

CHANGED #5 – “THROUGH GOD’S PRESENCE”

Review

- Three key words toward change: Surrender (to God’s loving will and heart), Heart (new desires) and Mind (transformed beliefs).

God’s Presence – Not Just His Words

- Exodus 33 14 - Moses: “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”
- Many Christians live as if the path to change is merely about obedience. If you just try hard enough, you can do what God tells you to do. They treat the Christian life as a morality campaign or a self-improvement program. It tends to be more about reading the Bible and doing what it says than about knowing a loving, relational God.
 - ▶ *2 Corinthians 3:18* “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” We are to “see his glory”, and be changed “from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” It’s about love – not just being relieved of our burdens.
 - ▶ *John 15:5* Jesus: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”
 - Life-giving nutrients flow from the Vine to the branches. But the branches must choose to stay connected - to be relational, to benefit from all the Vine wants to give. (Like marriage.)
 - When we stay relationally connected to him we will bear much fruit.
 - ▶ *Matthew 11:28-30* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
 - Too many people want to “learn from him” by just going to the Bible and skipping His presence. But we are to be yoked to him!
- Whether you’re a people-person or not (relational by nature), your heart must turn to God if you expect to be changed.
- God’s presence is through his Spirit – who lives in each person who loves, follows and trusts in Jesus. This isn’t some mystical spiritual force in the air that has to fall upon us. His presence is in us every moment of every day. ▶ *Romans 8:9*, “You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but are in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”
 - Is it wrong to look “up” to speak to God? No, for he is up and out and down and everywhere. Is it wrong to imagine the face of Jesus and speak to him? Again, no. An image can be helpful as long as it’s the

person who is worshipped and not the image itself. But however you think of him, remember this – he is nearer than your breath.

Some practical ways this Presence assists us in becoming more and more like Jesus.

- 1. In his Presence we are humbled and our wills are broken.** We realize our plans and our preferences are nothing in light of His plans and purposes. We say with Jesus, “Not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). James 4:6 “God gives grace to the humble” – we find God’s acceptance in our failures, his power in our sins and failures.
- 2. In his Presence we are reoriented and taught.** We find our way out of the dark forest. We find truth North. Truth emerges and shatters the lies we often unknowingly live by. We’re reoriented by his glory – not ours. We’re reoriented by his love – not condemnation. We’re reoriented by Jesus and his kingdom – not the values of this world. And these are life-changing. Read the Bible in God’s presence, not just for information. Read to hear God. ▶ *2 Timothy 3:16-17* “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that all God’s people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- 3. In his Presence we repent.** When we see our sins, our fears, our lack of faith, our enticed heart, our false beliefs, we turn to God and repent. It starts with confession and sorrow, and is complete by making a commitment to change. (See David’s repentance - Psalm 51).
- 4. In his Presence we are empowered by worship and praise.** C. S. Lewis – praise is “spiritual health made audible.” In worship we submit and adore and see the world through God’s perspective. Our love is poured out to him, and in that pouring out of self, we find ourselves. And God strengthens us for the task of change. Yes, in song on Sunday morning, but also merely seeing God as he is and then responding to that revelation with all their hearts in love. ▶ *Philippians 4:6-7* “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Worship him in your moments of temptation – silently or with words. Let God change you in a worship encounter.
- 5. In his Presence we can ask for transformation.** – for godly desires, for greater insight into the heart or mind source of our sin, for power, for deeper repentance, for wisdom, for a greater fullness of God.
- 6. In his Presence we simply rest and trust.** He is in us, with us, for us. He is working for our good in all circumstances. *Imagine him* loving us in ways that aren’t primarily about giving us comfort, but leading us to spiritual transformation.

How do we come into his presence? In quietness, in stillness; in prayer, in listening; in song, in tears; in nature, in suffering; in feasts of foot and art, in denial of certain pleasures; in sacrificial service, and in meditation in the Bible. It can be planned or spontaneous; it can be alone or with a congregation; it can be a few seconds in length or hours at a time.