

THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was. (Job 2:13)

The Ministry of Presence is one of the greatest gifts we can offer to another, but being with someone in their brokenness can feel awkward, uncomfortable, and vulnerable. Questions abound: How do I approach someone in pain? What will I say? How can I help? Is there something specific I should do or offer? What if they turn me away?

Yet if we trust God and selflessly offer our presence, our relationship with God will deepen and grow even if we are turned away.

WHAT DOES A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE LOOK LIKE?

The ministry of presence includes:

- shared suffering.
- a willingness to patiently listen without agenda or judgment.
- undistracted attention, even in silence.
- not trying to fix another's grief.
- sharing our stories of brokenness only if we are asked.
- being gentle, kind, loving, and compassionate.

God has always been and will always be with us, and we will carry the fragrance of *His Presence* as we offer our presence to others.

- *The Lord your God is with you ...* (Zephaniah 3:17)
- *... your God is with you wherever you go.* (Joshua 1:9)
- *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go ...* (Genesis 28:15)
- *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.* (James 4:8)
- *Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us"* (Isaiah 7:14)
- *But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your mind and in your heart, so that you can do it.* (Deuteronomy 30:14)
- *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* (Matthew 28:20)

God is with us and His Spirit lives in us. We are prepared to be present, to sit with, and comfort others. We have everything we need to reach out in faith as He leads.

PRESENCE IS NOT A SMALL GIFT

Joseph Bayly, in his book *A View from the Hearse*, wrote a powerful distinction between fixing and presence:

> *I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly; he said things I knew were true. I was unmoved except to wish he'd go away. He finally did.*
>
> *Another came and sat beside me. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.*

Our presence tells someone, "You matter. Your story matters. You are seen, you are loved, and I am choosing to be with you."

PRESENCE IS MEANINGFUL AND IMPORTANT

My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me. (Matthew 26:38)

The night Jesus asked His disciples to be with Him in the garden of Gethsemane illustrates one of the most meaningful and powerful ways we can show up for others. Jesus asked His friends to stay with Him, keep watch with Him, care about what He was going through. His words have echoed ever since in the requests of others suffering brokenness, pain, and grief. What we long for most in difficult times is the comforting, caring presence of others.

The Ministry of Presence is a ministry of learning to:

- listen.
- be still.
- be humble.
- be vulnerable.
- be undistracted.
- embrace silence, awkwardness, pain, anger, and tears.

Presence is an invitation to show up for the people God has placed in our lives. Whether we cry with, pray with, listen to, or simply sit in silence beside them, our presence carries the deep love of Christ.

Job's friends didn't get it all right, but they started out right. For seven days and nights, they sat on the ground with Job, and no one spoke. They were simply present, reminding Job that he was not alone. **Even if we don't get it all right, our presence can still be meaningful and comforting.**