

Russell Kelfer

The Glory of His Presence

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Series: God's Living Legends (Part 1)

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

The Glory of His Presence

It's so good to be able to call you our Father; to lift up our hearts to Thee; to lift up our cups to Thee and ask You to fill them.

This morning, Father, as we look at the very principle of spending time with You, we pray that somehow there might be a sensitivity in our spirits that would be long-lasting; that we might not leave this place simply moved, but rather motivated; not simply emotionally touched, but rather spiritually transformed. You're the only One who can do that, Father, so we ask You specifically this morning, to change us and take us, Father, from one degree of glory to another.

For these we've mentioned, Father, we lift them up, place them in Your hands and know that You are a God who loves Your children more than we can even grasp an understanding of that word, love. And so, we do know, Father, that You would never let anything happen that is not for their good and for Your glory. We pray for healing, Father, whenever healing is Your plan and pray that it might be done in such a way that there would be glory and honor and praise given to God because of Your grace and Your mercy in time of need.

Now, take this message we pray this morning, hide the teacher, reveal the Master.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

The camera crews are ready. We are at the Sinai Desert. The title of the program is not *Happy Days*. In fact, there's not much happiness around, although there is good reason for happiness. The title might more aptly be called, *That's Incredible*, because it is.

What we see on camera is sand, lots and lots of sand—and people, lots and lots of people. And you can hear the announcer as the scene fades saying, “As we looked in last week, our traveling entourage of Hebrew complainers were discontent due to a dietary

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deficiency. The medical community is called ‘no like and no variety.’” It didn’t go over well in either class. Okay, scratch that one.

Following their customary pattern of routine rebellion, they had gone to the tour guide, an aged but meek, dedicated gentleman named Moses, and complained that they were sick and tired of the diet. This was the same Moses, you remember, who had wielded the rod of God and pointed it at the Red Sea. It folded back as though it had been zippered, so to speak. The children of Israel walked through on dry land and two million Hebrews were safely on the other side before the enemy was totally consumed.

Moses was looking at a group of people who had been so miraculously delivered and so miraculously led by God that the only conclusion he could come to was that they were dealing with a terribly ungrateful spirit. And yet, this was the same Moses who had gone to God just a few days before and said, “Lord, why are you treating me this way? I don’t deserve this kind of treatment.” So we can see ourselves in the response at almost every turn.

For a short while, they had a delicacy named quail, along with a supernatural, heavenly bakery drop called manna. The quail was for a short-term; the manna was for a long-term. And you probably remember when the manna left the murmuring sheep began to attack the shepherd. They longed for the leeks, the onions and garlic of Egypt, and perhaps that explained the breath mints, as well. Lo and behold, Moses called his superior, a man named Jehovah, and Jehovah said, “They want quail? Tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to give them quail. Two billion quail rained down and the cries went up. “We didn’t mean that much Lord. We just wanted a hamburger.” God judged the Hebrews that day, and you’ll remember, through grace, things were restored. And that’s where we left off last week.

This morning, our travelers are moving along. The subject is “The Glory of His Presence.” Our two million murmurers have traveled further south now. They are past Rephidim. They are approaching Mount Sinai in the Sinai Desert. I was there a number of years ago and I can remember traveling across that desert. We were on a bus, which, of course, had no air conditioning and no shock absorbers. The roads were up and down and you got one stop in a full day’s trip. There were no facilities on these buses either. It was a long trip. I think I came to understand where the

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word *deserted* came from. This desert was nothing but mile after mile of sand, acres and acres of sand that was being re-baked by the scorching desert sun. This was in March! I have to be honest with you; we were told it was a lot like Texas this year. They say it only rains at the most, three to four days a year.

So the accommodations would be a minus five in your mobile tour guidebook if you were looking it up. The only water available was at the hand of the Living Water, who made it available according to special needs. They were constantly complaining.

As the scene opens this morning, we see Reverend Moses in his counseling room, ministering to the spiritual needs of his somewhat enlarged flock and his waiting room was stuffed with several hundred thousand people waiting to get in to see him. And about every hour or two, we see Moses lock up the counseling room, tell the people to wait, run around the corner, put on his robe and become a judge. He became the local precinct court and all these disputes that were going on, he would settle. He was kind of a one-man show. Then he would take off his robe, run around, and he would become counselor again.

Suddenly, he is in the counseling center one day and the phone rings. Moses picks it up and says, "Sinai Counseling Center, Moses the Mountain Mover here". Suddenly, his eyes light up. It's a call from the Grimy Gulch Bus Station announcing the arrival of the Goshen Greyhound. On board is Moses' wife, his two sons and his father-in-law, Jethro, who obviously was the escort service for the other three. You remember, he had taken them back home and now they were rejoining him. What a grand reunion. But, if you read between the lines, the reunion was short-lived and apparently, Moses had to run back to work. He said, "I'm sorry family. I haven't seen you in all this time, but you just can't believe how busy I am at the counseling office," and he ran back to the office.

The amount of counselees was now wrapped all the way around the mountain we imagine. And outside, scuffling Hebrews were beating on each other awaiting a chance to appeal to their Mosaic Magistrate. Papa Jethro, the father-in-law, scratches his head in bewilderment. He is amazed. And Exodus 18:13 is where our story begins this morning.

And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning

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until evening. [It seemed like it went on and on.]

So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? [What's going on here? Loose translation.] Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning to evening?"

And Moses said to his father-in-law, [Aw shucks...that's in the original.] "Because the people come to me to inquire of God." [They need me.]

When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws." [They couldn't get by without me.]

So, Moses' father-in-law said to him, [Uh-uh.] "The thing that you do is not good.

Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. (Exodus 18:13-18 NKJV)

Now I hate this passage, because it really hits me, but I'm going to teach it anyway because I'm not sure how to get around it. And Jethro says, "Moses, you don't understand. You don't have the gift of administration. These sixteen hour-a-day things are too much for you. Why the one man show? Why don't you delegate?" Then Moses says, "Aw shucks, Dad. It's nothing. I'm just in demand. They need me. I keep an appointment book on my notebook computer, Dad. It all works out." And Jethro says, "No, bad deal. Bad for you because you're going to wear out and then they won't have you at all. It's bad for the people because one man can't handle two million people. That's the problem."

Now, I'm sure that some of you can relate. It's an inability to delegate. I don't understand it, of course, but we take on the world and crater under the pressure, but Jethro did something about it. He proposed a plan and tucked within that plan, lies the key to spiritual multiplication.

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2 NKJV)

That's an outline for discipleship and Jethro gives us his Old Testament version in verses 21-23.

Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and

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place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

(Exodus 18:21 NKJV)

“You have captains, lieutenants and sergeants. Divide the program up and delegate.” That’s what he says. Now here is his method of multiplication. Memorize it. I’m well aware that every time I say, “Memorize it, or here’s a memory verse,” that every one of you writes it down and by the next week you have it engraved on your heart. So, I want to tell you, memorize it. It says:

Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. (Exodus 18:19 NKJV)

Here’s a plan for an elder board, for church leadership, for pastors. Here’s your role. You spend time with God. The first step is pray for the people you are responsible for. That will take care of most of the problems right there. But we don’t like to do that. We like to get busy, don’t we? He was to take their needs and bring them to the Lord, and then his second step:

And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. (Exodus 18:20)

Now, if you believe in discipleship, you ought to memorize that. He said, “First, Moses, you pray for them. Then while you’re praying for them, you teach them the ordinances and the laws, the absolutes and the principles. Then they won’t need you very much, Moses. They’ll know what to do.” Sometimes we don’t do that because we want to be needed, right? But, that’s not enough. He says, “I want you to show them two things. I want you to show them the way they should walk and the work they should do.” You’re not discipling unless they learn to walk the walk and unless they learn to minister the message. Jethro wanted to play show and tell. Take a few, show them, teach them, and turn them loose. That’s discipleship.

So Moses did what Jethro suggested. Jethro was happy. He got on the next bus and left town. And isn’t it neat, the people God brings into your life like that? You’ve got a problem. God brings somebody into your life. They give you the solution and the next day they are gone. Maybe there’s no long-term relationship, and yet you know that an angel of God brought them there to minister to you. So now Moses had the plan of God. Jehovah was going to

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teach Moses how to enter into the presence of God now, and how to enjoy the fellowship of God now, and how to behold the glory of God now. In other words, He said, “Moses you’re supposed to minister the word of God to the people of God, but the way you do it is the key. I want you to come up to the mountain and leave them alone.” He said, “But Lord, if I go up there, there’s no telling what they’re going to do.” “I know that,” the Lord answered, and, in fact, we will see in a week or two what they did. They blew it big time. But you see, our responsibility is to go up before the Lord and pray for them and then God will be responsible for what they do while we’re gone. We think we can’t leave because they’ve got to have us all the time. He said, “Moses, I want you to come apart before you come apart, and be with Me. We’re going to spend time together.”

Now normally, and most of you are aware of this, the application portion of the lesson comes at the end, right? This really is kind of an unresponsive group this morning. Anyhow, I’m going to flip that around. Maybe it will help wake us up. I think everybody is already at the lake mentally or something. Okay. The whole idea is that I’m going to give you the application portion of the lesson now and then we’ll go on from there.

Now the application portion is this: nothing we can do in our Christian experience, *nothing*, can substitute for spending quality time alone with God. Not going to church, not coming to Sunday school, not listening to tapes, believe it or not. Please believe it. Not listening to Christian radio, not going to Bible studies, not going to growth groups, not being discipled. Not even going to seminars. All those things are crucial and important and you should do them, and they will help you know more about God, but Scripture is not just to know more about God. The objective is for you to know God, and the way you get to know someone is by spending time with them.

I have to be honest with you; this week was such a revelation to me. It shouldn’t have been, knowing my life the way it is, but I was preparing all week long to teach this lesson. And usually when I’m preparing to teach a lesson, I try to be obedient, at least during that week, so I won’t be as big a hypocrite. But, I made a list of the things that got in my way this week from spending the quality and quantity of time with God that I intended to spend. If you want to really be overwhelmed, you make a list like that—the types of things it takes to keep you from spending time with God.

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When you want to know someone intimately, you spend time with them. That's all there is to it. There's no substitute for it. Jesus had to do it, Paul had to do it, Abraham had to do it, Elijah had to do it, and Moses had to do it. It just had to happen.

Now the application portion of this lesson basically involves you asking yourself these five easy questions. No, they're not easy questions, but they are easy to understand. And I beg you to be serious about this, this morning. I'm going to ask them. You don't have to answer me, but I would encourage you to answer God.

1- How faithful are you in spending quality time alone with God? How regular? How consistent? That's all I'm asking.

2- What is the magnitude of the kinds of things that prevent you from doing that? I made a list of some of the excuses I gave the Lord in the last week or two. They are really losers. "Too sleepy, Lord. When I wake up I'll get back to You." You may have done that. "Lord I'm too tired. My mind just isn't functioning." And you could hear the Lord say, "Oh? So, what's new?" You know? "Lord, the burdens are too heavy." What better time? "Lord, there's too much work to do for You! I'm doing this for You!" And here's my best one. "Lord, my computer needs me. Lord, people need me."

3- Do I spend more time alone with God than I did a year ago? Three years ago? Do I spend less?

4- How at home am I in the presence of God? Am I eagerly looking forward to it or am I anxious for it to be over? Ask yourself, where does your greatest amount of freedom come, when you're saying, "Dear Lord God, good morning," or, "In Jesus' Name, Amen?" Which gives you the greatest thrill?

5- Have I come to progressively know more of the character of God in the time I have spent with Him or has my time been simply a time of me giving Him a list of wants for Him to fill? Do you just give Him a grocery list, or do you get to know Him?

Now, I hate to do that to you, beloved, but those are the questions we are going to try to answer as we work our way through the lesson this morning. And I'm not sure I've ever asked any questions in this class or any class that are more important than those five.

Well, let's go up to the mountain with Moses.

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the

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Wilderness of Sinai.

For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him.

Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. (Exodus 19:1-8 NKJV)

Moses didn’t add anything to it. He didn’t take anything away from it. He gave them the word of God, and the people said, “Amen.” We’re good at that aren’t we? They said, “Whatever the LORD said we will do.” Have you ever said that? Well, we’ll see how long that lasts. But anyway, that’s what they said and God was getting them ready for the glory of His presence. He said, “Remember what I did for you? Get your book of remembrance out Israelites. I want you to remember what I have done for you in the past before you come into My presence.” That’s a good prerequisite for going into the presence of God. He said, “Don’t you remember, I bore you up on eagles’ wings? I was like an eagle or bird that takes care of His little ones.” And there are a lot of passages in Scripture that teach that.

For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.

As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings,

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So the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.
(Deuteronomy 32:9-12 NKJV)

Get that picture in your mind. That's the way the Lord led them. Isn't that a beautiful picture? That's what God wants you to get—this mental picture in your mind when you get up in the morning. God, like an eagle is going to bear you up on His wings and carry you through the day.

Like birds flying about, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. Defending, He will also deliver it; passing over, He will preserve it.
(Isaiah 31:5 NKJV)

Eagles' wings. Get that picture in your mind. Now Moses is reminded, "If you obey My voice and keep My commandments, I will—that's all you need to do." Then he gets a reward. God says, "Moses, I want to tell the people they're a peculiar treasure to me; a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Isn't that neat? Now you're imagining it's because they were so great, right? Well, we would know, of course, from past experience. Deuteronomy 7:6-9 tells us why God chose Israel. I trust all of you remember. Some of you remember. One of you remembers. Okay. It goes like this.

"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.
(Deuteronomy 7:6 NKJV)

Now, we would like to stop there and the Israelites would like to stop there, but He goes on.

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

but because the LORD loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
(Deuteronomy 7:7,8 NKJV)

Those were their qualifications, but ours are no different. Glory in the Lord,

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the

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world to put to shame the things which are mighty;
(I Corinthians 1:26,27 NKJV)

The Jew was precious to God. He set them apart, but it was not because they were so special. And when they rejected Messiah, He raised up another group of people He called the church, Jew and Gentile alike, and gave them a similar charge.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

who once were not a people but are now the people of God,
who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.
(I Peter 2:9,10 NKJV)

Do you get the picture? In Exodus 19, Moses said you are a peculiar treasure above all people. Peter said you are a chosen generation, a peculiar people. Moses said you are a kingdom of priests. Peter said you're a royal priesthood. Moses said you are a holy nation. Peter said you are a holy nation. That's how God looks at us and that's why He wants us to spend time in His presence.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow [tell them to go down to the corner laundromat] and let them wash their clothes.

And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.
(Exodus 19:9-11 NKJV)

Now I've got to tell you this, this morning, beloved. If you don't get excited at the last half of this message, just from the Scripture itself, I'm worried. I mean this is exciting stuff. Moses is telling the children of Israel and God is telling us, the closer we get to the light, the more impurity we see, and that's why some of us don't like to spend time with God, because unconfessed sin keeps us from spending time with the Lord. We want to be religious, but we don't want to confess sin, so we get busy. We volunteer for committees. We take part in activities. We get involved in religious or political pursuits or other things that occupy our time and we think to ourselves, "God's got to think I'm pretty good stuff. Look

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at all I'm doing for Him". But we don't want to spend time in His presence consistently, because if we do, we will be aware that the impurities in our lives break His heart. And if it breaks His heart, it ought to break our hearts as well.

The times when we're really struggling to be holy and really struggling to grow, are the times when we don't go to the Lord and spend time with Him, and those are the times we need to be there the most. So, there's the plan.

The next step is God wants to reveal His power.

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

(Exodus 19:16 NKJV)

Now I want you to picture this.

And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

(Exodus 19:17 NKJV)

You picture yourself there now.

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

(Exodus 19:18,19 NKJV)

God had called on a kingdom of priests, and now He wanted to reveal what happened when they spent time in His presence. When you become available to God, to stand in the presence of God, God reveals His power to you. He said, "I bore you up on eagles' wings. That's how much I love you and I have the power to do anything on this earth that I please. I always have and I always will." Now, be there with me for just a minute at the foot of that mountain. Picture the awe. You have been called together by God's man to actually meet with God. He said, "I AM is coming. Purify yourselves, stand in awe, but don't come too close. Don't be presumptuous," is what He was saying. "You touch the edge of that mountain and you'll die."

You come to the foot of Mt. Sinai now, and you wait and your heart is beating faster now, and suddenly it begins to thunder. I don't know if any of you here remember what that was like. And

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lightning begins to flash from one side of the sky to the other. And a cloud covers the mountain and there is a piercing sound of a trumpet. I wish I had noise in the background. The thunder gets louder and louder and the lightning fills the sky until the entire sky is aglow like the sun was up at noonday. And the trumpet blasts get longer and louder and longer and louder until the sheer intensity of it causes you to tremble. Are you there?

Suddenly, smoke pours from the top of the mountain. It's on fire, but like the burning bush nothing is consumed. And the ground beneath you begins to shake until it's all you can do to hold on. Louder and louder the trumpet blasts. Louder and louder, and suddenly God begins to speak. Beloved, that's a tiny demonstration of the power of God.

We took a trip a number of years ago and we sat in the shadow of the pyramids and the sphinx just outside of Cairo for what was billed as one of the world's most fabulous sound and light shows. Some of you may have been there; maybe years later than we were. At any rate, through quadraphonic sound and electronically controlled lighting, the ancient pyramids, including the largest one, which is billed as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, were alternately bathed in light at a distance. Through tape recordings, they pretended to speak to us through hidden loud speakers. They spoke of death, immortality and resurrection and the people around us were impressed. The lighting was awesome, the audio was creative, but the message was terrible.

At one point, the sphinx spoke and said, "The Nile be praised." The Nile be praised? But you see, quadraphonic sound is not the answer. God has said, "The gods of Egypt have tongues but they cannot speak. They have eyes but they cannot see. They have ears but they cannot hear. They spoke in this program as though these pyramids were the one thing that would last forever. Well, let me tell you something. If the God of eternity whispered, those ancient wonders would crumble like toy blocks or castles in the sand. All God would have to do is cry one tear drop and wash them into oblivion. And I couldn't help but compare that "magnificent sound and light show" with the one God put on for Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai. I thought to myself, "Dear God, these people don't know what power is." One day they'll know. One day God is going to put on the last light and sound show.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and

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the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.(II Peter 3:10 NKJV)

Beloved, that's power. The God of eternity who has that kind of power would like to unleash a portion of it in your life and in mine if we will take the time to spend the time in His presence that He's asked us to. The key is will we do it? Are you willing to set aside adequate time to bathe yourselves in the glory of His presence or will you find excuses the way I do, to do everything else.

Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. (Exodus 19:20 NKJV)

Then the Lord said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. (Exodus 19:24a NKJV)

And he did. He said, "Everything is ready, Moses. You lead the people down there." They didn't fair too well down there, you remember, but that wasn't Moses' problem. He said, "You come up and spend time with Me." Moses was going to receive the word from God. Aaron would take the word from Moses and communicate it to the people. This is another beautiful Old Testament picture of the Trinity. God the Father spoke to Moses. Moses received the word and passed it on to Aaron, who communicated it to God's people, the Jews. Today, God the Father speaks through the Living Word, Jesus. Jesus allows the Holy Spirit to communicate that word because the Spirit cannot speak concerning Himself; He can only speak that which is spoken to Him. He speaks that word to God's people and interprets it to the church. So, here's the pattern of the Trinity.

Now, the secret was, God had a message, a commandment. He said, "Moses, I want to change you first and in turn, I want to change the people. So you come apart with Me." Jesus, our Moses, will speak through His word. The Holy Spirit, our Aaron, will translate that word in our lives if we let Him. It will change us, and hopefully we will become so enamored with being alone with God that we will begin to cry out, "God, show me more." That's how you know you're spending enough time with God; when you can't get enough.

Exodus chapter 33, a passage we have read before. I want to go through it again in closing.

So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to

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his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.

Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, YOU say to me, ‘Bring up this people.’ But YOU have not let me know whom YOU will send with me. Yet YOU have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found grace in MY sight.

Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in YOUR sight, show me now YOUR way, that I may know YOU and that I may find grace in YOUR sight. And consider that this nation is YOUR people.”
(Exodus 33:11-13 NKJV)

It’s easy for us to cry out to God, “Lord, show me YOUR will. But the reason we want to know His will is so it’s easier for us; because then, we don’t have to walk by faith. Moses said, “Lord, show me your ways so I can know YOU better.” That’s the pattern on how to pray.

And He said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”
(Exodus 33:14 NKJV)

“You’re not going to go anywhere that I don’t go, so you can relax.” That’s what He said.

Then he said to Him, “If YOUR Presence does not go with us, don’t bring us up from here.”
(Exodus 33:15 NKJV)

“If you leave me, I’m going to quit.” That’s what he said.

For how then will it be known that YOUR people and I have found grace in YOUR sight, except YOU go with us? So we shall be separate, YOUR people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth.”

So the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in MY sight and I know you by name.
(Exodus 33:16,17 NKJV)

Now, if that were us, wouldn’t you hope that we would be so grateful for that time in the presence of God and that assurance by God that He would never leave us or forsake us, that we would bow before Him, and that would be that? But not Moses.

And he said, “Please show me YOUR glory.”

Then He said, “I will make all MY goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

But He said, “You cannot see MY face; for no man shall see

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Me, and live.”

And the LORD said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock [which stands for Jesus].

So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.

Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” (Exodus 33:18-23 NKJV)

You see the picture? Here was a man who knew God so intimately, it is said that God spoke to him as a man talks to his best friend. It was the supreme compliment that could be paid to a human being by God. So infused with His presence was he, that Moses would not move unless God would be with him; leading him, guiding him, protecting him. He had the John 15 principle, “Without You, I can do nothing.” Moses said “Good enough.” God said, “Good enough. My presence will go with you and I’ll give you rest. You can rest; you can relax. I’m in control.” Moses said, “That’s not enough. Show me more.”

There’s the secret. The more time you spend in the presence of God, the more you want to know Him. But, there is a key in this verse. He expects you to ask. Now, how many of you have ever asked God to show you His glory; to demonstrate more of Himself in your life, whatever the cost? God hides His beloved friend in the cleft of the rock. He passes by and He shows Moses as much as Moses can handle. Moses could handle more than any other man alive because Moses had spent more time with Him than any other man alive. And you begin to see what our class verse, 2 Corinthians 3:18 is all about; *in ever-increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another*. You can begin to see what I Corinthians 13:12 means. *Now we see through a glass darkly, one day face to face*. That’s what happens when you spend time in His presence. You become more like Him.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

(1 John 3:2 NKJV)

You get the picture? One day, you’re going to be totally like Him because you totally see Him. In the meantime, you can become progressively like Him if you will just spend more and more time in His presence. I think many of us are going to have to wear

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sunglasses in heaven because we aren't accustomed to His face.

Maybe it's time, if you pardon the pun, that we, like Moses, laid aside some lesser things, climbed up to the mountain of God, and spent some real quality time with Him. So much so, that we are able to cry out at some point in time, "Lord, show me Your glory. I just want to know You better. I want to know you as few men or women have ever known you before. Pass by, show me Your glory."

Now, I want to give you three illustrations and ask you to consider this issue in the light of these illustrations, and then we'll close.

Scenario 1: Imagine you were born into a royal family and you were announced to be the heir to the king. And all the privileges and all the power would one day be yours. One day, you would rule, and all the king wanted you to do in the meantime, was to spend time in his presence. He wanted you to understand how he thought. He wanted you to understand how his kingdom was ruled. Would you say, "I'm just too busy; I don't have time?" Wouldn't you sit at his feet and just drink it in, knowing that one day you would rule and reign?

Scenario 2: Suppose you enlisted in the military and you were preparing for imminent warfare. You were assigned to serve under the greatest military commander in history, the only one who had never lost a battle. He invited you to walk alongside him. He would be your mentor so you, too, could become more than a conqueror. What would you do? Well, you would retire to the barracks and play Ping Pong, right? No, I think you would follow his every move and watch his every expression until you knew his every thought.

Scenario 3: If you were engaged to be married and you claimed to be hopelessly in love with one who loved you so much, that he had offered his life in exchange for yours and made himself totally available to spend all the time with you that you were willing to spend. What would you do? Would you spend time with him, or would you say, "I don't have time. I have to go look for a wedding cake?"

You see, beloved, you and I are children of the King. He wants us to sit at His feet and learn of Him. You and I are participants in the most crucial battle in history, the war between principalities and powers, between the rulers of darkness of this world, between

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God and spiritual wickedness in high places. If you don't have time to sit at the feet of the Commander in Chief, He may win the war, but you may lose the battle and become useless as a soldier.

Beloved, you and I are engaged to the lover of our soul. He is coming back for us to celebrate the greatest wedding feast in history. He will spend eternity with us. If we don't spend every available moment we have in His presence now, we'll be like strangers on that day; when we ought to know His every heartbeat. So, the question really shouldn't be, how can we find time to be alone with God? The question should be, how can we make time to do anything else?

In the history of Christendom, if you read biographies, you'll remember that there stands out among the crowds, the names of a handful of men and women whose lives have literally changed the world. God has used them to move mountains while the rest of Christendom seemed to be scooping sand with toy spoons. If you read those biographies, you will find one common denominator, beloved—one. They all had the time; they all took the time to spend hours and hours and hours in the presence of God, until like Moses, they were so accustomed to being in His presence, they thought His thoughts, transmitted His image and were one with His heart. He could do in them and through them whatever He chose. Our task then, is to do whatever it takes to spend that time.

In closing, I would beg some of you to consider making a vow for one week. You say, "Why one week?" Well, that's all most of us have the faith to believe for, and vows are serious. Make it for one week. You see, that's why God divided time into years, years into months, months into weeks, the weeks into days, so we would have workable segments in which to exercise faith. We could make a vow for one week and every Sunday as you get ready to go to church you can renew that vow, if God leads you, for one more week.

This is the vow I encourage us all to make. You won't sleep or eat, one of the two, on any given day, until you have spent the time alone with God that you know God wants you to spend; enough time to know Him more intimately and experience Him more powerfully. Is that reasonable? You see, the end ought to be that like Moses, we would begin to be so at home in His presence, that He will proportionately increase our capacity to behold His

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glory, until one day we come to that natural transition from time to eternity and we will be so at home in His presence, we'll just be home.

THE GLORY OF HIS PRESENCE

Oh, to stand beneath that mountain
Where God's children were amazed,
Where at Moses' firm commandment
They but stood in awe and gazed,

As the thunder of His Presence
Shook the very mountain sod,
And the lightning filled the heavens
As there cried the trump of God.

Louder, louder, still its anthem,
Louder, louder still it rang,
Louder, louder cried the trumpets
Till the courts of Heaven sang.

And the Glory of His Presence
In a cloud formed overhead,
As the mount leaped flames of fire
Just the way the Scripture said.

Oh, how marvelous His Presence,
Oh, how awesome is His Power,
Oh, the brilliance of His Glory
As it filled the skies that hour.

But, ah, my friend, that Glory
Was not just for ages past,
Nor was it but a symbol
Of a power that would not last.

For the marvel of His Presence
In its splendor still is there,
And the Glory of His power
Still remains for us to share.

If we, like Moses, spend the time
Within the quiet place,
Till the Glory of His Presence
Even shines forth from our face.

The Glory of His Presence

And we then become more like Him
As we see Him day by day,
And we then reflect His Presence
To the men who pass our way.

Till we seek that golden morning
When at last set free from sin,
We shall see Him as He really is
And we will be just like Him.

Will we be at home when that time comes?
At last, the secret's known,
It may depend on how much time
We've spent with Him, alone!

For Focus and Application

1- Try enacting the scene Jethro found when he arrived with Moses' wife and children. What was Moses' problem? Why do you think he was doing it all himself? What was Jethro's solution? How can this be likened to the church today?

2- Compare Jethro's plan with Paul's plan in II Timothy 2:2. What do you think that passage means?

3- Describe how God, Moses and Aaron typified the Trinity.

4- Honestly answer the five questions on page 7. In the light of God's priorities for your life. Do your answers make sense?

5- Study the analogy of God and eagles' wings. What truths speak to you?

6- Try to close your eyes and imagine that you were at the foot of that mountain with the children of Israel. What thoughts would be going through your mind? Is this the kind of awesome respect you have in God's presence today?

7- Read Exodus 33:11-23. Be prepared to extract principles from that passage to apply to your own life.

8- Reread the three illustrations on pages 17. Weigh your commitment to being alone with God in the light of those illustrations.

9- Make a covenant with God that, for one week, you will spend the quality of time and the quantity of time in His presence, even at the expense of sleep or food. It could change your life.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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