I. GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

A. Scripture is very clear about the fact that God is omnipresent, meaning everywhere, all surrounding, without exception in every place at every time. He is everywhere at once.

> Am I a God who is near, declares the Lord, and not a God for off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill the heavens and the earth? declares the Lord. (Jer 23:23-24)

B. God is omnipresent in all the universe. There is no place where God does not exist and no place where He exists less or more. God does not have to be extraordinarily big in order to encompass the universe, rather the universe with all of its vast dimensions cannot outrun God. Not God is in all the universe, the universe is in God.

C. God's omnipresence is an essential characteristic of God deeply connected with His whole being.

1. “I Am” - God calls Himself Yahweh meaning “I Am” (Ex 3:14-15). Of course this is not only to be understood time-wise (Rev 4:8) but also regional.

2. Immanuel – In the Old Testament, Jesus is announced under this name meaning “God is with us” (Is 7:14).

D. God has a general desire to be close to human beings. This is what He created us for and why He created us in His image.

> Father, I desire that they ... be with Me where I am ... (John 17:24)

> That they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:27)

II. UNIVERSAL PRESENCE VS. MANIFEST PRESENCE

A. There is no place where God does not exist and no place where He exists less or more, for nothing can exist apart from Him or outside of Him. The New Testament highlights in an emphasized way that there is no place where God is more present (John 4:20-23). There is no difference in the level of God's presence in general. We call this universal presence.

> Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. (Ps 139:7-8)

B. Still there are times when we experience God's presence in a stronger way. God is always with us (universal presence) but His presence is not always tangible (manifest presence). However, this is not due to God decreasing and increasing His presence but fully depends on our perception of His presence. Manifest presence is nothing else but realized universal presence and is caused by us becoming aware of the fact that God is near.

C. Our cry that God would come closer, would draw us nearer and increase His presence is totally legitimate as it is a cry for God to make His presence manifest, to let us be fully aware of His nearness until we actually start to feel it. But it is a false and destructive assumption that God is close at times and sometimes He is not. We don't cry out to draw someone near who already and always is! We're asking for growth in our awareness, for a more perfect consciousness of the divine presence.

D. Seasons in which God intentionally withdraws His presence are never characterized by God being absent. He is still with us, but it is harder for us to connect with this truth at the heart level and to
really feel His closeness.

E. God's presence is promised to believers (Mt 28:20) and unbelievers alike (Acts 17:27). But the believer, as He believes and expects God to be with him or her, is much more likely to experience God's manifest presence.

F. We need to move from universal presence to manifest presence which means from unrecognized presence to a never ceasing awareness that He is with us in an immediate and deeply personal way. With our sensitivity for His nearness grows our experience of Him. If we get this truth, it will totally revolutionize our lives and relationship with God. Many Christians believe that He is always there, but they live as if He wasn't, not having pondered the depths of this truth so that it would transform the way they live, pray, worship and so on. We need revelation of His presence in our lives, not only in general but in particular situations. It's one of the most powerful truths for the human heart. Many problems and struggles will be settled as we connect with this truth deeply.

III. HIS GAZE – UNDERSTANDING HIS PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES

A. In order to live in constant awareness of God's presence, it's not enough to know that He is with us but also how He is with us and what He is doing. The Bible reveals those two important principles of God's immediate presence: 1) He is always right next to me, not only far up in the sky, 2) He is watching me with pleasure and 3) He is wooing me in His jealousy.

B. Principle #1: He is always right next to me.

1. The Scripture teaches that God is not only present everywhere in the universe, but they put an emphasis on the truth that He is always right next to us, at our side, unbelievably close to our heart, in fact closer than we are to ourselves.

8 ... Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (Ps 16:8)

23 Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand. (Psalm 73:23)

2. In practice, most Christians think of God as being “in heaven” which is a biblical truth (2 Chr 20:6; Mt 6:9), but it’s only one side of it and can leave us with a lacking sense of His presence and missing confidence in prayer and worship. God is not only generally present, He is present for us, for you personally.

3. We should stop thinking of God as being somewhere up in the heavens somehow hearing our voice. He is literally by our side. Always. Accepting that God is actually in the same room right now, not just somewhere up there, radically changes the way you pray. Our voice is heard while He is sitting there longing to hear what we have to say. Our words do not fade silent on their far journey to heaven, but they reach him right away. At the same time, what you say and how you say it will change because you’re no longer talking towards the ceiling.

4. Practically: When you pray, worship, minister, just throughout the day, picture Jesus right next to you. When you walk, meditate on the fact that He’s walking with you right at your side. When in your room, imagine Him sitting on your chair. In the movie theater, He's having the seat right next to you. There are unlimited applications of this truth to our specific everyday life situations. Realizing that Jesus is literally at our side throughout our day will dramatically increase our awareness of His presence.

8 I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. (Ps 16:8-9)
C. **Principle #2: He is gazing at me with pleasure.**

1. Living in God’s presence is inextricably linked with living before His eyes, living in the audience of One. He is not only right next to us somehow distracted being busy with other stuff, but His eyes are fixed on us. We have His full attention.

2. Even though God is watching believers and unbelievers alike (Prov 15:3; Ps 33:14), there is an important difference in the fact that God actually enjoys watching those who love Him and delights in them. It is crucial to realize that His main interest in looking at us is not to be able to see every mistake we make, but to take pleasure in His creation that moves Him.

   > **Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.** (Ps 33:18)

   > **For the Lord takes pleasure in His people ...** (Ps 149:4)

   > **Then the King will desire your beauty. Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.** (Ps 45:11)

3. Even when we are sleeping, He stays close to us, watching and taking delight in us as we sleep.

   > **... He who keeps you will not slumber.** (Ps 121:3)

D. **Principle #3: He is wooing me with jealousy.**

1. God’s activity exceeds mere watching of us. God is not content with only seeing us, even though He takes pleasure in the people who love Him, He also wants to get our attention even more and win our hearts. His presence and His jealousy go hand in hand. As He is with us, He is involved in everything that concerns us and deeply committed to our hearts. As He is with us, He is the all-consuming fire longing for our pure and undistracted devotion. We won’t truly understand His presence unless we understand His commitment. Both belong together.

   > **For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.** (Deut 4:24)

   > **This is what the LORD Almighty says: I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.** (Zec 8:2)

2. God is not passive! Often, we don't have any problems with realizing God’s presence and activity in our past and with expecting it for the future. However, in the current situation we often don't really know what He's doing, where He is or whether He is involved in our lives at all. We need to realize that God is the God who IS involved in our lives right now in various ways and that it’s really on His heart to do so. Becoming aware of this fact will open our eyes to notice it.

   > **And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.** (Hebr 11:6)

E. Living in constant awareness of God’s immediate presence means living in the audience of One which includes understanding 1) that He is right at my side and always close to me at a personal and intimate level, 2) that He is watching me all the time and really delights in me as He gazes upon me, and 3) that He is actively and deeply involved in my life, orchestrating things and situations even right now in order to draw my heart closer to His.

F. His presence, gaze and involvement are inextricably linked and foundational biblical principles when desiring to live in constant awareness of God’s immediate presence. Eventually, they tell us of a God who is a passionate and jealous lover that cannot take His eyes off of us and just never wants to miss our presence. That is the reason He created us and His motivation to give us eternal life: He loves us so much that He wants to spend the rest of His time with us.
IV. OUR GAZE – INCREASING GOD’S MANIFEST PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES

A. The level of awareness of God’s presence in our lives will greatly impact the way we live, pray, worship, treat other people and deal with problems. It seems to be just a small piece of truth, yet it will revolutionize our spiritual journey to a degree that only a few others will. That’s why it is so important to get this right and live in deep revelation about this fact.

B. In order to experience greater measures of His presence, we need to return His gaze by actively living before His gaze, to “set the Lord continually before us”. It’s not enough that He is present, but in order for it to become manifest presence we need to become and continually stay aware of it.

*I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*
*Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely.* (Ps 16:8-9)

C. The level we live and experience God’s presence throughout our everyday life is therefore defined by the level with which we actively gaze back at Him and remind our heart of the fact of His presence, gaze and involvement.

D. How to practically connect with the truth of God’s immediate presence in our life:

1. **Thankfulness** – increases awareness of His presence. Doubts will vanish as we proclaim and thank Him for the truth of His presence, gaze and involvement (jealous love).

2. **Meditation** – increases understanding of His presence. Here I just introduce basic facts about His presence. There is so much more to it. Mining the depths of this truth will sharpen our understanding and give us divine revelation that will further transform our lives.

3. **Reminding Ourselves** – increases time consciously spent in His presence. This is the most important aspect when desiring to constantly live in God’s presence. It is important to remind ourselves of His presence over and over again throughout the day in order for it to become manifest presence. It means constantly aligning ourselves in our everyday life and all its tasks, situations and troubles that He is with us. In order to live in His presence, we need to learn to pause in those moments when there is nothing to do and even while we are busy with other things. This is the hardest but most foundational practice we need to do. It will take much time to establish this as a habit, but saints like Brother Lawrence prove that it is possible and within our reach.

4. **Obedience** – increases confidence in His presence. Our expectation of His presence will radically grow as we walk in the things He tells us and obey His will. We will not only feel closer but also receive this truth much more easily than when we live in compromise.

V. THE EFFECTS OF LIVING BEFORE HIS GAZE

A. This whole topic of His immediate presence and living in constant awareness of us will tremendously impact our lives. Here I want to outline a couple of effects and implications, but there are many more to it.

B. If God is literally at my side right now, then...

1. **Concerning prayer** – A. W. Tozer brought it to the point in his book Pursuit of Man: “Payer loses its unmeaning quality and becomes a sweet conversation with Someone actually there.”

2. **Concerning my actions** – They are relevant and matter right now, not even for eternity. If He is watching then it’s in my hand to move Him right now. I have the ability to touch God’s heart right
now and it is possible for me to receive immediate feedback of what He feels. Whatever I do has immediate effect on His heart and emotions. We'll actually live more towards eternity when we realize that our actions matter now and not only some day.

3. **Concerning sin** – I am not alone. Sin loses its attraction when I notice that someone is watching (Job 34:21-22). The more we live in awareness that God’s eyes are on me, the less we will be tempted to sin. Just try it when temptation sets in. When realizing that the God full of love and compassion, full of power to deliver, abounding in gifts for you that satisfy you more than anything else, is with you, sin loses its attraction. Why would you draw from a lesser thing, if you realize you have the choice to draw from God right now. Likewise, not living in the awareness that He sees me or just the ignorance of the fact that He is with me can cause sin to increase.

12 Then He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land.’” (Ez 8:12)

11 He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.' (Ps 10:11)

4. **Concerning fear** – Deeply connected to the truth of His presence and involvement is that fact that He is in control in our life and all its situations and challenges. If we realize that He really sees then it will change the way we view our struggles and release confidence even in the hardest seasons.

8 I have set the Lord continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will dwell securely. (Ps 16:8-9)

5 Do not fear, for I am with you. ... (Is 43:5)

5. **Concerning the fear of man** – Fear of man is being aware that people are watching which makes you want to please them. On the other side, the fear of God is being aware that He is watching that makes you want to please Him. Becoming aware that He is much easier to please and that He even delight in you in your immaturity and imperfection will cause you to stop searching the approval from human beings.