

LIVING  
IT OUT

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# DAILY BIBLE STUDY

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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# If You Were Abandoned on an Island, What Would You Do?

Monday, July 10, 2017

Over four years of complete solitude. This was Scottish mariner Alexander Selkirk's reality. He had spent about a year robbing Spanish ships on behalf of the British Empire when he demanded that his Captain - [whom he disagreed with about the safety of the ship](#) - leave him on the island near which they were anchored. When he realized that none of the crew were staying on the island with him, [he begged to be taken back aboard](#). It was a request that his Captain denied happily. He lived for the next four years and four months completely stranded, interacting mostly with goats and his Bible.

To say that he probably experienced loneliness would be an *understatement*.

What if it were you? What if you found yourself in a similar situation? Deserted and alone on an island with no human contact for over 52 months?

What would bring you comfort?

Most of us would see this as a death sentence.

The thought of being alone for that long is terrifying. Something we only read about in old stories or watch in blockbuster movies starring Tom Hanks.

Sometimes, however, we can feel alone even when we are around people. Sometimes our circumstances cause us to feel a sense of loneliness that is at least comparable to that of desertion on an island.

The Israelites felt this. The Egyptians had enslaved them for over 400 years, and though they were the people of God, they hadn't been rescued.

Enter Moses.

After Moses had killed an Egyptian for mistreating a fellow Israelite, he fled Egypt and lived in Midian where he married and started a new life as a shepherd.

This past weekend, Ben Snyder started our new series, *God Is*, by walking through the story of Moses and the burning bush. In his message, he talked about how, once we realize God is **present**, we discover we are **never alone**.

## Exodus 3:1-8

<sup>1</sup>One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>There the angel of the Lord

appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. <sup>3</sup>"This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it."

<sup>4</sup>When the Lord saw Moses coming to take a closer look, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

"Here I am!" Moses replied.

<sup>5</sup>"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. <sup>6</sup>I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>Then the Lord told him, "I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. <sup>8</sup>So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land.

This week we will be diving into what happens in the story, but for today, we are going to look at one particular portion.

Verse 5 reads, <sup>5</sup>**"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground.**

Ben suggested that perhaps the reason for God's request was not only that the removal of sandals was a sign of respect, but also to help Moses **be present**.

Being present, as Ben defined it, is to see, hear, and be aware.

By removing his sandals, Moses removes what he would've been used to. It would have - presumably - increased his awareness.

What are your "sandals"?

What are the things that get in the way of you being present with God?

Ben gave us a couple of options, let's go through them briefly.

### **Spiritual Sensationalism**

Spiritual sensationalism is when you depend on **feelings** more than **faith**. Your emotions might determine how close (or present) you are with God. Here, we might *feel* super close to God one day, but when things go wrong, and we no longer *feel* God, we might assume that he has withdrawn his presence from us.

### **Rehearsed Religion**

Rehearsed religion is when you believe that God will only **accept you** if **you do it right**. Here, we think that if we simply do the things we believe God wants us to do, he will then show up and prove to us that he is present.

## Holy Ultimatums

Holy ultimatums are when you tell God you will only **accept him** if **he does it right**. In these times, we want God to reveal himself in an undeniably plain way; we want him to reveal himself on *our terms*.

## Drifted Devotion

Drifted devotion is when you have **sin** that **callouses** your awareness. We let sins go unnoticed and undealt with, and these sins build up so much that it becomes challenging to experience God.

Which of these have you experienced?

Are you currently struggling with any of these?

We need to remove our sandals. We need to remove these four things from our life so we can experience God's presence. God's name is a promise to us that he is always with us (more on that later this week). If you're currently feeling like God isn't near to you if you feel like you've been alone on an island for far too long, consider the barriers (sandals) that may be in the way of you being present.

As Ben said, "Prayer is the acknowledgment that God is present, and I am never alone." We need to pray.

Throughout the day today pray this prayer:

*Heavenly Father help me to see you, hear you, and be aware. I want to experience your presence and know that you are always with me. I want to live like you're always with me because you are! I ask this in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, amen.*

# Is God with You?

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

"God is with me, wherever I go!" This was the Biblical truth my then-4-year-old son proclaimed to me when I picked him up from his first experience at Vacation Bible School last summer. We downloaded the soundtrack and listened to that classic Sunday school song on repeat for weeks. As many times I heard those words, whether from my son or even from the time I have spent studying the Bible, I still often forget.

Moses apparently had never heard the song either, because when God told Moses he would be going to Egypt to lead God's people out of slavery, Moses reacted with a protest and an excuse as to why he wasn't the man for the job.

Exodus 3:9-11: **“Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. <sup>10</sup>Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” <sup>11</sup>But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?”**

I can't tell you how many times I have prayed to God for clarity, asking him what I should do next, what my next job will be, where I should live. I would love to receive a message or mission as clear as the one God gave to Moses. But if he did, I wonder what my reaction would be. While I hope it would be more like Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8), the reality is that it might be closer to Moses or Gideon (Judges 6), who responded in fear. Ben taught on Gideon's story in the Heroic series (The Villain of Fear - stop what you're doing and listen to it, right now). Like Moses, God had a plan for Gideon. He wanted to send Gideon to lead the Israelites in their fight against the Midianites. Gideon's response? “But how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family,” (Judges 6:15).

What was the reason for their fear? Each man doubted *himself*; Moses wondered how he could be important enough for Pharaoh to listen to him, and Gideon cowered behind his rehearsed excuse about being a nobody. My doubt comes from a fear of the unknown and a battle with anxiety. It leaves me feeling unsure and nervous, despite knowing the truth that God is with me! To both men, God said, "I will be with you," (Exodus 3:12, Judges 6:16). The phrase appears in the Bible eight times, and one more time in a cheesy kids song (do yourself a favor and Google it). God makes the same promise to us that he made to Moses and Gideon. With this assurance, we can confidently respond not with a Moses excuse, but with an Isaiah request - "Here I am. Send me!"

How do you respond when God sends you on a mission?

What will it take to move your response from, “Not me” to “Send me”?

**Prayer:** God, I pray for the clarity you gave to Moses and Gideon. Despite their reluctance, they knew exactly what you wanted them to do, and they eventually followed. Don't let me stop at my excuse, rather move me to action by the promise of your presence. Amen.

*This post was written by Ryan Cook, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# Who Are You?

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

**Who are you?** If you are as old as me, or just a fan of the rock and roll band, The Who, or the TV show CSI, you now have the song “Who are You?” playing in your head with all the “who-who,” “who-whos” accompanying it! Sorry! But it is a good question, one with many answers. How would you answer? All of us have a name, most often not especially unique in that there are probably thousands of people with the same name (unless your name is Mike, which means there are a bazillion people with your name!). Each person’s last name may narrow down our identity, but it doesn’t give anyone who doesn’t know us personally accurate enough information about who we each are. We often identify ourselves by what we do – our jobs – or how we spend most of our time. If you are a Christian, you have another identity that is truly more significant than any of the other ways in which you might describe yourself.

As we begin to take a look at who God is, we see in Exodus that God appears to Moses with a task, one that he is less than eager to undertake. Despite the fact that God has revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush, which is not consumed by the fire, Moses is not sure that God has the right guy for this job. After all, who is *he*? And who is *God*? I think these are legitimate questions. At this point, the Hebrew people have been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years. Pharaoh thinks so little of them that during the time of Moses’ birth, he had commanded the Hebrew midwives to drown any Hebrew male babies that they delivered (which they disobeyed, but that’s another story!). Moses was saved by an act of bravery on his mother’s part, found by Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought up as an Egyptian prince. At age 40, after killing an Egyptian who was mistreating an Israelite, he fled to another country and spent the next 40 years tending the sheep of his father-in-law. If you asked Moses, now 80 years old, who he was, he would be quick to tell you that he was a man who did not possess the skills to lead anybody out of anywhere. His gig was sheep! Moses had a pretty good picture in his mind of who he was, and he was not the guy who could go to the Hebrews and convince them that he would lead them out of Egypt.

Exodus 3:13-15 <sup>13</sup>*But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”* <sup>14</sup>*God replied to Moses, “I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.”* <sup>15</sup>*God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations.*

What kind of a name is I Am Who I Am? In Hebrew, it is expressed with the letters YHWH, which in English we pronounce Yahweh. It derives from the verb, to be, and a more accurate, but maybe less helpful translation is, “I Be Who I Be.” How does that tell Moses, or us, more about who God is when He reveals Himself as “I Am Who I Am?” To scholars, it suggests many things. One is that God is self-existent, and therefore not dependent on anyone or anything else for his existence. Two is that he is the creator and sustainer of all that exists. Three, that God is immutable in his being and character, which is a cool way of saying that he is as he is and never changes. Four is

that he is eternal in his existence. So how did that help Moses then, and how does it help us now to know who God is? What does it mean?

To me, it means that he is in control of all that concerns me because his words say that I can cast my cares on him because he cares for me. (1 Peter 5:7) My life consistently demonstrates that I am not in charge! There is truly nothing that I can control in my life, except hopefully, myself (with the help of the Holy Spirit!)

He is **omniscient**. He knows all there is to know because he has always been, always is and always will be. Therefore, he is not surprised when my plans don't turn out as I had hoped, or my child goes off the rails, or the month lasts longer than my paycheck. He has a plan and a purpose for my life that is not ruined by my current challenging circumstances (Jeremiah 29:11).

And it means that he is **omnipresent**. He is *always* with me. Because I have trusted Christ as the sacrificial substitute for my sin, God has promised never to leave or forsake me (Deuteronomy 31:8). I am never without him, his power, his guidance, his strength, his love. In fact, in Romans 8:37-39 the apostle Paul writes: *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The most important thing for Moses to know, and for us to know in our lives, is that God is with us. What we cannot do, God can do. Earlier in that chapter of Romans, Paul says, *"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all- how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"*

If you are a Christ follower, who you are in Christ is your primary identifier. If, when asked who you are, you describe yourself regarding something that can be lost, i.e., a career, a relationship, a place in society, etc., **you are only that one thing away from losing your identity**. If on the other hand, you describe yourself as a child of God, nothing can ever take that identity away, or negate all the power it contains. God is with you, everywhere, every time, in every circumstance. As he was with Moses, giving him the words, the power, the authority to convince Pharaoh to let his people go, so he is with you, no matter what you face today. Trust him. He never changes. He never fails. He always loves.

In what circumstance or situation do you need to trust God today?

How does this knowledge of who God is helping you to trust him with your situation?



**Prayer:** Yahweh, today I have decided that I can trust you at your word because you are all powerful, you are all knowing, and you are always with me. By your Holy Spirit, help me to wrap my mind around what that means, and to lean into the love you've shown me by revealing to me who you are, the great I Am. Amen.

*This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# No One Can Stand Against You.

Thursday, July 13, 2017

This week we've talked about how we need to trust God because he has promised to be with us. His very name promises us this. We have looked at the story of God telling Moses that he is the man to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and Moses balking at this commission. Over and over, God tells Moses that the reason Moses is up to the task is because of who God is, not because of who Moses is. God reassures Moses, and us, time and time again that we can do all things through him. (Philippians 4:13) Not through our strength or efforts, but because of God alone.

This is a difficult concept for most of us to grasp. We have a limited perspective of what the "omniness" of God really means. (For an excellent breakdown of this look back on Wednesday.) We are made in God's image, but so often we turn around and make him in ours. We may not realize it, but that box we put him in is limited, finite, unable, or unworthy. No wonder we are always afraid! We must begin to internalize the truth about who God is and what that means to us. Only then can we have the freedom that Christ promises and live without fear as God commands. But how do we do this?

The poet Hafiz wrote: "I am the hole in the flute that Christ's breath moves through/ listen to this music/ I am the concert from the mouth of every creature / singing with the myriad chorus / I am a hole in a flute / that the Christ's breath moves through / listen to this music."

What a great image of the truly unfathomable nature of our interconnectedness with God! If we can begin to let go of our small image of God we can start to see the mystery and beauty of God. The real and personal God is always behind us, around us, ahead of us, within us and beyond us!

God told Moses and ultimately showed the Israelites exactly how his power would release them from captivity. All Moses really had to do was trust that God was who he said he was, and that he would do what he said he would do. As we can see from this account and our own lives, this is easier said than done, even when God spells it out for us. But God proved himself in freeing the Israelites. In seemingly impossible circumstances, God did what he promised. He was with them, and he freed them.

Today, we know that because God is with us, he is for us. He was for the Israelites, and just like Romans 8:31 tells us since God is for us, no one can stand against us. When we begin to examine who God is, we can then trust that he is who he says he is. Then we can rest easy, knowing that he is with us and for us always.

## Romans 8:31-34

<sup>31</sup> What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? <sup>32</sup> Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God

himself has given us right standing with himself. <sup>34</sup> Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

As a follower of Christ, and knowing that God is always present with you, what does this passage mean for you?

What are some conceptions or perceptions of God you have held in the past that you now see were limited?

Meditate on the different "omni"-ness of God: Omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent (refer to Wednesday for definitions) How does reflecting on these characteristics increase your trust in God's power in your life?

**Prayer:**

*Omnipresent God, thank you for giving us these real life examples to prove your presence and your power. Thank you for the reminders that we constantly need you and that you continue to give us your infinite patience. Thank you for your constant presence, in us, around us and with us. Amen.*

*This post was written by Kelda Strasbourg, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.*

# How Knowing the Reality of God's Presence Change Me Forever.

Friday, July 14, 2017

Throughout this first week of the “God Is” series, The *LivingItOut* has examined the topic of God's presence in our lives through scripture in the Book of Exodus.

The wonderfully simple concept we've explored this week is that when we realize God is present, we discover that we are never alone. This week's *LivingItOut* has delved into several passages from Exodus 3 that illuminate God's presence and promise. We dug into the story of God's commissioning of Moses to lead the deliverance of the Israelites from the oppression they faced in Egypt and Moses' doubts of his worthiness and ability to lead this seemingly insurmountable task. And we learned how Yahweh, the great “I am,” ultimately demonstrated his undeniable presence and power by emboldening Moses to lead the Israelites to the promised land.

Today, we switch gears to examine how knowing that God is present can impact our daily lives.

For many believers, the question of God's presence is not really a question at all. If you were raised in the church, God might very likely have been part of your reality since you first achieved consciousness. As such, you may not view the certainty of his presence much differently than you would that of your parents, other family members, or friends.

As one who came to belief much later in life, however, I had a very different path to accepting and appreciating God's presence.

As I've shared previously in this space, I lived most of my years wrestling with belief in God. I spent years envying the comfort, strength, and confidence that so many of my friends derived from their belief. Even though I desperately wanted to believe, I lacked a spiritual foundation and struggled with placing unconditional trust and faith in that which was not tangible – that which I could not see, touch, or otherwise qualify. I never questioned whether others were wrong in their belief in God; my empirical way of thinking simply prevented me from definitively agreeing that they were right. In short, I was the very definition of the spiritually restless and unchurched person that CedarCreek is so devoted to helping.

Achieving the awakened realization that God had been with me – and patiently waiting for me – *all along* remains one of the most joyful surprises of my life. Coming to know him has also impacted me in ways that I could never have imagined possible.

But whether you are new to God or have enjoyed a lifelong relationship with him, we all know that it's not always easy to be conscious of his presence.

In his book, “Letters to Malcolm,” author and Christian apologist C.S. Lewis wrote, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with him. He walks everywhere incognito.”

As I have come to recognize and cherish God’s presence in my life, his impact has benefited me in a number of profound ways:

First, I have a greater **appreciation** for all elements of my life – large and small. This appreciation begins with my thankfulness for life itself and the gifts God has generously granted me (not the least of which is forgiveness for my sins and salvation through his Son’s death on the cross). I also appreciate the touch of his hand in our world – from the laughter of our children at the dinner table to the indescribable beauty of a burnt orange sunset on a July evening. Knowing that these treasures are gifts, and not merely happy occurrences makes me appreciative of God's presence.

My knowledge of God’s presence also allows me to walk with a **confident humility**; it enables me to be strong, even in my weakness. Christian recording artist Toby McKeehan (better known as TobyMac) beautifully illustrates this concept in the following lyrical passage from his song “Beyond Me:”

*Is it so crazy to believe  
That you gave me the stars, put them out of my reach  
Call me to waters a little too deep  
Oh, I've never been so aware of my need  
You keep on making me see  
It's way beyond me*

Discussing the song, McKeehan said, “I grew up in athletics, and I feel like I was taught my whole life to say ‘give me the ball, I’m going to score the game winner. I’ve got this.’ The wiser you get and the more life you live, you realize, for lack of better grammar, ‘I *don’t* got this.’ I have a desperate need for God. It’s beyond me.”

To me, the song also speaks to how God challenges us, while at the same time supporting us, to pursue things beyond our reach and swim in waters over our head. Knowing that I need God keeps me aware of his presence. It enables me to believe in something larger than me; something *other* than me. And it empowers me to be more than I could ever be alone – for him and others in my life.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, knowing God is with me has also empowered me to live a more **flourishing** life. Pastor and author John Ortberg describes this phenomenon in his amazing book, “The Me I Want to Be.” He defines flourishing as being connected with the spirit of God, which is available to us at all times. “When your spirit flourishes,” Ortberg writes, “you are most fully alive. You have a purpose for living. You are drawn to put on virtue and put off sin.” God’s presence in my life nurtures me to flourish, makes me grateful for love – both the capacity to love and the blessing of being loved by him.

## Questions

- Do you regularly feel God's presence in your life?
- If so, in what ways does knowing that God is present impact your life?
- If not, what steps can you take today to ensure that you are more aware of God and more trusting of his presence?

## Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank you for this life and your enduring presence in it. Help me always to know you, trust in you, appreciate the gifts you have bestowed upon me, and flourish in your love. Amen.*

*This post was written by Todd Romain, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.*