



# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

### LESSON 5: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

We will be studying the four ways through which we can benefit from living in the presence of God in this lesson. Luke 10:39-42 talks about how Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teachings and Jesus then said of her "Mary has chosen the good portion." The Bible is full of examples of how people's lives were changed because they lived in the presence of God.

We know that God is with us always, but how do we live with the awareness of the invisible presence of God in our lives?

Serving God does not guarantee an intimate relationship with God! It is in spending time in the presence of God that we come to know Him more.

In the gospel of Luke 10:39-42, we read about Jesus' visit to His close friend's house. His friends were Lazarus and his sisters- Martha and Mary. These verses talk about how Martha received Jesus into their house. But she was so caught up with serving Jesus that she did not have time to sit at His feet and learn like her sister Mary. The key difference between the two sisters was that Mary was practicing the presence of God. She made time to sit at His feet and to learn from Him.

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Let us now look at another portion from the Bible and see how different Mary's and Martha's relationship was with Jesus. In John 11:32-34 we read about how Martha comes to greet Jesus when He arrives on hearing Lazarus's death. Though Martha was the first to greet Jesus it was Mary's statement – "Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died" -- that moved Jesus. It is recorded here that when Jesus saw Mary weeping He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled. Thus the key to understanding the heart of God and having an intimate relationship with Him is in spending time with God!

We also read how Mary anointed Jesus' feet with the very expensive perfume and wiped them with her hair. When others accusingly questioned her actions, Jesus shut their mouths once and for all with this answer, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial" (John 12:7).

In short, being in the presence of God everyday will reveal new facets of God's character and this will birth in us hope, appreciation, intimacy, peace, love, devotion, faith, wisdom, and knowledge. Practicing the presence of God also helps us in understanding what is His will for our lives, and helps us in knowing the purpose for which He has created us.

Let us examine the life of the psalmist, Asaph, and discover how he benefited from practicing the presence of God. In Psalm 73, there are two parts: the first part is Asaph's complaint against the rich and prosperous who get their way by oppressing the poor, and the second part is Asaph praising God and surrendering his life to God. In this Psalm, we see two contrasting responses; it starts off with one perspective and ends with another. So what happens to Asaph that brings about the change? In the first part of this psalm, Asaph

was looking through the world's eyes (temporal perspective). He could see the rich becoming richer while the poor became poorer and he felt that God had turned a blind eye to the wicked. As we continue reading this psalm, we see that verse 17 reveals a decisive moment in Asaph's life. It says, "Until I went into the Sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end". It was when Asaph went into the presence of God that he started seeing things as they really were. God brought about a shift in his perspective. This new heavenly perspective showed Asaph that God is in control of all things.

When we are away from God, we start to think through our human reasoning which has a limited and temporal perspective of the world. By practicing the presence of God, our minds are renewed and we start seeing things the way God sees it.

Let us examine an Old Testament prophet who practiced the presence of God. In 1 Kings, we read about Elijah whom God had raised up to be a fearless prophet enduring the reign of King Ahab. He stood before the king when the king had sworn that he would kill all the prophets of the Lord. This courage and fearlessness in Elijah came as a result of his constant relationship with the Lord. When Elijah prayed earnestly that it would not rain in Israel, it didn't rain. In James 5:1, James reminds us that the power Elijah had is at our disposal even today.

In conclusion, our intimate relationship with God makes all the difference in our lives. Spending time with God, talking to Him, and hearing from Him will help us know His will and enable us to pray accordingly.

Practicing the presence of God leads to transformed lives and changed perspectives!

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## IN REVIEW

- Through the story of Mary, we learn that spending quality time at the feet of God helps us to understand Him better, and teaches us to know the heart of God.
- Through the story of Asaph, we learn that when we spend quality time at the feet of God, our perspectives change, and we see the world through God's eyes.
- Through the story of Elijah, we learn that spending quality time at the feet of God makes our prayers more effective because we know how to pray according to His will.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- What powerful changes have been brought about in your life as a result of practicing the presence of God?
- How has practicing the presence of God changed your relationship with God and with people?
- Has your prayer life changed through studying this portion- Practicing the Presence of God?

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