

BFF329 The Presence of God

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I'm well, thanks. I am feeling somewhat normal for the first time in several days. I was in California, Virginia, and Minnesota the past three weekends. Three conferences back-to-back-to-back, took a toll.

For the last couple of days, we had our four new official Demme grandchildren. They spent Friday night and all day Saturday at our house. Then Sunday, they were confirmed into their church. We had a huge party at a local park with catered barbecue and all kind of stuff. That was a lot of energy this weekend. I don't bounce back as fast as I use to.

Scott: I'm tired just listening to you talk about that. How did you pick up four new grandchildren?

Steve: Ethan and Anna had fostered them for a year and a half and 10 days ago, they were officially adopted.

Scott: Awesome.

Steve: I'm starting to tear up just telling you that. It was awesome. This was our first chance to be with them since I've been on the road so much. We usually try to have them over to our house on Sunday afternoons.

When they arrived, Bo came running into my room and jumped up into my lap. He gave me this huge hug and said, "Papa, I've been missing you. I haven't seen you for a while." Bo is Bo. He says whatever he's thinking all the time.

I hung out with them during the day and Saturday took them to playgrounds, adventures, and finally to our local airport. I saw a bunch of cars parked in the parking lot and thought maybe there's an air show. It turned out it was a car show. They also had a bouncing tent along with helicopter rides. The kids and I went over there, and hung out for a while. They're wonderful and I love them to pieces.

Scott: That's awesome.

Steve: I also realized why God gives children to younger people. I'm tired.

We've been immersed in our study of the Tabernacle for several months. We began on the outside of the court of the Tabernacle, then entered through the first gate. After passing through the courtyard, we came to the tent of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, the Tabernacle itself.

Then we entered a couple of weeks ago into the Most Holy Place and talked about the ark, the mercy on top of the ark, or atonement cover. Today, we're going to talk about God's presence because this is what we've been aiming for since the beginning.

Let's pray.

Father, help us to have ears to hear what You're saying to us today. Help us to truly hear You talking to our hearts. I pray that You will teach us more about Yourself as we study this topic. Quicken these scriptures to us, make them alive to us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: I'm going to read five chunks of scripture beginning with Exodus 25:22.

"There, I will meet with you. From above the mercy, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the Testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel." That's the ESV.

The ASV puts it a little differently, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark." The word is, "I will meet with you" and "I will speak with you." In both places, the word "for meet with you" is "Ya`ad." It's Strong's Hebrew #3259.

That word "to meet with you," resonates in my heart. It could be translated several different ways, but they're all pretty similar. It can also be translated "to appoint, to assemble, assigned, set, or designated." It also means to gather, to meet, to summon. When you put the whole all of those words together, it paints quite a picture is that this is where God has determined, or appointed where He would meet with His people.

Another time where that word "meet" is used is in Exodus 29. "Now, this is what you shall offer on the altar. Two lambs a year old day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight."

And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hint of beaten oil and a fourth of a hint of wine for a drink offering. The other lamb, you shall offer at twilight, and you shall offer with it a grain offering and a drink offering as in the morning for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to Jehovah.

"It shall be a regular burnt-offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting before Jehovah where I will meet with you to speak to you there." Notice the same words being employed, Meet and Speak. "There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by My glory."

These were set times twice a day where He was going to meet with the children of Israel. The same language is also used in Exodus 30:6 concerning the incense altar, "You shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the Testimony in front of the mercy that is above the testimony where I will meet with you." **In Exodus 30:36**, "You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting where I will meet with you."

This is special stuff as God says, I will meet with you a couple of times a day when you are offering these offerings and the incense.

It would be beneficial to read all of Leviticus 16 followed by all of Hebrews 9 talking about the day of atonement where the priest was only able to go into this Most Holy Place once in the year.

If you do, you'll notice the high priest going in once a year with all the very elaborate and detailed directions that he was given about his garments, about offering the blood for himself, and for his house, and for the whole nation of Israel, and then how Jesus did it better. For He was a better sacrifice.

However what I want to focus on is that this is where God, the living God, met the priests. This is where the living God met the people of Israel. This is where the living God came down and communed with them at an appointed time and place, and He spoke with them there.

Now, if you just back up a little bit for a little overview, remember that Abraham communed or met with God. When I say "commune," what I'm trying to convey is it's a two-way street. It's not just God speaking, and somebody taking notes and saying, "Yes, sir," and going off and doing them, but they actually communed and had a discussion.

When God showed up at Abraham's tent and said, "I'm about to go down and visit Sodom," they went back and forth. There was two-way communication. Several times, when God would speak to Abraham, they went back and forth. They were communing with each other.

I have noticed the same dynamic between God and Moses. Notice how God and Moses were negotiating about the children of Israel, and their sin. Moses said, "Let me take their place and be blotted out from the book of Life." God said, "No." This is a beautiful picture. Communion is based on a relationship.

In 1968 I was a young 14-year-old guy was on the side of a mountain in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. I heard the gospel for the first time. It was very simple. It was powerful.

I heard that I could ask God to forgive my sins, and because of Jesus, He would take them away and give me a fresh start. I heard that if I ask him, He would come into my heart, and He would live there.

I could know Him and talk to Him personally. I would have eternal life. I heard this explanation of the good news during the week at a Young Life camp way out in Colorado.

One day, I sensed that this was the time to make a decision. I went outside and sat down on the side of the mountain, and simply said, "Jesus, please forgive my sins and come into my heart," something to very close to that effect, and He did, and I sensed His presence.

Sadly, over the years, God had begun to seem further away. Then I went through this huge crisis 10 years ago, in 2012. God used that to draw me back in a new way. He

began to convince me that He loved me for who I was, that He liked me, that He created me in His image, that He knew me thoroughly, and He loved me completely. I began to grasp the gospel in a deeper way and I saw Jesus in a whole new light. Two years later, these new understandings had worked their way from my head to my heart of hearts. And in the fall of 2014, I sensed that God wanted to meet with me. It's like He was inviting me to an appointment, the same word that we talked with. He wanted me to assemble so that I could meet with him, and hear Him, and commune with Him. I rode my bicycle a couple miles from where we were staying to a rocky overlook called Lookout Point. I sat down and spent about an hour with my Dad. I communed with Him.

Then, for several years, I continued to make appointments, you might say, to go for walks or to engage in special times of seeking God. Then, four years ago, in 2018, I felt the Spirit direct me to apply the principles of Psalm 100 to come into His presence with singing, enter His gates with Thanksgiving, and praise His name.

These two paths that I have been on, studying the tabernacle and applying the principles of Psalm 100, are converging. I am observing incredible parallels of coming through His gates with thanksgiving and then entering His courts, His courtyard, the outer courtyard with praise.

There's a lot of interplay between these two paths. I wrote a book on Coming Into His Presence because this is so transformative to me to not just believe in a God who's way far away, but to actually commune with Him, and hear Him speak.

Since 2018 I approach God through these principles of singing, giving thanks, and blessing His name. Now in studying the tabernacle, I realize these were the same principles given to the priests. The priests were to come into His presence with singing and giving thanks and blessing His name, which David assigned in 1 Chronicles 16.

You and I are priests. We're more than priests. We're better equipped priests than Aaron, than all these people, because we know Jesus. We know the high priest. Hebrews 10:19–22 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Notice the phrase, “We have confidence to enter into the Holy Places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.” We have confidence that we can come into His presence.

This past week in California, I was giving a talk on the Gospel for Parents. It was a very precious experience. God came into that room in a deep way and met us. We all need to keep hearing this good news. As followers of Jesus, we need to hear the good news over and over.

I'm thinking of how God was present as I am reading that we can enter into the Holy Places and come into His presence because of what Jesus has done for us. During that session in California, the Spirit of God came down upon us, and we sensed God calling to us. At the same time, I sensed a resistance. I'm not sure resistance is the right word, but it's almost like we've become numb to hearing the message of Christ's salvation. Or we are too familiar or acclimatized to the message. I sensed that a wall was going up and it was keeping us from going deeper with God. It's like we have a set of expectations and are now saying, "Yeah, that's good for Moses. That's good for Abraham." And possibly even Steve's gotten something fresh now, but it's not for me. I have gone as far as I can with God. We've become comfortable in the sate of our own relationship with God, and don't expect too much.

I'm not sure I'm using the right words, but I sense that I get to a certain point and people are drinking it in, and they're tracking with me, then there is this wall of resistance that comes up and says, "Yeah, but I don't think that's for me, or I don't think I can really break through to that degree that you are talking about, where I could actually be led by the Spirit, and hear His voice, and commune with Him." However I believe that's exactly what God came to do. He is gently pursuing each of us to take our relationship to a deeper level.

When I was in Colorado, folks did not ask me, "Do you believe in Jesus?" I would have said, "Yes." They didn't say, "Are you a Christian?" I would have said, "Yes." They said, "Have you met Jesus?" That question was different and I could not say that I had. Even 10 years ago, I had fallen into this state where I believed in Jesus. I was seeking first the kingdom, and I sensed him at particular times, and I had been in meetings when God would come down. I sensed that God was near me, and didn't want to leave, but I didn't have this kind of relationship on a regular basis in my own personal walk with the living God.

I sense that's the same thing that a lot of folks are feeling when I am giving this talk. I know I'm talking to earnest Christians. These are people that want the best for themselves and for their family. That's why they're making the efforts to teach their children at home. They're coming to a talk on the gospel.

The title of it is "Good News for Tired Parents," but it's just a simple gospel presentation. Instead of using the four spiritual laws and the Romans road, what I'm teaching is based on John 15:9, where Jesus says, "Just like my dad loves me, that's how I love you."

Then if you take those words literally, which I do, and then you apply what happened at His baptism, when God the Father looks at His Son and says, "Wow, I'm so happy that you're My son."

You and I know that each of us has been adopted into the family of God. We have been adopted into His family. We are His children. We're not only His children, we are

His beloved children. We're not just His beloved children, we're His beloved children who bring Him great joy every time He sees us.

That is the good news, because Jesus has washed us, cleansed us, and clothed us. Then in John 15:9, He said, "Just like my dad loves me, that's the same way I love you." You and I are adopted kids, who are loved. We are also beloved. And we bring Him great delight. Then this is when I sense people start to shut down a little. I can almost hear them saying, "Wow, it's almost too good." I said, "Yes. That's the gospel. That's what makes it good news." I even stopped, and prayed. I said, "Lord, help us to get this." I'm still praying that people would get it.

OK. Now let's wrap this up. One of the very first verses we read in our study of the tabernacle, was Jesus saying to Philip, "I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me."

Then we saw that all three of those gates, correspond to this passage. The way was the first one, the door. The truth, when he washed their feet with water of the word, the second gate. Then the life, the veil was the third gate. You might say the third piece of the puzzle. Because of Jesus, we have now come through the third gate, and come into God's presence.

I like what Jesus says in John 17:1–3 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

When we meet Jesus, when we commune with Jesus, when we know God the Father and God the Son, we have life. That's it. It's not a formula. It's the person of God.

Hosea 6:3, "Let us know, let us press on to know Jehovah. He's going out as sure as the dawn. He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

That is what this whole study is about. That is what all of scripture is about. We don't just believe in Jesus, that's the starting spot, but we press on until we know God.

That's what Paul said, "I press on. I want to know Jesus. I want to be found in Him. I want to get close to Him." I hope that God will take this study, and write it on our hearts, all the different aspects of what we have learned about Jesus.

To know Jesus is to know His Dad, to know the Father, Son, and Spirit, all three, is to have eternal life. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Life is in the Most Holy Place, above the mercy enshrined, where He will meet with us, and commune with us, and reveal more about Himself to each of us.

Scott: We could just end it right there. I'll at least comment on if they're worth keeping. How about that?

Steve: Sure.

Scott: Two things that came to mind for me, one, is the fact that Jesus took care of all of that. There was so much involved through all these weeks that we've been talking about this. There's so much involved of getting into God's presence.

It was reserved for the high priest. It wasn't like everybody could just hang out with God. By tearing the veil to His crucifixion, through His resurrection, we have access to Him, the Holy of Holies. We can be with Him anytime, all the time.

The other thing that hit me was just the phrase in my inmost being. Psalm 139 says, "You created me in my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb."

Scott: Psalm 103, "Praise the Lord, my soul, all my inmost being, praise His holy name." I know for myself, throughout my life with God, a lot of it has been praying to God up there, somewhere out there, or maybe Jesus is near or in the room.

He wants to be in our inmost being, the kingdom of God within. This is very intimate. We have access to that. We can have that.

Steve: Amen. Let's pray, and ask God to take our relationship to a new level, which I believe God is holding out to us.

Father, deliver us from low expectations. Deliver us from the lie that somehow this is good for everybody but me. Deliver us from these lies of hell that are keeping us from entering into Your presence that You have opened through the death of Your son. The perfect sacrifice of the high priest. He's priest. He's the sacrifice. He's the whole package.

I pray You'll give us an appetite to know You. I pray that You'll give us an appetite to commune with You. I pray that You'll put something right down, as God says, in our inmost being that we will love You with all our heart soul, mind, and strength, that we will get to know You better, and that we will be found in You.

Communing, listening, break the ceiling, so to speak, in our own expectations and help us to get above our stuff that keeps us down. Help us to work through our stuff until we find the living God, and don't let us be satisfied with anything else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.