

## **Prioritising His Presence**

There is a quiet but searching difference between living for God and living with God. Many believers are wholehearted in their faith, faithful in church life, diligent in service and sincere in prayer, yet still experience an underlying sense of restlessness or spiritual fatigue. The problem is rarely lack of commitment. More often it is misaligned priority. We have learned how to work for Him, but we are still learning how to remain with Him. Prioritising His presence is not an advanced spiritual option for a few. It is the essential ground on which a healthy Christian life is built.

From the opening pages of Scripture, God reveals His desire for relationship. Genesis tells us that the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:8. Before sin disrupted that fellowship, presence was the norm. God was not distant or abstract but near and relational. That longing has never changed. Throughout the Bible, God continually draws His people back to Himself, not merely to obedience or achievement, but to communion.

Yet presence is easily crowded out. Modern life rewards speed, output and visibility. Even spiritual life can become task driven. We read Scripture to prepare a talk, pray to get through a list, serve to meet a need. None of these are wrong, but they can quietly replace attentiveness with activity. Psalm 46:10 speaks directly into this tendency when God says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Stillness is not passive. It is a deliberate posture of trust that acknowledges God as present and sufficient.

Jesus modelled this life of presence with clarity and consistency. The Gospels repeatedly show Him withdrawing from the crowds to pray. Mark records that very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus went off to a solitary place to pray in Mark 1:35. This was not withdrawal from responsibility but preparation for it. His public ministry was sustained by private communion. Authority flowed from intimacy, not effort.

When we neglect His presence, we often become reactive rather than discerning. Decisions are rushed. Activity replaces obedience. We measure fruit by busyness rather than by faithfulness. In Exodus 33:14, God reassures Moses with these words, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Rest is not found in the absence of work but in the assurance of God’s nearness. Without that presence, even meaningful labour becomes heavy.

The well known account of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38 to 42 captures this tension with pastoral gentleness. Martha is busy serving, distracted by much doing, while Mary sits at Jesus’ feet listening to His word. Jesus affirms Mary’s choice, not because service is unimportant, but because presence must come first. Sitting precedes serving. When we reverse that order, we may remain active, but we lose attentiveness.

Prioritising His presence requires intentional reordering. It means guarding time with God not as a duty but as a delight. It involves reading Scripture slowly enough to hear God's voice, not just to gather information. It involves prayer that listens as much as it speaks. Over time, this attentiveness reshapes our inner life. We begin to recognise God's nearness throughout the day, not just in set moments.

Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28 to 29 is deeply revealing. "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Rest is found in coming to Him, not merely in stopping activity. Similarly, Jesus' teaching in John 15 calls us to abide in Him. Fruitfulness flows from remaining, not striving. Apart from Him, He says, we can do nothing of lasting value.

Ultimately, prioritising His presence is an act of trust. It declares that God is more important than our productivity and that intimacy with Him is the goal, not simply the fuel for doing more. In a culture shaped by hurry and noise, choosing presence is quietly countercultural. Yet it is here, in stillness and attentiveness, that we rediscover the joy of walking with God, not rushing ahead, not lagging behind, but abiding daily in His life giving presence.

## **Questions**

1. We have explored the difference between living for God and living with God. How would you describe that difference in your own experience, and where do you sense God inviting you to shift your priorities?
2. Psalm 46:10 calls us to be still and know that God is God. What most often competes with stillness in your daily life, and how do those pressures affect your awareness of God's presence?
3. Jesus regularly withdrew to pray, even when there were urgent needs around Him. What does His example challenge or encourage you about the way you approach time with God?
4. In the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus affirms Mary's choice to sit at His feet. What does "choosing what is better" look like in your current season of life, especially in the midst of work, family or ministry responsibilities?
5. Jesus invites us to come to Him for rest and to abide in Him for fruitfulness. What practical changes could help you prioritise His presence more intentionally this week, and how can the group support one another in this journey?