

Presence Desired: The God Who Desires to be Close

(Yhwh Elohim) Genesis 1-2, Psalm 139, Acts 17:28

Reflect on the wonder. The Uncreated One, the Lord God Himself, steps on to the planet He's shaped, and continues to fashion. Suddenly, Divine Hands are plunged into soil while supernatural (yes, unfathomable!) craftsmanship, guided by limitless wisdom (cf. Prov.8:22), produces the greatest expression of His אֱלֹהִים (Heb., "creating"). Moments later, a mature human being, male in gender, lies in the grass.

The 2nd Person of the Trinity is not done. Purposefully He bends low, almost as if to kiss, and personally "breathes" life into Adam's nostrils, filling his lungs, enlivening his soul, energizing his heart. Oh to have watched these moments! What was prone now sits, then stands, perhaps stretches (?), ebbing with the fullness of endowed life. Opened eyes behold the Lord God, the Almighty, Maker of the heavens and the earth...an arm's length away.

Good morning! And welcome to year 2019, counting from the year when God himself showed up on the planet! It may be that the Lord will give us yet another year to Gather, Connect, and Serve Him here before He returns. Let's make the most of it!

To begin this year together, I ask you to stand and for us to read out loud together David's song found in Psalm 16.

¹Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

²I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."

³As for the saints in the land, they are
the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.

⁴The sorrows of those who run after another
god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood
I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

⁵The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot. ⁶The lines have fallen for me in
pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

⁷I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me
⁸I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole
being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.

¹¹You make known to me the path of life;
in Your presence there is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Now as you're seated, will you take a Bible and find that Psalm (p.453 ESV). I want you to see the 8 choices David made in his relationship with God:

- #1 He TAKES REFUGE in God who preserves
- #2 He DECLARES God's LORDSHIP and GOODNESS
- #3 He DELIGHTS in God's excellent people
- #4 He REFUSES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of other gods
- #5 He CHOSSES the LORD as his portion
- #6 He RECOGNIZES his INHERITANCE in God
- #7 He BLESSES the LORD for His intimate counsel
- #8 He SETS the LORD as his FOCUS

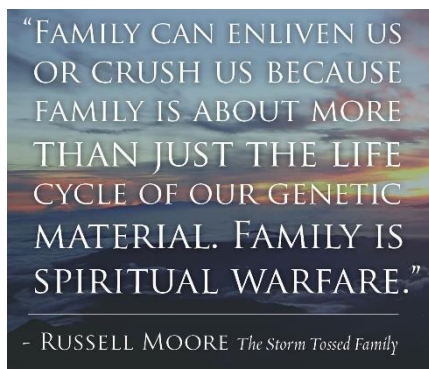
Will you notice the result in David's life flowing out of these choices? He has (vss.9-10)

a glad heart,
a joyful being
supreme confidence that God will act to protect him

Bottom line (vs.11) – “there's nothing like your presence God”

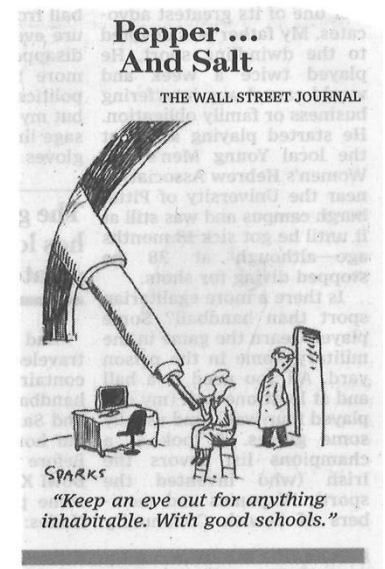
**¹¹You make known to me the path of life;
in Your presence there is fullness of joy;
at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Wow! What a passage of Scripture to kick off this new year. I mean, we read this, and we hear this, in a world riddled with difficulty, full of confusion and divisions, and fraught with all kinds of personal challenges. There's a reason Christianity Today's 2019 book of the year is Russell Moore's *The Storm-Tossed Family*. Moore writes:



We swim in a turbulent culture that tosses our families around, in a climate where depression is openly acknowledged as a population-wide epidemic, in a country poorly led from

top to bottom (at least politically). I mean, I've got Psalm 16 in one hand and a newspaper in the other. I had to chuckle when I saw this in the Journal.



Is that the solution? Look for another planet? But then we read a Hebrew song, breathed-out by the Holy Spirit in a song sung by a shepherd-teenager who dares to tell us, “Lord, God...In Your presence is fullness of joy!”

If the question is, ***What do we really need to make it?*** The Scripture is refreshingly clear. What I truly need in my life is nothing less than the Presence of God. To experience, every day, His presence. And...it is possible because of what God tells us about Himself; namely

**The God who created you is
the God who desires to be with you.**

How do we know this to be true?

**He is a triune
(Father, Son, Spirit)
relational God**

Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27

“Elohim” – powerful, plural (“our image”)

18

19

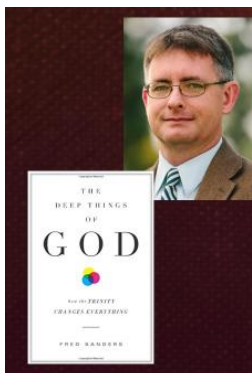
The GOD revealing Himself in the Bible
is a being of triune Persons

- God the Father
- God the Son
- God the Spirit



equal in attributes, distinct in persons
and roles, unified in loving fellowship

20



The Trinity isn't for anything
beyond itself, because the
Trinity is God.

God is God in this way: God's
way of being God is to be
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
simultaneously from all
eternity, perfectly complete in
a triune fellowship of love.

When Heaven and Earth were yet unmade
When time was yet unknown,
Thou, in Thy bliss and majesty,
Didst live, and love, alone.

Hymn by Frederick W. Faber

21

Secondly,

**He is a creative
(on the planet)
life-giving God**

Genesis 2:5-7, 21-24

“Yahweh” – personal, promise keeping,
relationship providing

22

Genesis 2:5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

²⁰ But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.



(H)e is being itself, and as such must necessarily be infinitely happy in the glorious perfections of His nature from everlasting to everlasting; and as **He did not create, so neither did He redeem because He needed us; but He loved us because He loved us.**

SUSANNA WESLEY (1669-1742)

Sanders, Fred. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (p. 61). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

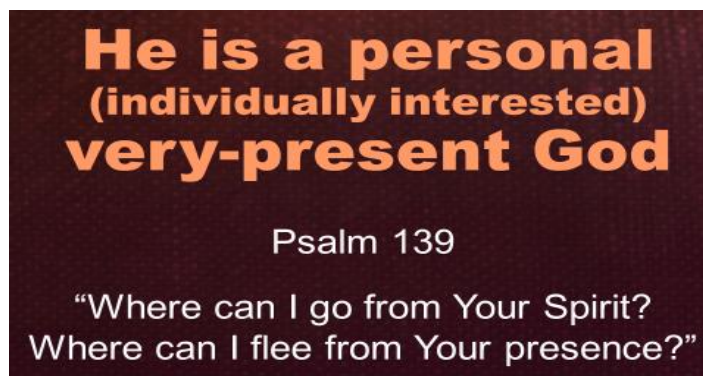
23

Of all the ways God could have chosen to communicate to us WHO He is and WHAT he is all about, he chose to paint an almost unthinkable portrait of the powerful, eternal God kneeling in dirt, hands fashioning, mouth breathing life into mouth. Making sure that male and the female are fully, marvelously designed in His image. A relational God, a life-giving God who personally created human beings, fashioned them, breathed into them...and loves them.

Illus – “In our home for Christmas day (2018) dinner, Pamela and I had the wonderful delight have having several from around the world in our home. One of our guests told her tender story when we asked her why she recently came to believe in the God of the Bible, and in Jesus Christ as her Savior.

Her response was beautifully simple when she said, “I used to believe in a God who didn’t love people. What kind of God is that? When I heard that the God of the Bible loved people, loved me...I wanted to believe in that kind of God. A God who loved me, and I could love Him.”

The TRUE God...the God who is there...is a Triune being who has been from eternity past, is today, and will be forever, a RELATIONAL BEING. The TRUE God...the God who is there...is a creative, life-giving being who loves what He has created. Add to this that the TRUE GOD...



25

p.521 ESV

The world in which we live – planet earth – did not randomly happen by the unthinking chaos of unplanned cosmic forces. There is no evidence for such a viewpoint. Quite to the contrary, the world itself, flourishing with life and all that can sustain life, was the purposeful result of a master Craftsman – a relational God, a life-giving loving God, a very present passionate-about-individuals God. This God

**The God who created you
is the God who desires to be with you
*to bring you fullness of joy each day***

PERSONAL CHOICES

As we step into 2019, and for the next 63 days, it's for us to make some choices...the way David did in Psalm 16, to *experience God's presence*. As your pastor, I'm asking you to join me in growing in the experience of the presence of God (just as we did last Fall as we grew in the flow of the Holy Spirit through us).

To step together, would you find the ***Experience His Presence*** brochure you were given as you came in. What steps can we take together?

Step #1 Let's GROW in the LIFE QUESTION: ***Does God make my day?*** For the next 9 weeks, we will teach here on experiencing God's presence. And for the next 9 weeks, there is an ***Experience His Presence*** 63 day devotional/journal for you to use. Pick one up today; pick several. Give God's Spirit a chance to use this tool to form the habit of cultivating the presence of God in every part of your life, in every part of your day.

Step #2 Let's ENGAGE in a MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY: Take a step in *Family Enrichment* or step into an *International Care* opportunity. They are listed on the back, but the most helpful action to take is to get on your phone or computer and dial in to ccames.org/engagewinter19.

Grow in the "Does God make my Day? Life question. **Engage** in a FE or IC opportunity. Let's start 2019 off right as a team.

The truth is that there is a relational and powerful, creative and life-giving, personal and present God who desires to be close to you. Paul startled the heady intellectuals in Athens when he declared, "Yet He is actually not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:28).

He is not far from you...and the only reason He is not closer may well be because you have kept him at arm's length.

Why? Why would you do that? Why?...when "in His presence is fullness of joy"?

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