

GOD'S PRESENCE IN ALL PLACES

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

God is present in all times and places for His people's good, most clearly evidenced in His dwelling with His people in Christ.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

1 Kings 8–9; Psalm 33; Isaiah 7

+ **SETTING:**

We have seen the devastating effect of sin and judgment in the destruction the Lord brought upon Judah and Jerusalem. He used the Babylonians to crush His own temple, conquer His own people, and to take many of them captive into exile. It would have been easy for the exiles to see themselves in a foreign land, under a foreign king, and surrounded by foreign gods and believe that God was no longer with them. But nothing could be further from the truth. God is present everywhere; God hears, cares for, and promises to dwell with His people.

DAY 1

READ:

1 Kings 8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 8:27-30

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Though Christians do not need to face in any particular direction as they pray, there is a need to maintain an awareness of the presence of God. Now that we have fuller revelation of God, we know that God is not in one place (John 4:21,23-24) and therefore wherever we face, he is there . . . [O]ur posture should express our awareness that when we come before the Lord, we are before the King of all kings."¹

—Musa Gotom

It can be tough to find someone you trust to give you wisdom and guidance if you are going through a hard time. Building trust in others takes spending intentional time together, having a mutual understanding of how they might approach certain situations, and most importantly, having faith that they will be present for you through the highs and the lows.

You probably wouldn't consider someone else's opinion on how to handle a situation if you don't trust them or have a relationship with them. One major way you might trust them or consider their opinion would be if you knew they had experienced something similar to what you were walking through. Your trust in them will grow a lot quicker when you know they can understand your circumstance.

In 1 Kings 8:27-30, we find Solomon crying out to God, acknowledging His omnipotence and His omnipresence. He was putting his trust in God and seeking His guidance because he knew that God had already gone before him and prepared a path for him. Deuteronomy 31:8 is a good reminder of God's true majesty in going before us, being with us, and not leaving us.

Knowing that we serve a God who has gone before us and is everywhere provides a sense of peace and comfort. When we seek the wisdom of our omnipresent Father and put our trust in Him, He will direct our paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

In what areas or circumstances of your life are you struggling to trust God? Why do you think that is?

DAY 2

READ:

Psalm 33

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Psalm 33:13-19

NOTES

In 2012, a film titled *Rise of the Guardians* was released. In this movie, Jack Frost, Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, the Sandman, and the Easter Bunny were under attack by Pitch Black, who was trying to make all of the children on earth no longer believe in these beloved characters. When the belief of the children runs out, the characters' powers do as well. During the climax of the movie, they are viewing a globe of the earth to find out how many children still believe in them. They were able to look down on the world and all the children's beliefs and perspectives.

Even though this movie is fictional, it's a great image of how God might view us as illustrated by Psalm 33:13-19. As we are here serving Him and faithfully working for His kingdom, He is watching and caring for us.

But not only is God caring for us and looking at us, He also came from heaven in order to save us from sin and the power of death. And today, God is continuing to work for our good (Romans 8:28-30). No matter the situation, God is working to make us look more like Jesus through it all. We should feel comfort knowing that no matter the circumstance, our God has everything taken care of.

With this being the case, we have to be careful how we respond to His presence. The presence of God should affect the way we live, for one day we will stand before God and give an account of how we used the salvation the death of His Son won for us.

God is faithful to you by fulfilling His promise of a Savior. What are some things that you can do today to help you remain faithful to God?

DAY 3

READ:

Isaiah 7

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Isaiah 7:10-14

NOTES

It is always important to understand the context of a conversation. For instance, if a parent tells a child, “Get whatever you want in the store,” you might think the parents were spoiling the child. Then you find out they were in a store that only sells \$1 items and you understand the context.

In Isaiah 7:10-14, it’s equally important to look at the context surrounding this interaction between Ahaz and God. At first glance, it seems as if Ahaz did not test God because of his personal faith in Him, but the opposite was true. As a matter of fact, Ahaz was an evil king who reigned over Judah. Because of his wicked ways, he was confronted by God Himself. Because of his reluctance to believe in the one true Lord, God asked Ahaz to test Him, no matter how big or small the request. He was giving Ahaz free reign to ask of Him anything that he could think of between the heights of heaven and the depths of hell. The Lord was willing to give Ahaz that ability, but the king refused. Ahaz did not test God. It’s possible he refused because of a deep bitterness towards God and a fear he might realize just how powerful the Lord truly is.

As crazy as Ahaz might seem in this narrative, how similar are we? How many times have we denied the free gifts of grace and mercy that God has given to us? How often do we find ourselves hypercritical of our own sin as if God’s Son hasn’t removed our guilt? In Jesus, God has done everything necessary to save us from our sin. Jesus is the ultimate and eternal fulfillment of the sign that God promised to give Ahaz. The question that we have to answer is this: Are we trusting that the work of our salvation is done or are we still trying to work in our own strength?

Are there areas in your life where you are not fully trusting in God’s finished work? If so, what are they?

DAY 4

READ:

Acts 17

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 17:22-31

NOTES

Since the beginning of time, the question of whether or not God exists has been discussed and debated. People have lost themselves arguing that He doesn't exist, and others have lost their lives standing up for their faith in God. It's hard to come to terms with the fact that this topic will never be settled for those who refuse to believe until Jesus returns. Some of the smartest people in the world have strong stances when it comes to this topic. Most theologians and scientists throughout history have differed in their beliefs and responses. Whether it be Thomas Aquinas or Albert Einstein, everyone must agree that everything, including all of humanity and the earth, had a starting point.

This proper understanding of our world is reflected in Acts 17. Even though the Athenians had many religious views and beliefs, they too acknowledged that there was a God above the rest. Even though this God whom Paul referred to might have been "unknown" to many of them, he proclaimed the one King of kings and Lord of lords. Paul was trying to help them realize that they were wasting their time trusting in their ability to have all of their bases covered. The God that they were seeking by worshiping all of the gods they worshiped was the God of the Jews—the only true God. By Him they all had life. He is in control of all. This God is a God who cannot be formed by human hands.

This is something that we too have to realize. We all have hearts that are bent toward sin and that are seeking to worship something. We chase after anything and everything, but nothing can fulfill us, protect us, and save us as God can.

What gods around you are trying to pull your attention away from the one true God? List these idolatrous things and pray that God would help you remove them from your life.

DAY 5

READ:

Psalm 139

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Psalm 139:1-12

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #22: GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

God's omnipresence refers to His presence in all time and all places simultaneously. Because God exists apart from and outside of time and space, He is not limited by their constraints (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24). He is present with us wherever we are and sees all that occurs; nothing escapes His attention (Psalm. 33:14; 139:7-10; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Matthew 18:20). God's omnipresence is a deterrent for sin and a source of great comfort and hope for believers.

Of the top ten grossing movies of all time, six of them are superhero movies. Everyone loves a good superhero story that ends with the protagonist defeating the antagonist and saving the world. These types of movies invoke a feeling of purpose and a sense of personal courage. These types of movies almost make us feel as if we too can rise to the occasion and carry out the responsibilities of a superhero.

In some ways like a superhero, God stands over His people and He watches them in order to take care of them. But superheroes, even in their fictional stories, are limited; God is not. He knows everything and is everywhere. He knows our innermost thoughts; He knows our words before we speak them. There is nowhere that we can go to escape His gaze.

This is good news because God made us for Himself and He loves us. And even though we were all at one point in time enemies of God, now we as believers have life through His Son (Romans 5:10). This brings us to one of the biggest differences between Jesus and a superhero: Superheroes save people from their enemies, but Jesus came and died to save His enemies—us—because He loved us and didn't want to see us perish.

In loving and saving us, we now have the ability to be the vehicle by which God saves more people. When we give our lives to Jesus, we get placed on Jesus's mission. It is our responsibility and honor to now go and tell others about Jesus that they too may be saved.

Who is someone that the Lord is calling you to take His message of salvation to?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The doctrine of God's omnipresence is one of the most comforting truths in all the Bible. It reminds us that we can never outrun the power and providence of our great Lord . . . God is equidistant to his people wherever they are; he hears their prayers and receives their worship whether it is offered in giant cathedrals or tiny country churches, in the great urban centers of Europe and North America, in the steamy jungles near the equator, or at the frigid isolation of the North Pole. Every place is full of his glory."²

-Timothy George

POINT 1: God is present to hear from His people (1 Kings 8:27-30).

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #22: GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

God's omnipresence refers to His presence in all _____ and all _____ simultaneously. Because God exists apart from and outside of time and space, He is not _____ by their constraints (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24). He is present with us wherever we are and sees all that occurs; nothing escapes His attention (Psalms 33:14; 139:7-10; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Matthew 18:20). God's omnipresence is a deterrent for sin and a source of great comfort and _____ for believers.



What are some ways we experience the presence of God now that are mere reflections of what is to come?

No matter where we are, no matter our circumstances, no matter the discipline we are under for our sin, the Lord is present, and He promises to _____ and _____ those who cry out in _____ name.

POINT 2: God is present to care for His people (Ps. 33:13-19).

Because God is omnipresent, He _____ everyone and everything, including our _____ attempts to save ourselves by our own merit.



How do we sometimes reveal that we think we can save ourselves by our own merit?

God keeps _____ over those who _____
and trust Him to save us from _____ because
He cares for us.

NOTES

POINT 3: God is present to dwell with His people (Isa. 7:10-14).

Ahaz's refusal to trust God wasn't going to stop God from fulfilling His _____ to provide a Savior through the line of _____.



What are some reasons we might find it difficult to trust God?

Isaiah's prophecy reveals God's promise to be _____ to save and to be with His people by providing a Savior, _____, "God with us."



How should understanding that God sent His Son as our Savior to save and be with us affect our view of God?

MY RESPONSE

Because God is ever present and nothing escapes His notice, we can find comfort and hope in all circumstances while also seeking to confess the sin in our lives, which can never be hidden from Him.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways the truth of God's omnipresence should affect the way you live?
- **HEART:** Knowing that God is with us to hear and forgive our sins, what might you need to confess to demonstrate your dependence upon Him?
- **HANDS:** How will you use the Christmas season celebrating "God with us" to help you share the gospel of Jesus with someone this week?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Were it an angel that had interposed, we might have some fears; were it a mere man, we might go beyond fear, and sit down in despair; but if it be 'God with us,' and God has actually taken manhood into union with himself, then let us 'ring the bells of heaven' and be glad."³

—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)