

PRESENCE

SERIES BOOKLET

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PRESENCE

“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” Psalm 16:11

We are in a season at Gateway where God is growing a hunger within us to be transformed in His presence and He is calling us to be His transforming presence in our community.

Share your experience

1. What does the presence of God mean to you?
2. What do you do and where do you go to experience God’s presence?

Open God’s Word

Deep in the heart of every person is a longing for the presence of God because deep in the heart of God is a longing to be present with His people. From the beginning of the Bible to the very end, God chooses to be present with His people.

3. Read the following scriptures. In each case, describe how the people experienced God’s presence.
4. What barriers did they face?
5. What do you learn from each instance and how can this help us?
 - Adam & Eve in Genesis 3:8
 - Moses in Exodus 33:12-23
 - The people at Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13
 - God’s people described in 1 Peter 2:9-10

Practise the Presence of God

God in his grace has made a way for all people to enjoy His presence every day. Unfortunately we get busy doing. We get distracted earning. We get satisfied with inferior pleasures and miss out on experiencing the life transforming presence of God.

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Psalm 16** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the Psalm again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the Psalm for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

When we practise the presence of God in private, we will bring the presence of God into public places. Being in God's presence shapes who we are. This is why it's so important to spend time privately in God's presence so we can be salt and light in our community.

6. How will you spend time in God's presence this week?
7. How can you be His transforming presence in your family and community? Give an example of one thing you could do this week.

HUNGRY FOR HIS PRESENCE

“When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:16-18

Share your experience

1. Have you ever tried the spiritual discipline of fasting? Share your experience.
2. What did God do? How did He reveal himself to you?

Open God's Word

When we fast, we come before God in weakness and humility and declare our hunger for His presence and our dependence on His power. For centuries when people have hungered for the presence of God to bring blessing and breakthrough, they have fasted and prayed.

3. Read the following scriptures. In each case, describe why the people were fasting. What was the outcome?
 - 2 Chronicles 20:3
 - Joel 2:12-14
 - Esther 4
 - Luke 2:36-38

When Jesus began His ministry, he spent 40 days in the wilderness, fasting and praying. He knew there was power released when he fasted that He needed to fulfill His Father's purposes. He clearly expected that His followers would fast until He comes again, and He taught us what to do when we fast and pray so that we receive a reward from heaven.

4. Read Matthew 9:14-15 and 6:5-18. Describe what fasting would look like for you personally in the context of Jesus' instructions.

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Psalm 63** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the Psalm again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the Psalm for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

God is calling us as a Church to fast and pray for 21 days to see breakthrough and blessing in our lives, our church and our community.

5. What are the things that you normally turn to as a reward or for comfort?
6. Read the information about fasting in the "21 Days of Prayer and Fasting" booklet. Decide how you will participate in the fast.
7. What are the blessings and breakthroughs you are seeking God for during this season of prayer and fasting?

BECOMING THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN COMMUNITY

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22

Share your experience

We are all made for community and we experience the presence of God when we are together with God’s people, through their physical presence and the power of praying together.

1. How have you experienced God’s presence through the words and actions of God’s people?
2. How have you experienced God’s presence through the prayers of God’s people?

Open God’s Word

Everyone with faith in Christ is joined together into a community that has become the dwelling place of God. The church community is called to prepare God’s people for His present and future presence and to share the gospel so that the lost may enjoy God’s presence now and forever as well.

3. Read the following scriptures. In each case, describe how the people of God bring the presence of God to each other and the world around them.

4. What did you learn from each instance and how can we practise this?
 - Matthew 18:18-20
 - Romans 12:9-16
 - Ephesians 4:1-16
 - Colossians 3:12-17

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Psalm 20** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the Psalm again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the Psalm for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

We are all made for community and we experience the presence of God in and through the words, actions and prayers of His people. When we rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn we bring God's comfort and hope to people in need.

5. What will you do this week to bring the presence of God to someone who needs to experience His comfort and hope? Be specific.

PRACTISING THE PRESENCE OF GOD EVERY DAY

“I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.” Psalm 16:8-11

Share your experience

As we conclude our 21 days of prayer and fasting as a church, share the blessing and breakthrough that you have experienced from God in this season. What have you learned? What has been good and bad about the process?

1. How do you experience the presence of God in the busyness of your everyday routine?
2. What daily spiritual disciplines work for you in your current season?

Open God's Word

From the very beginning we were designed to walk every day in the presence of God. Our sin banished us from His presence but God made a way to restore our relationship. God promises throughout Scripture that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

3. Read the following scriptures. What do you learn about experiencing the presence of God from each passage?
4. How can we experience the peace and hope of God's presence during difficult circumstances?

- James 4:7-10
- Acts 2:25-32

- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- John 15:5-8

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Lamentations 3:19-26** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the passage again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the passage for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

When we keep our eyes always on the Lord, the ordinary parts of our lives become extraordinary because of the power of His presence. In times of pain and turmoil, His presence brings peace that passes understanding and a certain hope for the future. In his presence we can find fullness of joy, no matter what is going on in our lives.

5. What will you do this week to be aware of God's presence in your everyday? Some suggestions include:
 - Set a recurring reminder on your phone to pray
 - Turn off the radio in the car and pray while you are driving
 - Take some time in your lunch break to pray or journal
 - Use a Bible reading plan
 - Pray or listen to worship music while going for a walk
 - Listen to a devotional podcast on the way to work/uni/school

ENTERING THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH PRAISE

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Psalm 100:4

Share your experience

1. How do you experience the presence of God in praise?
2. What are the songs that form the soundtrack of your faith journey?
3. How has the power of praise impacted your faith?

Open God’s Word

Praise is powerful. Praise ushers us into the presence of God. Praise moves us from dwelling on our worries to dwelling in God’s presence in worship. Praise defeats our enemy who tries to diminish God’s words and wars against God’s purposes. Praise blesses us with a closer relationship with God.

4. Read the following scriptures. Describe the power of God that is released in the praise of God’s people in each of the passages.
5. How can you apply this to challenges you face in your own life?
 - Acts 16:22-34
 - 2 Chronicles 20:18-23
 - Ephesians 5:15-20

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Psalm 8** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the Psalm again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the Psalm for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

Praise brings miraculous breakthrough and blessing in our lives and the world around us. Praise is a lifestyle that ushers us into the presence of God.

Make a decision to sing praise to God this week to see God's miraculous breakthrough in your life.

Download the Presence Playlist or find your own songs of praise to sing. Follow this link: bit.ly/presenceseries

Sing praise in the shower.

Sing praise in the car.

BRINGING THE PRESENCE OF GOD HOME

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Share your experience

We often compartmentalise our lives into spiritual and secular. We go to church on Sundays to worship God and enjoy His presence in our spiritual home and then we go back to our family home to resume our secular lives from Monday onwards. This was never God’s intention for the church on Sunday or for our homes on weekdays.

His plan was for the church community to meet together to be empowered to serve God all week and for our homes to be places where God is worshiped with all of our hearts; His words shared in everyday conversation and His presence seen through our good works toward one another.

1. Share some of the challenges you may face in living out your faith at home.
2. How have you witnessed people demonstrating their faith in their home.

Open God's Word

3. Read the following scriptures. Describe what it would look like for you to put these scriptures into practice in your home.
 - Deuteronomy 6:4-12
 - Matthew 5:14-16
 - Ephesians 6:1-4

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Psalm 122** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the Psalm again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the Psalm for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

God is just as present with us on Mondays in our family home as He is on Sundays in our church family home. Whether you live alone, with your family or a bunch of housemates we are all called to shine a light on what God is like by the way we worship Him and follow His commands in our homes, so that others may experience His presence and come to know His salvation.

4. How will you demonstrate the presence of God in your home this week?

TAKING THE PRESENCE OF GOD TO WORK

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Colossians 3:23-24

Share your experience

1. What are the challenges in bringing your spiritual life into your workplace?
2. Have you shared your faith with a work colleague? Share your experience.

Open God’s Word

One of the great heroes of the faith didn’t start a church, preach a sermon, write a worship song or lead a thriving kid’s ministry. He built a wall. He heard God’s call to build a wall. He trusted God’s power to help him build a wall. He prayed for God’s protection to overcome the challenges of building a wall. He knew that God was present with him as he worked to build a wall.

3. Read the following scriptures. Describe how God’s presence is at work in each context.
4. How are each of these passages relevant to your work situation?
 - Nehemiah 2:4-5, 17-18, 4:1-6, 6:15-16
 - Colossians 3:23-25
 - Exodus 31:1-6

Practise the Presence of God

Sit comfortably. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Have someone pray and ask God to speak to you through the passage you are about to read.

Read **Proverbs 2:1-10** slowly and listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Spend a few moments in silence to meditate on the word or phrase.

Read the passage again and while you are listening, consider why the phrase has resonated with you. Spend a few minutes in silence to ask God what He is wanting to say to you.

Read the passage for the third time. As you are listening, ask God what He is calling you to do. Wait in silence for a few minutes to consider what God is saying to you.

Share with one another the word God gave you and what God is calling you to do. Pray for one another.

Commit

Whether you are building a wall, leading a business, teaching a class or crunching some numbers, God is present, and He is at work in your work.

Brother Lawrence said, "the time of work does not differ from the time of prayer. Even in the noise and clutter of my kitchen—when several persons are at the same time calling for different things—I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at communion."

5. How will you demonstrate the presence of God in your workplace this week?
6. How can you become more aware of God's presence at work in your workplace?

NOTES FOR LIFE GROUP LEADERS

Open God's Word

In each study there is a list of four scriptures your group can look at. This may be too many. If you prefer, choose to discuss one or two of the passages in more detail. Encourage your group to look at the additional scriptures in their own time.

Practise the Presence of God

Each week in life group during this series we will take time to experience the presence of God, learning to be still and listen to his voice. This practice is adapted from an ancient spiritual practice known as Lectio Divina. The process is as follows:

Sit quietly for a moment. Someone pray for God to speak.

Read the passage slowly, listening for a word or phrase that resonates with you. Spend some time in silence listening to God

Read the passage again, asking God why the particular phrase has resonated with you. Spend some time in silence listening to God.

Read the passage a third time, asking God what He is calling you to do. Spend some time in silence listening to God.

Share with one another and pray for each other.

This is a time to slow down, invite the Holy Spirit to speak and take time to listen to His voice.

Presence Playlist

The worship team at Gateway have developed a playlist to help you and your group enter the presence of God. You can access the playlist in YouTube or Spotify by following this link: bit.ly/presenceseries or go to the Media/Series page on the website.

Week of Prayer and Fasting

God is calling us as a Church to fast and pray for 21 days to see breakthrough and blessing in our lives, our church and our community.

We will encourage everyone to find something they would normally turn to as a reward or for comfort (food, some foods, tv, social media etc) to fast from for 21 days or for a period of time over the next 21 days.

We will identify some areas in our lives, our church and our community where we are hungry to see blessing and breakthrough. We will commit to pray consistently, both privately and corporately (prayer meetings, life groups, Sunday Services) **from 10 February until the 1 March.**

The 3 Sundays and 3 prayer meetings during this time will have a focused time at the end of each service to pray for blessing and breakthrough.

There is a separate booklet with more information about the spiritual discipline of fasting, daily scriptures to meditate on and prayer prompts for the 21 days.

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BAPTIST CHURCH