

November 2022 Newsletter

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you, and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in....

Circumstances

This month, experiencing God's presence in the midst of busyness has been a battle. It's hard for us all with such a fast pace moving society. While praying and singing to the Lord about this, I was reminded of a verse from Psalm. Psalm 26:2-3 says, "Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness."

As I was singing and praying to the Lord, I longed for him greatly because it felt like it had been a while with Him. Just as a boyfriend and girlfriend who miss each other, I felt that longing mixed with sadness due to the time away, but hope because I finally where I belong again, at His feet. Jesus truly is our first love; our hearts can miss him and long for him and hunger and thirst to be close again.

Here's part of the lyrics to my song:

Help me stay close to You in my struggles and my pain.
Help me stay close to You when I'm busy with so many things.
Wherever I am, whatever I do, help me stay close to You.
Do this, that, the other, and the day is gone.
Help me put you first, and always make space for Your dwelling.
(Remember, in the Christmas story in Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn for Jesus, we don't want to be like that).

When my mind is running, and I'm distracted, please give me focus on You and peace beyond understanding. When the clock is ticking and time is racing, please remind me You are infinite.

Cause You are with me when I'm lonely
You are with me when I feel weak.
You give me strength when it feels way too much to carry.
Until the end, to the very last breath, even beyond the grave, you are with me for eternity.

There are two things I have tried and want to focus on- closeness to God and His presence.
Here are two verses that help us think about staying close to the Lord:

Joshua 23:6-11, "Be very strong, be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now. The Lord your God has driven out nations before you great and powerful nations; to this day no

one has been able to withstand you. One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. So be very careful to love the Lord your God."

Joshua 22:5, "But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

As a woman engaged keeps herself pure for her husband set apart, we are to set ourselves apart for the Lord. Recall that being set apart is the concept of being holy. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole Spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." Notice also in Ephesians 6:25 that the Lord is preparing us for this day! It says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." What I am trying to get at here is: cling to hope! Cling to the hope to see Him in all his splendor and eagerly await His return. Cling to His power when you're weak. Cling to His promises, words, and love when you cannot see, or all you see is difficulty. Oh, that we cling to Him, to His goodness, to His grace, to His mercy, and not our own, not sacrifice. That these be the things that we hold on to for dear life, but also remembering He will never let go.

He is not a God that just saved us in the past and was experienced by us then; he is forever Savior, forever our Warrior, forever our Comforter, forever our Healer, and forever our God. He is not a God that says I helped you already- do it yourself now, no! As we walk in the light of that, that He is the One who was, who is, and is to come, may we find hope, freedom, and peace.

The second part of this is His presence and what it brings. I am still learning and thinking through this, but one book, *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence, covers this. It's about becoming more aware of the presence of God in the grit of work and in the busyness of daily life to always contemplate and seek His face. I am not there yet, but how I long to be close to Jesus, and I pray and know your longing grows and grows to be close to Him also.

Fundraising

We praise and thank the Lord and all of you; as of November, with one-time gifts and pledges, we are at \$104,078.00, 99% of the target goal. We are planning a trip for a week and a half to Peru in April to visit family and also see how things are and what God lays on our hearts. By God's grace, Rocio and I have continued to participate and help a Peruvian Pastor, Alberto Fernandez, some Thursday nights in the online Inductive Bible Study on Matthew. It has been a blessing and encouragement to us. Praise the Lord, we are almost fully funded for two years; however, the time frame for us to launch depends on an immigration process for Rocio's U.S. citizenship we applied for in August 2022. The process can take up to 12 months. Please be praying that everything will result well in God's timing. Our plan for 2023 is to continue fundraising for the third year.

Spiritually: (continuation on the presence of God)

Regarding the presence of God, I noticed when I was reading through Joshua that both in the crossing the Jordan and going around Jericho seven times. Guess what always went first, the ark of the covenant- a symbol of the presence of God! Joshua 3:11, "See the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you....Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up like a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the waters flowing down the Sea of the Arabah (this is the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite of Jericho." This same ark was carried around Jericho seven times, seven days in the front and the army behind. The Lord's presence assured them of victory, and on the seventh day, the Israelites gave a shout, and the walls came tumbling down. Psalms 97:1-7, "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. **The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord (at the presence of the Lord ESV) of all the earth.** The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all peoples see his glory. All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols-worship him, all you gods!" See how powerful the presence of the Lord is? His presence goes before us! Psalm 139:5, "You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me...." Deborah, to go against Sisera, in Judges 4:14, says, "Go! This day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" It's good to ask ourselves the same question: Has not the Lord gone ahead of you? "Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." This puts a refreshed perspective of Romans 8 when it says neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future....will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." It brings peace. Acts 3:19, "Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."

But even more, the ark of the covenant out in front (crossing the Jordan and around the walls of Jericho) is also an encouragement to seek first His kingdom and righteousness first, and all these things will be given to us as well. When we prioritize the eternal and our relationship with the Lord, His kingdom, and His work, things flow better (maybe not perfectly). A good way to do this is to place our trust in Him with each area of our lives, as we surrender those and place them in his hands- family, relationships, jobs, money, goals, dreams, effort, etc. May we prayerfully place each area in his hands because if we are holding on too tight to one of these, the tension will show, the stress will increase, and we will be caught attempting to control the outcomes. Think of Abraham and Isaac when God told him to put his son on the altar. Placing these in God's hand doesn't mean not doing anything, but it does mean releasing living in such a way that is honoring to God in each of them. Let's place our lives in his hands and experience peace!

Here is a final verse and an encouragement when life feels like it is just too much. 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surrounding power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body. For we who

are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal bodies." Notice that this can give us hope when feeling stretched or stressed. We grow by becoming less, so Christ becomes more within us to His glory.

