

CHIEF MINISTRIES

March 2018

To feel the presence of God is wonderful! I won't try and describe what it feels like, for it is far too great to attempt with my feeble pen. Any attempt would be like looking at pictures of a place you've never been. Victoria Falls, the Taj Mahal, the pyramids of Giza, Big Ben, Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, the Sea of Galilee, the Swiss Alps, the Eiffel Tower, I never truly understood what being there would be like, until I was. Perception is one thing, but seeing the real thing is quite another.

The same is true when you hear of famous people or seeing their photographs and then meet them in person. My jaw hit the floor at 19 years old meeting Prince and Janet Jackson, Boyz II Men, Christina Aguilar, etc. My perception in advance of meeting these people was one thing, but, seeing them face-to-face was quite another.

At first Jacob felt nothing. He had just left home and was running from his brother, Esau who wanted to kill him. He grew up knowing he was the grandson of the great Abraham, but he was no match for Abraham. He could never live up to a legend like that. Not only that, but Jacob knew he had done everything wrong: he had tricked his brother, Esau, into selling his birthright, and he deceived his father, Isaac, to get the patriarchal blessing. He was now running for his life.

Where was God in all this? Jacob reached a "certain place" (Genesis 28:11) and Jacob prayed. He felt nothing when he arrived there. There was nothing spectacular about this place. There were no signs that said, "You will treasure this place one day." He was tired and scared. He needed to sleep. He took a stone for a pillow and then God stepped in - with a dream. It was a dream that revealed that the God of Abraham was now Jacob's God. The words given to Jacob were almost too good to be true. Jacob would never be the same again (v 11-15).

A "certain place" was where Jacob felt nothing at first, he had no sense of God, no hope, and no purpose in life. But that place became pivotal not only for Jacob but countless millions over the centuries. It is called Bethel, which means "the house of God."

Bethel becomes a symbol of both the conscious and unconscious presence of God. *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."*, He said (Genesis 28:16).

The unconscious presence of God only means that we feel nothing when He is present. His presence is very real - very real indeed. But a sense of Him is kept from us. We feel nothing whatsoever, but He is there as much as when we feel Him.

We must learn to respect God when He does not appear to reveal Himself. We must honor Him when we feel nothing. We must worship Him when we are tired and afraid. In our weakest moment - even our most embarrassing moment - God is absolutely there. *"I will never leave you or forsake you"*, (Hebrews 13:5) He promises or as Jesus put it, *"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20).

Can you accept this? Can you believe this? It means that God is with us whether or not we feel Him – twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.

We need to remember this in all aspects of our lives. It can be in a time of prayer or frivolity. It is true when we are struggling to hear from God or when we are having fun. It is true when we have messed up and our closest friends or loved ones misunderstand us or reject us.

Jacob had been commanded to return to Bethel when his heart had become cold and detached from God's purpose. Jacob obeyed and announced to his family, *"Put away the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and there I will make an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone"* (Genesis 35:1-3). *"Who answered me"*, this is how we know Jacob was actually praying when he came to the previously mentioned "certain place". The second phrase - *been with me*, is Jacob acknowledging God's presence with him. God demonstrated to unworthy Jacob the truth of His sheer mercy and grace. The faithfulness of God seems too good to be true (more on that later), when Jacob first prayed at that "certain place" called Bethel, he felt nothing. He only knew that he prayed. But within a few hours he could say, *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."* ^{v17} *And he was afraid, and*

said, *How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!*" (Genesis 28:16-17 ESV).

Even John the Baptist struggled with his feelings about the presence of God, He's in manifested form – Jesus, the Son of God. But he too had to be shown something about the presence and what it does for us, in us and through us. John had heard in prison about the works of Christ. He sent two of his disciples and he said, "*are you the coming one or do we look for another?*" (Matthew 11:2, 3 ESV) Check this out.

In Luke it reads, "*The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ^{v19} calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'*" ^{v20} *And when the men had come to him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'*" ^{v21} *In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. ^{v22} And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. ^{v23} And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."* (Luke 7:18 – 23 ESV).

Does anyone remember when John prophesied who Jesus was? Are you guys with me on this? He prophesied when he saw Jesus on the banks of the river and said "*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29 ESV). This is Him, I have found Him, this is the Messiah! And somehow, some time has passed, he's in prison, *added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.* (Luke 3:20 ESV) And he sent two disciples to Jesus to find out if He's truly the one. What happened? He's in prison, that's what happened. Who did he prepare the way for? He prepared the way for the one who releases people from prison. That was in His job description. He says, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me to give recovery of sight to the blind and He talks of releasing prisoners from prison and he just went through this list of stuff and now John was in prison. He does this amazing thing - He doesn't give any Biblical reasons about why He is the Messiah! He just says - "*Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.*" (Luke 7:22 ESV). What did He tell John? All He did was say, "John- look here, stop looking at what I'm not doing. What was He not doing? - He wasn't releasing John from prison.

****And whenever we feed ourselves with what God hasn't done, we undermine our own confidence and belief (faith) in the Lord!**

What happened? Honestly, just think about this. We keep a record - well I prayed this many times about this and for this person - and we carry the bondage of what hasn't worked out for us. And that defines the next moment we pray. It defines the way we pray. It defines how we think going into the situation. Well bro, I hope it works this time. I know it's worked a few times. I don't know if it's going to work this time and everything is modeled out of our experience instead of out of the authority of Scripture. The Scripture says, "*you will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.*" It doesn't say, "you know if you're lucky and it's a good day you'll get a breakthrough." It says, "*They will recover!*" Does God's faithfulness seem too good to be true? Unless the gospel you heard preached seemed "Too good to be true" you haven't heard it yet! But when you hear yourself say - that's too good to be true - that's when you heard it!!! But, what happens then to the person who's been impressed by the lack of breakthrough and they hold to that - they feed their heart secretly on that - it's what we do to remain humble and it's not authentic humility - it's humiliation - it's unbelief - and unbelief, unfortunately feels like humility to us.

Lack of confidence in God has a feel, that unfortunately has a feel that's way too close to humility but it's not humility. False humility will keep you from your destiny! True humility will never keep you from your destiny! And so here I become a person that is so aware of this tragedy, this trouble, this trial. "Oh - have you heard the news today, read the paper today. Oh, we lost another one! Did you hear about the diseases moving in? Oh, the flu - don't pet the dog, their carriers!" We've got all this stuff going on and everyone is living in reaction to darkness and we've been given an assignment to go invade this darkness and break its power, its stronghold. But to do it effectively, it can't just be done out of rote obedience, although it helps. It's much more powerful if I could stay aware of God. THERE'S A REVELATION FOR YOU!

If I could just somehow stay conscious of God! Stay conscious of an open-heaven. *Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened.* (Luke 3:21 ESV). Stay conscious of a God whose bigger than everything I've ever feared. Why? Because something happens when I am aware of that!

TRY THIS!

Go into a day room, chow hall or your cell or dorm and you keep yourself aware of God's presence **on** you and **in** you and **through** you and you go into that place and you change it – **WHY?** Because what you are conscious of is released through your presence. That's why you can tell when a depressed person walks into the room - or the oppressed, or the possessed. Because what you are conscious of (God) gets released as a fragrance into the atmosphere - so it flips us back now to praying for things we already have answers for. If I continue to contend for an open heaven and the Scripture says "I already have one, then how am I ever going to find joy in an answer? I have to find joy in the discipline of prayer and that's where we exalt form over power!

If you've ever seen a miracle or been around one that happens. It's powerful, life-changing, awesome. But you have to be aware of His presence in these times and we focus on those things and the supernatural realms of God. It's much easier to reproduce what you're aware of. When we come back into day to day life - we switch - it's not that there's a greater anointing in Mexico or Brazil, - we switch what we are aware of - and some have even said, "the open heaven over that country is so great" and it probably is. But, there is an open heaven over me. And if I can get someone to step in and agree with me that there is an open heaven, then together, this is an exponential release of authority to open heaven up over any place that you're at!

Are you living aware of the Spirit of God on you?

Are you living aware of His purposes?

Are you shifting the consciousness, the awareness of your crisis, your calamity? So, Jesus told John, *"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. (Luke 7:22 ESV)*. Stop looking at what I'm not doing – Look at what I am doing! If you want to do well, look at what He's done!

But look! Find it! Feed yourself! You see John was not in the best environment to be encouraged! He's in prison and it looks like he's about to die - Jesus said - *"just tell John what I'm doing"* and the very next phrase was - *"Blessed is he who is not offended in me!" (Luke 7:23)*.

I don't know if this is making sense to you - I hope that it does.

****There is such a strong connection between what you're aware of and what you produce!****

What you think about because of a tenderness in your heart, a tenderness (in your heart) opens up the mind to receive the impressions of God - the thoughts of God - the ways of God's thought patterns and processes are available to those with a tender heart. It's just simply the way it works. And so remaining tender (in the heart) suddenly one becomes aware of God. Don't be aware of the prison you're in. You don't have to deny it, you don't have to pretend it doesn't exist! But feed yourself with what God's doing! Why? Because - *"Blessed is he who is not offended in me!" (Luke 7:23)*.

See anytime I feed myself with what God hasn't done or isn't doing, I open myself to the spirit of offense. And the spirit of offense eventually will lead me to the ultimate sin - which is the sin of unbelief!!! There's just a few adjustments that have got to be made. Instead of praying for an open heaven, - what if you lived as though you had one? What if you thought you had one? And I'm not just talking imagination here. But you just become aware of the Spirit of God on and in you. What I like to do is take moments in the day where I just stop! I don't pray, I don't sing, I don't read, I don't do anything. I just turn my affection towards Him – WHY? I just want to be aware of Him!

I want us to pray - "God help us on the journey to discover all that you already answered! So that our prayers can be used for things that matter. To pray that our awareness will be increased in several areas, help us become aware of your answers to prayer." Pray this right now, "I want to become aware of what you've already answered" Pray it! You see prayers that don't move you - won't move Him. "I want to be more aware of your presence in my life"

Don't settle for a picture of Jesus. Get to know the real thing! Find that "certain place" and live in it.

Expecting great things from you for His glory,

Chief

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Christ's

Heart

In

Every

Felon