

SERIES: THIS VERSE CHANGED MY LIFE

The Bible is powerful and life changing! All it takes is one passage to strike your heart and transform your life.

Different stages of my life have been defined by different bible verses:

- When I first became a Christian-
John 3:36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, **the wrath of God remains on him**.
- When God corrected my view of Himself-
Romans 5:8 But God proves his own love for us in that **while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us.
- When I journeyed through depression-
Psalms 23:4 Even when I **go through the darkest valley**, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

I love and am grateful for each one of those scriptures. But the verse has been the song of my soul in this season is:

Psalms 73:28 But as for me, **God's presence is my good**. I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all you do.

Psalms 73:28 (NASB95) But as for me, **the nearness of God is my good**; I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

TITLE & TEXT: **God's Nearness is my Good (Psalm 73:28)**

The *theme* of nearness is one that has been jumping out at me everywhere I look in the Bible.

Scott Taylor- "*the bible begins and ends with the nearness of God*". (*Garden in Genesis- Feast in Revelation*)

Here are just a few examples:

- **Exodus 33:15-16** "If your **presence** does not go," Moses responded to him, "don't make us go up from here. ¹⁶How will it be known that I and your people have found favor with you unless you go with us? I and your people will be distinguished by this from all the other people on the face of the earth."
- **Joshua 1:9** Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is **with you** wherever you go."
- **Psalms 65:4** How happy is the one you choose and **bring near** to live in your courts!
We will be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple
- **Psalms 119:151** You are **near**, Lord, and all your commands are true.
- **Isaiah 58:2** They seek me day after day and delight to know my ways, like a nation that does what is right and does not abandon the justice of their God. They ask me for righteous judgments; they delight in the **nearness of God**."
- **Zechariah 8:20-23** The Lord of Armies says this: "Peoples will yet come, the residents of many cities; ²¹the residents of one city will go to another, saying: Let's go at once to plead for the Lord's favor and to seek the Lord of Armies. I am also going. ²²Many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the Lord of Armies in Jerusalem and to plead for the Lord's favor." ²³The Lord of Armies says this: "In those days, ten men from nations of every language will grab the robe of a Jewish man tightly, urging: Let us go with you, for we have heard that **God is with you**."
- **Hebrews 11:6** Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who **draws near** to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Psalm 73:28 (NIV) But as for me, **it is good to be near God.**

I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

The Hebrew word (קָרַב *qarab*) carries a sense of movement- moving towards; approaching; advancing.

The **KJV** gets it right: “**But it is good for me to draw near to God...**”

The Dilemma: Beneath the invitation to nearness

is the implication of distance

It implies that there has been separation. Ever since the fall the chasm has only widened. As you read Genesis you see humanity continuing further and further eastward, away from the garden of presence.

Q: Have you ever felt far from God? or Have you ever felt as if God was far from you?

Maybe due to shame, guilt, anger, disappointment, etc-

To feel far from God is so **common**, that we might mistakenly believe it's **normal**

But it's not! It's the result of everything that is wrong in the world-

FEELING FAR FROM GOD FEELS WRONG BECAUSE IT IS WRONG!!!!

Jon Tyson- “**The primary effect of sin is not falling short of moral standards, it's not even rebellion; the effect of sin is loss of access to the presence of God**”

Sin separated. And the danger is that unless something is done, the distance will keep widening until we are forever cut off.

Psalm 73:27 **Those far from you will certainly perish;** you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.

Distance from God is what's harmful, dangerous

2 Thessalonians 1:9 NIV They will be punished with everlasting destruction and **shut out from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of his might

God's nearness is so good, that the ultimate punishment is being cast away from His presence!

It's true God is **OMNIPRESENT** and in one sense we can never escape His presence-

Psalm 138:7-8 (NLT) I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there.

The special presence & nearness I'm referring to is what theologians call God's **IMMANENCE**.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is **near** the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit.

So, God is always with us, but there is a special nearness that was made inaccessible because of sin. *BUT GOD...*

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!

The Gospel: Jesus closes the Gap

Sin brought *separation*; Jesus brought *nearness*- we were *drifting away* God says *draw near*

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who **were far away** have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

If you're not yet a Christian, this is the most important news you that will ever fall on your ears.

Jesus can take you from being an outcast, to casting away your sin. Believe & surrender!

No need to run anymore or have it figured out, just COME near.

The temptation for those of us who are already Christians is to think that the nearness of God is something implied at our salvation, initially, but not much more thereafter. It's the holy butterflies in the beginning but it wears off.

Q: Know any Christians like that? (dry, bored with God, just embers of a fire long gone) Are you one?

"What I am anxious to see in Christian believers is a beautiful paradox.

I want to see in them the joy of finding God while at the same time they are blessedly pursuing Him.

I want to see in them the great joy of having God yet always wanting Him." -A.W. Tozer

Psalms 73:28 But as for me, **God's presence/ nearness is my good.**

I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all you do.

The realities of this verse mean a lot to me. I want to give you an example how it has played out in my life-

My Epiphany

A few weeks back, after a sermon I preached in which I spoke about overcoming depression, I was asked how I got past my depression. I gave some thoughts I thought were helpful and practical, and I explained that I still experience low moments, but that even then, I would now overcome depression instead of it overcoming me.then it hit me! It was one of those moments you only get a handful of in life. An Epiphany.

Actual text message- What I can point to is this: It wasn't my trying to get out of depression that got me through it. It was my seeking God, desperately and intimately, that got me through it.

– it was drawing near that was good for me. -*Forest Gump 'Run Forest Run' shackles fall

Psalms 73:28 But as for me, **God's presence/ nearness is my good.** I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all you do.

The reason I can today tell about what God has done, is because I have made God my refuge;

In the security of His refuge, I found that it was abundantly good for me- because He is good to me.

My Epiphany: Gods' nearness is my good

I cannot stress enough how life changing this has been for me in the past few years.

Here's the reality- I'm still a sinner; I'm chased by temptation & I chase after sin...
but God in His grace, through Jesus has declared me a saint...
and for all my sin-chasing, I chase after Him even more;
for all the temptation chasing me, I find He gives chase even more.

I was praying about this journey of seeking God's nearness, how I could best communicate it to others to hopefully propel them to encounter the same thing I've been experiencing. Here's what I've come up with:

(I think this might be the quintessence of my life's work. If I ever write a book, this is it right here.)

Journey into Nearness:

Desperate Dissatisfaction→Demanding Hunger→Devoted Pursuit→Deep Intimacy

Desperate Dissatisfaction that causes a

Demanding Hunger that compels a

Devoted Pursuit that culminates in

Deep Intimacy

DESPERATE DISSATISFACTION

The year was 2008, I was a 21-year-old, drug addicted, woman degrading, insecure, failure of a man.

My mother was dying, my girlfriend had moved out, my best friend was a guy on parole for manslaughter, and I was living paycheck to paycheck. I HATED MYSELF. And all the things that used to cover up that dissatisfaction weren't working anymore.

What I'm referring to is true desperation of the soul, a storm brewing within that agitates and does not relent.

"I CAN'T DO THIS ANYMORE!"

"I'M TIRED OF THIS, WHEN WILL IT END?"

Psalm 55:6 I said, "If only I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and find rest.

That 30th of August (Saturday), 2008, I prayed "God kill me or change me but don't let me be the same"

THAT DESPERATE DISSATISFACTION CAUSES A DEMANDING HUNGER

Where will you turn to when nothing else will do? There comes a point in which you must realize that only God can satisfy your soul.

Blaise Pascal- ***"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself"***

Psalm 42:1-2 As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God.

²I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God?

Psalm 84:2 I long and yearn for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh cry out for the living God.

THOSE HUNGER PAINS COMPEL US TOWARDS A DEVOTED PURSUIT

Psalm 27:8 My heart says this about you: "Seek his face." Lord, I will seek your face.

This isn't a perfect pursuit...it's a devoted one. We will fall and stumble and at times be tempted to turn back... But the memory of dissatisfaction and the aching hunger will keep pushing us to draw near.

How do you draw near then???

- **identify what is robbing you of your affections for God**
(this will be tough; you may find there are things you love that are stealing the little time and energy and focus you have. Jesus said we must die to self.)
- **read the Word with expectation**
- **pray until you are empty.** Then wait and listen.
- **sing the truths of the gospel**
(even if you're not musical. There are literal sections and books in the bible with nothing but songs and poems)

Psalm 145:18 The Lord is near all who call out to him, all who call out to him with integrity.

God is eagerly waiting for those who wish to draw near, He can spot their foolish waddle towards Him. He closes the gap with those who desire to be near to Him, despite how weak of an attempt it is.

AW Tozer- ***"The degree of fullness in any life accords perfectly with the intensity of true desire.
We have as much of God as we actually want...
He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so very long, in vain."***

IT'S THAT DEVOTED PURSUIT THAT CULMINATES IN DEEP INTIMACY

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

Job 42:5 I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you.

I don't know if I have the words to describe what this stage is like, other than to say it's good.

When I jumped from the plane (3x's) I can only poorly describe the experience, but IYKYK

Bernard of Clairvaux- ***You ask then how I knew He was present, when His ways can in no way be traced?
He is life and power, and as soon as He enters in, He awakens my slumbering soul; He
stirs and soothes and pierces my heart, for before it was hard as stone, and diseased.***

'Summum Bonum' is an ancient Latin expression that it means ***"the highest good."***

Classical philosophy sought out to find what the ultimate good attainable was.

They worked out no less than 288 different views or solutions of the "Summum Bonum,".

Asaph had already figured it out in 1,000 B.C.

Psalms 73:28 (NASB95) But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

MAIN POINT- The nearness of God is our greatest good.

Do you know what the greatest discovery in history is?

Fire? The wheel? Agriculture? Forging metals? The internet? Wi-Fi? Chick-Fil-A/ In-n-Out??????

To the weary heart, to the thirsty soul, the greatest discovery is that God's nearness is our good

INVITATION: Approach God and discover He's far more good than you fathom

Isaiah 55:6-7 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is near.

⁷Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord,
so he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will freely forgive.

There is a time coming, when you will wish you had drawn near to God...

those who would not draw near to God as a friend, will experience that God will draw near to them as an enemy

Are you currently satisfied with your proximity to God?

Don't you hear that voice within crying out to draw closer, to seek nearness, ever so more, to God?

Ask that He would permit you to feel a dissatisfaction; to feel the pains of hunger only He can fill; set off to grab a hold of Him!

****call up worship team

COMMUNION (together this month)

BULPEN-

OUTLINE:

- setup the sries
- the biblical theme of nearness
- the dilemma: distance/ separation
- the gospel: Jesus closes the gap
- my epiphany of nearness:
- conclusion/ invitation/ communion

[Strong's H7126](#) קרב *qarab*, a primitive root meaning, "to draw near."

quph ק = sun on the horizon, thus condense, circle, time
resh ר = head of man, thus head, first, top, beginning, man
bet ב = house, thus house, household, family, in, within

The story: That which draws (*quph*, as the light is drawn back to its source when the sun is on the horizon) the man (*resh*) home (*bet*).

From **qirbah / qarab** = approach; draw near.

Also in: **Isaiah 58:2** *They seek me day after day and delight to know my ways, like a nation that does what is right and does not abandon the justice of their God. They ask me for righteous judgments; they delight in the nearness of God.*

This must depend upon the character of the God to whom we draw near. If He be only my judge, how could I say, "It is good," etc. But He is our Father, and hence it cannot but be good to draw near to Him.

The backdrop is Asaph (the author) admitting he was tempted with envy (V2-3)- others who don't care for God seem to be doing better than well, and as he examines his life he begins to wonder did I do all of this for nothing? " (v13)

God is home. And in the words of the theologian and prophetess Dorothy 'there's no place like home'.

Jon Tyson- God goes where He's wanted

John Hall-It involves a drawing away from the world. Our arms are too short for us to walk hand in hand with God and the world. The great, clutchy arms of the world are about us, and the loving arms of God are extended towards us, inviting us to come nearer to Him.

Drawing near to God -requires that I strip off any sense of pride or self-glory- all I have to cover with is humility.
 Only then do I realize how much weight I was dragging with me.
 -It also resets my view of the world and what I would otherwise deem success or 'good'-
 since I now see God closeness is my good

Joke- older couple/ younger couple. "remember when we used to sit that close?" "I haven't moved"

What would our church look like if we all closed the gap every day more and more?

Where are you going?

God comes where He's wanted- Jon Tyson

What's pushing you?

What's pulling you?

Here's the reality- I still pursue sin. I still feed the flesh.

But I am at a place in which I pursue God even more so, I feed my spirit evermore so.

Pastor Ed- ***"Drawing near to God is intentionally using your mental, emotional, and/or physical energy to make yourself aware of and pursue the presence of God."***

Matthew 1:23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated **"God is with us."**

Psalms 27:4 I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to **dwell in the house of the Lord** all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the Lord and seeking him in his temple.

Hosea 10:12 Sow righteousness for yourselves and reap faithful love; break up your unplowed ground. It is time to seek the Lord until he comes and sends righteousness on you like the rain.

Psalms 84:10 Better a day **in your courts** than a thousand anywhere else.

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than live in the tents of wicked people.

John 15: 4 **Remain in me**, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.