

Why Believers Sometimes Miss the Presence of God

Are you aware of the presence of God around you?

Maybe you are thinking about that amazing time at church or that prayer time at church camp. It was just so amazing. We use language like, "God was near" or "God seemed so real." Those words help us capture our awareness of the presence of God around us.

God's Word teaches us that God is everywhere all of the time. David even asks the question, "... where shall I flee from your presence?" (Ps. 139:7) He can't come up with an answer to that. But we just don't always realize it. Maybe you are going through one of those seasons where you wonder where God is.

Here are six times when it is helpful to remember that whether you feel Him or not, God is still with you:

1. When life turns upside down. Jacob is running for his life. If anyone's life has been turned upside down, it's his. He is running from his brother, who has threatened to kill him. He was leaving everything he knew to start over. In the midst of that running, he has an encounter with God. He then makes one of my favorite statements in the Bible, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it" (Gen. 28:16b). If you are going through a moment that feels as though the world is upside down, remember God is with you.

2. When we are under attack. I love the story about when Elisha has an army come and get him because he has ticked off a king (Read the whole story in 2 Kin. 6). When Elisha's servant freaks out because they are surrounded, Elisha prays that God would open his eyes. The servant then sees horses and chariots of fire all around. They were there before, but the servant didn't see them. If you are feeling under attack

today, I pray that God opens your eyes to see His presence with you.

3. When we dealing with our own sin. This is a little more tricky. When we sin, we choose to separate ourselves from God. David talks about this feeling in his famous confession in Psalm 51. He says, "Do not cast me away from your presence" (Ps. 51:11a). And if you are feeling distant from God because of your sin, I can give you no better encouragement than to do what David did in that moment. In brokenness of heart, get right with God.

4. When we are confused. A fun story from shortly after the resurrection happens when Jesus meets a couple of disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24). I won't get into what we learn about Jesus from the way He messes with them in that moment. But in their confusion about what is happening, Jesus is there to explain what they need to understand. If you are confused with life right now, Jesus is with you to help you find a way forward.

5. When we are dealing with relationship conflict. One of the common passages people use about the presence of God is found in Matt. 18:20, "For where two or three are assembled in My name, there I am in their midst." But as my friend Chris MacKinnon pointed out to me, the context of this verse is conflict and relationship issues in the church. It is a great reminder that even in our moments of conflict with people, God is right in the middle with us.

6. When we are outside our comfort zone. God keeps calling us (me, at least) outside of the comfort zone. And sometimes when He sends me somewhere, I can feel all alone. Some people give their lives to go to some of the most difficult places in the world where no other Christian is near. It is in those moments that where He tells us to go, He also promises, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b).

So whether you are going through one of these six situations or something else, I pray that today you that you would be reminded that Jesus is Emmanuel—"God with us." {eoa}

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