

Protecting the Presence

Connect Group Guide - 2.15.26

Opening Prayer

Ice Breaker

Question: Share a time when you had to wait on someone or something important. How did that waiting period test your patience and faith?

Key Scriptures

- **1 Samuel 13:8-14** - Saul's impatience and disobedience
- **1 Samuel 16:14** - The Spirit departing from Saul
- **2 Samuel 6** - David bringing back the Ark of the Covenant
- **Psalms 51:11** - David's prayer: "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me"

Message Recap

This week's message contrasted King Saul and King David—both were called, both were anointed, and both made mistakes. However, Saul spent his life protecting his position while David spent his life protecting God's presence. The key question: Are we more concerned with protecting what God has given us, or with protecting our relationship with the Giver?

Key Takeaways

- Both Saul and David were called and anointed, but only one finished well because one protected his position while the other protected God's presence.
- You can be gifted, appointed, and elevated and still lose the presence of God if you protect the call more than the Caller.
- The kingdom without presence is just structure without glory.
- Saul asked, "How can I stay king?" David asked, "How do I stay close to God?"
- When you protect His presence, He protects your purpose.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. What stood out to you most from this message? Was there a particular story, scripture, or point that resonated with you?
2. Pastor Mike said, "Partial obedience is full disobedience." What does this mean, and how have you seen this principle play out in your own life or in Scripture?
3. Compare and contrast Saul's and David's responses when they sinned. What can we learn from how each handled their mistakes?

Going Deeper

4. Saul's leadership pattern included impatience, partial obedience, image management, insecurity, and self-glory. Which of these do you struggle with most, and why?
5. The message stated: "You can keep the platform and still lose the presence." What does this look like in modern life? Can you think of examples (without naming names) where someone maintained their position but lost God's presence?
6. David danced before the Lord "with all his might" when the Ark returned, despite looking undignified. When was the last time you worshiped God without concern for what others thought? What holds you back from that kind of abandoned worship?
7. Read Psalm 51:11. After David's sin with Bathsheba, his greatest fear wasn't losing his throne—it was losing God's presence. Why do you think we often fear losing our "stuff" more than losing intimacy with God?

Personal Application

8. Pastor Mike asked: "What are you protecting more—your title, your image, your influence, or God's presence in your life?" How would you honestly answer that question today?
9. "When I protect His presence, He protects my purpose." What does this mean practically? How might your life look different if you prioritized God's presence above your plans and goals?

10. The closing story about searching for the grandson illustrated desperate longing for someone precious. Do you crave God's presence with that same intensity? If not, what would it take to develop that kind of hunger for Him?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE area where God is calling you deeper and take one concrete step:

Option 1: Presence Audit

- Set aside 30 minutes this week to honestly evaluate: What am I protecting more—God's presence or my position/possessions/reputation?
- Write down areas where you've prioritized the blessing over the Blessor
- Confess these to God and ask Him to reorder your priorities

Option 2: Daily Presence Practice

- Commit to spending 15 minutes each morning in God's presence before checking your phone, email, or starting your day
- Use this time to simply worship, pray, and read Scripture—not to prepare for anything, but just to be with Him
- Journal about how this changes your day

Option 3: Worship Without Walls

- This week, worship God in a way that might feel "undignified" or uncomfortable—sing out loud in your car, raise your hands during worship at church, pray out loud while walking
- Notice what holds you back and surrender your concern for others' opinions to God

Option 4: Repentance Reset

- Like David in Psalm 51, write out a prayer confessing areas where you've walked away from God's presence
- Focus not on fear of losing blessings, but on longing to restore intimacy with Him
- Share your prayer with a trusted friend or accountability partner

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting