



ENTER God's presence

The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.

– Psalm 145:17-19

Lord Jesus, we come before you now and call on your name. Be with us and fill us again with your Holy Spirit so that we might come to know the truth of your word more deeply as we meet together as your people. In your name we pray, Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Share a story from the week of a time when you were aware of the presence of God in your life.**
4. **Share a time in your life, when you just wanted to escape from life. What happened and where did you go?**

Have you ever just needed to clear your head? To go for a walk to process things? Ever jumped into the car and driven, not sure where you were going, but just needing to escape from life? Has your life ever been turned upside down, leaving you dazed, confused, shattered or wrestling with questions like what's next? Where do I go? What do I do? Have you ever felt fatigued or frustrated, and can't see Jesus and can only think of everything wrong with your life. Instead of sensing God you feel like he's gone or like he'll talk to anyone but you. When you can't see God or sense Christ's presence it can be a dark place. Our vision becomes blurred and our memories become selective. If you are at that intersection in your life, right now, Jesus comes to reveal his presence to you in three life-giving ways that re-awaken passion, renew life and transform the story of your life. We will explore and discover again His presence in your life today.

Week beginning:
Sunday 8th Nov 2020

Worship series:

His Story...Your Life



VERSE for the week
Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:31-32



REMEMBER this week

Regardless of how it seems or how you feel, you are not alone in your journey. Christ will catch up with you and is present with you. Invite him to stay and let him transform the transit into a dwelling!



LISTEN attentively

Read Luke 24:13-35

5. **What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
6. **What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
7. **Have you had an experience like these disciples where you have only recognised the presence of Jesus in hindsight? Share your experience.**

One of the things that is unique about God's story, is that it is always a story of God's presence with his people. Other faiths, may have stories of times when their relevant deities interact with humanity for short periods of time, but from the beginning of Genesis, right through to the end of Revelation, we have a story of a God who has always dwelt with his people. First in the Garden of Eden, then in the tabernacle, then in the temple, then in the person of Jesus and now in his people through the gift of the presence of the Holy Spirit. One of our biggest challenges to being aware of God's presence with us today can be that we simply do not expect to encounter God or his presence in tangible ways outside of his word, the Bible, and the sacraments, baptism and holy communion. It seems that historically, humanity was more inclined to recognise God at work in the world through physical things in nature like the colours of a beautiful sunrise or sunset and through abstract ideas such as fate, destiny and coincidence.

8. **On a scale of 1-10, how aware would you say you were of God's presence in your life on a daily basis. 1- being "I don't see him at all" to 10 – "I constantly feel his presence".**
9. **Why do you think the disciples in this story were kept from recognising Jesus?**
10. **What do you think are some of the factors that impare our ability to recognise the presence of God in our lives today?**

It is not hard to imagine the disciples feeling abandoned by Jesus at this point. Notice that these two are heading to Emmaus on the day of Jesus' resurrection. They had heard the news of the empty tomb, but seemed to be having trouble coming to terms with it. They certainly do not seem to have accepted the news of the women that he was alive. In fact, it would not be hard to believe that these men may have been heading to Emmaus on their way home, having decided that after three days it was all over. They had backed the wrong horse and it was time to head back to their old lives. While we can't say with any certainty what the purpose was for their journey to Emmaus, it does seem like they have taken a different path to the other disciples who appear to have stayed in Jerusalem. Isn't it interesting that Jesus appears first to these two, not to all the others? They do not take off looking for Jesus, yet Jesus comes along, finds them, and walks with them.

11. **Can you recall and share a time when you have taken your own path, but God has followed after you to bring you back? Share.**



GROW deeper

One of the other things that is interesting in this story is the process which the two disciples go through before they recognise who it is that has been walking and talking with them. Right from the beginning of their encounter it is clear that they know a lot about Jesus. They can recount the events of his death and resurrection, they identify him as a prophet of God, who had taught with authority and performed signs and wonders but they had not correctly recognised his role as God's Messiah. They, like so many others, were expecting him to kick out the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus did restore the people of Israel (along with everyone else) from their sin, but instead established the kingdom of God. Their knowledge was incomplete. So Jesus set about filling in the gaps for them by helping them encounter and understand the Scriptures, God's Word. Yet even now, while they are curious and don't want him to leave them, they still don't quite get it. Only when they recognise him and encounter him face to face does anything change. In fact they change direction completely. After walking for half a day, they get up and hurry back to Jerusalem to tell of what they have seen.

12. **When it comes to evangelism (sharing the good news of Jesus), how would you describe the way we balance talking and teaching *about* Jesus, with *being* the presence of Jesus in the world?**

13. How would you describe your own journey to faith? Do you think you were mostly taught or shown who Jesus is?

Have a look at the following verses:

Exodus 33:7-14, Psalm 139:7, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 28:19-20, 1 John 4:12

Scripture is full of promises and assurances of God's presence with his people. The ones you have read are only a small selection. Being aware of the presence of God has the potential to completely change the way you see the world around you and the way you relate to God and to those who he brings across your path each day. God's story does not support the picture of a God who is sometimes called "the divine watchmaker". He is not the kind of God who created an intricately designed and balanced world just to set it running and leave it alone. Our God is one who is constantly interacting with his creation, present with his people and alive in those who trust and follow him. He wants you to be a part of his ongoing and unfolding plan of salvation. Not just for your own sake but also for the sake of those who have not yet encountered Jesus. He wants you to be a place where they may recognise the love and forgiveness of Jesus for the first time as you embody his presence wherever you go.



LIVE purposefully

Have a look at Acts 1:1-9

The book of Acts is generally considered as the sequel to Luke's gospel. In these verses we are given a brief overview of Jesus' time with his disciples after his resurrection. Before being taken up into heaven Jesus promises the disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. This promise of the presence of the Holy Spirit came powerfully on the apostles at Pentecost (Acts 2). This same Holy Spirit is one of the gifts we receive in our baptism. The Holy Spirit is God's continued presence with his people today. It is his presence with us that draws us deeper into faith in Jesus and empowers us to bring the presence of Jesus into the lives of others. Sometimes we can feel isolated or marginalised as Christians in modern Australian society. We can feel powerless and intimidated by those around us who might ridicule our beliefs. Remember though the words of Exodus 33:14 where God says, my presence will go with you and I will give you rest. Look for God's presence in your life, expect to see him at work. Learn to take confidence in his care and allow him to work through you. When you seek him, not only will you find him, but you will find he was there all along.

14. How could you be on the lookout and record the ways you sense God's presence in your life this week?

15. Try praying each morning this week that God would make you more aware of his presence with you. Practice looking for him at work and listening for his prompting and guiding. See if you find it easier at the end of the week.



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his presence and protection.
- Thank Jesus for experiencing humanity with us and being with us in our hurt and sorrow.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help your life be a place where people encounter the risen Jesus.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], Christ lives in you. Amen.