

Foundations 504: **God's Presence Is His Promise**
Thinking Biblically, Living Covenantally
ROUGH DRAFT

Our Non-Negotiables

Christianity is unique among all world religions in that it speaks of a God who redeems and dwells with his people.

John 1.14, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Matthew 1.23, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Acts 1.8, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

2 Corinthians 4.6, For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God is here. Right now we are surrounded by the presence of God. God is with us here in this meeting. Today when you got out of bed and got ready for work, God was with you. When you dealt with that difficult client or child, God was with you. When you went for a walk, God was with you. When you were tempted with that same sin for the umpteenth time, God was with you. When you had to move to a new location, God was with you. When you had a health scare, God was with you. When that person you loved passed away, God was with you. God is there, right there with you in every situation in every moment. **God's presence is his promise.**

God's presence is with us in all places and at all times. This is called his omnipresence. "Omni," meaning "all." God is everywhere present. We cannot go anywhere that God is not near us. Hear the words of David: *Where shall I go from thy spirit? Or where shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, you are there: if I make my bed in Sheol (the place of the dead), behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me (Psalm 139:7-10).* God sees us, he guides us, he holds us, he is beside us everywhere we are.

But have you ever had times when you wondered if God was with you? When you felt God had abandoned you? You may have had these thoughts and feelings, but your emotions don't dictate truth. The truth is, "God is always with you." You are not alone in these feelings. You know someone who really struggled at times with this? David. Listen to what he said in *Ps 22.1-2, 23-24*:

*¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?*

² *My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.*

At that point, David did not feel God's presence. He thought he had been abandoned. But a few verses later he declares his trust in God's presence in his life. Listen to what he says a few verses later:

⁹ *Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.*

¹⁰ *From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.*

²³ *You who fear the Lord, praise him! ...*

²⁴ *For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.*

Corrie Ten Boom recounts her story in the book *The Hiding Place*. Corrie Ten Boom and her family learned the reality of the truth of God's omnipresence; that even when there seems to be no life, even when there seems to be no hope, God is there in the hopelessness and darkness. For God is our hiding place in times of trouble. [Ps 32.8](#), "*You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*"

The Ten Boom family was deeply involved in saving Jews from the Nazis. They built a secret room, a hiding place, to hide Jews in case their home was raided. This room was accessed through a hidden panel in the linen closet and would hold 6 people. I've stood in in it, and it is very small. One day the Ten Boom's were betrayed. That night their home was raided by the Nazis. About 30 people in the Ten Boom family were arrested. Father Caspar was imprisoned and lived about 10 days. Corrie and her sister Betsie were eventually sent to Ravensbuck concentration camp in Germany.¹

In Ravensbuck Corrie and Betsie endured great deprivation and suffering. At roll call they stood outside in the bitter cold in a flimsy dress and broken shoes for hours on end. There was never enough to eat, nor was there medicine for sickness. Yet in that dark pit Betsie and Corrie continued in faith. Miraculously, Corrie was able to smuggle in a little Bible into the camp. This Bible encouraged them and hundreds of women from different countries who were imprisoned with them. At night there was Bible study and prayer. Betsie read the Bible in Dutch, Corrie translated to German, and others would translate into French, Polish, Russian, and Czech. Where once many of the women prisoners looked out only for themselves, a community was formed where compassion, kindness, and encouragement became common. Corrie described these times as "little previews of heaven." And she "would know that in darkness God's truth shines most clear" (p 201).²

¹ Ten Boom, Corrie and Sherrill, John and Elizabeth. *The Hiding Place*. (1971)

² Ten Boom, Corrie and Sherrill, John and Elizabeth. *The Hiding Place*. (1971), p. 201.

Betsie, never in great health to begin with, became ill. As she lay on the prison hospital floor, Corrie leaned down to hear her sister's last words: "... (we) must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that no pit is so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been there" (p 217). And then, Betsie was ushered into heaven, her face utterly at peace.³

Soon thereafter, Corrie was "accidentally" released from the camp through a clerical error. The day after her release, all the women her age were exterminated. Corrie heeded her sister's exhortation, and for the rest of her life, traveled the world preaching the goodness, faithfulness, and presence of God in our darkest days. With conviction, she recounted Betsie's words: "There is no pit so deep that God is not there." There is no situation we face in which God is not there walking closely beside us.⁴ Surely, **God's presence is his promise.**

Are you living in a difficult situation right now? Is there trouble at home? Are there health problems? What about work? Has you been hurt by someone you love deeply? Do you have loved ones who don't know Jesus or who have walked away from him? Are you being marginalized because of your beliefs in Jesus? You are not alone. God knows what you are going through and walks with you in your pain and struggles. He will strengthen you, help you, and give you wisdom. God knows what you need. Will you let him help you? Will you surrender your cares to him? Are you willing to do things his way rather than your own?

God's word often speaks to me through music. One praise song embedded Isaiah's words in my heart ([43.1-3](#)).

1. When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you,
And the waves will not
Overcome you.
Do not fear,
For I have redeemed you,
I have called you by name,
You are Mine.

Chorus: For I am the Lord your God
The Holy One of Israel
Your Savior
I am the Lord (do not fear)
I am the Lord (do not fear)

2. When you walk through the fire
I will be with you,
And the flames will not
Consume you.
Do not fear,
For I have redeemed you,

³ Ten Boom, Corrie and Sherrill, John and Elizabeth. The Hiding Place. (1971), p.217.

⁴ Ten Boom, Corrie and Sherrill, John and Elizabeth. The Hiding Place. (1971)

I have called you by name,
You are Mine.

God's omnipresence means that nothing is hidden from him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that **"your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you"** (Mt 6.4). When you privately do good to others, God sees it and rewards you. A lady in our church who recently went home to be with the Lord (Larry Childs' wife) was once asked if she would take in a young woman who was pregnant out of wedlock. She took her in, and later raised that baby for several weeks. And then there were more foster babies. And then there were times when local ministries would call her to ask for groceries or Christmas gifts. And then she noticed hardly anyone was helping a church member who had Alzheimer's. She started talking to her friends at church and got help. She didn't help others because she wanted man's applause. She did it because it was the right thing for her to do. God gave her a heart to help those in need. I believe her reward in heaven is great.

On the other hand, God sees the wrongs we do in secret. Of course, they're not really secret, are they? Though we try to hide things from God, we can't. As the Scriptures say, *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"* (Heb 4.13). However, our sin does not cause God to abandon us, we are always in his presence. And we praise the Lord for this! He doesn't leave us alone in our sin. He is right there convicting us, calling us back to him, imploring us, waiting for us to confess our sins and turn from them and to him. He stands at the door and keeps on knocking (Rev 3.20). He is committed to us. He will never leave or forsake us (Heb 13.5). No one and nothing can snatch us from his hand (Jn 10.29). God loves us so much, he will not let us remain in our sin.

Do you realize that we can consciously live life in the presence of God? His omnipresence enables us to enjoy fellowship with him and to know that we can depend upon him in all that life throws at us. I don't know about you, but I often get preoccupied by the distractions of life. What am I going to eat? What am I going to wear? When do I need to schedule that meeting? How can I help this teacher? How am I going to ever write these talks? In my distractions, I forget that God is with me and that I can call on him to help me.

Have you read the little book by Brother Lawrence (a seventeenth century monk) called *The Practice of the Presence of God*? It's a wonderful book about how in Every. Little. Thing, he practiced being in God's presence, whether he was working in the kitchen, cutting potatoes, washing dishes, or tilling the garden. His love of God and total trust in him is convicting.

Now, initially Brother Lawrence did not like to wash the dishes in the monastery. You've washed grimy, hard to clean pots and pans. I don't enjoy it either. Brother Lawrence did this for 15 years. But as he practiced the presence of God, his heart was changed, and he considered it a privilege to do this chore. He writes, "My day-to-day life consists of giving God my simple, loving attention. If I am distracted, He calls me back in tones that are supernaturally beautiful. If you think of me, remember the grace with which God has blessed me rather than my typically human ineptitude."⁵

⁵ Lawrence, B. (1982). *The Practice of the Presence of God*, p.38. Whitaker House.

What did Brother Lawrence consider most important in walking with God? “The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way. This is especially important in times of temptation, sorrow, separation from God, and even in times of unfaithfulness and sin.”⁶ The most important thing is to live life in God’s presence.

Further, Brother Lawrence writes this about the presence of God:

“The presence of God is the concentration of the soul’s attention on God, remembering that He is always present.

“I know a person who for forty years has practiced the presence of God, to which he gives several other names. Sometimes he calls it a simple act—a clear and distinct knowledge of God—and sometimes he calls it a vague view or a general, loving look at God—a remembrance of Him. He also refers to it as attention to God, silent communion with God, confidence in God, or the life and the peace of the soul. To sum up, this person has told me that all these descriptions of the presence of God are merely synonyms that signify the same thing, a reality that has become natural to him.

“My friend says that by dwelling in the presence of God he has established such a sweet communion with the Lord that His spirit abides, without much effort, in the restful peace of God. In this center of rest, he is filled with a faith that equips him to handle anything that comes into his life.”⁷

Isn’t this what we want for our lives? That by the grace of God we walk in the presence of God and receive life and nourishment for the soul? **God’s presence is his promise.**

In Bill Bright’s book, *God: Discover His Character*, he lists **several promises that will help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives.**⁸

First promise: When we are confused, God will guide us.

There is so much confusion and chaos in today’s culture. Confusion over fundamental issues such as identity, gender, the environment, ethnicity, justice, the application of the law. But we as Christians are often confused, too. There are a range of questions. What is God’s will for my life? Why am I experiencing this suffering? How do I walk through this adversity? How am I to relate to this changing world around us? How am I to raise and educate my children in this confusing environment? How am I to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world? How am I to lovingly speak the truth? How do I resist temptation?

⁶ Lawrence, B. (1982). *The Practice of the Presence of God*, p. 59. Whitaker House.

⁷ Lawrence, B. (1982). *The Practice of the Presence of God*, pp. 67-68. Whitaker House.

⁸ Bright, Bill. (1999) *God: Discover His Character*, pp. 77-81. Orlando: New Life Publications.

God is with us all the time everywhere. He promises to reveal himself as we seek him through his Word and prayer. The Holy Spirit our Helper show us what to do as we trust in the Lord. *Ps 25. 4-5, ⁴ Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. ⁵ Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Ps 32.8, ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. **God's presence is his promise.***

Second promise to help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives: When we are afraid, God will protect us.

On my way to work, the announcer on Family Radio shared that sometimes when his little girl was feeling scared, she asked him to read a certain book. The repeated refrain was "God is always with me."

When you are afraid of that assignment you've been given, of driving down that unfamiliar road in the heart of darkness and rain, when you are alone in a dangerous place, when you're facing a hostile situation, when you don't know anyone at the event, when payments are due, when relationships are strained, when your prayers seem to go no higher than the ceiling, when Bible study seems stale and fruitless, when you don't see God's transforming work in your life, God is with you. The Lord says to you, "*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isa 41.10).*"

Preach this promise to yourself. Believe that God is with you in your fears and worries. Believe God will strengthen you, help you, uphold you, and comfort you to engage fear with his strength and wisdom. **God's presence is his promise.**

Third promise to help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives: When we are tempted, God will help us to resist.

Satan's goal is to do whatever he can to draw us away from God. Usually this is done through lies and deception. Jim Cymbala describes one of his strategies. Satan will whisper in your ear, "Don't call, don't ask. Don't depend on God to do great things. You'll get along fine if you rely on your own cleverness and energy."⁹ And often we fall to Satan's lies. Of course, Satan laughs gleefully as we seek solutions with our own human wisdom and strength apart from God. But when a Christian seeks the Lord without ceasing, Satan loses his power over you in that situation. Harry Reeder said, "The whole of Christian life is warfare." So, Christian, put on your spiritual armor and fight with the weapons God has given you ([Eph 6.10-18](#)).

We are tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Satan eagerly strives for believers to ignore, disbelieve, and disobey God. David Jeremiah helps us to see temptation in a different way.

"Suppose you and one of your friends are on the border of doing something wrong. Both of you know it is wrong. But you are about to do it anyway. But if you should say to your friend, 'Go

⁹ Cymbala, Jim. (1997) [Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire](#), p.38. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

right ahead and do it, but I think you should know that I just heard from heaven and God will be here in a few moments.’ Maybe your friend will respond,’ Wow, if God is going to be here soon, maybe I will do this tomorrow or next week, but I don’t want to do this if God is going to show up in a few minutes.”¹⁰

Well, the truth is, God is already there. Dr. Jeremiah’s illustration should remind us that when we are tempted to sin, we will be sinning in the presence of God. Remind yourself of this truth. Practice God’s presence by asking the Lord’s help to resist temptation. It is possible to be tempted and not sin. Listen to the promises in [1 Cor 10.13](#): “*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*” God is faithful. He will not test you beyond what you are able, and he will provide the way of escape. **God’s presence is his promise.**

Fourth promise to help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives: When we are hurting, God will comfort us.

Paul and Silas were attacked by the crowds in Philippi. Their clothes were stripped from them, and they were beaten with rods. They were imprisoned in the inner cells of a cold, damp, filthy prison, their feet in stocks. If I were them, I would be commiserating about how unfairly I had been treated and crying from the hurt of my wounds. I’m glad Paul and Silas were not me.

“*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,*” ([Acts 16.25](#)). Pray? Sing hymns to God? How could they do this in the midst of mistreatment and suffering? They knew God. They knew God was with them in their pain. The Spirit of the Lord filled them.

“*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Ps 34.18). “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Ps 147.3). “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;” (Isa 61.1).*

Whatever kind of pain we are experiencing-spiritual, mental, emotional, physical-the Holy Spirit, the Helper, is with us to comfort and strengthen us and to help us endure. My sister Sheryl became very ill with the flu, then viral pneumonia. Her organs failed, she was on life support, and then she was gone. All in 17 days. My family was devastated. Yet God was near. He showed his nearness everyday as his people sat with us, called us, sent us food and cards, and attended her funeral. His presence was very real. **God’s presence is his promise.**

Fifth promise to help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives: When we are discouraged, God will encourage us.

Think for a moment: what is discouraging you right now? Discouragement is one of Satan’s most effective tools.

¹⁰ Jeremiah, David. (1994). [Knowing the God You Worship](#). San Diego, CA: Turning Point Ministries.

The devil, according to legend, once advertised his tools for sale at public auction. When the prospective buyers assembled, there was one oddly-shaped tool which was labeled “Not for sale.” Asked to explain why this was, the devil answered, “I can spare my other tools, but I cannot spare this one. It is the most useful implement that I have. It is called Discouragement, and with it I can work my way into hearts otherwise inaccessible. When I get this tool into a man’s heart, the way is open to plant anything there I may desire.”¹¹

Remember: **God’s presence is his promise.** He is with you in your discouragement. Again, preach to yourself the promises of God. “*Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you (1 Pet 5.7). “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act” (Ps 37.5). “Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved” (Ps 55.22). “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Mt 6.25).*

Drink in God’s Word, and discouragement will flee. As you soak in his Word, you will more and more experience his presence. Place Post-It notes with verses at strategic places to remind you of Truth. Don’t waste your time trying to figure things out on your own.

Do not be anxious for anything! Cast your anxieties and burdens on the Lord. Commit yourself to him. He will sustain you, and he will act! Do this every single time discouragement assaults you. Every single time.

Sixth promise to help us consciously practice the presence of God in our daily lives: When you are lonely, God will be your companion.

I rarely feel lonely, but a lot of people do. Perhaps I realize my loneliness most when I’m in a crowd and hardly know anyone. I’m an introvert, so I don’t always reach out. What would I say? How could I make conversation? It is so stressful. And the others in the crowd don’t know me either, so they hang with their own group. I am alone. Hardly anyone notices me (and part of me is good with that.) Yet feeling alone is an isolating feeling.

There is One who always notices us, who always cares, who always wants to be with us, who always wants to hear us. He is One who sticks closer than a brother ([Pr 18.24](#)), who is our ever-present friend ([Jn 15.15](#)), who will never leave us or forsake us ([Heb 15.5](#)). The Lord Jesus is his name. Immanuel, God with us, is his name.

Sometimes God gives us lonely assignments. Though the tasks be lonely, God is ever-present with us to accomplish the good works that he has prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them ([Eph 2.10](#).) The story is told of David Livingston as he prepared to sail for Africa for the first time as a missionary. A group of friends accompanied him to the pier to say goodbye and pray for his well-being. They were deeply concerned for his safety in that vast, uncharted, dangerous land. One friend tried to convince Livingstone to remain in England. Quietly, Livingstone opened his Bible to [Mt 28. 20](#), “Lo, I am with you always...” He closed his Bible,

¹¹ Tan, P. L. (1996). [Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times](#) (p. 337). Bible Communications, Inc.

turned to his friend, smiled, and said, “That, my friend, is the word of a gentleman...So, let us be going.”¹²

Can any person or circumstance or confusion or chaos or hiding remove you from God’s presence? Absolutely not! God is with you at all times, in all places, in all conditions, in all mental and emotional states. God is with you everywhere. Paul states this most eloquently in [Rom 8.38-39](#): “³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹ *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Our ever-present, omnipresent God is with us now...and forever! **God’s presence is his promise.** Be at peace.

¹² Bright, Bill. (1999) [God: Discover His Character](#), p 80. Orlando: New Life Publications.