

# EXPERIENCING GOD TODAY

## 2. PRACTISING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

### 1 STARTING WITH FAITH

In Acts 16, we read about a jailer who saw something of God's presence in his people. After being beaten for their faith and put in jail, Paul and Silas began to sing praises to God. This was followed by an earthquake. In response the jailer said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." *This is the first step in practising the presence of God.*

The jailer's question: what must I do to be saved, assumes that he needed to be saved from something. He needed to be saved from the sin that separated him from God. To experience God's presence today, we too need to be saved. We need to be saved from the sin that separates us from God. Isaiah 59:2 says our iniquities have separated us from God and our sins have hidden his face from us, so that he will not hear. To remove this barrier, we need to believe in Jesus. That's it... and that's all!

To practise the presence of God, we do not have to be perfect. Romans 4:5 says, "To those who do not work but believe in him who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness." We are encouraged to believe in him who justifies the ungodly. When we do this, our faith is credited as righteousness. On one side of the scale is a mountain of sin that weighs us down. On the other side of the scale is the righteousness of Christ. This is why Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." Once saved from the sin that separates us from God, we can then step out in faith to enter the realm of the spirit and practise the presence of God...

### 2 STEPPING OUT WITH FAITH

1 John 1:5-7 says, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness, we do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin." This is the next step in practising the presence of God. *Having seen the light and come to the light, we now walk in the light.*

As we walk in the light of God's presence, he points out sin in our lives. God does not do this to condemn us or to make us feel bad. He does it so that we may see our sin and do something about it. As God points out sin in our life, we should welcome it, thank him, seek to change, and move on. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "God's word is there to teach us, rebuke us, correct us, and train us in righteousness. In other words, it is there to help us.

Many of us want to walk in God's presence, but are hesitant to do so. We feel that we are not good enough to walk with God. And we're not! Thankfully, however, God has made another way through Jesus and in his Spirit. The first step is to believe that Jesus died for our all our sins. We should then seek God's help in dealing with the remains of sin. As we walk in the light of God's presence, he points out sin in our life, and we bring it to him for cleansing and forgiveness. We then accept his forgiveness and put it behind us. This is how we practise God's presence. We start with faith, we step out with faith, and we then...

### 3 STAYING WITH FAITH

The need for faith does not end at conversion. Many verses in the Bible encourage us to keep on seeking God. Addressing God's covenant people, Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near." Romans 2:7 says to those who continue to seek glory, honour, and immortality, he will give eternal life." *Amos 5:6 comes straight to the point when it says, "Seek the Lord and live."*

In a world of heavy demands, huge pressure, and high expectations, Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." He then said, "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" This is what it means to practise the presence of God.

To practise the presence of God, we need to slow down to catch our breath. In doing so, we may also catch the breath of God. We need to slow down in our eating, walking, driving, and working. It is hard to accept, but God managed before we burst on to the scene. And he will manage when we are gone!

**The following may help us reflect further on the message**  
we can also use these points as a discussion guide at fellowship groups

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**The first four questions relate to the message on 'Believing in God'**

1. Do you believe in God? Do you believe God is with us now? Do you believe God is working in your life? Has it been evident this week that you believe in God and that God is at work in your life? Why is this important? Note the experience of the believers in Acts 16:22-34.
2. How important is it to understand atheists and agnostics. How should we approach them in our daily witness?
3. With Ecclesiastes 3:11 in mind, discuss the idea of Blaise Pascal that there is a God-shaped vacuum in each of us that cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator.
4. How helpful (or unhelpful) are the so-called philosophical arguments for the existence of God (cosmological, teleological, and moral arguments)? See Psalm 19:1-2.
5. Discuss the first step in practising the presence of God. How important is Romans 4:5 in this process? Why is it important to let people know that faith in Christ is not just a blind leap into the dark?
6. Discuss the idea of walking with God in 1 John 1:5-7. What does this mean and how can we apply this today?
7. We sometimes encourage non-believers to seek the Lord, but how important is this for us who believe? See Psalm 63:1; Psalm 105:4; Isaiah 55:6; Romans 2:7.
8. How do you relate to Paul's experience in Philippians 3:12-14?
9. Is it possible to miss the life and beauty of God in the subway of life? What can we do about this?