

Draw Near

The Ways of a Presence-Centered Life

God Inhabits Us with His Presence

Chapter 7, The Presence-Centered Life

By Bill Elliff

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." **Luke 10:41-42**

She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **Luke 10:39**

Draw near to Me and I will draw near to you. **James 4:8**

Distant and Disconnected

1. What was it about Bill's experience and the church's that led to the nearness of Christ? What contributed to this season?
2. Think of 2-3 times where you sensed the presence of Christ more deeply than any other season. How did you draw near?
3. Do you think God's nearness is only reserved for special times? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever fasted? What was difficult about it? What were the rewards?
6. Did you find it interesting to read that, in a time of revival, "life became very simple"? Why do you think that was the case?

The Need to Draw Near

7. How often do you find yourself distracted from the pursuit of God's nearness?
 - 1-2 days a week
 - 3-5 days
 - Most weeks ... often whole weeks at a time
 - I can't remember the last time I felt very near to Christ
8. When you are **not** walking in God's presence, what are the clear indicators in your life?

(These are important to identify. Imagine them as "check engine" lights on a car. Check all that apply.)

- My mind is centered on the things of the world
 - I am worried and bothered about many things
 - I'm easily irritated and angry
 - I say inappropriate things
 - I fall into some habitual sins
 - I don't think much about Christ
 - I rarely think about living my life each day to advance the kingdom of God and invest in people
 - I begin to forsake my time with God in the Word and prayer
 - Other:
9. What are the 2-3 things that most easily distract you, drawing you away from the Lord's presence?
 10. What might help you to not be distracted so easily? What could you do to remain aware of God's presence and abide in Him?
 11. We do what we think is valuable. For instance, if we think television, social media, or entertainment is valuable, we'll gladly give hours to it. Why do you think Mary gave herself to "sitting at the Lord's feet" and listening to His Word? Why was this so important to her?

A Hunger and a Choice

12. How important is it to you to become consciously aware of God's presence all day... and be communing with Him?
14. What would "drawing near" look like to you?
15. What is one significant adjustment you could make this week that would help you begin to draw near to God throughout the day?

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16. What do you think these words from Christ indicate about what Mary was doing?

The Good and Lasting Part

17. Evaluate the use of your time over the past two weeks. Outside of sleeping, eating, and work, what did you give your discretionary time to? Be specific.
18. Is there anything missing in that list that needs to be there?

What is present in that list that doesn't need to be there?

19. Do you think it's possible to know God's presence even as you're working, recreating, interacting with others, etc.? If so, how?