

PRESENT PRESENCE

a two part sermon series

PART ONE INTRODUCTION

If you chose a Christian at random and asked them what the distinctive feature of the church is, what do you think they would say? They would likely list familiar features unique to the church such as the Bible, communion or baptism, but the main distinctive feature of the church must foremostly be something we seem to hear so much less about—the manifest presence of God. Without the present presence of God in our church, everything else merely becomes a ritualistic routine of sorts devoid of any real meaning or purpose.

In the first part of this two-part series, we follow the Old Testament journey of how David brought the ark of the covenant home to Jerusalem in order to restore God's presence, along the way picking up practices to cultivate God's presence in our own lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you experienced the manifest presence of God in your life before? Share with the group what this experience was like and how it affected you.
2. In the message, we are urged to arrange our lives to anticipate God's arrival. Whether be it in church or in your own daily life, what are some practical doable steps that you can take to position your heart to be ready to host the presence of God?
3. David asks in I Chronicles 13:12, "How can I bring the ark of God home to me?" Out of the six practices to cultivate God's presence presented in the sermon (arrange, aware, altogether, archetype, apportion, adoration), share which speaks to you most and explain what you feel God is asking you to do to bring the presence of God into your home/life.
4. Read I Chronicles 15:1-28.

Do an inductive bible study (observations, interpretation and application). You can use the following as a guide.

i. Posture your heart. Spend some time in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. Open your heart to the Lord to speak to you.

ii. Read the passage aloud

iii. Ask some context questions of the passage:

- What sort of writing is this? (a letter, a poem, a narrative etc?)
- Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
- What has happened so far in this particular book of the Bible?

iv. Some observation questions of the passage:

- Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the passage?
- What is the main point or points?
- What surprises are there?
- What are the key words? What words or ideas are repeated?

v. Some meaning questions of the text:

- How does this passage relate to other parts of the book?
- How does the passage relate to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

vi. Some application questions of the passage:

- How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
- Is there some attitude I need to change?
- How does this passage call on me to change the way I live?

5. We have to be altogether in spirit and unity in order for God to want to make his presence manifest to us. Think about a time when you might have neglected God's presence to focus instead on a relational issue. Would you determine from now on to put aside all disunity and minor irritations to cultivate what is more important: His presence.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Since the creation of the world, God has wanted to dwell with His people. However, it cannot be denied that sometimes we completely neglect to pursue His presence the way He has always pursued us. Having good intentions and merely agreeing that we want God's presence in our lives is not enough; as evidenced in 1 Chronicles 13. If we want to pursue God at all, we must seek Him in His way and cultivate His presence the way He wants us to. As priests today, we should seek to go about our lives walking with an awareness of the presence of God, paying attention to the fact that we are carriers of His presence.

There are two things that we can do as carriers of His presence:

- i. Prepare our hearts for our weekly church gatherings and come ready to worship
- ii. Practice personal worship at home and make space for God in your family routine

CHANGE YOUR MIND

And David was afraid of God that day, and he said, "How can I bring the ark of God home to me?" (1 Chronicles 13:12)