

"In His Presence"

When you seek out those you love, the approach may be for various reasons, some of which might be: to share good news, to seek a shoulder to cry on, to share a laugh or two, to share a quiet moment together. What joy it brings to know you have that 'special someone' who is willing to hear you and to be an active part of your life.

When you seek out the presence of God, what is your purpose for doing so? Do you recognize that He, too, wants to share in what you are going through at this very moment and He wants to be an active part of your daily living?

The Daily Devotions for the 2012 Ministries to Women Promotion Week entitled *In His Presence* calls you to consider the way you approach God. It also calls you to recognize and give praise for the way He is involved in the ordinary activities of your daily life.

It is my prayer that as you join other women across the Canada and Bermuda Territory in these daily devotions, that God will move in your midst, refreshing your spirit and challenging you to encourage others to draw near to Him as He invites us all to come *In His Presence*.

Major Patsy Rowe

Day 1- *Resting in His Presence*

Psalm 37:7 "Be still before the Lord & wait patiently for Him"

This is one of the hardest things we are called to do – to be still and be patient! Yet, as we look at this instruction, we are forced to recognize how much of our day consists of busyness – the busyness of doing. Doing what? Looking after family, going to work, participating in church life – all those activities we believe are necessary to accomplish the fullness of living.

When was the last time you truly rested and waited in the presence of the Lord without the pressure of being rushed or feeling guilty about being still?

Read: Luke 10: 38-42

Here we are given a glimpse into the daily activity of Mary and Martha.

Note Mary's action in Luke 10: 39

Contrary to the belief of many, resting and waiting on God is not a passive posture. To rest and wait on God is to come into His presence with the expectation that the God who calls us to approach him in this manner will respond.

"To wait is not merely to remain impassive. It is to expect--to look for with patience, and also with submission. It is to long for, but not impatiently; to look for, but not to fret at the delay; to watch for, but not restlessly; to feel that if he does not come, we will acquiesce, and yet to refuse to let the mind acquiesce in the feeling that he will not come."
Dr. A.B. Davidson
Waiting on God (quoted in *The Hidden Life of Prayer* by David McIntyre)
<http://articles.ochristian.com/article2580.shtml>

Reflect: Be still before the Lord;
Wait patiently for Him;
Allow Him to minister to your spirit in the quietness of the moment.

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*Silently now I wait for thee,  
Ready my God thy will to see,  
Open mine eyes, illumine me,  
Spirit divine*

(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #99)



Day 2 - *Worshipping in His Presence*

Psalm 96: 6 “Come let us bow down in worship  
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker”

The act of submission is not an easy stance to take. Yet, when we read the invitation of the psalmist, we are invited to worship in an act of submission. Sure, its easy for us to acknowledge the position of the Lord as our Maker – He is the Creator of all things; but to *submit* to the Lord is certainly a hard action for us to do. Why? Because the human will is a force to be reckoned with. I want my way, you want your way, and then there is God’s way – and sometimes they collide, causing chaos in life. The reality is that often in the midst of chaos, we sometimes fail to recognize the presence of God until He intervenes in some powerful way; and when He does, our only proper response is to take the position of submission – to kneel before the Lord our Maker.

**Read:** Matthew 14: 27-33

Here we are given insight into the reaction of the disciples when they beheld the Maker at work in the everyday affairs of life.

Like the disciples, there are times when we come face to face with the issue of submission. Just as the elements submit to Jesus’ command, so should we! Sometimes it takes the moving of God in a mighty way to call us to our knees.

“The greatness of man’s power is the measure of his surrender.  
It is not a question of who you are, or of what you are, but  
whether God controls you.”  
Henrietta C. Mears  
(<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqs submission.html>)

**Reflect:** Look beyond yourself to see the presence of God in the everyday things.  
Give thanks for God’s presence, even in the chaotic moments of life.

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*Prayer gently lifts me to highest Heaven,
From earth’s confusion to Jesus’ breast;
My sin and weakness,
My doubt and sorrow,
Are lost forever in sweetest rest.*
(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #94)



Day 3 - *Praying in His Presence*

Psalm 17: 6 “I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;
turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.”

Lyndall Bywater, the coordinator for The Salvation Army’s 24/7 prayer network in the United Kingdom was the guest speaker at a recent Officers’ Retreat. Speaking about prayer, she emphasized that while we all recognize the importance of prayer, we must also recognize that each of us has a different personality with which we come before the Lord. Using the analogy of going to the beach, where people engage in different activities, yet all are at the beach, Lyndall pointed out that it is the same when we pray. Some people are **sunbathers**—for them prayer is primarily about being in God’s presence and knowing Him more deeply; some are **surfers**—for them prayer is primarily about finding God in the world around them and experiencing God through their senses; some are **ice cream sellers**—for them prayer is primarily about caring for others and compassionately bringing them before God, making specific requests and seeing answers; some are **snorkelers**—for them, prayer is primarily about discovery, expanding your knowledge of the things of God, gaining wisdom and a deeper understanding of God’s being and ways. While all personalities of prayer are acceptable before the Lord, we need to ensure that we engage others in prayer rather than forcing them to conform to our own prayer personality.

Read: Luke 2: 22-38
Here we read of Simeon and Anna, both of whom lived a life of prayer,
and recognized His Word made flesh in the presence of Jesus.

“It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use.
What matters is the faith which lays hold on God, knowing that He knows our
needs before we even ask Him. That is what gives Christian prayer its
boundless confidence and its joyous certainty.”
Dietrich Bonhoeffer
(<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqprayer11.html>)

Reflect: Consider your own prayer life – what is your personality for prayer?
Thank God for it and for meeting with you during your time of prayer and
revealing Himself to you in your personality of prayer.

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*We’re all seeking the same Saviour,  
We’re all seeking the self-same Lord.  
We’re all claiming the same cleansing,  
We’re all finding our peace restored.*  
(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #112)



Day 4 - *Crying in His Presence*

Psalm 18:6    *“In my distress I called to the Lord;  
I cried to my God for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice;  
my cry came before him, into his ears.”*

During difficult circumstances in life, we sometimes try to put on a straight face to hide what lies beneath. Why? Because we don't want others to see us in a vulnerable position, to see the hurt that lies beneath the surface. Yet, despite this veiled face we assume in public places, it does not hold up when we enter into the presence of God, where we crumble and shed tears that have been pent up inside us. Sometimes, overbearing circumstances in life even cause the tears we shed to have the effect of blinding us to the very presence of God. We are so consumed with grief and hurt that we fail to recognize God's ministering Spirit during those difficult seasons in our life. Yet, isn't it amazing that somehow God, in all His wondrous power, is able to break through our barriers, to reveal Himself, to bring reassurance and even healing for the brokenness we feel?

**Read:**            John 20: 11-18  
Here we find Mary consumed with grief and blinded to the presence of the resurrected Savior; but when He spoke her name, her senses came alive, hope was reborn in her.

“Jesus says, “Cry over your pains, and you will discover that I’m right in your tears, and you will be grateful for my presence in your weakness.”  
Henri J. M. Nouwen  
(<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqgrief.html>)

**Reflect:**        How many tears have you shed in the presence of the Lord?  
Take time to absorb His presence and to listen for His voice.  
Allow Him to bring healing for brokenness.  
Praise Him for the new life He brings.

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*Meet my need, Lord,
Meet, my need, Lord,
Meet my need just now;
I am waiting and thou art coming
to meet my need just now.*
(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #86)



Day 5 - *Singing in His Presence*

Psalm 65: 8 *“The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
Where morning dawns, where evening fades,
You call forth songs of joy.”*

One of the memories of my youth is hearing my grandfather sing. He could not carry a tune, but he could certainly sing of the blessings of God! For many years, my grandfather endured sickness to the point of being bedridden; however, even this did not change his song of praise. Did he know something that has taken me many years to learn – that the awesomeness of God calls forth songs of joy *in spite* of circumstances? It is sometimes difficult to look beyond ourselves, to recognize and respond to the presence of God with songs of joy. Yet, what a glorious song can be heard when we do it! Our kids may complain, our pets may howl, but does it really matter? What matters is that we are in the presence of God and our response to Him is to lift our voices in adoration, in wonder, in awe of who He is and what He accomplishes on a daily basis.

Read: Matthew 21: 1-11
Here we read of the joyful song of those who recognized the presence of Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

“All our life is a celebration for us; we are convinced, in fact, that God is always everywhere. We sing while we work, we sing hymns while we sail, we pray while we carry out all life’s other occupations.”
Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c.215) Theologian
(http://www.faithandworship.com/Christian_Quotes.htm)

Reflect: What is your song of joy to God?
Sing, even if its off-key, for God know the song that exists in your heart.

*“Such as I have, Lord, I give unto thee,
Praying and waiting new visions to see;
Lord, wilt thou use me? Thy servant I’ll be;
Such as I have, Lord, I give unto thee.”*
(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #103)



Day 6 - *Witnessing in His Presence*

Psalm 145: 3-4 *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
His greatness no one can fathom.
One generation commends your works to another;
They tell of your mighty acts.”*

When was the last time you kept good news to yourself? In all likelihood, you couldn't wait to share it with someone significant in your life. What stops you from having the same response to the blessings of God? Is it uncertainty about the reception of the message? Is it your own sense of inadequacy to tell others, even your own family and friends? When was the last time you shared with someone how God is working in your life? One of the greatest encouragements for fellow-believers, and for non-believers, is to hear that God is working despite our human weaknesses.

Read: Luke 7: 11-17
When the people saw the power of God in their midst, immediately they proclaimed the good news – God has visited his people.

“If...we know Him by the revelation of the Holy Spirit and in our daily experience of Him as a personal loving heavenly Father, and are acquainted with both His gentleness and His awesome holiness, we will run to Him as children with open arms and yet deepest respect. The most important Person who ever existed loves you and me! The Creator of the universe has revealed Himself as having the tender heart of loving Father, and has by his Spirit made us His true-born children. He knows your name, He knows my name, He laughs and weeps with us! In Him we have discovered that we are valued infinitely far above our worth. How can we keep quiet about such a God?”

Graham Kendrick

(<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqwitness.html>)

Reflect: In what ways has God made Himself known to you?
Have you allowed God to use your testimony to bless others?
Ask for courage to share the good news.

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*“Blessing through me, Lord, blessing through me,  
Lord, send to others, some blessing through me;  
Living that all men thy glory shall see,  
Lord, send to others some blessing through me.”*  
(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #59)



Day 7 - *Walking in His Presence*

Psalm 89: 15

*“ Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,  
who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.”*

What a joy it brings when parents sees their child take that first step on his own; it is a visual sign of growth and independence. However, when the child reaches the teen years, the parent may discover that the steps of the child may go into undesirable places. What is a parent to do? We cannot keep them isolated from the world. With feelings of inadequacy, we try to guide them into making good decisions.

When we give ourselves to God, what a joy is His to know that we want to walk with Him! Yet, there must be countless times when He experiences disappointment when we step into undesirable places as we test our independence. Yet, the promise of His continual presence is ours to claim; the teaching He gives is ours from which to learn and apply to our lives. He wants us to make good decisions in life.

**Read:** Luke 24: 13-35

As the two disciples walked with Jesus, He unfolded the Scripture to them, so that their hearts burned within them.

“What should we set as our ultimate goal in this life? The answer: the most perfect worshipers of God we can possibly be... I sought no more than how to be God’s and God’s alone. My goal made me resolve to give my all for the All...Always I worshiped Him as often as I could, keeping my mind in His holy presence. When I wandered I brought Him back to my mind... At all times, every hour, every minute, even at the busiest times. I drove away from my mind everything capable of spoiling the sense of the presence of God... I just make it my business to persevere in His holy presence... My soul has had an habitual, silent, secret conversation with God.”

**Brother Lawrence**

( <http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqrelationshipgod4.html> )

**Reflect:** Listen to the words of truth God gives for your life.  
Acknowledge your need for Him to give direction in life

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*“Lord, make Calvary real to me;
Lord, make Calvary real to me,
Open mine eyes to see victory in Christ for me;
Lord, make Calvary real to me.”*

(The Salvation Army Songbook, Chorus Section #81)



In Good Company

Janice Rowe



Purpose: Learning to appreciate each other.

Preparation:

- In weeks prior to the event, have women bring a favourite recipe so that they can be copied and bound into a table favour recipe book for the night of the program.
- Have a display of *Company's Coming Recipe Books* for interest as the ladies wait for the program to start.
- Invite women to bring a picture of themselves with their best friend.
- Set up prayer display: cross, praying hands, prayer basket.

Other Options:

- Invite someone to share how to get along with other personalities, someone who can administer a True Colors © or other Personality Inventory. This would be a great way to acknowledge each others differences and learn how to communicate and enjoy the company of each other.
- As a door prize, purchase a copy of the book: *The Company of Good Women, Vol. 1: Almost Sisters*

Fellowship Lunch Idea:

Treat the ladies to a sampling of some evening party foods out of the *Company's Coming Appetizer's Recipe Book*© or the *Company's Coming Healthy in a Hurry Recipe Book*© or depending on your set up, invite someone to prepare a favourite dish to share with a friend during the evening.

Welcome & Introduction of the Theme

Chorus: *We're Together Again, just Praising the Lord* Gordon Jensen & Wayne Hilton

Prayer

Take time to thank God for His blessing of giving us the good company of other women to share with; for the people He allows us to meet through Women's Ministry, and the opportunities to laugh and fellowship in a safe environment. (We often forget that many of our attendees leave homes where the company is not so good. Women's ministry for them is a breath of fresh air- that safe place where she can let her hair down and be who God intends her to be.)



Poem:

You're in Good Company

Patsy Rowe

Do you think you're alone
When your whole world comes undone?
Don't fret—because you're in good company.

Do you think no one understands
When everything falls through your hands?
Don't fret—because you're in good company.

God knows we all need a friend
Who will encourage us right to the end
He provides—because we all need good company.

God Himself will see us through
His Presence goes with me and you
Never fret—because *He* is our good company.



Game: Two's Company, Three's a Crowd

Two's Company, Three's a Crowd

Directions: Find what the three words have in common, and write the one word in the blank.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|
| 1. strong, block, line | _____ | 9. machine, out, line | _____ |
| 2. sea, head, light | _____ | 10. boat, dream, green | _____ |
| 3. glue, bell, house | _____ | 11. tub, water, bubble | _____ |
| 4. hot, house, food | _____ | 12. bell, bonnet, feeling | _____ |
| 5. notebook, news, airplane | _____ | 13. full, light, new | _____ |
| 6. tree, cake, cup | _____ | 14. hot, dog, school | _____ |
| 7. day, weaver, catcher | _____ | 15. walk, pan, cup | _____ |
| 8. book, furniture, up | _____ | | |

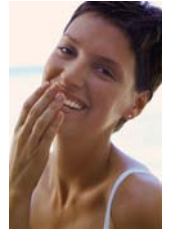
This game is like Tri-Bond. Ladies have to find what the three words have in common.

1.Head; 2. Red; 3. School; 4. Dog; 5. Paper; 6. Fruit; 7. Dream; 8. Cover;
9. Time; 10. House; 11. Bath; 12. Blue; 13. Moon; 14. House; 15. Cake

For more variety, or more difficult combinations, check out the Tri-Bond game RP Toys ©

Three's Company Fun Quotes - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075596/quotes>

Remember the old T.V. Show- Three's Company? Select some of the quotes and read them to the women or pass some of them around and have the ladies read them.



Sharing Time:

Allow ladies to share their photos and a brief story of why their friend makes "good company" for them.

Chorus: *Bind us together, Lord* Bob Gillman

Scripture Text:

1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character."

Drama- At the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Every group has its fun members. Invite a couple to act out the story of Martha and Mary. They can put a contemporary twist on it or use the Dramatized Bible for an already prepared drama.

Devotional: In Good Company

Depending on what kind of day we're having, sometimes we do not make the best company. All it takes is a phone call that says you have to meet with the principal because of something your child has done, or you go to get in your car and you have locked yourself out of both car and home, and you are completely thrown off from what was to be a great day!

Sometimes as women we have to admit (and of course we would only admit this in the company of women- my rule is "What happens at Women's Ministry stays at Women's Ministry") but, we have to admit that at least once a month we get cranky, or moody and we know when we are not going to be good company. (Please tell me, I'm not the only one!)

My husband has a tendency to want to entertain guests. He's always in the mood for company, and he is quite the host. Nothing seems to bother him. He can always whip up a meal or an evening snack with the snap of his fingers, and he can chat up a storm about anything. But entertaining is a little more worrisome for me. So, when he says, "Company's Coming", he knows now, after 20+ years that he shouldn't spring it on me, especially when I am not in the "good company" mood.

When I think of the story of Jesus at the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42), I am reminded of how important it is to be in good company. Jesus probably frequented Martha and Mary's home because he was their friend and he felt comfortable in their presence. Everyone needs a place where they can go and kick up their feet and step away from the hectic pace of work, home, family and just the everyday stresses of life. But on this particular occasion, Martha appeared to be distracted and wasn't good company. In fact, she busied herself with all the preparations, and found that she had no time to play hostess. Mary, on the other hand followed Jesus into the "living room", and she sat on the floor at his feet hanging on his every word.

Back in the kitchen, Martha was getting more flustered by the minute, knowing that there were important things to be done, and knowing that her time with Jesus was going to be short. Can you picture Martha in her apron and shower cap, poking her head into the other room and saying, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work? Tell her to help me!

That's probably not how we would do it today. We would either call out sweetly, "Mary, could

you come to the kitchen for a moment? I want to ask you something”, and when she got there, we’d give her an earful. Or, we would let the visit continue and once the guest was out the door, we would go up one side of Mary and down the other for hogging the guest and making us do all the work.

I like how Luke records the story because Martha took her concern to Jesus and Jesus responded to her by telling her not to worry about the meal or the dishes. The only thing Jesus wanted was her good company. The Bible doesn’t tell us how the story ended, but I believe Jesus didn’t leave Martha in a place of frustration and anger at her sister. My guess is that He invited her to take off the apron and pull the shower cap off her hair and sit and enjoy the same conversation that Mary was enjoying.

Sometimes we need a gentle reminder that when company shows up, it’s not an interruption or a catastrophe because we don’t have anything to serve them. It’s an opportunity that God is giving us to be “good company” for someone who just might need it at that moment. We also need a reminder now and then that our lives need to be open for the company of Christ. He wants to be Someone who is welcomed into our lives and our situations every day. Take the time to sit and spend some quiet moments with Him. Leave your Bible and devotional book on your favourite chair. Let it be a place where, when you go to sit down, you know that Jesus wants your company- and let the visit begin.

Sharing in Prayer: This can be a sacred moment of sharing and prayer; remind the ladies of the need for privacy, respect and confidentiality for one another’s prayer requests.



Instructions: Have pen and paper available to each woman— perhaps in the shape of a hand (symbolizing that we pray for one another, and also symbolizing that we are offering our prayers to God); allow a few minutes for each person to write their personal prayer request (something they wouldn’t mind others knowing about—can be general or specific request). Collect the prayers, redistribute them to the women so they have someone else’s prayer request. Allow a few minutes of silent prayer as the women pray for each other, then ask each lady to place the prayer in the prayer basket, as we present each others prayers before God.

Closing Prayer

Fellowship & Refreshments

Sunday Worship—In His Presence

Note: For Units doing two meetings, I have included extra song suggestions to cover both meetings; also, the Dramatic Scripture may be used in place of a sermon.

Call to Worship:

Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there! Emmanuel—God is with us!
This is a holy place, for we are in His presence.
Let all who gather in the name of Jesus, seek Him with sincerity of heart,
and worship God in spirit and in truth, for he alone is worthy to be praised.

Song Suggestions:

- *Come into His presence with thanksgiving in your heart*
- *In His presence there is comfort*
- *The power of your love*
- *This is my desire to worship you*
- *He knows my name*
- *I saw the Lord seated on the throne, exalted*
- *Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place*
- *Holy, holy, holy*
- *I stand amazed in the presence*
- *All to Jesus I surrender*
- *I was sinking deep in sin*
- *Count your blessings*
- *When we walk with the Lord*

Responsive Reading: Isaiah 6

Testimony: Invite several women to give their testimony regarding how God made his presence known in a very significant way.

Dramatic Scripture: *In His Presence—In Every Circumstance*
and/or

Sermon: *In His Presence: Behold the Glory of the Lord*

Benediction: **Ephesians 3: 20-21**

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Responsive Reading
Isaiah 6

Leader: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him were seraphim, each with six wings; With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

People: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Leader: At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

People: "Woe to me! I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Leader: Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said:

People: "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

Leader: Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

People: And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Leader: And he said, "Go."

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Sermon — In His Presence: Behold the Glory of the Lord

Adapted from *Word and Worship Resources for Salvationists* 2nd Qtr. 2002—Southern Territory, USA
(*The Presence of the Lord*, pgs 16-19)

Introduction:

On February 3, 1970, eleven o'clock chapel at Asbury College, the chapel began as most did, with singing a hymn or two, a prayer, then the speaker of the morning. On this particular morning the speaker felt led not to give a sermon, but invited students to come and share a testimony. Several came, then more. It was time for chapel to conclude, but the leader decided to sing one more song and open the altar for prayer. Hundreds came and suddenly the presence of the Lord, and the Glory of the Lord was evident in that place. It lasted seven days. Afterwards, those who walked into the auditorium were physically moved with the presence of God.

During the next year people began to study what had happened and why it happened. It turned out that several groups of students had independently joined together in prayer. Discipleship groups and many others believed that the revival was an outgrowth of those groups. When these students humbly and sincerely sought the presence of God in their lives in a new and vital way, then God manifested His presence, honored their disciplines and the Glory of the Lord was present.

A holy people will be a people who are increasingly open to the presence of God and who are constantly seeking after that presence.

God wants Himself to be known. He wants the whole earth full of His glory. He is looking for us to be receptive to His presence.

We know God is present everywhere. That's one of the divine attributes, omnipresence. In Psalm 139, the question is asked, *"Where can I flee from your presence, If I go to the heavens you are there, If I make my bed in the depths you are there. If I rise on the wing of the dawn, or if I go to the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."*

God is present everywhere, the whole earth is full of His Glory. Yet, not everyone is aware of His presence. In Genesis 28, Jacob had a dream at Bethel and when he woke up he said, *"Surely the Lord is in this place and I am not aware of it."* That was his problem. I'm afraid it is ours as well. God is present all the time, are we aware of Him?

Let's not fool ourselves, God *is* present whether we are aware of Him or not. It is only in our awareness of His presence that we experience His Glory. The psalmist says in 105: 4 (ESV), *"Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His presence continually."* The fact that God is present everywhere doesn't negate the fact that we are still to seek His presence, in order for His presence to have its full impact on our lives.

As a holy people we must be a people who are increasingly open to God's presence and we are to be a people who are forever seeking His presence.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, "How are we to seek God?" What should we do as individuals and as a congregation to develop an attitude of being receptive and responsive to God's presence?

We are not in the dark on this. There are types and places where God has said, "I will pour out my spirit, my presence, my glory." So, then it is our task to learn to seek God in the places where He has told us to seek Him. There are disciplines that as Christians, we must observe in order to be constantly aware of God's presence.

John Wesley calls these disciplines "The Means of Grace." He said, "They are the ordinary channels through which God conveys His presence to us." They are the likely places where God meets us.

Wesley believed Christ instituted five "Means of Grace" for us. In the "Large Minutes" which contained Wesley's plan of discipline for the early Methodists, he discusses each of them briefly:

1. Prayer

Of all the means of grace, prayer is "the grand means of drawing near to God." The others are meaningful only when they are combined with or lead us to prayer. Prayer is also the most all-encompassing of the means. It includes confession of sin, petition for our own needs, intercession for the needs of others, and thanksgiving for God's goodness and mercy. It embraces our lives as individuals (private prayer), families (family prayer), and congregations (public prayer). Prayer is to be engaged in at all times—morning, evening, and throughout the day.

Are we a people of prayer? How much time do we spend in prayer? How often do we pray? Do we say a quick word while on the run, or do we take time to meditate on the Word of God and allow Him to speak to us rather than us giving Him a list of our demands: "Lord, bless...", "Lord, heal...", "Lord, give me..." Oh, and "Thanks for what you've done for me." Where and when do we sit in His presence, listening for Him to speak to us and to minister to our spirits?

2. Seeking the Scriptures

Another of John Wesley's "Means of Grace" noted in the "Large Minutes" is Seeking the Scriptures.

We are to read the Bible constantly (everyday), regularly (in an orderly fashion), carefully (using study helps), seriously (beginning and ending with prayer), and fruitfully (immediately putting into practice what we have learned). In addition to reading the Bible,

searching the Scriptures involves meditating upon them, and hearing them preached and taught.

Are we a people of the Word? Do we read our Bibles? How often? Do a mental addition: How many Bibles do you have in your home? Some people take great pride in owning various translations of the Bible, yet when it comes to the message contained in it, they are totally ignorant. Do we engage in serious study both privately and in groups? How do we read the Word of God? Is it done selectively—we read only the passages that are pleasant to our ears? Do we obey what we read?

3. Attendance at the Lord's Supper

Another of John Wesley's "Means of Grace" noted in the "Large Minutes" is Attendance at the Lord's Supper. Christ is made known to us in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:35). Wesley promotes that through the sacrament of Holy Communion, God's real presence is conveyed to us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Wesley says, it is "the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can."

Are we a people of communion? Some churches practice the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Salvation Army is non-sacramental. "Practicing" Holy Communion is simply the acknowledgment of the presence of Christ in the act of communion. The question we need to ask ourselves is, are we a people who acknowledge the sacred presence of God in the everyday, common activities of life—to do so is to be engaged in a life of sacramental communion with God. Are we aware of Christ's presence in what we do? Do we allow the Holy Spirit of God to convey the presence of God in our midst at all times?

4. Fasting

The fourth of John Wesley's "Means of Grace" noted in the "Large Minutes" is something that as Salvationists, we need to be more involved in: Fasting.

Because fasting weans the soul from its attachment to the things of this world and increases spiritual sensitivity, Jesus commended the practice to His disciples (Matt. 5: 16-18). Wesley, likewise, encouraged the Methodist to fast. He was convinced that "when you seek God with fasting added to prayer, you cannot seek His face in vain." Methodists generally observed Friday as a fast day.

Are we a people who fast? Have you ever fasted? Not diet, but denial of the physical. Wesley took this in the context of food, I think we need to broaden it. Perhaps a fast day might mean a day without the television, or cell phone, or the car; perhaps it can be a particular day of the month when a group gets together to pray during lunch hour instead of having lunch. What do we deny ourselves in order to be master over ourselves, rather than have our desires master us?

5. Christian Conference

The fifth and final item in Wesley's "Means to Grace" is Christian Conference. What in the world is Christian Conference? Wesley used the text of Matthew 18: 20 - "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" to prove that gathering together in some form of small group structure is necessary for believers. He says, "It too is a means of grace instituted by Christ. As believers gather together for fellowship, encouragement, accountability, study, and service, the risen Christ is present in their midst."

Are we a people who are accountable to a small group of organized believers? People we feel responsible to and people who feel responsible to us. People we can share with, pray with, study with, serve with and confess with.

Wesley called these five "Means of Grace" places of waiting. In the Scriptures from Acts 2, when we read of the day of Pentecost, these five "means of grace" are included in the characteristics of the church. We see that they were an essential part of the life of the early church; in fact, they were what *gave life to* the early church!

Conclusion:

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah experienced the glory of God! Do you want to experience the Glory of God? If your answer is yes, then let me ask you: are you willing to seek His presence and His glory in the discipline of your faith?

This is not Holiness by works, any more than it is Salvation by works. God wants to reveal to us His Glory and Divine Grace. Isaiah came to the Temple in need and in prayer; it started out as just another ordinary day. However, God broke in upon the ordinariness of Isaiah's day and caused Isaiah to behold the presence of the Lord in a new and wondrous way.

The children of Israel had prepared the place; they had set up the Tabernacle. Isaiah was in this Tabernacle as this was his usual activity. However, on this particular occasion, when God saw their obedience, His Glory was present in a new and refreshing way.

In Acts 2—On the day of Pentecost the disciples were in one accord and God sent His Glory to them.

Again, I ask: Do you want to experience the glory of God? An unholy people will only become a holy people when they actively seek His glory.

We have made preparations in this place (indicate the altar); God calls us to come meet with Him—to be in His presence. Let us come, and behold the Glory of the Lord!

In His Presence—In Every Circumstance

Adapted from *Dramatic Sermons* by Kathryn Trim

This can be done, alternating the voices (as per Kathryn Trim’s original) or using a visual setting of the Sea of Galilee with several disciples in a boat.

Characters: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Disciple A, Disciple B

Narrator 1:

Matthew 14: 22— *“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.”*

Disciple A: What a wind! Will you look at those waves? I can’t believe we’re in such a storm!

Disciple B: I don’t get it! Jesus sent us out here and we did what he said. Here we are following his commands and we’re in the midst of a crisis!

Disciple A: What gives???

(Freeze frame)

Narrator 2: It wasn’t an easy trip. The disciples found themselves in a difficult situation. They were following the Lord’s command but this did not shield them from having some problems. The wind was strong and blowing against them.

Narrator 1: God has not promised us a life without its challenges. Becoming a Christian does not guarantee us a trouble-free existence. In fact, Jesus, the great realist, told his disciples that they could expect some difficulty in the world (John 16: 33). He urged those who wanted to follow him to make sure they had considered the cost involved before they committed themselves. He knew what lay ahead and he wanted them to be prepared. He did not want their faith to crumble when the inevitable tough times came.

Narrator 2: We know this in our heads, don’t we? None of us really believe that by belonging to God we are sure to have smooth sailing for the rest of our lives. Yet when it becomes personal, when the storms come our way, when the winds are against us.... then it is a different story! It is hard to teach our hearts what our heads know and we can become discouraged and upset.

Narrator 1: Nobody welcomes storms, but we need not be defeated by them. This passage of Scripture is a special treasure for us because of what it teaches. First, let’s remember that when the winds blow against us, this does not necessarily mean that we are out of God’s will. We can be doing just what the Lord wants but experience difficulty nonetheless.

Narrator 2: Note a second truth found in this story. Remember what happens?

Disciple A: I don't like this!!! Storms are one thing, but that's another!

Disciple B: What?

Disciple A: That... out there... walking on the water!

Disciple B: What is it? I don't know... let's get out of here!

Disciple A: Right! (*scramble around trying to escape, bump into each other, realize they're on a boat*). It's not going to work. There's no escape. We've got to stand up and face this ghost. (*stops and listens*) What did he say?

Disciple B: Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.

Disciples A & B: It is the Lord!!!

(*Freeze frame*)

Narrator 1: It was indeed. Jesus didn't leave them alone. He came to be with them in their trouble.

Narrator 2: Throughout Scripture, God gives his people the same message. In Joshua 1, three times he says, "*Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*"

Narrator 1: Listen to Isaiah 43: 2— "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.*"

Narrator 2: Paul, the Apostle, testified to God's presence during an especially tough time. In 2 Timothy 4:16 he said, "*At my first defense no one came to my support, ... everyone deserted me. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be proclaimed...*"

Narrator 1: Sometimes people experience bad dreams, especially children. And in the middle of the night when it is dark and the imaginary images seem so real and scary, parents prove their love for their children by removing their fear, and calming them down. The parents' nearness, their presence gives the children assurance and helps them through the rest of the night.

Narrator 2: Jesus came to his disciples. He didn't leave them to face the storm alone. He went to them and stood by them in the midst of it. His presence gave them courage. It inspired Peter to do something really difficult... the impossible... to get out of the boat and start walking to Jesus... on top of the water.

- Narrator 1: It must have been so exciting! The Lord with his hands held out... and Peter walking, in faith, towards him!
- Narrator 2: Remember what it is like teaching a toddler to walk? The child is encouraged to take that first step, often by wanting to reach the toy in the parent's hand. But then... Oh!.. The child falls, often because of a distraction that caused him to take his eyes off the toy.
- Narrator 1: That's what happened to Peter. He got side-tracked. Not by something pleasurable, like a new toy, but... look at what verse 30 says in Matthew 14, "*He saw the wind, and was afraid.*" He took his eyes off Jesus, paid more attention to the storms against him than paying attention to the Lord and Peter started to sink.
- Narrator 2: It's often one thing or the other. People lose sight of God, either because life is going so well that they forget about Him, or, because life is going so badly that they think He has forgotten about them!
- Narrator 1: Either way, the outcome is the same. When we take our eyes away from God, we start to sink. If we sink too far, we begin to drown.
- Narrator 2: There's one thing you have to say about Peter—he recognized he was in trouble and called for help. There are far too many people who are distracted and sinking—and who do not even know it!
- Narrator 1: And look at our wonderful Lord—He who had been there all the time, who said, "Don't be afraid", and yet had watched Peter give in to fear—look how He responds to Peter's cry!
- Narrator 2: Matthew 14: 31— "*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.*"
- The strong hand of the saving Savior—the hand that one day would be stretched out on a cross to provide salvation for all, the hand that reaches out to you and me today, even to those of us who are redeemed— His strong hand still reaches out to us because of the storms that beat against us and because we are so prone to look at the storm and find ourselves sinking in the waves.
- Narrator 1: This same Jesus is here this morning (evening). He longs for us to focus our minds and hearts on him. He wants us to know that He is near—to be sure that He is with us in every circumstance we are facing.
- Narrator 2: Our part is to believe this and cling to it. When we turn our eyes upon Jesus, and look full in His wonderful face, we know that He is with us in every circumstance. Come—let us enter His presence; let us fix our eyes on Him; let us hold fast on to the hope we profess and trust in His power to see us through.

In His Presence—A Concert of Prayer

Adapted from “We Have An Altar” - *Women’s Ministries Programme 2010*
The Salvation Army Caribbean Territory



- You may choose to open the Prayer Concert to the entire corps or invite a neighboring Women’s Ministries Group to join you.
- It may be helpful to meet in the corps sanctuary/hall for this meeting so that people have access to the Mercy Seat.
- Arrange for a worship team and vocalist.
- Arrange for some of the music to be placed on power point or have handouts ready.
- Arrange for various people to lead in corporate prayer (e.g. prayer for our country, prayer for missionaries, prayer for young people, prayer for revival)

Theme: “Praying to the God who is Greater!”

1. Celebration

It’s a strange phenomenon, this coming together for worship. We are young and old. Some of us prefer jazz, folk music, classical or retro. We each possess varied talents and gifts. There are social butterflies among us and very solitary folk. Some of us are sports fans, great cooks, joggers or couch potatoes. But here we are—all together. We’ve congregated and it’s amazing! Perhaps the reason that we’re all here for worship is this: despite all our differences and variety, we have a common longing to find our way in life and to be found by a powerful and loving God who seeks us and who desires our faith and praise... **the God who is greater!**

Worship Team: *Lord, I Lift Your Name on High....* Rick Founds
 Open the eyes of my heart Lord Paul Baloche
 Here I am to Worship... Tim Hughes

Sentence Prayers of adoration for the nature and name of Jesus

National Anthem

Read: Psalm 33: 12

Pray for Our Country

2. Prayer for Peoples of the World

Worship Team: *God of Justice...* Tim Hughes

Read: Romans 10: 11-17

Solo: *People Need the Lord* Greg Nelson

Pray for Persecuted Christians (In Groups of Four)

Chorus: *Bless Them Now* The Salvation Army Song Book Chorus Section 58
(Stand and join hands while singing)

Pray for Missionaries

3. Prayer for All Your Anxieties

Read: 1 Peter 5: 5b-7

Chorus: *I Cast All My Cares Upon You...* Kelly Willard

Silent Prayer for Your Home and Family

4. Prayer for Our Youth

Read: Psalm 90:1-2; Proverbs 22:6

Five Ways to pray for our youth:

1. Pray for the wisdom of God as we relate to the youth of our community (James 1:5)
2. Pray that the churches will become more informed and adopt appropriate strategies to reach out to the young people (Amos 3:7)
3. Pray that our young people will realize their need of Jesus (Luke 15: 17-19)
4. Pray that our youth will be bold witnesses (Romans 1: 14-16)
5. Pray that our churches will develop strategic alliances to help the youth in their area of need (John 17: 21)

Worship Team: *How Great is Our God...* Chris Tomlin

Pray for God's intervention in the lives of our Youth

5. Prayer for Our Church Mission

Read: 1 Chronicles 7: 14

In the words of General John Gowans, the mission of the Salvation Army is simply: “to save souls, grow saints, and serve suffering humanity.” Are we fulfilling our mission as an Army that we believe to be raised up by God, cleansed and redeemed through Jesus Christ, and guided by the Holy Spirit? Is our local congregation doing its part in making the mission a reality in our community? How are you and I actively engaged in making it a reality? As we ponder these words, let us allow the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth and rekindle the fire of God within us—**let us pray for revival!** May the Lord revive us—bring us back to life just as Ezekiel experienced revival in the Valley of Dry Bones!

Vocal: *Take My Life, And Let It Be* The Salvation Army Songbook 525

Prayers of the People for revival

Worship Team: *Show Your Power O Lord* Kevin Prosch

Lord's Prayer:

Closing Prayer:



Introduction:

In the April-June, 2011 edition of *Revive*—A Resource Magazine for Women in Ministry and Mission (The Salvation Army IHQ), Mel Cotton highlighted the importance of prayer retreats. In the article “Alone with God”, Mel quotes Major Lyn Whittaker, Territorial Prayer Ministry Consultant for the Australia Eastern Territory— “A retreat should mirror a rhythm of life. There are times of corporate worship, times to play, rest and pray. Being on retreat allows you a chance to look at where you are in your journey with God, and to be more aware of your journey and the loving God with whom you journey. But we are not just learning or hearing about God, we are experiencing God by learning to spend time in his presence and bringing him into every aspect of our lives. We tend to compartmentalize our lives, but prayer retreats are about the idea of praying continually, bringing God into everything we do.”

Using some of Mel Cotton’s “A Guide to A Retreat” the following is an easy outline for a Women’s Prayer Retreat:

Leader’s Instructions:

- Invite women to participate in a prayer retreat of quiet time and reflection, followed by refreshments and conversation. Set aside two hours for this event so that no one is rushed.
- Ask participants to bring a Bible or provide them with a Bible (other option—print off selected passage of scripture) and to enter the venue in silence.
- Ask three women to be prepared to read the designated Scripture reading.
- Set up an environment conducive to enhancing the experience of prayer and reflection (e.g. cozy room, light Christ candle in center (if possible, use a large candle in a large holder, placed in the center of the room, meditative music, individual chairs situated to give personal space and positioned so that all can see the Christ candle—circle form).
- Instruct participants to quietly enter the designated room, to choose a seat and focus on the Christ candle.
- Throughout the time of retreat the leader is to speak in a quiet tone, move unrushed through each aspect of the prayer time, and reinforce the use of silence to enhance the experience.
- If the group consists of more than 12 people, you might want to divide the women into smaller groups and have more leaders appointed to lead the prayer retreat, especially when it comes to giving an opportunity for women to share their reflections (optional).
- Have available for your use *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us* by Stuart Townend.

Guiding the Retreat:

Entering His Presence:

Leader: You have come away from the cares of daily living to seek out this quiet space, and in doing so you sit in the presence of God—the eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful God of the universe. He has been waiting for you; indeed, He invites you into His presence—to listen, to reflect and to respond to His voice.



Chorus: *We have come into His house...*

Reflective Questions:

Leader: Focus on the Christ candle (or close your eyes, if this is the preferred method of focusing). It symbolizes the very presence of God. In your mind speak to God, as speaking with your dearest friend.

What are the cares, the concerns, the responsibilities of family, work, and ministry that are pressing in on you at this time? Share them with God.

Silent Prayer

Leader: What is happening in your body today? Are you feeling energized, tired, anxious or ill? Become aware of how your body is feeling and then offer yourself to God.

Silent Prayer

Leader: What hopes and fears do you have as you come to meet with God? Do you expect great things to happen? Are you afraid that you won't hear anything? Are you afraid that God won't listen to you? Do you feel worthy? Hand these hopes and fears to God.

Silent Prayer

Listen:

Leader: Listen to the words of this beautiful song that reminds us of the depth of God's love:

Play music: *How Deep The Father's Love For Us* (Stuart Townend)

Reflect:

Leader: Spend some time reflecting on the amazing love and grace of God— he loved you so much that he sent his Son for you so that you may experience life eternal in him.

Silent Prayer

Leader: Listen to these beautiful words– a prayer– penned by Mary Sue Edgar
(The Songbook of The Salvation Army, No 32)

God who touchest earth with beauty,
Make my heart anew;
With thy Spirit recreate me
Pure and strong and true.
Like thy springs and running waters,
Make me crystal pure;
Like thy rocks of towering grandeur,
Make me strong and sure.

Reflection on the Word:

Instructions for Leader:

- Using the form of Lectio Divina, this reflection on the Word follows the instructions given for “Lectio Divina Shared in Community” (*Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, Fr. Luke Dysinger, <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>, public domain).
- Three women can be asked in advance to read the designated Scripture, or a Scripture passage of your choice. All women can look at the Scripture passage in their own Bibles, otherwise a copy of the Scripture reading can be given to each woman. There is no obligation for all women to share their personal insights with the group, however, to have them freely express their insights makes the prayer retreat more meaningful.
- Leader is to ensure that the instructions are given for each segment.

Leader: Many early Christians went on retreat to the desert or other lonely places. They developed series of readings called Lectio Divina, described as “a slow, contemplate praying of the Scriptures which enables the Bible, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God” (*Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, Fr. Luke Dysinger, <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>, public domain).

Using the practice of Lectio Divina in a group setting, let us reflect upon the Word of God from Psalm 16 (*New Living Translation*):

Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word:

1. One person reads aloud (twice) the passage of scripture, as others are attentive to some segment that is especially meaningful to them.
2. Silence for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
3. Sharing aloud: (A word or phrase that has attracted each person). A simple statement of one or two words. **No elaboration.**

How Christ the Word speaks to ME

4. Second reading of the same passage by another person.
5. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on “Where does the content of this reading touch my life today?”
6. Share aloud: **Briefly:** “I hear, I see...”

What Christ the Word Invites me to DO

7. Third reading by still another person.
8. **Silence** for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on “I believe that God wants me to Today/this week.”
9. Sharing aloud: at some greater length the results of one’s reflection. (Be especially aware of what is shared by the person on your right.)
10. After full sharing, silently pray for the person on your right.

Leader: Conclude your silent prayer with ***Amen***.

Praise and Thanksgiving:

Leader: Conclude with a prayer of praise & thanksgiving.