

Noticing that God Is Near

“The most holy and important practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God - that is, finding constant pleasure in his company, speaking humbly and lovingly with him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way - a continual conversation with God.”

— Brother Lawrence

Was the world a scary place to you as a child? Is there even more for children to fear now? There are pools to swim in, hikes to take, dark rooms to sleep in, reports to give, bikes to ride – great terrors for many children. Fortunately, when faithful lifeguards, trail guides, mommy in the next room, understanding teachers, and “I’m right behind you” grandparents are present and doing their job, their presence can make fear turn into celebration. But those **faithful and strong companions reassure us only if we notice their presence.**



So it is with God, who is always present and always faithful. Noticing his presence makes all the difference. **The habit of practicing the presence of God is simply a matter of “finding constant pleasure in his company.”** This spiritual practice is about turning quickly and continually to him for input, comfort, and approval. Noticing that God is near, abiding within, means that everything is overshadowed by his presence, everything is influenced by his existence. Noticing God’s presence is a routine of conferring and consulting with him, taking course correction from him, calibrating choices based on him. This life practice means that we **live with Psalm 23 in full view.** He leads, he satisfies, he prepares, he tenderly cares for us.

Noticing that God is near means we really, **truly believe in Emmanuel.** It’s not just a Christmas word, it is a guiding reality: God with us. He is not far off or unaware. Even when we don’t feel that he is near – we know he is. C.S. Lewis reminds us, “God’s presence is not the same as the feeling of God’s presence, and he may be doing most for us when we think he is doing least.” Geography and architecture don’t limit his presence. He is not more present in a special city or in a special building. One of the most enduring voices about practicing God’s presence, Brother Lawrence, entreats us to **make our hearts a personal chapel.**

Nothing can bring a sense of fulfillment and make life more significant, nothing can clarify our value more, than to **be aware of his presence as he shows favor toward us and transforms us.** Every need becomes insignificant because he is there as the solution. Every fear is diminished because he has authority over all things. Every challenge is diluted because his purposes are set in eternity past. He reigns and he is with us.

What a gift we give our children as they acquire the habit of noticing God’s nearness. They look through heavenly lenses when they **evaluate life in light of his presence.** He knows. He is near. He is with them.

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INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. I’d like to share with you a practice that will help you enjoy life no matter what!”

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

We’re going to play a special kind of I Spy game. While you hide your eyes, I’m going to go to 5 places in our yard (or house) and I’m going to put one of these red paper circles in places as a hint that I have been there. Then we will see if you can spy the circles, the hints. (Go with the child to spy the circles.) Now, listen to this wonderful word from God. **“the LORD our God is near to us whenever we call on him?”** (Deuteronomy 4:7 NLT) Next, we are going to look for hints that God has been with us in our day. We will place those circles in places where we saw God’s care to remind us that God is always near to us. (Put the circle on the window where the morning sun comes in, or on the refrigerator where you keep the food he supplies, or on the child’s chest where she breathes the air God gives ...)

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

One wise man said that “trying to be happy without a sense of God’s presence is like trying to have a bright day without the sun.” (A.W. Tozer) Draw a picture of your day. What would have been different if the sun had not come up today? Think of the things you would not have enjoyed. Think of ways the sun helped you. The sun makes all the difference in our day! The same is true of God’s presence. Let’s talk about ways God’s presence near us made things different today. Hebrews 13:5 - “Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, **I will never leave you or abandon you.**” (CSB)

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Let’s read Psalm 23 together. Now, using what we discover in that chapter, let’s make a list in our journals of all the times when God is with us. We will leave a couple of empty lines after each of the phrases from that chapter. At bedtime over the next several days we will review our day and **make a note of when we noticed God’s presence with us** that are similar to this chapter. When did God satisfy us when we were thirsty for something? When things were hard and dark, how did we sense his nearness? How did he protect us or help us through something that was difficult? How did he guide us?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

It Will Be Okay by Lisa Terkeurst

God Is Always With Me: Psalm 139 by Dandi Daley Mackall

Found: Psalm 23 by Sally Lloyd Jones

[A Video Reading of Found: Psalm 23](#)