased with *you*?

Read 1 John 1:3–4 and answer questions 65–68:

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete. 1 John 1:3–4

65. What has the apostle John seen and heard that he is proclaiming?

66. With whom do those who have heard and believed John's message have fellowship(v. 3)?

67. What gives John and other believers complete joy (v. 3)?

68. Would you like to have complete joy? Yes No (Underline One)

Most people *would* like to have complete joy. The Greek word, *chará* (χαρά), that we translate joy, is defined as a feeling of inner happiness, rejoicing, gladness, delight. It also means a state or condition of happiness or blessedness.

Some people try to distinguish between joy and happiness, but this is a false distinction. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary happiness is a state of well-being and

contentment, joy. Likewise, Vocabulary.com defines happiness as that feeling that comes over you when you know life is good and you cannot help but smile. It is the opposite of sadness. Happiness *is* a sense of well-being, joy, or contentment.

What people are trying to distinguish between is *holy* joy/happiness and *worldly* joy/happiness. *Holy* joy/happiness is rooted in God alone and not in circumstances. It is an inner joy that comes from trusting and abiding in Jesus. *Worldly* joy is dependent on self and outward circumstances.

This reminds me of two missionaries from India who have written and spoken about God and how He distinguished Himself in their community. One of the Hindus in the village where the missionaries were serving had accepted Christ as his savior. As a result He was “kicked out” of his family and his livelihood; he lost his money and possessions.

Hindus worship many gods and may have many idols set up in their homes. One of the saved man’s Hindu friends said to him, “How can you be happy? You do not have anything.” He was perplexed by his answer, so he decided to observe his activities.

The Hindu friend kept watching this new Christian. Finally, the Hindu came to church with a big sack. He walked up to the pastor and emptied his idols onto the ground and said, “I want to trade in these gods for the happy God!”²

God wants us to be happy *in Christ*, not in various situations or circumstances. *All joy comes in and through God’s Son*. The closer our union with Christ, the more complete our joy will be. That means giving up idols, wrong desires, and anything else that sets itself against knowing and serving Christ Jesus.

Read Ephesians 3:11–12 and answer questions 69–70:

... according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹²In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:11–12

69. In whom did God accomplish His eternal purpose (v. 11)?

70. How can we approach God with freedom and confidence (v.12)?

If we are lacking joy, we need ask God to have the fruit of joy through His Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–33). We are not required to manufacture joy but to rely on the Holy Spirit for this fruit. Now, being in a state of *holy* joy does not deny that we have real emotions.

Are you wondering about this state of joy in Christ Jesus? There are Christians who do not have the joy of the Lord in their hearts. Sometimes Christians are not happy because they have unmet desires or expectations. They are not getting what they want or think they deserve. These desires may be different for each person, and may seem fine at first glance.

² The author read the story on the internet at one time but is unable to locate the original source.

However, when those Christians look at their desires closely, they will see they can be self-centered. *We* too should look closely and ask ourselves, “*Am I at the center of my desires?* For example, when we want something, we should ask ourselves, *Why do I need this?* Invariably, it will lead back to something we think will make us feel better about ourselves. The “self” is not conducive to living in Jesus, the model of *selflessness*.

If we are truly surrendered and praise God for His sovereignty, we will make our requests known, but rejoice in however God answers. Our motives should always be for God’s will and purposes. Therefore, our desire is for God’s glory and not for our own selfish motives.

We run into trouble when we think we know better than God. The desire may even turn into an idol. Anything that becomes more important to us than God is an idol. Both thinking we know better than God and putting anything in place of God are rebellion and sin. Sin will rob us of our joy. The Bible tells us to put to death whatever belongs to our earthy nature (Colossians 3:5–9). We are to replace these sinful attitudes and actions with the “new self” in Christ (vv. 10–14).

As a Christian leader, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, not only for your own sin, but to those you are influencing as well. The goal is not to point fingers or shame anyone, but to lead them gently and lovingly back to Christ.

Again, when we speak of joy, we are referring to a joyful spirit, not joyful circumstances. There are valid reasons, such as the death of a child, spouse, or parent, that may bring a real sense of loss and sadness. But our sadness is not without joy. Sadness and *holy* happiness are not mutually exclusive.

Jesus wept with compassion when He arrived at Lazarus’ burial (John 11:35). He and His friends were suffering loss, but Jesus did not lose His *holy* joy. He trusted in His Father who always has the perfect plan. Right before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He said, “*Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?*” John 11:40

All believers will see the glory of God when we die because Jesus suffered for us in *holy* joy. *For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2). Like Jesus, we radiate *holy* joy because we rely on God’s sovereignty and presence. We seek His perfect will, and we rest happily in His plans.

71. Share a time of distressing circumstances and how God was there for you.

Although God is with us constantly, His presence may be experienced differently. We may not experience God through a burning bush, but He will certainly make His presence known in other ways. One of the recurrent ways God is present with us is through His Word, the Bible (1 Thessalonians 2:13). In *Christian Leadership, Lesson 12: Faith of a Leader*, you will read about brother Yun who trusted that the words in the Bible were God’s words to him so fully that when he slept, he laid the Bible on his chest.³

³ Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Monarch Books, 2002), 30.

All Christians with access to a Bible have the ability to experience God. To experience God, fully understand His teachings, and put them in practice, however, we need the Holy Spirit. No one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11). The Holy Spirit makes God's Word vibrant, active, and alive to us.

There are times when I am reading my Bible that certain verses or passages stir and penetrate my heart. I know in my spirit that God is speaking to me through His Word. He may be confirming my calling, encouraging, teaching, or inspiring me. I feel God's presence and I am grateful, comforted, and motivated to serve Him.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:12–13 and answer questions 72–75:

What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 1 Corinthians 2:12–13

72. What have we not received from God (v. 12)?

73. What have we received from God (v.12)?

74. For what reason have we been given the Spirit of God (v. 12)?

75. Who teaches us the words to speak and explains spiritual realities?

Action Step

76. Read Ephesians 2:18–19 and write a prayer of thanksgiving based on it.

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, . . . Ephesians 2:18–19

Accountability: Be prepared to share your answer #71 and Action Step #76 with your team.

If your relationship in Christ is not as strong and vibrant as you would like it, there is an easy answer. Ask God for a stronger and more vibrant relationship with Christ and trust Him to provide this for you. This is the prayer the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesians, and I pray for you: *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,* ¹⁷*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.* Ephesians 3:16–17

The apostle Paul experienced Christ and had a powerful union with Him through the Holy Spirit. He followed Christ and obeyed Him. He lived Christ daily. As a result, Paul was joyful. He preached about being joyful and modeled it through persecution and imprisonment.

Joy is a precious and needed gift in the life of a Christian. A leader who is joyful, even when facing apparent loss, will have a godly influence on others. Pray for and practice joy in God's presence and share the gospel with others so they too can be exceedingly glad.

You may go through times when you are just not happy. Satan may be putting thoughts in your head to torment and hurt you. There are other times when you are ill or facing intense persecution. You may be losing sight of God's presence and starting to focus on yourself and your pain. Cry out to the Lord and stop berating (scolding and criticizing) yourself. Jesus loves you and will see you through to victory. Trust Him.

Let us pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in praying with humble, sincere, and pure heart:

O God, create in me a pure heart to seek You and Your Holy presence each day. Give me more of You in Christ Jesus. I pray that I never try to exalt myself in any way. May I seek holiness, wisdom, intelligence, and humility for Your honor and not for my recognition, honor, or attention. I seek Your presence O LORD to love, obey, and serve You with an undivided and true heart. You are my Leader, Christ Jesus; make me a holy leader in God's service. Amen.

Action Step: Read the following paragraph and answer question 77:

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). God's presence through His Holy Spirit results in joy. Walk in the Spirit, walk in joy today. Be happy toward everyone. Practice expressing this joy for the next seven days until it becomes a "happy habit."

77. Share an experience with your team from this past week of God's presence and joy.

Accountability: Be prepared to share your Action step #77 with your team. You may have to share the following week, after you've had an opportunity to practice walking in joy.

Steps to Increasing God's Presence and Joy

1. Seek God (Jeremiah 29:11–13).

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

2. Think Jesus (Hebrews 12:1–2; Colossians 3:1–4)

... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:2

3. Be Thankful (Psalm 100:1–5).

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalm 100:4

4. Examine Conscience (1 John 1:8–10).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

5. Trust Promises (Psalm 16:11, 89:15–16, 90:14; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:10–11, 10:21; John 15:9–11; Acts 2:25, 28; Jude 1:24).

To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— Jude 1:24

6. Obey God (1 John 5:3, 2:13)

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. 1 John 2:3

7. Ask God (James 1:2–7)

But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. James 1:6

—End Day Five and Lesson 4—

Next—Lesson 5: Unit 2: Christian Leadership: Leading by Example

Rev 5/10/2022