

Adult Group Study Guide for June 28, 2020
Practicing the Presence of God
Genesis 28:10-22

Goal: To learn to practice the presence of God every day.

Key Verse: *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”* – Genesis 28:16 (NIV2011)

1. C.S. Lewis is the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*. *Surprised by Joy* is the author’s story of his early years that takes us on his journey from atheism toward faith. A key turning point happened on the upper deck of a bus in Oxford, England when he surrendered his life to God. If you were asked to write your spiritual autobiography, what significant events and places would come to your mind?
2. Review the story of Jacob’s Life (begin with Genesis 25). Jacob lived up to his name, “the grabber,” since he cheated his brother out of his birthright and his father’s blessing. How did that contribute to his surprise when he encountered God in Genesis 28? What misconceptions about God might affect your expectations about when and how God might be present?
3. Pastor Howard suggested that to understand the presence God requires three shifts in our thinking: 1) from thinking that God is everywhere to believing that God is here, 2) from imagining his presence as a future promise to embracing it as a present reality, and 3) from viewing God’s presence as the end or the goal of our faith to seeing it as a means in which God is at work in us, in the church, and in the world. What shift in thinking would help you the most? How does God’s presence equip you to be present for others?
4. Listen to the song, *Altar in the Field*, by Bob Bennett on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owtYBRIVq14> or *Surely the Presence of the Lord* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1-fLiLsrIo>. What songs help you to remember your experience of God’s presence in your life? What is important for you to remember?
5. *The Practice of the Presence of God* is the title of a book by Brother Lawrence that was compiled following his death. At the age of eighteen, he experienced the presence of God as he thought about the transformation that Spring brings to trees. He learned to practice the presence of God by working in a monastery kitchen. Read Micah 6:8, Matthew 16:24, and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What place does humble service, total surrender to God, and constant prayer have in the development of faith? How does the promise of Matthew 28:20 help you to be faithful in your walk with God?
6. Listen to the song, *We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8NV07oqNdM>. African American slaves were not permitted to speak while working in the fields but were permitted to sing. This song became one of the first slave spirituals to be widely sung by white Christians. Read the whole story behind the song at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_Are_Climbing_Jacob%27s_Ladder. In what ways are we climbing Jacob’s ladder?