

“The Temple of the Holy Spirit: Holiness & the Presence of God”

What is a Church? Pt.7 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:1 3-11-2007

Summary: We are the Sanctuary (dwelling place) of God, which points to 1) Holiness (precious to God – don’t destroy a church) and morally separate & idol-free; and 2) fellowship with God (God will walk among us like a nearby dad and so our actions are joint work with Him).

Review

Imagine we are standing before the Lord Jesus Christ being evaluated the way He evaluated the churches in Revelation, chapters two and three, and he looks at us and smiles big and says, “Well done! You were exactly what I wanted a church to be” and He has no rebuke for us at all. We want that more than anything. That is why our very first study together as a church is a study of the five main metaphors the Lord gave us to teach us what a church is supposed to be.

The first two were that we are the body of Christ and that we are the bride of Christ. As the body of Christ we found that our responsibilities are to properly represent the Lord Jesus, so when people look at us they get an accurate picture of Him. We are to build one another up to reach maturity so we can do His work. And His work is the dispensing of His grace.

The second metaphor is that of a bride. As His bride our main responsibilities are

- 1) To be faithful to Him
- 2) To be beautiful and delightful to Him
- 3) To be delighted by Him (to love Him)
- 4) To invite others to take delight in Him.

The Sanctuary of God

Naos not Hieron

The third metaphor we are going to take a look at is that of a temple. The Church is called a temple (or more accurately, a sanctuary) several times in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you are God's temple (sanctuary) and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

2 Corinthians 6:16 what agreement does God's sanctuary have with idols? For we are the sanctuary of the living God

The Temple complex was made up of a series of outdoor courtyards. And if you moved westward through the various courts you would approach a spectacular, magnificent building – 90 ft. high. That building was the holy place (sanctuary), and it was the dwelling place of God where the people were not allowed to enter. The Greek word for the entire complex was *hieron*. But when they wanted to refer specifically to God’s dwelling place (the sanctuary), they would

use the word *naos*.¹

The Church is called a temple several times in the New Testament, but never is the word *hieron* used to describe the Church. All the passages that compare the Church to the temple use the word *naos*.² The point is not so much that we are the temple of God, but, more specifically, we are the *sanctuary* – the holy place. We are God’s dwelling place.

Purpose of the metaphor: We are His dwelling place

So why this metaphor? What is God trying to teach us about the nature of the Church by calling us His Sanctuary? If there were a group of people who had never heard the word “church,” and God put them in a room with a Bible and said, “I want you to function as a church,” and so they opened up the Bible and saw these passages that say the church is God’s sanctuary, what would that mean for how they were to function from week to week?

The most basic answer to that question is that when people walk here in they should experience the presence of God.

Eph.2:21-22 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy sanctuary in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ...we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said: I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

God calls us His Sanctuary because we are the headquarters for His presence. God is everywhere present, but when the Bible speaks of God’s presence it almost always refers specifically to His presence to bless (that is – when God reveals His presence to you in a favorable way). That is *not* the same everywhere. It is revealed only in certain places and certain contexts and in varying degrees. Can you experience the presence of God in your private prayer closet? Yes. But not to the degree you can experience it in the church. Otherwise it would be misleading when the Bible repeatedly says that the church is the place where God lives and reveals His presence.

Eph.2:22 in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The greatest experience of the presence of God is in the church. If you do not experience the presence of God in a greater way on Sunday morning than you do other times, then either we are functioning as we should as a church, or there is something missing in your awareness or attitude or expectation. But Scripture is clear that there is more potential for you to experience His presence in the church (even in a terribly flawed church), than anywhere else including your own private prayer closet or in the most beautiful part of creation.

When you come to church, how profoundly you experience the presence of God depends both on your own readiness, and on the church’s faithfulness. The more we function as we should, the more profoundly God’s presence is revealed among us. The Ephesians were already Christians, which means the Lord already lived among them, and yet in Ephesians 3:16,17 Paul prayed that they would be strengthened so that the Lord would dwell among them in an even greater way. God’s dwelling among us is not a static thing. It increases and decreases.

Two different psalms begin with the same question:

¹ Most translations confuse the issue by translating both words “Temple.” This is where the CSB is very helpful – it translates *hieron* as “temple complex” and *neos* as “sanctuary.”

² Except for 1 Pe.2:5, which uses the phrase “spiritual house.”

Ps.15:1 O Lord, who may dwell in Your sanctuary? Who may live on Your holy mountain?

Ps.24:3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his sanctuary?

That is really the main issue for human beings, isn't it? So how do we gain greater access to His presence? As Christians we enjoy His presence to some degree 24 hours a day. But how do we experience it in a greater way? And how do we function as a church to make it possible for others to experience it in a greater way?

Let's take a look at each of the passages and see exactly what points they are making when they use this metaphor. As I studied these passages I found three similarities between the Church and the Sanctuary that were emphasized. Holiness, fellowship, and worship.

1) Holiness

The word "sanctuary" literally means "holy place." Those two terms mean exactly the same thing. (the Latin word for holy is *sanctus*). So a sanctuary, or a sanctified place, is a holy place. And the room within the holy place where God dwelt behind that curtain was called the Holy of holies. That's a Hebraism that means the holiest place of all. So the first reason for this metaphor of the Church as the Sanctuary is to teach us that a major part of what it means to be a church is to be a holy place.

The term "holy" means to be set apart. There are two parts to that – that which is holy is set apart as special and set apart from evil. So it carries the ideas both of preciousness and purity. The first one is described in terms of something God does – He sets us apart as especially precious treasures to Him . The second part is often described in terms of *our* responsibility: We are to separate ourselves from the world morally.

The Church is sacred & precious to God

As His Sanctuary, the Church is especially precious to God. He set us apart from the rest of humanity in the same way you set your fine china apart from your paper plates. As God's Sanctuary we are special to Him -- His prized possession -- His fine china.

In 1 Corinthians 3, when Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for their disunity and divisions that were destroying their local church, he said,

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Don't you know that you are God's sanctuary and that the Spirit of God lives in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's sanctuary, God will destroy him; for God's sanctuary is holy, and that is what you are.

Don't ever do something that will bring harm to a local church , because the Church is so precious to God that if you destroy a church God will destroy you. He doesn't want you to destroy His paper plates either, but He *really* doesn't want you to ruin His good china. God bought that china with His own *blood*. Jesus especially loves the Church; even the bad churches; even Laodicea, the arrogant, proud, self-sufficient, spiritually pitiful, poor, blind and naked church that was the only church to receive only rebuke and no praise from Jesus, even that church Jesus loved. After rebuking them and threatening to vomit them out of His mouth Jesus says,

Rev.3:18-19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

Jesus deeply loves every church that is truly a church.

So don't ever destroy a church. Which, of course, brings up the question - How do you

destroy a church? First let me mention a few things that don't destroy a church. There are some things that are frequently pointed to as the culprits in the death of a church that Scripture does not point to. For example, honest disagreement on points of doctrine. When two people are doing their best to interpret Scripture and they end up disagreeing, that does not destroy a church.

Neither does debate over those differences (as long as the debate is done in love for the purpose of edification). In fact, honesty about what you believe, and sincere, loving debate are things that *build up* the church.

Eph. 4:15 speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Honesty builds up a church, and so does debate. Colossians 3:16 commands that we instruct one another. That is what debate is – instructing one another. Arguing and fighting is evil. But honest, loving, edifying debate builds up a church. Another thing that the Bible does not identify as the cause of the death of a church is leaving that church. Some pastors can put a real guilt trip on you – “if you leave, this church will die.” Jesus never rebuked any churches for being too small. Nor did He rebuke anyone for attending one church instead of another church.

Another thing that does not destroy a church is repentant sin. If you have sin in your life, but you are repentant – that will not destroy the church. If it did, every church would be destroyed, because every member of every church sins every day. The absolute best we can hope for in this life is to have a church full of repentant sinners. All sin does some damage even if you repent but if we all repent of our sin it isn't going to destroy the church. According to James 5:16 if we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another God promises healing, not destruction. People will still offend you, but they will repent of their offence and you will repent of your anger and unforgiveness, and nothing will remain to destroy the church. So confessed, repentant sin does not destroy the church.

So what does? Unrepentant sin and false doctrine. Whenever Jesus rebuked one of the churches it was always because of doctrinal error or ongoing, unrepentant sin. He didn't rebuke them for anything else.

The problem in Corinth was their unrepentant disunity. You can destroy a church by creating factions where people are looking down on each other. Or by the cancer of gossip or sinful judging. Or by enticing people to grumble and complain by grumbling and complaining yourself. Or by destroying the unity of the church by leaving broken relationships unreconciled. If you haven't made every effort to reconcile a broken relationship, you are continuing in unrepentant sin.

Mt.5:23-25 if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Settle matters quickly...

The command to reconcile our broken relationships is incredibly urgent, because church unity is so important to the very nature of what a church is. Unreconciled relationships can destroy a church.³

Jesus said, “Don't destroy My Church, or I'll destroy you.” Very strong words!

So that is one side of the coin of holiness: as God's sanctuary we are set apart as especially

³ John Piper put it well: The body of Christ is a body where unreconciled relationships are so at odds with the reality of what Christ has done in creating the body that they cannot endure without casting doubt on a person's true participation in the body. ... We must be a reconciling people because we are a reconciled people. Not a people who do not offend and get offended. But a people who are soon on the road to reconciliation.

http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByTopic/5/810_Israel_and_Us_Reconciled_in_One_Body/

precious to Him. And the other side of the coin of holiness is that we are responsible to separate ourselves from the contamination of the world.

We are to be separate from the world

It is a great horror to ever drag a defiled, impure, unholy, detestable contaminating thing into the Sanctuary. As the Sanctuary of God it is our responsibility to live separated lives that are uncontaminated by the world.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 Do not be yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement does God's sanctuary have with idols? For we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said: I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ¹⁷ Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. ¹⁸ I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Therefore dear friends, since we have such promises, we should wash ourselves clean from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

We are to be separated from the world. It is interesting that in verse 16 we are compared to a sanctuary, and unbelievers are compared to what? Idols! Getting into a relationship with unbelievers in which they are influencing us instead of us influencing them is like dragging idols into the very Holy of holies.

Our relevance comes from our difference, not our similarity

Some people are suggesting today that if we are going to reach the lost, we are going to have to break out of our evangelical ghetto and engage the world. If we are going to win their respect and admiration so they will listen to our message, we need to be out there drinking beers with them in the bars and approximating their lifestyle and culture and music and recreation and dress and language as much as possible, so that our message will seem relevant to the lives they are already living and we will win their respect. The result is churches where the pastor swears in the sermons and small groups meet in bars so they can win the world's respect and become relevant.

Something is relevant if it has bearing or importance in relationship to the real world. So we should seek to be relevant. If they judge our message to be irrelevant – having no bearing or importance in relationship to reality, then they won't listen.

Now, according to Scripture the lives of unbelievers are empty, worthless, guilty, and condemned, and they need to forsake that life in exchange for something infinitely better. For us to be relevant to them, then, something has to convince them of their need to be rescued and transformed from their current life. And the best way to accomplish that is by showing them the alternative. Therefore, all of our relevance is dependent upon them seeing a difference between their lives and ours.

If we come to them with profane speech and profane lives, we make our message irrelevant to them. The more profane we are the more irrelevant our message (people don't listen to a salesman who is selling what they already have). If you are in prison, and someone who has already escaped contacts you from the outside and tells you how to escape, that is more relevant to you than someone who appears to still be in prison with you telling you how to escape. The holier we are the more relevant our message.

Should we try to win their respect? Yes. But we are to do so not by approximating their lifestyle. We are to do it through our righteousness.

1 Thes.4:11-12 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders

We can win respect by living out the virtues of our faith that the world respects (like integrity, hard work, honesty, kindness, etc.). Not by swearing and being up to speed on pop culture so we can join in their banal conversations about the worthless trivia. The same life of integrity and righteousness that will win their respect, once it starts to expose their wickedness, will also win their hatred and rejection. Jesus was highly respected, joyfully praised, and then brutally murdered.

Has the Church become a ghetto? Are we too isolated? It depends on which kind of isolation you're talking about. Jesus said we are to be in the world but not of the world. (John 17:11-14) Frequently we are just the opposite – we are of the world and not in the world. When it comes to their need to hear the gospel we are nowhere to be found. But when it comes to their entertainment and lifestyle and sin we are very often right by their side.

Reach them through the testimony of idol-free lives

Colossians three and Ephesians five both teach that greed, or covetousness, is idolatry, which means the first commandment and the 10th commandment are really the same commandment. Covetousness (looking to earthly things for our satisfaction instead of looking to God for our satisfaction), is idolatry because it places earthly things in place of God as our highest treasure to which we look for satisfaction.

Everyone in the world is completely enslaved by covetousness. Unbelievers derive 100% of their joy from earthly, temporal things and zero percent from fellowship with God. The idea of preferring the presence of God to any earthly pleasure (or to all earthly pleasures combined) is absolutely inconceivable to them. They think satisfaction can only come through temporal, earthly things (like people, and earthly experiences).

So when we live in front of them with joy that is not dependent upon anything or anyone in this world, we should stand out like sore thumbs. What an unarguable testimony of God's magnificence that would be! What an airtight proof of God's goodness that would be! Let them see how we much prefer His presence over any earthly pleasure. Let our independence from earthly satisfaction be obvious enough to them that it is striking to them. In their minds there is one thing and one thing only that can produce joy and satisfaction, and that is earthly, temporal pleasures. And so when we come along with greater joy and satisfaction than they could ever dream of, and zero need for any earthly thing to generate that joy and satisfaction, let that mystify and astonish them.

Individual holiness

As the Sanctuary of God we are to be holy, and in order to do that each one of us as individuals must keep ourselves from sin. The church is a Sanctuary that is comprised of a whole bunch of individual sanctuaries.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee from sexual immorality! "Every sin a person can commit is outside the body,"¹ but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

For the church to be holy, each member has to keep him or herself holy.

Ps.15:1-2 O Lord, who may dwell in Your Sanctuary? Who may live on Your holy mountain? He whose ways are blameless and who does what is righteous.

Ps.24:3-4 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his Sanctuary? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart and who does not lift up his soul to an idol.

We see that the metaphor that describes the Church as a temple, or Sanctuary is designed to teach us that the Church is holy. It is set apart as especially precious to God (His fine china), and it is to be set apart morally from the way the world lives. That's one purpose for the Sanctuary metaphor. Let's look at a second purpose.

2) Fellowship with God

God calls us a Sanctuary – His dwelling place -- because He wants to teach us that we are to function as a place of fellowship and personal interaction with God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 ... we are the sanctuary of the living God, as God said: I will dwell among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ¹⁷ ... I will welcome you. ¹⁸ I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me

The most important pursuit

If we are holy we will enjoy God's presence. That's the greatest desire of the Christian.

Ps.73:25-28 Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength¹ of my heart, my portion forever.

You may already be familiar with those verses. But have you ever noticed the next two verses?

²⁷ Those far from You will certainly perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful (lit. who commit adultery against) to You. ²⁸ But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.

A true believer is someone who desires nothing on earth besides God, because his only good is the nearness of God. And there are only two kinds of people – those whose only good is the nearness of God, and those who are far from God. And the ones who are far from God are far from Him because they commit adultery against Him. They are more attracted to the world than to God. They are far from God because the nearness of God is not good to them. There is something else that is good to them, and so they pursue that for their joy, and they end up far from God.

I will walk among them

But what about this promise of God walking with us? I've thought a lot over the years about what it means to walk with God. But what does it mean to have God walk with me? What exactly do you think God had in mind when He made this particular promise: **'I will live with them and walk among them?'**

There are two clues. The first one comes from the immediate context.

Like having a loving father with you

When He repeats the promise in verse 18 look what He says:

2 Corinthians 6:18 I will receive you. 18 I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to Me

Having God walk among us means He will be near us in the same way an ideal father is near his children. The other day my son Josiah was out selling things door to door for a school fundraiser. It was about 8:00 at night and it was dark out, and he wanted me to go with him. And so I did, and we had a good time walking around the neighborhood together. Why do you suppose he wanted me to be with him? I asked him why and he said he didn't know (which didn't help with my sermon prep any). But it is not too hard for me to figure out: when you're a kid it is just good to have your father with you. It is good for companionship, so you're not alone, it is good for guidance, so you don't get lost, it is good for instruction, so he can teach you how to go about what you are doing, it is good for protection, in case you come across some danger.

That is what a church is supposed to be: a place where God is like a father walking with His people. We should always be asking: What can we do as a church; what can I do in my ministry to see to it that a person could come to Agape Bible Church and experience what it is like to have God walk with him or her like a father walking with his kids?" Having God nearby in that way makes everything we could ever need available. If we need protection, He'll be right there. If we need guidance or encouragement or strength or comfort or healing – He'll be right there.

Ps.68:19 Blessed be the Lord God, who daily bears our burdens.

One of the great things about being a Christian is we are the only ones whose God can carry our burdens. The false gods of the world are powerless to help their followers carry anything.

Isa.46:1 Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary.

God daily bears our burdens, but the false gods can't even bear their own burdens, much less ours. The people in our culture bow not before Bel or Nebo, but before science and mother nature – those are the gods they worship. Think of how powerless those false gods are. When the burden becomes unbearable – a child dies, disaster comes, depression sweeps over, health disintegrates, cancer is diagnosed – the false gods of our culture are as powerless as the nothingness that they are. They can offer no comfort, no strength, no hope, no consolation, no strengthening, no restoration, no love, no compassion, no healing, no renewal. But we serve a God who offers all that. He stoops down and bears the burdens that are too heavy for us. He carries not only our burdens but He carries us!

Verse four of Isaiah 46 says **I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.**

He sustains us and rescues us and carries us along. He strengthens and comforts and empowers us. He gives us hope and a future. He gives us satisfaction and joy in Him that is greater than any conceivable suffering. Every day we have the privilege of casting our cares upon Him because He cares for us. He is distressed over all our distress, and that distress moves His heart. Those things the world has to endure alone, He carries us through. They face burdens too great for them, and their only recourse is to distract themselves with some shallow earthly pleasure that does nothing to ultimately alleviate the burden. But God has made a way for us never to be overburdened. If I just trust Him to carry them, He will!

God's involvement in all you do

Another thing that can shed some light on this idea of what it means to have God walk with

us is to understand the metaphor of walking in Scripture. When the Bible uses that metaphor of walking it refers to the moment-by-moment actions of life. Your life is pictured as a journey, and each action or thought you have is a step. So as you move through life – action by action, deed by deed, thought by thought – you are taking a series of steps toward some destination. That’s what the Bible means by your walk.

So what does it mean for God to walk with you? Evidently the idea is that each action you do, God is doing it with you. So when you reach out your hand and do something, God’s hand is also on that thing. God is involved in your actions so that they are joint actions. When you pick up one of the chairs to stack it, God’s hand will be on that chair with yours. God will be stacking the chair. When you stick out your hand to greet someone, God’s hand will be grasping that person’s hand. When you smile at someone or attempt to encourage or exhort someone, or give someone a hug – God’s mouth will be encouraging and His arms will be embracing the person.

Now be careful not to think of this the wrong way. The promise is not that God will trail along behind you and follow your lead. The promise is this: If God is walking with you then when you are doing something in the church, you will be doing that thing because it is the very thing God had in mind to be done. And that’s why He will be doing it with you.

What an amazing promise! The first time I heard the fable of king Midas as a child, I remember thinking it would be the coolest thing in the world to have the Midas touch, so everything I touched turned to gold. How much greater than that is this? What God touches does not turn to gold; but to perfection. It turns to holiness. What God touches turns to beauty. It turns to glory. God has the *divine* touch, and everything He does turns to goodness - which means if God is walking with you – involving Himself in the moment-by-moment actions of your life, that gives eternal, cosmic significance and meaning to what you do, because God does not do meaningless things.

Realized in measured degrees

Obviously this promise is not yet realized in an absolute way. That won’t happen until the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21.

Rev.21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them.

Like so many aspects of the kingdom of God, it is already in place partially, but not yet in its full, final form. In this life our church will be the location of God’s presence in proportion to how much we fulfill the condition in verse 17.

2 Corinthians 6:17 Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; Touch no unclean thing, and I will welcome you.

To the degree that we separate ourselves morally from this world, God will dwell among us and walk with us. But to the degree that we defile the Sanctuary with idols we will not enjoy His presence.

When the sons of Eli defiled the presence of God, God withdrew His presence from Israel. And when Phinehas’ wife heard about it, as she was giving birth to a child, in her utter despair she named her child Ichabod, saying “the glory has departed from Israel”⁴ (Ichabod means “Where is the glory?”)

Hosea 9:12 woe to them when I depart from them!

⁴ 1 Sam.4:19-21.

Ezra 9,10 describe the horrific event later on in their history of the glory of God leaving the Sanctuary. First they see the glory of God leave the Holy of holies, then it moves out of the courts, and finally departs altogether.

Will that ever happen to the Church? Will God ever remove His presence from the universal Church altogether? No – According to Jeremiah 31:32 the Church will not break the New Covenant like Israel broke the Old Covenant. However, is it a possibility for an individual, local assembly to be unfaithful? Yes. In Revelation 2,3 the picture is of the universal Church being like the sanctuary, and each individual, local church is like one lampstand inside the Sanctuary. And what happens if a local church is unfaithful? God doesn't remove His presence from the Sanctuary. But He does remove that church from the Sanctuary. And if God does that, that church is no longer a church. They no longer enjoy the presence of God. There are thousands of churches today that should be renamed "Ichabod."

They may have stadiums full of people, but the glory of God is not there. Oh Agape – let us see to it that that never happens to us!

Conclusion

When we did the Bible study on Psalm 63 we searched the Scriptures to find out what the Bible says are the natural results of being in the presence of God. Here's what we found – this is what you are *guaranteed* to experience if you experience the presence of God:

Gladness and joy,
greater love and desire for God in our hearts,
greater love and desire for all those God loves,
safety and protection,
peace and calmness,
a joyful, willing heart,
pleasure,
encouragement and comfort,
rest and refreshment, like water to a tree,
restoration,
guidance and clarity with regard to direction,
confidence and courage,
honor and vindication,
fullness and satisfaction,
a sense of being attended to and cared for,
hope and rest,
renewal and transformation,
strength,
motivation,
enlightenment,
a greater abiding presence of Christ in our hearts,
experiential knowledge of the love that surpasses knowledge,
fear of God,
awe and reverence, and
desire to obey.

So when God dwells with us and walks among us, all of that will abound in this church and in our lives! But to the degree that we fail to function as a church – we distance ourselves from His glorious presence and all those benefits. We drive God out of His own house so that when we need help, or protection, or guidance or strength, He is not close by.

Is God worthy to have a holy, undefiled Sanctuary? Is He worthy for us to do whatever it

takes to remain holy and pure before Him? David longed to build a beautiful Sanctuary for God. God didn't allow him to because of the blood on his hands, but he was honored with the high privilege of raising the money – a privilege in which he took great delight. Let us have a love for God like that. Let's love Him so much that we long for a magnificent sanctuary for Him, and long to be involved in contributing to its magnificence in any way. Is God worthy to have a Sanctuary that is not filled with detestable idols? Is He worthy to have children who desire His presence more than they desire that which God hates? Let's be urgent in our effort to eliminate any sign of attraction to and love for the world in our hearts, so that we don't provoke God to withdraw His presence from us.

Ps.96:6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

The people seated around you in church on Sunday morning are inside God's Sanctuary. They should experience the splendor, majesty, strength and glory of God before they walk out the door. And whether they do so is dependent, in some measure, upon you, because as part of the church it is your responsibility to do your part in functioning as the location of the presence of God. So make sure you do all you can this morning to see to it that the people around you (especially the people in your small group next hour) experience the presence of God through you before they leave. And do seek to enjoy God's presence through those around you as well.