

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 5: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled Christian Disciplines. This series of lessons introduces the disciplines of a Christian life, including prayer, Bible study, as well as fixing our mind on eternal things. This is exciting content that should energize and renew the spiritual life of mature Christians and propel newer Christians into deeper faith. The material is practical in nature, yet focussed on the many spiritual rewards of a life devoted to God.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 5: PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to help participants understand practising the presence of God in their everyday lives.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson looks at practising the presence of God. If you are unfamiliar with that term, you may want to look into the history of it. *The Practice of the Presence of God* was written in the 17th century by a monk named Brother Lawrence. This man went about his menial everyday tasks trying to cultivate a continual conversation with God. He wrote about his experiences and they have inspired Christians ever since to stay mindful of the presence of God in their lives at every moment. This practice takes discipline, but can be life-changing for a Christian.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ When do you feel that God is with you most? Have there been times when He felt far from you?
- ❖ What do you think is meant by the phrase “practising the presence of God”?
- ❖ Consider the way you live your Christian life. Do you ever get so busy in your Christian service that you neglect spending time alone with God?
- ❖ Who are the people you spend the most time with? In what ways have you become more like these people? In what ways have they become more like you?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

- ❖ **Practising the Presence of God:** One of the mysteries of Christianity is that God dwells in us. He comes into our lives and is always there! Though God is invisible, we can train ourselves to become aware of His presence and to delight in it each and every day. Consider these verses:
 - God chooses to dwell in us! [\(1 Corinthians 3:16\)](#)



- God abides in us! ([1 John 4:12-16](#))
 - There is no where we can go from God's presence. ([Psalm 129:7-8](#))
- ❖ **How to Practise the Presence of God:** How do we become more aware of God's presence in our lives all the time, and walk with Him moment by moment?
- **Start your day with God.** Be intentional about starting your day in prayer. Give your day over to God. Spend time alone with just Him. Listen to Him, learn from Him, and pray to Him. Spend significant time, and don't rush.
 - **Turn the ordinary into holy moments.** When you have ordinary tasks to complete throughout your day that don't require your full attention, invite God into your task. Talk to Him through it. Tell God what you are thinking about, recite Scripture to yourself, and think about what God has done for you.
 - **Practise praise.** No matter what your circumstances throughout the day, practise praising God. Even in trials, stresses (including small things like bad weather, traffic, hard work, etc.), find reasons to praise God. Turn your attention from the troubles around you to God.
 - **Be aware of what God is doing.** Sometimes we pray and miss the answers to our prayers because we are distracted or not looking for them. Expect God to show up and answer your prayers! Look at people around you and pray for them, — even strangers on the street. Watch for the ways in which God is working in the experiences of your life.
- ❖ **Knowing the Heart of God:** One benefit of being aware of God's presence is understanding His heart, — what God values, and loves. This will transform your own heart to be more like His. We will look together at the example of Mary of Bethany, a disciple of Jesus.
- **Worship over work:** We learn that God values time spent in His presence more than work done in His name, by reading the story of Mary and Martha in [Luke 10:39-42](#).
 - As a result of prioritizing time with God, Mary learned more about Jesus and was very close to Him. Serving God did not guarantee an intimate relationship with God, but spending time with Him did!
 - When Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus died, it was Mary's question and watching her weep that moved Jesus to tears ([John 11:32-34](#)). Mary shared her emotions with Jesus and brought her concerns before Him.
 - Mary anointed Jesus' feet with oil, which was a costly act of worship and adoration. She knew His heart and what mattered most to Him. By doing this, she learned how to worship Jesus and honoured God.



- ❖ **Knowing the Perspective of God:** Learning to see the world with an eternal perspective is another benefit of practising the presence of God.
 - **A change of view:** Asaph was a psalmist. Psalm 73 describes how reading God's Word can change us, and give us a better understanding of the world from His perspective.
 - In Psalm 73 there are two parts: Asaph's complaint against the rich and prosperous who get their way by oppressing the poor, and Asaph praising God and surrendering his life to Him. What happens to Asaph that brings about the change?
 - In verse 17 he said, "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.
 - When we are away from God, our human understanding has a limited perspective of the world.

- ❖ **Knowing the Will of God:** Understanding the will of God for our lives is the last benefit we will look at together. In order to please God we must carry out His will for us. Sometimes that plan is to be still in His presence. Other times it will involve action.
 - **Courage in trials:** In 1 Kings 17:1-7 we read about Elijah who was a prophet during the reign of King Ahab. He spoke the words of God when the King said he would put to death all the prophets of the Lord. Elijah was courageous and unwavering in his faith.
 - Elijah knew what God desired of him and obeyed God rather than man. God brought Elijah to a place of refuge where Elijah was provided food by God and spent time alone waiting on God 1 Kings 17:8-24. Elijah knew where he was to go and what he was to do because he was paying close attention to God.

- ❖ **God is with Us:** God promises that He is with us, but we must discipline ourselves to live in this reality. It can be difficult to always be mindful of God, but this mindfulness will keep us in constant prayer and thankfulness. You will find your attitude becomes one of gratitude and joy! Read these verses together to remind yourself of God's promises to you:
 - Joshua 1:9 *Be courageous, God is with you.*
 - Matthew 28:20 *God is with us giving us power to obey.*
 - Hebrews 12:5 *God is with us helping us to be content in Him.*
 - Romans 8:38-39 *Nothing can separate us from God.*
 - Psalm 32:4 *God is with us through trials and struggles, giving comfort.*



DISCUSSION

- ❖ How could you practise the presence of God while doing a daily chore (cleaning house, cooking, sitting in traffic, walking, doing physical work, etc.)?
- ❖ How would it change your day if you spent time with God early in the morning, and spoke to Him throughout the day?
- ❖ When have you had an experience like Asaph's, where you had a change of heart about your circumstances? How can God help us see our circumstances in a different light?
- ❖ How might practising the presence of God affect your relationships with other people around you?
- ❖ What was most comforting to you about this lesson? What was something new you learned?
- ❖ What have you learned in this collection of lessons about Christian disciplines?

PRAYER

Close in a time of prayer. Pray that participants would daily practise the presence of God and set their eyes on Him. Tell God, "Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73: 23-26).