

# GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US



**W**hen I awaken in the morning, God is with me. When I kneel to worship Him, He is with me. When I arrive at the office or at the airport for one of my many trips, He is still with me.

God is with me while I am on the airplane, and He is with me when I arrive at my destination, whether in California, Pakistan, or Brazil. He is with me as I turn out the lights at night anywhere in the world. We can be confident that Christ is present with us and all believers in the United States, Canada, Germany, Russia, Indonesia, Egypt, and every other country—at the same time.

God is not limited by time or space or height or depth—or even our level of faith. He is always with us whether we are taking giant steps of faith or we are taking the first baby steps of faith. He lives inside of every person who puts his trust in God through faith in Jesus Christ.

## GOD IS PRESENT WITH US IN ALL PLACES

Let us apply this attribute to the events of our lives. First, God's omnipresence means that we cannot go anywhere that God is not

beside us. The psalmist writes, “If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.”<sup>1</sup> God sees us, walks with us, and cares for us no matter where we are.

During NASA’s Apollo 13 flight, Jim Lovell, Jack Swaggart, and Fred Haise were scheduled to walk on the moon. Just after they blasted off, an explosion on their ship endangered their lives. Not only did they have to abort their plans to make a moon landing, but it also looked as if they would not have enough engine power and cabin oxygen to return to Earth alive. One of the tensest times during the flight was when the space ship orbited behind the moon. For agonizing hours, the astronauts were sailing through the darkness on the far side of the moon, out of reach of radio contact with Mission Control in Houston. All over our country, Americans prayed for the safety of the astronauts. The country breathed a sigh of relief when radio contact was reestablished and when Apollo 13 was successfully brought back home.

How could God hear all the prayers for the astronauts? Because God is no less present behind the shadow of the moon than right beside you right now. In fact, without God’s omnipresence, prayer would be ineffective. God promises His people, “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear.”<sup>2</sup> When I am in Orlando and pray for a fellow staff member in Thailand, God is with both of us. He is fully present in Orlando to hear my prayer, and at the same time fully present in Thailand to act in behalf of the one for whom I am praying! The basis for all prayer rests on the fact that God is omnipresent.

## GOD IS PRESENT IN ALL OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

Have you had an experience that left you wondering where God is? Sometimes we do not feel God’s presence, but emotions can be misleading. No matter what we feel, God is still there.

David often felt abandoned by God. In Psalm 22, he im-

plores, “My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me? Why do you remain so distant? Why do you ignore my cries for help? Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.”<sup>3</sup> Yet later in the same psalm he states his trust in God’s presence:

Yet you brought me safely from my mother’s womb and led me to trust You when I was a nursing infant. I was thrust upon You at my birth. You have been my God from the moment I was born . . . Praise the LORD, all you who fear Him! . . . For He has not ignored the suffering of the needy. He has not turned and walked away. He has listened to their cries for help.<sup>4</sup>

Two Dutch women during World War II experienced God’s omnipresence. Corrie and Betsie ten Boom became involved in hiding Jewish people during the Nazi occupation of their country. As a consequence, the Nazis sent the two elderly women to Ravensbruck, one of the most dreaded concentration camps. There they endured incredible depravation and suffering. Yet they ministered to hundreds of other prisoners who needed to hear about their Lord and Savior. Their barracks were transformed into a Bible study and prayer center, and the cruel, harsh attitudes of many prisoners were turned to compassion and love.

Eventually, Betsie became deathly ill. As she was taken to the prison hospital, Corrie tried to shield Betsie from the sleet that stung their bodies. After the orderlies set Betsie’s stretcher on the hospital floor, Corrie leaned down to hear the words on her sister’s weak lips, “. . . must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been there.”<sup>5</sup>

Betsie died the following day. Soon after, Corrie was miraculously discharged from the camp—only days before all women her age were put to death. For the rest of her life, Corrie traveled

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the globe telling her story of God's presence and faithfulness even in the worst of places.

Our confidence is that "there is no pit so deep that God is not there." We cannot face a situation in which He does not walk beside us.

## GOD IS PRESENT WITH US DURING EVERY CRISIS

What crisis are you facing right now? Unemployment, serious health problems, the break-up of your marriage, rebellious teenage children, rejection by those who once loved you? God walks with us, gives us strength, understands our pain, and knows how to handle our problems. He will help us if we only ask Him and are willing to do things His way and in His time.

Isaiah 43:1–3 records God's precious promise to be with us in times of crisis:

The LORD who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

One of the most basic crises each of us faces is our own death. For many people, even Christians, the terror of leaving this world is very real. One of my fellow staff members faced such a crisis just after her thirtieth birthday. Days after her doctor admitted her to the hospital, she began having problems breathing. Although she pressed the nurses' call button, no one responded.

Panicked, she realized that she was dying in a hospital bed—and no one knew. As her breathing became more labored, she began to lose consciousness. She was helpless, yet she desperately wanted to live to see her young daughter and husband again.

Within seconds of her panic, a supernatural peace flooded over her. God impressed this promise clearly on her heart: "If you awake and are in heaven, I am with you. If you awake and are in

this hospital bed, I am with you. Either way, I am just as close to you.”

With that promise ringing in her ears, she put her future in God’s hands. Then through eyelids barely cracked, she saw the elevator doors slide open in the hall outside her room. Out walked her pastor! By the time he reached her bedside, she drifted into unconsciousness. But because of his quick response, her life was saved.

The comforting words of Psalm 23:4 ring beautifully. “Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me.” I encourage you to memorize and meditate upon this beloved psalm.

## GOD IS WITH US WHEN WE WITNESS FOR HIM

Jesus promises, “Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”<sup>6</sup> This was given as part of the Great Commission—the challenge to go into the entire world and preach the gospel and disciple those who come to faith in Christ. It is when we are fulfilling the Great Commission that Jesus’ promise to be with us becomes most precious. He has given us the challenge to reach every person on earth with God’s message of love and forgiveness. Yet He did not leave us alone to accomplish this impossible task. He has sent us His Holy Spirit who empowers us to do what is humanly impossible—but possible with God.

I take great comfort in the fact that Jesus is with every one of our ministry’s 20,500 full-time staff and over 660,000 trained volunteers in 181 countries of the world.<sup>7</sup> His Holy Spirit is the one who works within the hearts of all believers so that His work will be accomplished.

You can take comfort in knowing that God is present and working during any ministry He gives you to do. As you share your faith in Jesus Christ with your neighbor, God is with you. When you teach your children about God’s love, God is with you. When you witness to that coworker who is an atheist, God is with you. God will bring forth the fruit and help us be faithful to Him in introducing others to Christ as Savior and Lord.

## NOTHING WE DO IS HIDDEN FROM GOD

Jesus promised that our heavenly Father, “who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”<sup>8</sup> Just think about that. When we privately do something good that no one else knows about, God still sees it and rewards us accordingly.

When a Sunday school teacher labors teaching preschoolers about God’s love, she may not receive many affirmations from others, yet the Lord sees every smile and hug she gives them. When a godly pastor spends hours in his office in heartfelt prayer for people who dislike him, try to thwart his ministry, or are apathetic about the church, God sees his deep concern. For the bedridden elderly person who adopts a prayer ministry in behalf

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of loved ones, neighbors, and friends, God hears. For the godly parent who prays hours into the night for a prodigal child, God sees. God knows about the businessman, betrayed by his business partner, who does not take revenge but responds in forgiveness and love. To these faithful servants, our ever-present God says, “Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great.”<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, God also sees the wrong things we commit in secret. We only fool ourselves by thinking that no one will ever know. Scripture says, “Nothing in all creation can hide from Him. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes. This is the God to whom we must explain all that we have done.”<sup>10</sup>

There is no place we can hide when we do wrong. God sees and is beside us. As believers, we may break our fellowship with God when we sin, but He does not leave our presence. He is still dwelling within us, convicting us, helping us to do what is right through His loving discipline, and waiting for us to repent of our wrongdoing.

Some people see God as a “great traffic cop” in the sky watching their every move. I like to think that He loves me so much that He cannot take His eyes off me. I am the “apple of His eye.” Thank You, Father, for watching over us.

## CONSCIOUSLY LIVING IN HIS PRESENCE

God’s omnipresence enables us to be in constant communion with Him and to depend on Him in every situation. But at times we ignore His presence because we are so preoccupied with our lives and focused on material concerns (food, clothing, shelter, finances, and jobs). Sometimes we even forget that He is with us while we are busy serving Him. Brother Lawrence discovered this truth when he began to practice the presence of God. For fifteen years, his responsibility was to wash greasy pots and pans in the monastery—a job he disliked. Practicing the presence of God transformed what he considered a chore into an exciting privilege. He writes, “My day-to-day life consists of giving God my simple, loving attention. If I’m distracted, He calls me back in tones that are supernaturally beautiful.”<sup>11</sup> This is what he considered important in walking with God:

The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. That means finding constant pleasure in His divine company, speaking humbly and lovingly with Him in all seasons, at every moment, without limiting the conversation in any way.<sup>12</sup>

Living in God’s presence means realizing that God is with you and is vitally concerned about every part of your life. As I practice this, I find that throughout the day the Lord Jesus communicates with me through impressions in my mind that spring from meditating on His Word and talking to Him in prayer. This makes both prayer and the study of God’s Word an exciting adventure for me. Let me give you some promises that you can rely on as you consciously practice the presence of God in your daily activities.

### **When we are confused, God will guide us.**

Confusion is rampant in our society—even among believers. People

ask: Why are these things happening to me? Where should I go and what should I do with my life?

We can have confidence that God will reveal Himself to us when we do not know where to turn. He promises, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”<sup>13</sup> Through His Word, prayer, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and our open hearts, He will guide us along the pathway He has planned for us.

### **When we are afraid, God will protect us.**

No matter where we are afraid—at home alone, driving on the freeway during rush hour traffic, facing a hostile meeting, or walking alone at night—God is right beside us. He promises, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”<sup>14</sup> What a comfort this is for us in our daily lives!

Claim this promise and consciously remember that God is with you during your times of fear and uncertainty. He will comfort you and give you courage to confront your fears. He will also protect you so that you will never experience anything outside His will for your life.

### **When we are tempted, God will help us resist.**

Satan’s main strategy with God’s people has always been to whisper, “Don’t call, don’t ask, don’t depend on God to do great things. You’ll get along fine if you rely on your own cleverness and energy.” The devil is not terribly frightened of our human efforts, but he knows his kingdom will be damaged when we lift our hearts to God.<sup>15</sup>

Although we can be tempted by our own flesh and by worldly influences, Satan is a major player in our desire to disobey God. Radio Bible teacher David Jeremiah puts temptation in a new light:

Suppose you and one of your friends are on the border of doing something wrong. Both of you know it is wrong. But you are about to do it anyway. But if you should say to your

friend, “Go right ahead and do it, but I think you should know that I just heard from heaven and God will be here in a few moments.” Maybe your friend will respond, “Wow, if God is going to be here soon, maybe I will do this tomorrow or next week, but I don’t want to do this if God is going to show up in a few minutes.”<sup>16</sup>

Surprise! God has already shown up. He is here... now! When facing temptation, we should say to ourselves, “This is being carried out in the presence of almighty God.” Meditating on this truth will give you conviction to face temptation in your life.

I encourage you to practice the presence of God by asking our Lord to help you resist temptation. The Bible promises that “God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it.”<sup>17</sup>

### **When we are hurting, God will comfort us.**

How could Paul and Silas sing praises to God in the depths of a stinking, cold Roman prison? Their backs were raw because they had been beaten with whips and rods. Their feet were in stocks and the jailer had threatened to execute them if they tried to escape. Paul and Silas could sing because God was with them in the inner dungeon while they were hurting.

The psalmist writes, “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit.”<sup>18</sup> Whether we experience physical, emotional, or mental pain, the Holy Spirit will comfort us and give us strength and courage to triumph over our hurts.

Several of our Campus Crusade for Christ staff members have lost small children to accidental death or disease. Vonette and I are thankful that this is a trial we have never had to endure, but we feel their pain. They tell me that it is one of the most agonizing crises that a person can ever go through. Tears flow for months; muscles are sore from sobbing. Many unbelieving couples break up afterwards due to guilt and blame. But many followers of Christ testify, “That was the most difficult thing I have ever experienced, but I have to tell you that God was so very near to me that I felt His presence like I have never felt Him before.”

Although Scripture is clear that God is present everywhere at once, parents who have lost children give evidence that God manifests His presence in special ways at particular times of need. In 2 Corinthians 1:3,4, Paul assures us, “[God] is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others.”

### **When we are discouraged, God will encourage us.**

Do you struggle with insurmountable bills? Have friends betrayed you? Do you feel inadequate at your job or as a parent? Scripture instructs us, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”<sup>19</sup> We are encouraged in Joshua 1:9, “Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Not only will God help you conquer every discouragement, He will help you climb every mountain in your life! And when you come through the valleys of discouragement, you will find that God was there all the time. Sometimes He was waiting patiently for you to exhaust your means and energy and turn to Him for His help. What a tremendous encouragement! We can trust that kind of God for anything!

### **When we are lonely, God will be our companion.**

Some of our most lonely moments can be when we are in a crowd, and yet no one notices us. Our hearts ache when we think no one cares. But Jesus is our ever-present friend.<sup>20</sup> He promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”<sup>21</sup>

He is also with us as we face lonely tasks. When David Livingstone sailed to Africa for the first time as a missionary, a group of his friends accompanied him to the pier to wish him bon voyage. They were concerned for his safety and reminded him of the dangers of that unexplored land. One of the men even tried to convince him to remain in England. But Livingstone opened his Bible and read Jesus’ words from Matthew 28:20: “Lo, I am with you always.” He turned to the man who was especially concerned about his safety and smiled. “That, my friend, is the word of a gentleman... So let us be going.”

No person or circumstance can ever remove us from the presence of our loving God. Paul writes, “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from His love. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>22</sup>

He is here with us right now and forever—because He is our ever-present God. He is our guide for life and for eternity. What an incredible truth! What a powerful motivation for us to know, love, trust, obey, worship, and enjoy the presence of our wonderful God and Savior.

# LIFE APPLICATION



**WRITE IT ON YOUR HEART**—Commit the following statement and verses to memory. Then as you encounter situations during this week where you need the comfort of knowing God is near, claim these promises by faith.

- Because God is ever-present, He is always with me.
- Joshua 1:9—“I command you—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”
- Psalm 16:11—“You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of Your presence and the pleasures of living with You forever.”

**COUNT ON GOD**—Our ever-present God is everywhere you have been and everywhere you will go. He is in the classroom, the courtroom, the office, the home, and the hospital room. He is with you in life and in death. He is the only one who can be with you no matter what. Are you in the midst of a struggle or situation where you need His guidance? Turn to Him now and place your trust in the One who is always with you. Study His Word and let it guide you.

**OBEY GOD**—God is present with you each minute of every day. He knows what you do and think every moment. Is there some area in your life in which you are not obeying God? Your ever-present God knows, so commit yourself to obeying Him today.