

## Knowing the Active Presence of God

Ex 33:1-16

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### Background

We were made for the active presence of God and to walk in the ways of God, that we might be distinct among all the peoples of the earth. It turns out that the presence of God is perhaps the central motif in all of scripture, and we cannot know the active presence of God in our lives if we are inattentive to the ways of God. The two go together. It is both the active presence and the ways of God that make us distinct from the world around us. So, we should be appropriately “desperate” to know God’s presence.

### Sermon Text: Ex 33:1-16 (NIV)

*<sup>1</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ <sup>2</sup> I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. <sup>3</sup> Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”*

*<sup>4</sup> When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. <sup>5</sup> For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’” <sup>6</sup> So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.*

*<sup>7</sup> Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. <sup>8</sup> And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. <sup>9</sup> As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. <sup>10</sup> Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. <sup>11</sup> The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.*

*<sup>12</sup> Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' <sup>13</sup> If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."*

*<sup>14</sup> The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

*<sup>15</sup> Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. <sup>16</sup> How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"*

## **Discussion Questions**

### **1. Preparation**

- a. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- b. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- c. What stands out to you the most from this sermon?

### **2. Sunday questions**

- a. Do you feel the "active" presence of God right now? Why or why not? (George described "active" as God moving and shaping you.)
- b. God would not go with the Israelites to the promised land because of their idolatry. And as George said, "Idolatry grieves the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30). Have you ever had to tell a friend/acquaintance that you could not go with them somewhere because it was inappropriate as a follower of Jesus? Explain.
- c. Are you "deeply committed" to the ways of God? What does that commitment look like for you? Which way(s) do you need to understand better?
- d. Are you longing for the presence of God right now? If so, what does that look like?
- e. Think about your "patterns of life." Are they distinctive from your friends/neighbors/colleagues/classmates? What makes them distinctive?