

▷ INTRODUCTION

Last week we began our study of the concept of lordship. We learned that Jesus is Lord, and that surrender to Him is at the very starting point of discipleship. We reviewed the biblical concept that we must die daily—that spiritually, self has to yield to God's control on the issues of daily life.

This week we will go deeper into the concept of Jesus as Lord. We will discover that Scripture reveals something greater than simply obeying God. Instead, Bible writers present us with the incredible concept of spiritual partnership and intimacy with the indwelling Christ.

This intimacy began with creation; Adam and Eve were created for friendship with God. Adam began life in the cradle of God's arms, awakened by the kiss of life. Discovering God and his own identity in relationship with God were his first conscious thoughts. This capacity for intimacy with the Almighty continues today. In fact, we are born with the need for this intimacy. Only as we find that union with God will we find peace and satisfaction.

Lordship is the realization of that union with God for which we were born. Here, the very presence of God transforms our hearts. When Jesus promised "another Comforter," He also promised to return to us (John 14:18). The coming of the Comforter would bring the assurance of His presence: "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John 14:20). This indwelling presence of Christ is the essential core of the biblical concept of discipleship. Intimacy with God empowers our daily living.

ACCEPTING HIS PRESENCE WITHIN US, WE BECOME GOD'S ULTIMATE TEMPLE.

Paul presents the promise "that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Ephesians 3:16-17, ESV). Paul concludes that, as a result of knowing the height and depth of God's love, we will be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:15-19). This is the scope of the promised intimacy with God—Christ bringing the fullness of God into our lives. Accepting His presence within us, we become God's ultimate temple.

While this relationship offers so very much, it also confronts us with far-reaching demands that are in direct contrast to the contemporary Christianity that has been assimilated by the world around us. This Christianity has lost its power, for it has abandoned its Source—the indwelling Christ. Instead of debating over issues of obedience or arguing about how to keep the Sabbath, we discover that our relationship with Jesus is something much more radical—a life of intimate union with Him. Each part of that life is transformed by His presence.

As we walk with God, discipleship moves from following from a distance to a journey with a friend. It moves from human attempts to obey and meet God's standard to the realization of Christ's transforming presence. It leads to the fulfillment of God's promise to work in us "both to will, and to do" (Philippians 2:13). He is Lord. You and I have the privilege of living out this experience in everyday life. How? By abiding in Him and allowing Him to abide in us. Thus, lordship moves from a theological expression to a living relationship with the King.

▷ OBJECTIVES FOR THIS WEEK

Our objectives for this week include the following:

- We want to understand the biblical reality that Christ wants to dwell in us.
- We want to understand how to accept Jesus as living within us.
- We want to explore the implications of an intimate union with God.

▷ HOLY HABIT—PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

God has promised to be with us (Matthew 28:20). He said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. . . . (Isaiah 43:2, NIV). The Psalmist portrays that there is no place we can go that God cannot find us (Psalm 139:7-10).

So God is with us at all times. However, we forget this reality and live our lives in our own strength and power. Too often we find ourselves spiritually isolated while surrounded by the fullness of God's presence. Our challenge is to learn to be consciously open to and spiritually accept the reality of His presence.

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD is the art of consciously seeking to be alert to and aware of God's presence in our lives because:

- He has promised to be with us.
- It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring His presence to us.
- We can do things which will help us be more sensitive to the reality of His presence.

This *Holy Habit* of practicing God's presence has the power to transform our lives. Just imagine what it would be like to have God's presence with us at all times! How would things change in our relationships and behavior if we could visibly see God sitting or walking beside us? He really is here with us. We just have to train ourselves to be conscious or aware of His presence. When we do, our lives are transformed. We cannot dwell in His presence and remain the same.

God has invited us to come before the throne of grace or into His presence. The following pointers may help in practicing the presence of God:

- Use your imagination to picture God being with you in all you do.
- Make room for God in your daily life, physically, mentally, and in your time.

- Try to think of God at regular intervals throughout the day. Start with longer periods of time and move down to thinking of Him at least once each minute.
- Try to keep one part of your mind focused on or thinking of God at all times.
- Be conscious of the reality that you are in the presence of God at all times.

We can learn to live in God’s presence. In the meantime, a little practice will help.

▷ **SUGGESTED PRAYER**

Here is a suggested prayer as we begin this week of our journey with God in study, reflection, and growth:

Dear Father of Love, Help me to be aware of your presence in my life. You have promised to be with us. I claim that promise and ask that you help me be aware of how you are involved in my life. Help me open my mind to the reality that you are here with me now. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

LIST BELOW THREE OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR JOURNEY WITH GOD DURING THIS WEEK:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

We continue to explore the level of intimacy that God offers us in the discipleship journey. Very few of us really understand God's desire for us. We want to recognize what He offers and learn to enter into a deeper relationship with Him.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Loving Father, I come seeking to understand just how much of a relationship you offer to me. I want more of you. I want to know you better and love you more. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE

This week we start with memory verse #7. Again we want to follow our process for memorizing and reviewing this verse with a card.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)—“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (KJV)—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Once again, we want to review memory verses from the last two weeks. Today we are reviewing memory verse #4 (1 John 5:13) and #6 (Matthew 11:28-30). Use the cards to help you review these verses and reflect on their application to your life.

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

It is now time to turn to Scripture and explore God's promises to be with us, and what that can mean for us.

READ MATTHEW 1:23—Reflect on what the name Immanuel means to our relationship with God. Write the key points from your thoughts below:

READ THE STORY OF MARY AND MARTHA IN LUKE 10:38-42. Which are you more like, Mary or Martha? How does this affect your relationship with God?

READ EXODUS 25:8 AND COMPARE IT WITH 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20—How does God's desire to dwell "with us" and to make our bodies His temple impact your thinking about your relationship with God?

READ MATTHEW 28:18-20—How does Jesus' promise to be with us affect your thinking about the challenges you face?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help me catch a vision of what you want for my life. Help me understand how I can be a temple for your Spirit. Teach me to open my life to your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

We continue looking at God's promises to be with us. We especially want to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We want to see what Scripture tells us about the Holy Spirit bringing the presence of Christ into our lives.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Father in Heaven, Jesus promised to be with us. Help me to understand how that can be more real for me. Show me how to open my heart more fully to your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Today we need to review memory verse #7 from yesterday (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Spend a few minutes reflecting on what this promise means to you.

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Now open you Bible and spend a few minutes in reflection and growth as you read and study what God has for you today.

READ THE STORY IN MATTHEW 14:13-33—In what ways have you wanted to “step out of the boat” in your spiritual journey with God? How does your experience compare with Peter’s?

READ JOHN 14:16-21—What does Jesus promise of the Holy Spirit mean to you? What does verse 20 tell us about where God wants to be?

READ COLOSSIANS 1:27—How does Paul's promise of Christ being in us bring us hope? How does this compare with John 14:20 (see above)?

READ GALATIANS 3:14—What does this passage tell us about how we receive the Holy Spirit? What factors fight against you receiving the Holy Spirit?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear Father, Help me to understand the biblical truth that Christ wants to dwell in me. Help me open my life to your presence and give you room to work. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Today we want to explore how God's presence brings strength and comfort into our lives. As we study more of what Scripture says about what God's presence can do in our lives, we will find comfort and strength.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, You promised to be with us. Help me understand just what that can mean to me today. Help me experience your strength and comfort in my life today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

We have two verses to review today, memory verse #1 (Jeremiah 31:3) and verse #7 (Ezekiel 36:26-27). This extended review helps us memorize the passage. It also helps us make that passage and its truth part of our daily life. Spend a few minutes using your imagination to apply these verses to your life. How can the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life change the way you live today?

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

We now want to spend the next few minutes in quiet reflection and study as we turn to Scripture.

READ THE STORY IN MARK 4:35-41. Reflect on how Jesus can sleep so calmly in the midst of the storm. What areas of your life are stormy and how could Jesus' presence make a difference?

READ THE STORY IN LUKE 7:11-17—What does Jesus' compassion and power teach you about how He can make a difference in your life today?

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7—Take special note of the statement that God is near. How can His presence bring you contentment and peace?

READ ISAIAH 43:1-2—How can the assurance of God's presence help you face a crisis in your life? In what areas of your life would you like to experience God's presence today? After you have reflected on these questions, spend a few minutes claiming these promises of God's presence.

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Finish your study with a prayer such as:

Dear Lord, Your presence changes things in my life. Knowing that you care enough to be with me gives me strength for today. I claim these promises as mine today. Help me to believe and integrate them into this day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Today we want to explore the power that is available to us with God's presence. He promised that we would have power for every area of life. We want to understand how His power can change the way we live.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear Loving Father, Help me to catch a vision of the power that is available to help me live with you today. I invite you to guide my study and help me understand more of what you give me to help me live each day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE

We start memorizing verse #8 today. Once again we will need to use the memory system we have been using during the last three weeks. Write the passage out on a card and carry that card with you to help you review and reflect on this passage throughout the day.

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)—“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

2 Peter 1:3-4 (KJV)—“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

We also want to review memory verse #5 (Proverbs 3:5-6) from last week. Spend a few minutes reflecting on this passage and its implications for our lives today.

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Now it is time to open our Bibles and study. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking on this vital subject for today.

READ THE STORY IN MARK 5:21-43. Try to imagine what it would have been like to be there when the story happened. What details from this story speak to you, and why?

READ AND REFLECT ON TODAY'S MEMORY VERSE, 2 PETER 1:3-4. What limits exist to the power that God promises us in this passage?

How can the reality of this promise change your life today?

In what areas of your life do you want to claim this promise today?

▷ COMMITMENT PRAYER

Loving God, I claim your presence and power in my life today. I am dependent upon you for everything in my life. Help me to trust you and believe that these promises are mine. Give me wisdom and strength to meet the issues that I will confront during this day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY’S OBJECTIVE

Our objective today is to explore one of the most powerful lordship concepts in all of Scripture—obedience is the result of God’s presence in our lives. Because we love Him, we want to obey God. We have tried and failed many times. Today, we go deeper into one of the most incredible truths in all of Scripture.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear God, I want to walk with you. I want to learn to obey you more. Yet I struggle in areas of my life. Help me understand more of what you offer me. Help me believe that you can change my life. Give me faith to trust your power. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Today we want to review our two verses from this week, #7 (Ezekiel 36:26-27) and #8 (2 Peter 1:3-4). Once again, we will want to use our review card process.

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

Now it is time to return to God’s Word and explore more of what He offers us today.

READ THE STORY OF THE RICH YOUNG RULER IN MATTHEW 19:16-26. Try to put yourself into the story. Have you ever felt like you were doing all the right things, and there was still something missing from your life? What points from this story speak to your present situation?

READ EZEKIEL 36:26-27—How does God promise to bring obedience into our lives? Where and how could this change your life?

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13—How does this passage compare with Ezekiel 36:26-27 (see above)? What are the two specific promises in this passage that lead to an obedient life?

READ EPHESIANS 2:4-10—What does this passage teach us about obedience or “good works?” How is this obedience an extension of the grace that saves us?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Lord of Love, Teach me to walk with you. Teach me to give you room to work in my life. Help me to accept the reality of your presence with me. Help me choose to obey and trust you to produce that obedience in me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ TODAY'S OBJECTIVE

Our purpose today is to understand and explore how God's presence helps us grow spiritually. The exciting discipleship journey with God means constant growth. It means each new day brings new insight and opportunity.

▷ INVITATION PRAYER

Dear God of Love, Take my study time today and open my mind to what you want to do in my life. Help me as I reflect on your Word. Send your Holy Spirit to guide me as I reflect on your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

▷ MEMORY VERSE REVIEW

Our review text for today is memory verse #8 (2 Peter 1:3-4). Follow the review process we have established by now and spend a few minutes reflecting on this promise. How can this promise change your life?

▷ BIBLE READING AND REFLECTION

It is now time to continue our exploration of biblical truth. We want to understand how God wants to change and transform us.

READ GENESIS 32:1-28—What does the story of Jacob teach us about our spiritual journey? In what ways are you tempted to try to solve problems yourself and wait to call on God only when nothing else works?

READ EPHESIANS 3:16-19—We have looked at this passage before and it has even more depths for us to explore. How can Christ “dwell in our hearts”?

What are the results of Christ being in us?

READ GALATIANS 4:19—What does it mean for Christ to be “formed within” us?

▷ **COMMITMENT PRAYER**

Dear God, I am amazed by the promises I have studied this week. Help me to realize that they are true—that you can do what your Word says. I invite you into my life and ask that you will change and transform me into your image. Help me to be like Jesus. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

This week we have gone deeper into the subject of Christ's Lordship. It is really an extension of our study last week. The choice of Jesus as Lord is the turning point in the Christian life. The choice to accept the indwelling Christ is the power of the Christian life. Far too often Christianity is something we do in living a certain lifestyle. Instead, Scripture teaches us that Christianity is really about intimacy with God. This intimacy is the level of a spiritual union in which Christ dwells within us. His presence transforms and empowers everything else we do. Spend the next few minutes reflecting on what this week's study can mean to our spiritual lives.

How has your daily time with God affected your life this week? What difference is it making in the way you live?

What have the promises of God's presence "with" and "in us" done for you this week?

Where have you experienced challenges to your discipleship during this past week?

How is allowing Jesus to dwell within you starting to impact your life?

How would you like to see God work in your life during the next week?
