

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

God is omnipresent, Part 4

Greg Wheatley: Welcome to Radio School of the Bible. This program is a ministry of the Center for External Studies at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. I'm Greg Wheatley, and if you've been joining us in the past for this quarter, you know that we're studying God's Will for Your Life with Dr. Bill Thrasher, Professor of Bible and Theology at the Graduate School of Moody Bible Institute.

Well, in talking about God's Will for Your Life, we've really been majoring on God and getting to know Him as our Heavenly Father. And the last few sessions here, Dr. Thrasher, we've been discussing what it means to walk closely with Him and to understand the immediacy and the intimacy of His fellowship.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: That's exactly right. We've been looking at the truth that God is present everywhere. We've looked at the various ways Scripture speaks of God's presence, and we've focused upon one of those ways, and that is of cultivating a conscious enjoyment of His presence. We looked at some of the benefits that come into a life as they seek to cultivate this conscious enjoyment of God's presence.

And then we also began last time to try to answer the question, "How do I cultivate a conscious enjoyment of God's presence?" And the first thing we noted was to desire it. To desire it. We looked at various Scriptures that talked about the delightfulness of God's presence. And then we also secondly talked about dealing with any point of rebellion and double-mindedness.

We gave some examples of double-mindedness – how certain desires – we can have a greater loyalty to those desires than we can to the desire to obey God: the desire to be popular, the desire to get rich, the desire to be lustful, the desire to get revenge, the desire to be our own boss. We explained those in a little more detail last time. We saw the great dangers of double-mindedness, how it produces instability in our life, and it hinders our prayer life, and it strips us of our spiritual authority.

We saw the cure of God graciously bringing us to a point of repentance where we express a divine dissatisfaction with where we are and how we've been living. That we haven't been under the authority of God, and we seek to humble ourselves before Him, and we take advantage of His gracious, gracious plea, even to us in our rebellion, to draw near to Him, and He will draw near to us. As we seek to live before Him, we also need to continually deal with any disagreement that we have in our life with God.

You know, people talk about a devotional live and quiet time – whatever we call it – and I’m certainly a believer in that, as I’m sure you are, too. But sometimes we miss the goal of that. It’s not just something – another thing to put on our to-do list. People tend to rebel against that. We don’t want another thing on our to-do list because our lives are already too busy. But God wants to give us the gift of having time with him that enables us to gain a perspective and to sometimes unclutter our minds and to put our hearts at rest.

But also it’s our goal is to make sure that we and God are in agreement; we’re in one. You know, when we and God are in agreement, we can be joyful. That’s the biblical secret of joy. In that sense, Jesus was the most joyous person who ever lived. It says, “Even though a man of sorrow,” this is quoting him there in the book of Hebrews, it says, “Thou has hated lawlessness,” speaking of Jesus, “and loves righteousness. Therefore, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above all thy fellows.”

Greg Wheatley:

You know, let me take you back a minute to your comment about the devotional life, because I think that’s really true. If we’re not careful, those moments – whenever they are – in the morning, in the evening – can become sort of a notch on the belt, can’t they – a tally mark. Did you do your devotions today? And as you were saying that, I was sitting here thinking about getting together with any other human friend.

We don’t treat it that way. We say, “Oh, I’d like to talk with you.” We don’t say, “Well, there, I can check off the fact that I had lunch with Dr. Thrasher today,” but yet we treat God that way sometimes, don’t we.

Dr. Bill Thrasher:

That’s very true. I think that brings us back to the very first thing we talked about when we talked about the character of God and the idea we need to have a greater desire to know Him than to know His will – that he’s a person. And you’re absolutely right. I don’t know any of us that don’t fall into that at times. And that’s – I think that’s part – as God seeks to build meaningful disciplines in our life, there are times those disciplines will lose their meaning, and God has to rejuvenate those.

In fact, I don’t think it’s within ourselves we have the ability to keep that dynamic in there, and that’s why we need the help of the Holy Spirit, to keep that so that that discipline, which is essential, but it becomes not an end in itself, but a means to an end. In fact, that’s a wonderful lead into what really the last thing I wanted to talk about in regard to cultivating conscious joyous presence, and really it’s in this same vein, is the idea of learning to delight in His presence.

And certainly we seem like we understand what it means to delight in the presence of another human being. But that's something you cultivate. Something – you've been with this person, and so you enjoy that person's presence, and that's the way it is with God. There's a – I think there've been times that it's been extremely helpful just to program into my schedule times where I just put on there "Appointment with God."

And that idea wasn't originally with me. There was a very successful, busy pastor of an extremely large church – if I mentioned his name probably everybody would know him – and he was talking to several of us one day, and he said, "You know, at the beginning of a month, what I do – I take out my calendar, and I write all over it in various places, 'Appointment with God. Appointment with God. Appointment with God.'"

"And so all these demands come my way, I'm able to say with integrity, 'You know, I'd love to do that, but I can't because I have an appointment.'" And he said he puts that on there first, having appointments with Him where you're able to leisurely pour out your heart to God. Now, it may be sometimes just taking a special walk with the Lord. Maybe not just always in our traditional way of thinking – I think of an individual that was so helpful I used to meet with on Friday nights when I was single.

This was a number of years ago. And we would be tired and worn out on Friday night, but we would go and get something to eat, and then we would walk and pray together. And if I had just been by myself and tried to be up in my apartment, I probably couldn't have – but, you know, the help and the energy of – so that's what we're talking about: learning to delight in God's presence. Even – it's even helpful sometimes to think through also just as you pray through your schedule for that day banking upon the truth that God is with you.

You know, God is with you as you do this, no matter how routine. You may be having lunch with this person or working on this particular responsibility or that, but banking up on the truth that God is with you. Even – and also I think God can even allow us to build reminder systems into our life. The – you know, when we're involved in any responsibility, just to remind ourselves, you know, Lord, it's only your will that ultimately satisfies."

As Jesus would say, "I have food to eat that you know not of: to do the will of my Father and to accomplish His work." You know, that perspective can change maybe a mundane task that is a part of our life and is essential, but to look at this as – what? Lord, I want to do this as unto you. In fact, any little activity and goal, even in the little mundane of life, as you eat – whatever you do – whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.

Okay, Lord, you know, I want to eat thanking you that you gave me these taste buds to enjoy this, and you provided this food. Whatever it may be, God can give us many reminder systems. Certainly as trials come into our life, those are reminders that God is ultimately in control, that He's able to overrule that for good that which is not pleasant in and of itself. Any blessing that comes into our life is a reminder that He's the ultimate giver.

Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. When sin and temptation come into our life, the reminder to walk in His light and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. So really all of life really is a reminder of the presence of God when fears and anxiety comes in our life, which we're constantly tempted with. "I sought the Lord, and He delivered me from my fears."

Or, "Don't be anxious," God graciously says, "but talk to me about what's causing you to be anxious, and tell me what you'd like me to do about it, and don't forget to thank me," there in Philippians 4. "Every need of our heart – desire of our heart – if any man's thirsty, let Him come to me and drink." Now – so there's reminders of His presence. But you know, there was a number of years ago that God was seeking to teach me something that is – and that is just the discipline of silence.

And I feel like that was a real breakthrough in my own life. I know we live in a culture that doesn't know what to do with silence. Seems like we always need noise, and I know they used – I remember, it was a number of years ago, but I would get in my car at that particular time and I would just turn the radio on. There's certainly nothing wrong with that. We're grateful for every radio that's on at this particular time.

Greg Wheatley: Yes, we are.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: But it was like that was such a reflex reaction that – it's not like I thought about it. It's like I needed that noise.

Greg Wheatley: You know, even in church we tend to do that. A lot of times we tend to want to fill every silent moment with something, whether it's music or the spoken word. It's – we're uncomfortable with just silence, aren't we.

Dr. Bill Thrasher: And, you know, silence – absolutely. I think you're right. I certainly can identify with that. You know, there was one day – I've never had a day exactly like this in my life. It was any other day, and it was a number of years ago. Dr. Sweeting was present at that particular time. That will give you some indication of how far back it was. But there was a special speaker we had on chapel, and Dr. Sweeting was moved by that particular speaker.

He came to the pulpit after the chapel message, and he said, “We will not have classes tomorrow. We will meet for class, but only to pray.” And so, of course, students got excited about that, and it was in the midst of a busy fall semester. And I was a teacher. I got excited about that, too, in the only sense that, “Lord, this is a gift from you just to sort of slow me down.” And I began to talk to the Lord.

“Lord, what do you want me to do with this particular day?” And it didn’t seem like the Lord was impressed with any of my ideas. And I’m thinking, “You know, Lord, do you want me to fast?” and it didn’t seem like any of that was appropriate at that particular time. Not that that’s inappropriate always. So I remember going out and getting a good breakfast. And I was single at the time; I used to live off these restaurants when I was single.

Sometimes said when I got married I think they thought I died. But the – but I remember getting on the train, and then it was like the Lord wanted me to put down everything it seemed like that day. It seemed like if I was even speaking an unnecessary word, it was sin. Just be quiet, shut up, and that was the kind of day I had. So as I – and I was going – like if you had asked me, “What did you do that day?”

I’d say, “Well, I didn’t do anything but be still and be quiet.” And I remember going – I ate at another restaurant before I got on the train. But you know, a waitress said something to me that had never been said to me. She said, “I go all over this restaurant in a sense of hurry, in a sense of rush.” She says, “I come to your booth, and I sense peace.” She said it not two times. She said it three times.

The difference is God wanted to knock me over the head saying, “You know, if I ever order you to slow down, I want you to see that it’s incredibly productive. It’s not a waste of time.”

Greg Wheatley:

What a great story and great place to conclude today’s session in Radio School of the Bible. Don’t we need to hear that – to just slow down and be still before the Lord. Well, thank you for joining us for today’s class session, and we hope to see you again next time. We’re continuing to study God’s Will for Your Life this quarter in Radio School of the Bible. Thanks for joining us. We’ll see you next time on Radio School of the Bible.

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