

Experiencing God's Presence

You will fill me with joy in your presence. –Psalm 16:11

The manifestation of God's presence can be unveiled in more than one way.

Jacob felt the presence of God at Bethel, and he was afraid (Gen. 28:17). For some there is a bias in the direction of the fear of God, which, to them, proves that God is present. Some people are even uneasy with joy. Fear is their comfort zone. They have a ready-made theological rationale for not smiling and looking sad instead. When we don't have much joy, we can hide behind the convenient view that God's glory always produces a sense of fear. That feeling of awe was what people experienced as a result of a healing presence in Galilee (Luke 5:17, 26). They felt this immediately after Pentecost (Acts 2:43).

The angel of the Lord said to the shepherds, "I bring you good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10). As a result of Philip's preaching in Samaria, "there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8).

We must try to remain open to the manner in which God chooses to manifest His glory. We can become so firmly entrenched in our specific comfort zone that we fail to recognize the presence of God. At the end of the day, it is impossible to describe adequately the feeling of God's special presence—however it is manifested.

The special presence of God is greater than anything said about it. But you won't miss it if you haven't experienced it. And you can believe it's still present after it has departed. Yesterday's memory of His presence and today's expectancy that it will be present can make you think God is present when He isn't. It is an easy mistake to make.

This is why we should want to be more and more sensitive to the Spirit. As we are more and more sensitive to Him, we will more quickly recognize God's special presence—and His absence.

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