

GOD CONSCIOUS



*Where could I go from your Spirit?
Where could I run and hide from your face?
If I go up to heaven, you're there!
If I go down to the realm of the dead, you're there too!
If I fly with wings into the shining dawn, you're there!
If I fly into the radiant sunset, you're there waiting!
Wherever I go, your hand will guide me;
your strength will empower me.
It's impossible to disappear from you
or to ask the darkness to hide me,
for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night.*

Psalm 139:7-11 (TPT)

Doubtless everybody who claims to believe in God will say yes to those words.

God is omnipresent.

But how many of us are living in the awareness of God's presence all the time?

There are those who live in a continuous paranoid fear of an angry God who's out to destroy them. There was once a man who had murdered a woman, was arrested and brought to trial. He was declared not guilty. He walked out of the courtroom feeling perfectly free. Then he began to receive in the mail clippings from the newspaper showing the murdered woman's body. As these "letters" kept coming it drove this man right out of his mind. He knew that somebody was watching him.

That's how it is with us very often. We think that God is out to "get" us. That's not living in the aware-ness of God's presence. That's living in a nightmare.

Then there are those who walk around with an idea of God tucked under their arm like a teddy bear.

Every time life gets a little rough they snuggle their teddy bear and feel better. Here's a murderer, who never thinks about asking God for forgiveness for his sin, but who, every night, piously folds his blood-stained hands and says, "Dear Lord, give me better luck tomorrow." That's not living in the consciousness of God's reality; that's living in a religious delusion which sooner or later is going to blow up in his face as reality comes crashing in.

But there is a way in which you and I can live in the awareness of God's presence,
...God's fathomless mercy, his majesty, his glory, all the time.

So that even when we walk through the darkest night his presence makes everything light about us. And even when we're going through the most violent storm, his awesome peace reigns in our hearts.

This is why Jesus came and died on the cross; so that by the shedding of his blood and the sending forth of his Spirit he might draw us into communion with the Father. You could say that Jesus died on the cross in order to make the 23rd Psalm a reality in our lives. We all love the 23rd Psalm and we love to say it to ourselves, yet how many times those words are far away from our experience. But they don't have to be.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

- We say it, but do we live this way, are we conscious of this?

***He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
he leadeth me beside the still waters, he restoreth my soul.***

- But are we living with restored souls?

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

- Are we allowing ourselves to be led by him?

***Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.***

- He died in order that we might live that.

So that we wake up in the morning and God is there. We lie down at night and fall asleep in the palm of his hand. We walk through all kinds of confusion, and he's there. Needs crowding at us and we don't have the words to speak or the things that will help them, and suddenly we become aware of the fact that God is present.

When we're living in that kind of awareness of the presence of the living God, then we're in God's Kingdom, and we know we're in God's Kingdom. We then find ourselves able to lift others into God's presence too.



Now surely this is what we're after. And this is what most of us will frankly admit we don't quite have. We want to be so overwhelmed by the presence of God's mercy that it overflows to everybody we touch. But how do we get there?

It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying “he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

Hebrews 11:5-6 (NLT)

Two simple things:

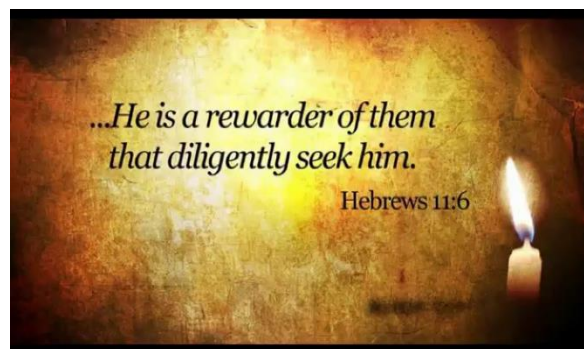
we must believe that he is,

and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

What so often happens is that we become taken up with his blessings and go no further. It's like the man who loves his wife's cooking, really appreciates those scrambled eggs, but he never gets around to appreciating his wife who makes the eggs. Or the woman who loves that paycheck her husband brings home, but she never gets around to appreciating him.

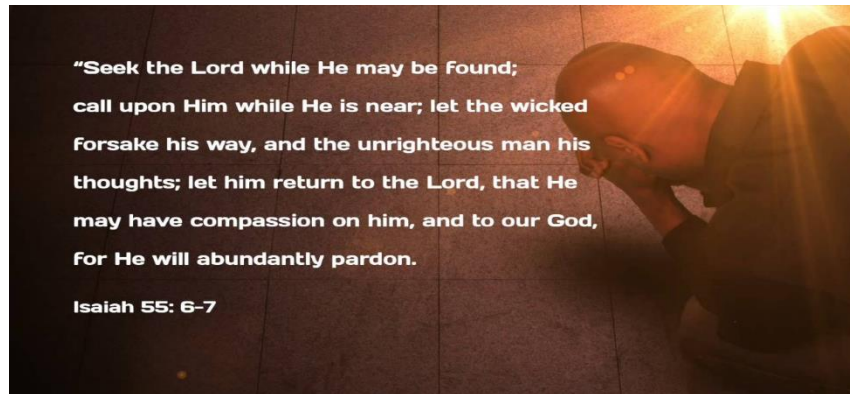
The gifts and the blessings and the promises of God are wonderful.

But they never match the joy that comes to those who come into a living relationship with God himself.



And there is no such thing in this age of grace as seeking God and not finding him. The only ones who never find God are the ones who never seek him. There will be a time when there will be a famine for the Word of God. Then people will run to and fro seeking to find him and he won't be there.

But now, God is near and he can be found.



**"Seek the Lord while He may be found;
call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked
forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his
thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He
may have compassion on him, and to our God,
for He will abundantly pardon.**

Isaiah 55: 6-7

How do we do this?

Very simple.

First of all...

Follow in the footsteps of Jesus himself, and take time, every day, to seek God's face.

So often we think of prayer as a duty. Imagine what it would be like if in your backyard is a spring that bubbles up summer and winter. One glass of water from this spring, every day, will bring you eternal youth. You're about to celebrate your 200th birthday and you still look like you're only 35. Would you complain, "Oh, I have to go back there and get a drink of water again today?" You'd be out there if you had to chip the ice off the edges! You'd enjoy that glass of water like you never enjoyed anything in your life! It would always be a pleasure. And that's what we're talking about, when we talk about seeking God's face. It's not some hard thing.

This is the joy of all joys, to walk into that room, shut the door and say in so many words, "Lord Jesus, you shed your blood to bring me into the Father's presence and you sent your Spirit to bring me up before the Throne of the Father, and so here I am Lord, waiting for the power of your blood and the glory of your Spirit again today to lift me out of myself and bring me up before the Father's Throne."

It doesn't matter how old you are, or how young,
how strong or how weak,
how intelligent or how stupid,

- If you do this, and you drink from this spring every day, very soon you're going to become conscious of God's presence all the time.

Thoughts will come into your mind that come straight from heaven, words will form on your lips which are not your own.

A fire will start to burn in your heart, and you're going to walk out of that room, day-after-day-after-day, with strength which comes right from the Throne.

- You will see with new eyes,
 think new thoughts,
 speak new words,
 and you'll have a new heart.



Secondly...

The pursuit of God involves a constant re-collection of God's presence found in Jesus.

- *"Lo, I am with you always.*
- *I will not leave you desolate, I will come to you.*
- *If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it will be done."*

And many of us still fail to understand that we can have a friendship with the crucified and risen Son of God that goes on-and-on. It's not just for the apostle Paul, who says,

**For to me
to Live is Christ,
and to Die is Gain.**
Philippians 1:21

It's for us all.

Nor is it a matter of figuring out how we can bring Jesus down out of heaven.

He's already here.

What we have to do is come to reality.

Reality is that Jesus is here.

Not some mythical Jesus, nor some Jesus that is tailored to suit your little personal whims, but the Jesus who was born of the Virgin Mary, and suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now Lord.

That's the One who walks at our side in order that we might live as sons and daughters of the King, be filled with his mercy, and absolutely over-flowing with God's grace.

Whenever we collect our minds and bring our thoughts into focus around Jesus, he's there!

And he's there exactly as he stands before the Father's Throne to help us live in the consciousness of God all the time.

The third thing which is involved in living in a constant God-consciousness is this:

An instant practice of the mercy of God that comes to us in Jesus.



An instant practice of that mercy. Notice how often in the New Testament we read that word "instantly" or "immediately" or "straightway". But many of us have the idea that we can drink in God's mercy day-after-day, month-after-month, and even for years with the idea that *"sometime, when I get around to it, then I will begin to also give forth that mercy to those people around me that I can't stand."*

We want to take mercy, but we don't want to give mercy.

Impossible.

The minute I stop giving it, it stops flowing into me. Once I have experienced God's mercy, if I shut my heart against a brother or sister, I'm turning my back on God.

To pursue God is to practice mercy.



When we take the bread and the wine, what does it mean? God's self-giving mercy feeding us with life. How in the world can you eat that bread and drink that blood and not instantly practice that mercy? If you take it into your body and don't live it, you're eating and drinking judgment upon yourself.

You're turning mercy into wrath because you're turning your back on it.

The more instantly we practice the mercy of God which comes to us, the more continuous and constant is our aware-ness of God's presence in our lives.

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We're not talking about pie-in-the-sky by-and-by, we're talking about a living, burning, quickening, constant-renewing relationship with God that we can have right now,



- if we're willing to seek his face daily, taking time for it,
- if we're willing to collect our thoughts around Jesus...
daily, hourly, moment-by-moment,
- if we're willing to practice that same mercy he's giving us.

You say, "I don't know if I can do that."

His hand is reaching out to each one of us now, and if we'll take that hand, he'll help us.



Sweet Shepherd, Lord Jesus, you who are ever with us, we take your hand. We seek an ever-present relationship with you. We long for your peace to reign in our hearts through the darkest nights and most violent storms. You are our shield, our quiet retreat. You wrap us in your loving presence. Empower us to live every moment in the light of your ways. Bring light into our darkness. Overwhelm us with your love and mercy. May we seek you, diligently, each day... asking for and receiving new hearts, thoughts, eyes and ears. May we ever be aware of you pleading before the throne of God and be ever aware of your presence with us... you have not left us alone and desolate. And Lord in the pursuit of you, may we constantly and instinctively practice mercy. May it flow from us as it flows into us. We tremble in holy awe of you, we bow in thanksgiving and humility that you are ever present and we can enter into a living, empowering relationship with the Holy of Holies. We honor you; we worship you by opening our lives to the gift of your presence.

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THE LAMB
WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN

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