



Message Transcript

Pleading for God's Presence

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we're here to celebrate you. We're here to give you worship and adoration and tell you that we are dependent upon you, that we love you, and that we want to honor you in all that we do. Lord, we do thank you in our country today for all those who gave their lives so that we have the freedoms that we have. Lord, we pray that as Christians, that we would exercise the freedoms we have and that we would honor you as a nation. Righteousness, exultation, but sin is an abomination to all people. Lord, may righteousness reign in our land, may you turn the hearts of people back to you.

And Lord, we thank you for your living and active Word and that every time it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak. And Lord, our prayer now is speak for we are ready to hear. And so now, for all those who have gathered, who desire to hear the word of the Lord, who will believe what Jesus says specifically to you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, Amen? Amen.

When I was dating my wife, there were times where I would do things to make sure that I got her attention. I wanted to do everything I could to get her attention. If we were going out to eat with my family, I was like, oh, that's a great opportunity to call and invite Kim to come. If I was going out to a game with a friend, that's a great opportunity to invite Kim to come. I just wanted to be around her. As a matter of fact,

when we started dating and I started to call her, I wanted to be around her all the time. I would call her on the phone.

There was one night I called her at nine o'clock at night. I had to charge my phone three different times. We talked till six in the morning. We've never done that since. But I just wanted to be around her. Even when we broke off in the evening, she would drive to her house or I would drive to my house, we'd be on the phone talking to each other, looking forward to the day we didn't have to go our separate ways and we could sleep in the same bed. I did everything I could to get her attention. There was even one time I went to her mother and father's house so I could walk her dog.

I don't like dogs. I didn't like her dog, but I took it for a walk in hopes to score points so that her mom would tell her, "Hey, Jeff was here to walk the dog." I wanted to get her attention. And here's why, because it wasn't about dating her and it wasn't about talking to her on the phone. And it wasn't about anything other than I wanted one thing from my wife. I wanted her presence. I wanted to be near her. I wanted to be with her. The reason I got married is I wanted to be with her all the time.

When it comes to our life spiritually, there's nothing more important than presence. There's nothing more important than the presence of God. It's what we need more in our own personal lives. It's what we need more in our church. It's what we need more in our communities. It's what we need more in our nation is God's living and active presence. Now, let me talk about presence. Psalm 139 says that God is everywhere. There's no place you can go that God is not. I'm not talking about that kind of presence. I'm talking about His personal manifested presence when He shows

up in your life that you know that you know that you know that Jesus is right here with me and He's walking with me.

And if you've been a Christian for any period of time, there's probably been some moments in your life where God's shown up in a special way with His presence. And when He does, there's this hunger and desire to say, "I want this to linger. I want more of God's presence. I want to hear His voice more clearly. I want Him to be more around me than ever before." And if you've ever wanted more of God's presence in your life, I believe God has a word for you today. Because I have good news for you, God wants to be present in your life. He wants to manifest Himself to you in your life. And so if you're a Christian and you look around and you see other Christians and say, "Man, this person seems to just enjoy God all the time and they love being around God all the time. And I can tell that God goes with them everywhere they go, I wish I could live my life like that."

Good news is, you can. And God wants to show you four requirements as to what it takes and what responsibilities you need for His presence to go with you. And if you've ever wanted more of God's presence in your life, this is a message for you. And in case you didn't know it, what you want more than anything in your life is more of God's presence in your life. So this message is for you. So I want to encourage you to open your Bibles up to Exodus chapter 33, and we're going to talk about pleading for God's presence, pursuing and pleading for God's presence. And we're going to take a look at four requirements that we're going to need.

Now, if you remember in Exodus chapter 32, they just came out of that season of idolatry where they had taken all their jewelry to form a golden calf and worshiped that. God was so angry he was going to kill the entire nation and told Moses He would give him a new nation. And Moses interceded and pleaded on behalf of God's word, God's promises, and God's desires. God says, "Okay, that's great. I'm going to send an angel before you. Continue to go into the promised land." And this is where this picks up. And I'm going to give you four requirements this morning. If you're going to plead for God's presence, if you really want God's presence in your life, these four requirements will ensure that God goes with you.

And the first is this. Pleading for God's presence requires a willingness to change, a willingness to change. Notice what happens. In chapter 33 verse one, it says, "Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saying to your descendants, I will give it.'" Remember how Moses pled and said, "God, you promise us you'd go." And God is always true His word. So God says, "Now go. I'm going to give you the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He says this, "I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites."

He's like, "You go. I'll send an angel before you. He'll clear the way. You won't have to worry about your enemies. It's going to go well for you." And then he says, "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey for I will not go up in your midst because you are an obstinate people and I might destroy you on the way." He says, go into a

land flowing with milk and honey, right? Go to this land. Now, as a kid, I always pictured like waterfalls of milk and waterfalls of honey, this land is going to be different. It's not what it means. It means there's livestock, there's plenty of milk. It means there's honey. God has everything that they're going to need. And it's interesting because this area in Israel would, without God's blessing, without God's touch, it wouldn't be a natural place to produce all these sorts of things.

So God says, "You go, I'll send my angel ahead of you. I'll stay true to my word, but as for me, I'm not going. You're obstinate, you're stiff necked, you're always turning around. And if I'm in your midst and I see all that again, I might kill you all. So in order to help you, I'm going to stay behind, but I'll send somebody else forward." And then notice what happens. It says in verse four, "When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning and none of them put on his ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, say to the sons of Israel, you are an obstinate people. Should I go up with you in your midst for one moment I would destroy you. Now therefore put off all your ornaments from you that I may know what I shall do with you."

He tells Moses, you go tell them. Go tell them they're obstinate. Go tell them if I just spent one more second with them, I'm going to kill them. Like my holiness is at stake. They don't want what I want, they don't want me. They don't want who I am. So you go tell them and tell them to take off their ornaments. What were their ornaments? Ornaments were their jewelry. Take off your jewelry. What jewelry? The jewelry that you were giving away to make the molten calf. Don't use your valuables on your idols

anymore. Show me that you're not going to do that anymore. Take off your jewelry. Take off your ornaments.

So what do they do? Notice verse six. So the Sons of Israel strip themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward. So they take off all their jewelry. They don't put jewelry back on. For how long? For the entire journey. They're not wearing the jewelry, they're showing God. God said, take it off. They took it off. God said, do this, and what do they do? They did it. In order to grow with God, in order to experience more of God's presence, there has to be a willingness to change. Not necessarily a desire to change, but a willingness to change. There's a difference. Jesus told a parable about a father who had two sons and he asked him both to go work in the field and the older son said, "Yeah, dad, I'll go", but he never went. The younger son said, "Dad, I'm not going to do that." But he went and worked in the field and Jesus asked the question, which one did what the father asked? And they said, "Well, the one who went and worked in the field." He said, "Then go do that."

What was He trying to say? I don't care about your lip service. I don't care about what you promised me. I don't care that you tell me, Hey, I'm going to get right with you. I'm going to do what you want me to do. He cares about actually what? Doing it, putting into practice what He shows you. What does that mean? It means when you listen to a message like this, it's not about you remembering all four points next week. We're not giving a quiz on it. I may not remember them all by Wednesday. What it means is when the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart about something in the message, that's God's speaking to you, how are you going to put it into practice and then go put

it into practice? There has to be willingness to change on your part. If there's no willingness to change, there's no presence with God.

Now, let's be clear. The gospel is that God so loved the world that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life. Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. He died for you. If you'll repent and believe that Jesus died for all your sins and that He rose from the dead, you will be saved. You do not need to clean yourself up to come to Christ. You can come to Christ just as you are and God will welcome you home. He will be the one that cleans you up. Make no mistake about that. But when you do come to Christ, He's not going to leave you where you're at. There is a desire from the moment you come to Christ for Him to begin to continually, progressively increasingly growing you into His likeness and into His holiness.

You must be willing to change. That's why after David sins, what's he pray? Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me." We have to understand that God is perfect, He's holy, He's righteous and He's good and you're not. And God wants you to be perfect, holy, righteous, and good. So when the relationship comes together, guess who has to change? You do. God's not changing. "I, the Lord, your God, do not change." You don't want God to change. God's perfect in His love and God's perfect in His holiness. You don't want Him to change. But if you're going to have a relationship with this God of the Bible, guess who's going to change? You're going to change. And if you don't change, you will not continue to grow in Him, you will not continue to see His manifest presence in your life.

There is a progressive growth that happens to every single believer that

continues this relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why it's important. Now, we need to understand something. If God is sovereign, which He is and He's good, which He is, and He's the one unfolding all of history and life on the macro scale and also on the micro scale, meaning everything that's done in the world, God is in control of and everything that's done down to the finest minutiae, God's in control of that too. Which means this, when things happen in your life, circumstances change in your life, people treat you a certain way in your life, those things are not happening to you. They're happening for you. Do you know what that means? That means God's unfolding that for you because Romans 8:31 says that if God is for us who can be against us. All life circumstances are happening for you. They're for your good, they're for your benefit. They're not just happening to you.

Now, when blessing comes, we're like, oh man, look what God did for me. When hardship comes, we're like, look what the devil did to me. No, look what God's unfolding for you there too. And that's what it is. And so two words, two words that will be super helpful to you in this as you continue to journey with the Lord, do you want to know two words? Ready for them? Two words you can use in your relationship with God. Change me. Change me. When you begin to pray that way, your life will begin to change. Your life will begin to change.

Think about your marriage. Think about your marriage. Those of you who say, well, I want a more solid marriage. Here's how you can pray. Lord, change me. You want a better dating life? Lord, change me. You want a better relationship with your

kids? Lord, change me. Kids, you want a better relationship with your parents? Lord, change me. Do you know why that's so important? Because here's what we tend to pray for. Lord, change my circumstances and change all these people around me and then I'll feel a lot better about what's going on in my life. Change my health, change everything around me. Change these people, change my boss, change my employees, change my neighbors, change the circumstance, make it better, and once you do, I'll know you're God.

Sometimes God's not going to change the circumstances and sometimes God's not going to change anybody else. Here's who God wants to change, you. He's wanting to change you. If you're in a difficult situation and you begin to pray, Lord, change me. I don't see what needs to change, but obviously, it's me. You're trying to get my attention. I'm uncomfortable here. This doesn't seem to be working. What do you want to change in me? Because I find that when we're dealing with people that are difficult or hard, we're asking God, Lord, make them more holy, change them. That's fine to pray that way as long as you're going to start with yourself.

Lord, I know I'm not perfect, and how do I represent you best in this situation? What's it look like for me here? How can you go with me? Because as you're willing to change, guess what, then you can invite God on the journey with you to go change you. Then you actually need His help. Lord, I need you to change me. The best way to stunt your growth in the Christian faith is to think that you're just fine the way you are. I'm doing okay. There's no plateau in the Christian faith. As my college football coach used to say, you're either green and growing or you're ripe and rotting. You can't just

plateau. As soon as I get here, I'll just coast. I'll be good. No, you won't. You'll start going back the other way.

In every situation, Lord, change me. And if you'll pray that way, God will change you moment by moment, step by step, minute by minute, hour by hour, month by month, year by year. Lord, change me. We want everybody else around us to ... Lord, change my church. When you make it a good church, I'll be excited about it. Lord, change the worship songs. Lord, change the way they do kids' ministry. Lord, change my neighbors, change my neighborhoods. Lord, change my house, change my income. Lord, change me to be content with everything you're unfolding and show me what you're trying to show me in this situation so that I can allow you to do what you want to do because change is necessary in any relationship.

Change is healthy in any relationship. Think about it. If you're 50 years old now, but you're still relating to your mom like you did when you're five, that's unhealthy. If you're still acting like you did when you were 18 years old in high school and you're 50 years old right now, that's unhealthy. Change is necessary for a relationship. In your relationship with Christ, change is necessary. And one of the things that should be happening that's normal for a believer over time is, what I used to be, I'm no longer that. I look back over 30 years. What I was when I first came to Christ, I'm no longer that. What I was in college, I'm no longer that. What I was in my twenties, I'm no longer that. In thirties, I'm no longer that.

What I was when I planted this church, I'm no longer that, and I know God's growing me and changing me. I hope I can say in five years, I'm no longer that. God's

pleased with where I am, but He's not content with it because until I'm perfected in holiness and walking it out in every way, God's going to continue through His Holy Spirit to help me magnify the resurrected Christ in my life. The question is, am I willing? Because for many of us, we're not saying this. We're not saying change me. We're not praying Psalm 139, search me and try me, O Lord. See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. We're saying, Lord, look at their offensive way and look at this offensive circumstance and change that and change them.

You want to grow with Christ, you want to experience more of his presence in your life? Pray this prayer, Lord, change me. And what I found over time is, He will do it. Not change people, not change circumstances. Some of the reasons that some of you are so anxious and stressed out all the time is that's not the way you're praying. You think you can change somebody else. Here's some free marital advice. It'll save you lots of money. You can't change your spouse, you can't change your kids. You can't change anybody. And the only way you can actually change yourself is to truly let the Lord come and empower your life through His Holy Spirit. You can't change others, but yet we spend so much time trying to change our sons and our daughters and our wives and our husbands and our neighbors and our employees and our employer and our church, and then we're all anxious because it's not working. You can't do it.

Pray for God to do what He wants to do. Think about Jesus, didn't He pray just like this? Jesus didn't have a desire to go to the cross or want to like, oh, I'm so looking forward to this. What was He praying? Father, if there's any other way, I would

like it to be that. If there's a different way that my people could treat me, I would love that. If there's another circumstance that could happen other than me going to the cross, that's what I want. But not what I want, what you want, dad. It's okay to pour your heart out to the Lord. We're going to talk about that today, but it's also right to settle in when the Lord has you in a situation and say, Lord, just change me in the middle of this circumstance. I'm uncomfortable with it.

It doesn't say in the Bible, rejoice in your circumstances. It says, give thanks in all circumstances. It says what? Rejoice in the Lord. Say it again. Rejoice. I'm rejoicing in the Lord and I'm thankful that God's in my circumstances even though I'm not thankful for all my circumstances, and that's what the Bible's teaching. So if you want more of God's presence in your life, there has to be a willing on your part to change.

When relationships don't change, when someone wants you to be someone you used to be a long time ago, that's when a relationship needs to end. That's when it's not working anymore because it's not dynamic and you're not growing and you're not doing it. It's not about changing others. It's not about changing other circumstances, it's about letting the Lord change you. That's why repentance and obedience are essential to the Christian faith. They're essential. When I go before the Lord, there's things He's calling me to change. There's things He's calling me to turn from. There's things He's calling me to become. There's new ways of obedience. There's always a further step than wherever I'm at. I need to be willing to change.

Number two is this. Pleading for God's presence not only requires a willingness to change, but a commitment of time. This requires a commitment of time because for

some people when they hear that, okay, I want more of God. If He wants to give that to me, that'd be great, but I'm kind of busy right now. I know it requires your time.

Notice what happens. Verse seven. Now, Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. This is not the tabernacle, this is before the tabernacle. He's been given instructions for the tabernacle that has not been erected and built yet. This is his tent. This is his own personal tent. And he doesn't meet in the camp where all the sin is, he spends some time going outside the camp.

So when Moses is going to meet with God, he has to get his tent, go out to a specific place, pitch his tent and get ready to meet the Lord there. "And it came about", verse eight, "whenever Moses went out to the tent that all the people would arise and stand each at the entrance of his tent and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent and the Lord would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship each at the entrance of his tent." So Moses would take his tent, he'd go outside the camp, he'd pitch his tent. When people saw him going out, they would say, oh, the Lord's presence is going to come. This is how it's going to work.

Moses would set up his tent, he'd pitch his tent. They'd all stand out by their tents looking off in the distance, and then they would see the pillar of cloud come when Moses entered the tent. And when they saw God coming, they would worship Him.

They would worship His presence. That's how it worked. So in order for Moses to meet with God, it wasn't just like Moses could wake up in his own tent or on his blanket and be like, Lord, I just want to talk to you right now, and God would talk to you. There had to be effort on his part to go outside the camp to pitch his tent and to be super intentional that he wanted to spend time with God.

Now, the good news is, Jesus Christ came and he pitched his tent among us. He tabernacled among us. His presence is willing to meet you everywhere, but there's still intentionality on your part that needs to take place in order for that to happen. It's not going to happen automatically just by you waking up and thinking, well, I'd like to have more of God in my life. It's going to take some time and intentionality for you to pursue the Lord, for you to take time consistently to want to linger in His presence. And I don't know about you, but when it comes to lingering in the presence of the Lord, it's not like I just go home and open my Bible and start reading and hear sounds of angels and tingly feelings all inside.

Sometimes when I'm reading the word, it's difficult and as I'm reading the word, I'm thinking about the calls I need to make and the texts that I need to return and the schedule I have and things that are going on. And I can even read a whole chapter and say, what did I just read? There has to be intentionality about what we do and it can't be manufactured. It's why when it comes to your own personal time with the Lord, I'd encourage you to pick the same place daily, to pick the same time daily. Maybe you have the same chair that you sit in daily. Maybe you have the same plan. Because

what I find is if I just get up and say, okay, I think I'll go spend time with the Lord, it's hard to know exactly what to do.

But if you're reading through a book of the Bible and you're going to read at seven in the morning every day and you're going to spend 15 minutes doing that and you're going to journal when you do that and you're going to pray when ... The more routine you can make it, the better. There has to be a commitment of time. There has to be time that you are pursuing and that you want the things of God. Coming to church on a weekend is one of those times where you're making a commitment to drive in, to be here, to be among God's people, to pursue Him, to experience all that He would have for you. Now, some people get all caught up, well, what does it look like and what do I have to do? And that's the wrong question. You can go through all the religious motions and still not have the presence of God. It's wanting what God wants.

I'll give you an example. When I was a youth pastor, I think I was 24 when I started in ministry. When I was 24, we didn't have church services online. We didn't have podcasts that you could watch. If you wanted to hear somebody preach the word that wasn't your pastor, you had to listen to the radio and I found a guy by the name of Dr. Tony Evans who became a mentor of mine from a distance. And at 10:30 in the Chicago area, I would listen to Moody Bible Radio and he would come on at 10:30 every single day and I would have my Bible and I would have a yellow tablet. Now, when you listen to the radio, there's no rewind. You can't get the podcast again. I just would sit there and feverishly take as many notes as I could, every single day, Monday through Friday. That's what I did. That's how I started to learn the Bible.

And the ones that were really good or where I didn't get the notes, I would send off like three to \$5 and get one of those things. You may know what these are. They're called cassette tapes. Remember those? And you put them in your car and then I would wear that out over and over until I knew it backwards and forwards and could preach it like he preached it because I wanted that in my heart. I wanted to know what he knew. There was a hunger for that. When there's a hunger for God, you will be satisfied, and so the commitment is not just a commitment of time like you're checking the box. The commitment is, I'm pursuing the relationship because I want the relationship to grow.

When you're married and you go on a date, if you're just checking the box, it's different than if you're pursuing your spouse. There's a commitment of time that I want to give to this because I want what God wants. And so notice what happens here in verse 11 when he got into the tent. It says, the Lord used to speak to Moses face-to-face just as a man speaks to his friend. We're going to see later talking about what it means to speak face-to-face. Here it's talking about He's relating to him. He's talking to him like you would talk to anybody else. Now, I know what some of you were thinking. I'd go pitch a tent outside my hometown if I knew God would appear to me in a pillar of cloud and speak to me face to face. To which I would say, I got one better for you.

Anytime you open up the word of God and you want to hear what God wants to say, He will speak to you. He'll meet you right where you're at. Quit looking for the experience and look for God. He wants to talk to you. He wants to know you. He wants to be with you. God's speaking with Moses because Moses is going to need to

know what God says in order for him to accomplish what God wants. Can I tell you this? You're going to need to know what God says in order to accomplish what God wants to accomplish with your life. You need to know the voice of God. You need His presence in your life.

And notice what happens next. It says, "When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent." Now, we're going to read about Joshua later as we continue to journey on. I've taught through the book it's a great book of victory where Joshua takes the people into the promised land. After a 40 year camping trip, they're ready to go and Joshua rallies the troops and goes. What made Joshua qualified for ministry? What prepared him for everything God wanted him to do? You know what it was? Even when Moses left, Joshua was like, I'm hanging right in the presence of God. God's presence is what you need for everything God's calling you to do.

God's presence is the most important asset that a believer has. We don't read how Joshua went to seminary. We don't realize all the theological nuances that he learned. Here's what we know. He wanted to be in the presence of God and he lingered in God's presence. If you want to be equipped for everything God has for you, linger in the presence of God. There's something special about doing that. That's why worship services that open up the word of God and preach are important. That's why worship services that celebrate the resurrected Christ in singing are important. That's why our first Tuesday meeting where we're all gathering and praying and seeking the

face of God are so important. That's why when we go on mission in cadres and we're doing prayer, care, and share for the lost and we're going among the lost and we're inviting God to come with us, it's so important because we can experience the presence of God and there's nothing more important than His presence.

And I can say this, I've had moments. They don't happen every single time I open the Bible where God descends like a dove and just lays on me, but I have had a couple moments like that in my journey. And when I've had those moments, I don't want them to end and I wish they lingered and I wish they continued on and it's just whetting my appetite for what someday we're going to experience in the coming kingdom. And on this side of heaven, we won't have full immersion of God's manifest presence everywhere and we never want to leave. That day's coming, but until then, we want more and more and more of His presence. And if you have a willingness to change and you have a commitment of time and you're willing to give God your best, God will manifest Himself in and through you.

The third way is this. Once you're willing to change and commit your time, there has to be, number three, a devotion to the relationship. If you're going to plead for the presence, there has to be a devotion to and for the relationship. Notice this. Verse 12. "Then Moses said to the Lord", now God's told him, I'm sending the angel before you. It's going to be good. I'm not going, but y'all go, it's going to be good. "Then Moses said to the Lord, see you say to me, bring up this people, but you yourself have not let me know whom you will send with me. Moreover, you have said, I have known you by name and you have also found favor in my sight. Now therefore I pray if I have found

favor in your sight, let me know your ways that I may know you so that I may find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

Here's what he's pleading for. You know me. You say I have favor in your sight. You know all my ways. You're acquainted with everything about me. I don't know that I know you all that well. I need to know you. I need to know your ways. I need to know how you think about every single issue if I'm going to leave these people. I need to know what you think. Now, how do we learn God's ways? We learn God's ways through His word. God's word teaches us what He requires. If you want to know what marriage is all about, the Bible is the best handbook for marriage. If you want to know what singleness is all about, the Bible is the best handbook. If you want to know how to steward your money, the Bible is the best handbook. God is going to tell you about all His ways, but in order to experience His ways, in order to say, I'm familiar with God's ways, I know God's ways, you have to live out those ways.

Can I give you an example? When I got married, I knew God's ways of marriage. I'd read through Ephesians five many times. I'd read through First Peter three, First Corinthians seven. I know the Bible. I know what it requires, but I didn't know how to practice it. Kim and I just celebrated 18 years of marriage. We would tell you that had been the 16 happiest years of our lives because the first two were killers because I knew what to do. I didn't know how to do it. Some of us can read through the Bible. Here's what God says about saving. Here's what God says about stewarding. Here's what God says about spending. I see it. I just don't know how to do it. Becoming familiar with God's ways is learning to put into practice the very things He shows you,

and it takes time to do that.

It's not automatic, but if there's a devotion to the relationship, meaning I want what you want when it comes to this or anything. When it comes to my dating life, God, come on all my dates. When it comes to my marriage, you're in my marriage. When it comes to my family, you're in my family. When it comes to my job, you're in my job. When it comes to what I'm doing for fun, come along. I want you to be part of everything I'm doing. That's devotion to the relationship. And Moses is telling God, listen. You say you know me. You say I found favor. I don't even know why, but I don't know you and I don't know your ways and I need to know how you want me to operate if I'm actually going to lead your people, so share with me what you're doing.

Secondly, he prays this way. He wants His presence. Notice verse 14 and he said, this is God speaking, "My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest." Where do you find rest? In the presence of the Lord. You will not find it any other place in this world. Even after a good night's sleep, you can wake up and be stressed. The only place you can find rest is in the presence of Christ. So then Moses said to Him, "If your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." Do you hear what he's saying? God's promised him, I'm giving you the promised land. I'll be true to my word. I'll send my angel ahead of you. It'll destroy all your enemies. You can go, you can have all my blessing.

Moses is like, I don't want your blessing. I want you, and if I don't have you, I could care less about your blessing. You see a difference between that and religion?

Religion would say, as long as God blesses me, I'm good. Christianity says, as long as I have God, I don't care about the blessing. God is my blessing. Moses is saying, I don't care if you drive out my enemies. I don't care if you give us the promised land. I don't care if it's flowing with milk and honey. I don't care what it looks like. If you are not going, then I'm not going either. I want you.

That level of intimacy is what allows the presence of God to dwell. That level of intimacy says, God, I want you. I want what you want. That makes us different than others because you notices what he says in verse 16. "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I in your people? Is it not by your going with us so that we, I and your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?" What makes a Christian distinct from any other person on the planet? Answer, the presence of God. Sometimes we try to share the gospel with words only. We try to share it with theology.

I'm a Christian because I believe this. You don't believe this, therefore, I'm a Christian and you're not. Well, there's truth in that, but what we should be able to say is because I believe what I believe, I'm living differently than how you live and I have a joy that you don't have and I have desires that you don't know and that's why you need what I have, because what I have is so much better than what you don't have. That's the gospel. It's God's presence that changes us. You ever been around somebody and you can tell in about two seconds when you're with them, this person walks with God? You can feel the Lord almost emanating off of them in a conversation or just in a look or in a manner of, you can just sense that the Lord is with them. That's what he's

talking about.

We need God's presence in our life. We need to know His ways and we need His presence. And too often as Christians we're like, I don't care about your ways. I don't even care if you come. Just bless me, God. I just want every good thing you have for me, and that's missing the whole point of what the Bible is about, which is the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's having a personal relationship with Him. And then notice what Moses says next. "Not only do I want to know your ways, not only do I want your presence, I want to see your glory. I want to experience this." Now, notice what Moses says, verse 18. It's a very interesting verse. Then Moses said, "I pray you show me your glory."

Now, when you read that after reading through the Book of Exodus, it should be startling because here's a guy that's praying this prayer who has seen God show up in a burning bush and speak to him without the bush being consumed. A guy that's spoken directly to him and told him to go to Egypt and deliver his people, a God who has spoken through him to the nation's leader several different times, telling him to let his people go, has reigned down 10 plagues and gotten the people out, has shown them the Passover for what they're going to celebrate, has got them out of the land, and even when they were at the brink of disaster, protected them from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, took them all through the Red Sea and then closed the Red Sea on all of Israel's enemies and crushed the Egyptian army.

Not only that, but then when they complained about not having enough water, God provided water. When they didn't have food, God provided manna. When they

said, that's not good enough for us, we want meat, God provided quail. Then when it was their enemies that they needed, he came and helped them defeat the Amalekites. Then he brings them all the way up to Mount Sinai where He appears as a consuming fire and invites Moses up without being consumed to speak with Him. And now Moses is like, yeah, so show me your glory. It's kind of like, well, what more do you want to see, bro? That's how I read it. But here's what I think Moses was saying. I think Moses was saying this, I need to know that that God that I've experienced is listening to what I'm saying now. I think that God that I'm experiencing is going to show me His ways, that God I've experienced is going to be with me in His presence. So show me that you're hearing me. I want to know this.

And so God makes a promise, I'll do that. I'll do that. Notice what he says in verse 19. He said, "I myself will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you and I'll be gracious to whom I'll be gracious and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion. But he said to you, you cannot see my face for no man can see me and live." Now, wait, wait, wait. We just read that He spoke to him face-to-face like a man? He was saying, I'll speak to you face to face, I'll relate to you, but you cannot see my unveiled nature and live. Nobody can see my unveiled nature and live. Even examples we have in the Bible like Jacob wrestling with the angel or Isaiah seen the Lord high and lifted up in the temple or John in Revelation, several different times, sees the resurrected Christ in all of His glory.

It's always the manifestation of God through an angel, through a man, through

Jesus. It's never the unveiled fullness of who God is. No man could see that and live. And what we know through the New Testament is the word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. When we see Jesus, we've seen the Father. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. So we'll get to see all the manifested glory in Jesus someday just not the full unveiled glory of all that God is. He's like, I'm so glorious and I'm so good, I can't show you all of me because you can't take it. You can't live if you do. But here's what I'll do. The Lord said, "Behold, there's a place in me and you shall stand there on the rock and it shall come about while my glory is passing by that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I pass by. Then I will take my hand away and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

Now, we're talking about God the Father. We're talking about spirit. We're talking about not having a body like Jesus Christ has, and so He doesn't have a right hand. He's not covering up Moses, but it is interesting, isn't it? Where does He put him? In the cleft of what? The rock. Who is Jesus Christ? The rock. It's like he's almost hiding them in Jesus and saying, I'm going to put you right there in Christ and then I'm going to come on by. I'm going to give you a glimpse of my glory. You can't see the fullness of it, but I'll give you a glimpse of it so you'll know that I'm listening to what you're praying. I'll let you see who I am.

And friends, that's what we have, that's why we need a devotion to this relationship. We need a devotion to relationship. We're in this together with God. Now, notice what Moses is doing. He's pouring his heart out to God. He's pouring his heart out. Religious people do not pour out their heart to God. Religious people pray.

Christians pour out their heart to God. Do you know the difference? Here's just one verse from the Old Testament. Psalms is filled with these, but this is just one. Psalm 62 and verse eight says it like this, "Trust in Him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us." Pour out your heart.

The difference between praying and pouring out your heart is kind of like this. When you go through a difficult time and you're religious, you pray like this, "Dear Jesus, this is a really hard time. I hope you'll help me." Pouring out your heart is, I'm going to go into great detail with emotion, sometimes with tears, sometimes with frustration. "Lord, here I am. I'm frustrated and this is what's going on and I don't know what to do and I don't understand and other people seem to understand and I don't know and I'm pouring my heart out." I'm not yelling at God, but it's a relationship. A marriage is a relationship. There has to be a pouring out on both sides for it to work. Have you ever poured out your heart before the Lord? When's the last time you poured out your heart before the Lord? When's the last time you wept before the Lord? You've wept about a situation or you wept about your sin? When's the last time you celebrated before the Lord?

I have a pastor friend that's a mentor to me, Pastor Larry Stockstill. He says every morning he wakes up. Part of his routine is he dances before the Lord. I've never done that, but I may want to because every time I'm around Pastor Larry, I sense the presence of the Lord. When's the last time you've invited God into all of your stuff and you poured out your heart and when you're super excited or super desperate or you're just melancholy, you're just telling the Lord, "Lord, we're doing this together and here's

where I'm at and I'm just telling you I'm not happy with all this stuff." It's okay to do that. That's pouring out your heart to the Lord because He's a refuge and strength. He can handle your pain, He can handle your problems. It's not too big for Him. And by the way, when you pour out your heart, that's sometimes when you begin to hear the voice of the Lord.

And sometimes it's not even changing your circumstances or your situation, it's just knowing He's got His hand on you and He's like, "It's going to be okay. I got this. I see it all. I understand why you're in pain. I understand why you're frustrated. I understand why you want this situation to change. Do you trust me? I got you that." That's the presence of the Lord.

A lot of people ask questions about church and what's your leadership structure and how do you make decisions and all this kind of stuff. Listen, when it comes to the things of God, the most important ministry of a stewarding elder, a shepherding elder, a supervising elder is one thing. It's prayer. Are you hearing the voice of the Lord and are you practicing His presence? It's pretty easy to come up with a five-year plan or a 10-year plan and script it all out and then ask God to bless it. It's way harder to seek the presence of the Lord and ask Him, what are you doing now and how are you changing this?

Let me give you an example. Two years ago, three years ago, we did Easter at Bandimere. We did Easter at Bandimere. It is a great day. We had about 10,000 people that came out, had about 500 people get saved, had like 300 people get

baptized. We prayed about it. The next year we did it at Bandimere again. We had about 12,000 people come out, more people get saved and more people get baptized. And then everybody started saying, oh, it's Bandimere this year. We prayed about it and sensed, no, it's not. We're going to do it in our new building here in our new building in Westminster, and that's what God has, and we're going to follow His lead. Why? Because that's what God was leading us to do.

See, as Christians, too often we like to get in ruts and routines and say, well, God blessed it once, so we're going to keep doing the same thing over and over again, and that's what we're going to do. So while we can develop a five or 10-year plan for the church and we're working on it, we're strategizing. It's important. We hold it like this, because if God doesn't say go, we're not. If God says go, we're going to go. If God says slow, we're going to go slow. If God says no, we're not going to do it. So it requires ongoing listening to the voice of God in order to do what God wants.

If God says, you go, I got this. He's got it. When we moved from Cherry Creek High School to the building we have just south of here, when we didn't have the money and we didn't have the resources and we didn't have all the people that could fill it, God said, go. We went and God showed up and did it. When it came to this building that you're sitting in Inglewood, when it came to the building that you're in Westminster, God said, go. He did it. If God didn't say go, it wouldn't be a blessing. It'd be a burden. So what does it require? Individually and collectively, the most important thing we can do is be completely dedicated to the relationship, in hearing the voice of the Lord and following His leading on everything, on everything. Are you devoted to that relationship?

If you're devoted to the relationship, He will show up and He'll be special in your life.

If you have a willingness to change, if you have a commitment of time, if you have a devotion to the relationship, let me give you the final one here. It's going to happen for you if you have the first three, and that's a hunger for worship. It's a hunger for worship. It's a desire to give God your full allegiance, not just part of it. Notice what happens in chapter 34, we'll read through the first few verses.

"Now, the Lord said to Moses, cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you shattered." I love that. "So be ready by morning and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me on top of the mountain. No man is to come with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain. Even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of the mountain. So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went to Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two tablets of stone."

What do you see here? People had broken covenant with God. Moses had thrown the covenant down as symbolic that they broken the covenant. And a lot of people say, well, God's so mean, that mean God of the Old Testament. How about the gracious merciful God of the Old Testament? What does He say? Hey, cut out two new stones. Bring them back up to me. I'll renew the covenant. I'll put the same words on both. I'll reestablish my covenant with you. It means this. You can't break things too far for God's mercy. God's mercy goes beyond your sin. And we see in Christ that God's mercy goes way beyond our sin. That no matter how broken you are, no matter

what you've done, no matter how bad it is, that God's willing to forgive and God's willing to give grace. That's what He does. And because of this, this is what causes our worship.

Notice verse five. It says, "The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called on the name of the Lord." So what's part of his worship? He's calling on the name of the Lord. He's calling on the reputation of the God that he knows. He's asking God to move mightily on his behalf. "Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed", this is the Lord speaking. "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgressions, and sins. And yet, He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." Notice this. "Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth," and what? "Worship." What's Moses's response to all that God's doing? He's going to worship. He's humble, he's desperate. He wants God.

God is attracted to your humility. God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. God opposes those who say, yeah, if you want to bless me, fine, but I really don't need it. I got my own life to live. He opposes that. He gives grace to the humble that say, God, I'm needy. I'm dependent. I want you. I want what you want. Lord, please help me. That's worship. That's the kind of worship that God accepts. And Moses is calling on the name of the Lord and as the Lord's coming by, what's He

speaking? "I am the Lord. I'm the Lord your God. The one who has loving kindness, the one who's compassionate, the one who slow to anger. That's who I am."

I love when I'm talking to people that have had an encounter with the Lord and we all have did different times and different reasons, and they'll start saying, Hey, the Lord just spoke to me recently and here's what He said. And when they talk like that, there's an intimacy that happens in that time where the Lord reveals something and He shares something about your certain circumstance in that time and is a presence about Him. I'm going to be okay. I needed to hear this. God was doing this for me all along. He's with me in this. I needed to hear His voice, and I'm going to worship Him. I'm going to give Him more glory. I'm going to give Him more honor. I'm going to give Him more praise. I'm going to put Him more central in my life.

That's what you're seeing in Moses. He's bowing low to the ground. Now, it's fine that we want to sing to God and we say we want to see God or dance for God, or read about God or hear God. But worship means, if there's no music and I don't have my Bible near me, I want to get down on my face. I want to worship God. I want to let Him know I'm low, He's high. I want to let Him know He's great and I'm small. And Moses says in verse nine, he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight." This word favor has been all throughout this text. You want to have God's favor, this is the way to do it. "Oh Lord, I pray. Let the Lord go along in our midst even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as your own possession. Lord, would you please go with us? Lord, we just want you."

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mound, Matthew 5:6. "He who hungers and

thirsts for righteousness will be satisfied, will be filled." If you want to be filled with God, you can be filled to the full. You can be filled to the overflow if you're willing to change, if you have a commitment of time to the Lord, if you have a devotion to that relationship and all that you do. And if you're hungry to worship, then God will do a work. And I love this because, for me, it tells me no matter who I am, that God wants to do a work in my life. God wants to bless my life. God wants to go with me in my life.

There's no way I would stand up here on the weekend and preach if I knew God wasn't with me. Because I know myself well enough, I have no words that can help you. If there's ever been a blessing that you've had from anything preached from this, know that it's God's blessing and favor coming through me to you. It's not me. Wouldn't do what I did if I couldn't do it with God, wouldn't want to be married if I couldn't do it with God. Wouldn't want to raise my kids if I couldn't do it with God. Wouldn't want to steward my money the way I do it if I couldn't do it with God. I want God to have full orb over all my life. Where I go on vacation and what I do and where I live and why I do it. God, you continue to take over more and more. Does that mean I'm perfect? No, but I'm increasing and I'm growing in it, and I want God to do that.

So the way we want to end our service today, we've been doing 90s songs. Some of you don't even know what we're singing today because you weren't even born when we were singing them. But there was a song in the nineties written by a guy named Matt Redman. And I was studying it this week just to kind take a look at how he had written it because I'd heard several different stories. But he was a worship director at a church and the pastor felt at that time that the church was too centered on the PA

system and the guitars and all the instruments and the music. And they had lost the heart of what worship was about, which was all about Jesus. And so they took all the PA system out of the church, said for the next few weeks, we're not going to do that. Which Matt talks about in the video. He is like, that's kind of uncomfortable when that's your job, that they're taking it all away. But it got him to focus on Jesus again afresh.

And he wrote this song called The Heart of Worship back in the nineties where he said, I'm coming back to the heart of worship. And it's all about you. It's all about you, Jesus. And that's how we're going to end today. And when we end, I want you to worship Jesus any way you want. We'll have our prayer team up front. We'll have some of our elders up front. If you want prayer, you can worship God through prayer. You can worship God right where you're at. You can worship God by standing. You can worship God by sitting. You can worship God by kneeling. You can worship God by lying flat on your face. But let's give God the praise He deserves. Let's welcome His manifest presence in our room as we celebrate Him and as we worship Him this day. Amen. Would you stand with me as we pray?

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask in this moment that you would be honored and worshiped. Lord, as we sing a classic hymn in the history of the church, Lord, it just reminds us that it's not about the music, it's not about the sound. It's all about you, Jesus. Be honored in our praise. Be honored in what we share. We give you all the glory. In Jesus' name, amen and amen. [inaudible 00:48:41] You got some praise today?

