

# PAUSE & BE FULLY PRESENT

Week Four | May 14, 2017 | Better Together: Pause

## PREPARATION

### MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY

Read through Exodus 33:7-11; Luke 5:27-32, 10:38-42; and Acts 2:42-47. Pray the Holy Spirit would bring to life the truths of this text and allow you to teach it well to those in your care.

### THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY

Many questions have been included in this week's guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

### DAILY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study.

## OPENING PRAYER

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

We must pause and be fully present with God and those around us.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

In a culture constantly distracted and deprived of true relationships, believers who are fully present are able to live in a focused way, offering those around them the deep and meaningful relationships they crave.

### MEDITATE

*"Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."  
(Exodus 33:11)*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

*How does it feel when you are sharing your heart and someone checks their phone or watch?*

*Why do you think we constantly look down at our phones? What satisfaction does it bring us?*

*What's it like to be around a constantly distracted person?*

## FIGHTING DISTRACTION

Though we see people striving to be part of a virtual “community” online, whether through Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or text threads, it’s easy to see that these connections are weak and unfulfilling compared to real relationships. God designed people to exist inside of authentic, personal community. And the best way to experience this type of community is to be fully present with others. In the technological world we live in we always have a companion in our pocket that masquerades as an angel of light, telling us we are “present” with those we are interacting with, but distracting us from real people all the while. Our phones seem to be an incredible innovation that helps stay connected with others in ways we never imagined. However, the problem is that more times than not, it keeps us in the shallow end of relationships. We connect via filtered photos, quick comments over social media, emojis, and brief texts devoid of body language. Our phones also provide constant distractions when we do sit face to face with others, always beckoning our minds somewhere other than where our bodies are, with messages and notifications.

Even over dinner with a dear friend, it can be hard to put our phones away and just be present. As we will see in the upcoming passages, we are called to meet with God and others in a focused and deep way, as dear friends meet together. These passages will show us that real friends engage often and face to face. For those who practiced this kind of “presentness” in Bible times, we easily see they were changed. Let’s make being fully present our goal this week and see how it changes us.

*Have you ever built convictions around the role of technology in your life, your home, your marriage, or your relationships?*

*In what ways does our culture mistake virtual interaction for real interaction?*

## ■ ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

This week, we will explore a few places the Scriptures teach us about being present in our lives. While it can be extremely difficult to turn off the busyness and distractions that steal our attention and focus, the Lord helps us by teaching us three aspects of being present:

### 1. PRESENT WITH GOD

### 2. PRESENT WITH EACH OTHER

### 3. PRESENT WITH THE LOST

## GOING DEEPER

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

## PRESENT WITH GOD

### ■ ■ EXODUS 33:7-11 AND LUKE 10:38-42

*What title did Moses give the tent? [Ex. 33:7] What point is he trying to get across?*

*According to Exodus 33:7, why would people go to this tent?*

*What did the Lord do when Moses went inside? [Ex. 33:9] In what specific way did the Lord communicate with Moses [Ex. 33:11]?*

In Exodus 33, we learn a great deal about the first and most important way we should be present: with God. The story of Moses and the Meeting Tent gives us a wonderful example of how to stop and be fully present, enjoying time alone with the Lord. The name of the tent itself reveals its purpose, to interact with God in a focused way, or in short, to simply meet with him. People did not go there on a whim, haphazardly, or for ritual's sake. Instead, verse 7 shows us that people went there to seek the Lord intentionally and single-mindedly. The Meeting Tent wasn't for social events or leisure time. It's only purpose was to hear from God and be present with him. We must remember that before Christ's work, God's people did not have the option of meeting with him whenever they wanted through the Holy Spirit. In order to meet with God, they had to go to the place he was physically dwelling, and at this point in Israel's history, that was only at the Meeting Tent.

The story tells us that Moses pulled away from the camp and met with God in this tent, hearing from him clearly. More than that, the story tells us how God chose to meet with Moses: face to face, a figurative expression suggesting openness and friendship. The story mentions no distractions or interruptions, just pure, face to face time with the Lord. This was the place Moses could be fully present with God, and he took it seriously, so much so that even the townspeople knew when he was going to meet with God, and waited for him outside, avoiding distraction at all costs. This gives us an incredibly intimate picture of God's relationship with Moses and also helps us see what our own time with God should be like. Given that God dwells in us now (and not in a physical tent) through the presence of the Holy Spirit, how much more should we engage with God this intimately? Like Moses, we should take time to pause from the hustle and bustle of our "camps" and be present with God, the one who considers us his friend, too (John 15:15).

*Martha first engages with Jesus by doing what? [Luke 10:38]*

*According to Luke 10:39, what is Mary interested in doing when she's with Jesus?*

*Martha does not engage further with Jesus. Why? [Luke 10:40]*

Another story that helps us see the principle of being present with the Lord is that of the famous sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha is known for being distracted by things that need to get done in order to serve a guest in her house, while Mary is known for sitting and being truly present with Jesus. While most people know the story well, a little detail is often missed: Martha is the one who started off strong! She was the one who welcomed Jesus into the house in the first place. Her hospitality revealed that she, too, wanted to enjoy Jesus' company. While both sisters desired to be present with Jesus, one gave her whole heart and focus to the task, and the other tried to fit in a few other things at the same time. Martha's intentions may have been pure in the beginning of the story, but like we all do at some point, she got distracted and busy. In fact, she was so convinced that her service to the Lord was the right way of "being" with him that she got angry with her sister for not following suit!

Jesus sheds light on the situation, showing us that anxious toil, even if it's in service to Christ himself, will never equate with being fully present with God. Jesus wanted the sisters to sit and rest in his visit with them, being fully present in his company, with no thought of kitchen tasks! Like Moses, Martha needed to press pause on the "camp" of the kitchen and hear from the Lord in a distraction-free environment. When we sit to give him our undivided attention and devotion in this way, he promises that the fruit of meeting with him will not be taken away from us.

*How does Jesus instruct us to follow whose example when we spend time with him [Luke 10:41-42]?*

*Share the things that most distract you when you seek to spend time with the Lord.*

## PRESENT WITH EACH OTHER

■ ■ LUKE 17:3-4 AND ACTS 2:42-47

*What were the four major things the early church was dedicated to doing with one another? [Acts 2:42]*

*What were the believers in this church doing with their possessions and money? [Acts 2:45]*

*What was the result of this incredible community? (Acts 2:47)*

Acts 2 is a famous snapshot of the early church, showing us what biblical community should look like. This group of believers took the time to be present in each other's lives in the most important of ways: learning God's Word, fellowshiping, praying, and sharing meals together. While we know the early church was comprised of all sorts of different people in all different walks of life, they gathered as one church family, fully available to the Lord and to one another, no matter what. This account in Acts includes a detail that helps us understand what being present in the life of another believer looks like: they sold their possessions, pooled the proceeds, and distributed as each had a need.

Talking about financial need is a delicate situation that requires great intimacy and strong friendships, so the fact that this church was marked by this kind of generosity tells us just how present these people were in each other's lives! We, too, must pause regularly to be fully present in the lives of our faith family and our immediate family. If we are unaware of any needs going on around us, or have not shared a meal or a prayer with others in a while, perhaps we need to stop and truly engage with those we have been neglecting due to distraction and busyness. As we are fully present in the the body of Christ, the world sees and the body grows! Believers giving one another their complete attention is an attractive thing to a world dominated by distraction, starving for legitimate relationships.

*What is the first command Jesus gives in these verses? Explain how that relates to being present.*

*If our brother or sister in Christ is in sin, what should we do? (Luke 17:3)*

Luke 17 gives us another other dimension of being present with those in the body of Christ. First, to be fully present with other believers requires us to have hard conversations. Not every experience is as warm and healthy as the picture we see in Acts 2, and Jesus shows us in Luke 17 how to restore a believer who is not living out that picture. Should a brother or a sister around us be in sin, it's our responsibility to lovingly tell them their offense, in hopes that they repent. On top of that, we are called to forgive them each time the offense happens! Sometimes being present means getting cut by the thorns in someone else's life, but we stay loving and forgiving, knowing that Jesus was cut by the thorns in our life! Being fully present in the church means pausing from distraction in order to learn with, eat with, pray with, give to, and forgive the believers around us.

*Are you present enough with your Christian friends to notice the patterns in their life? When was the last time you had a hard conversation with another believer for their good?*

*Share a time when you experienced another believer being especially present in your life.*

## PRESENT WITH THE LOST

■ ■ LUKE 5:27-32, 7:34, 15:2, AND 19:7.

*What is Levi's (Matthew) job before meeting Jesus? Luke 5:27*

*What does Matthew do immediately after choosing to follow Jesus? [Luke 5:29]*

*Who was invited to the feast that Matthew hosted? [Luke 5:29]*

*What title do the Pharisees give Jesus when they see his behavior around the lost? [Luke 7:34]*

These passages show us a final dimension of being present in our lives, and that's the principle of being present in the lives of the lost around us. We see through Matthew's example that becoming a Christian does not require us to run away from sinners in fear, but rather run toward them in compassion and love. It is not a small detail that immediately after a tax collector chooses to follow Jesus, he hosts a dinner to introduce all his other tax-collector friends to him! Instead of avoiding all his old friends, he is fully present with them at a feast, and brings Jesus to them, knowing that not long ago he was in their very shoes.

The word spread that Jesus and his disciples often ate and spent time with the lost, so much so that they were entitled the "friend of sinners," a very derogatory title in their culture! Sharing a meal in Bible times meant much

more than it does today—it was a sign of solid relationship, warm welcome, and public association with one another. The powerful in Jesus’ day would dine together in order to show the community who was “in” and who was “out” among the elite of society. Conversations were very intentional and focused during these meals, as people wanted to get the maximal amount of attention from the “important” ones. The ordeal was very political, indeed. When Jesus and Matthew dined with sinners, they were in essence saying “we are ‘in’ with these people and we consider them important,” a very risky public statement to make. Jesus wanted his deep focus and attention to be on those who didn’t know the Father, regardless of what that meant for his reputation. More than simply preaching to them from afar or going to sporadic outreach events, Jesus got in the actual lives of the lost around him in a focused way—around their home, their dinner table, and their family. As we see in Jesus and Matthew’s example, we are not only called to be present in such a way that we are entitled a “friend of God,” but a “friend of sinners” too.

*Jesus invites who on his turf? [Luke 15:2]*

*Jesus not only invites sinners on his turf, but also does what regarding their turf? [Luke 19:7]*

When we think about pausing to be present with non-Christians we know, we are naturally inclined to invite them around us. For example, we invite them to our church, to our home, and to our events. We usually invite them into the hobbies or interests we enjoy and we feel comfortable with, like going to coffee or ice cream or a movie. In short, we ask the lost to come on our turf and gather around our interests. While we should definitely be inviting the lost to experience parts of our world, we must also make ourselves available to go get in their world, too. In Luke 15 and 19, we are shown that Jesus both received people on his turf and also met them on their turf as well. We see this in a plethora of examples: when engaging with a lost Pharisee, Jesus goes to his house for dinner (Luke 7:36). When engaging with a sexual outcast of society, Jesus does not invite her to the synagogue to discuss spiritual questions, but converses in a place that feels familiar to her: the well she went to daily (John 4).

In short, Jesus asks people to come to him, yes, but more often he goes to them first. For us, this may mean spending time doing a hobby that our lost friend enjoys or going to their house for dinner instead of ours. If we are not familiar with their family, their home, or their interests, then we are probably not being fully present with them as friends. As Jesus shows us, being fully present in relationships with the lost requires the friendship to go both ways. We must keep in mind that the goal of getting on the turf of others should always be in line with Matthew’s: to introduce people to Jesus!



*Are you present with the lost in your life to the point that others would consider you very good friends with them?*

*How often do you share meals with non-Christians?*

## NEXT STEPS

*+ Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

*What can you do with your phone/computer/devices this week in order to ensure that you are fully present with God during your time with him?*

*How can you stop to pay more attention to believers around you?*

*Is there a sin issue in any of your friendships that you need to address?*

*Pause and dream up a creative way to get on the "turf" of one of your lost friends this week.*

## PRAY

*+ Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

*God, convict me when I'm giving way to distractions instead of being fully present with you.*

*God, give me an attentive spirit that is fully present with other believers in my life. Show me their needs and their life patterns so I can be useful in their lives, helping them grow.*

*God, give me ideas on how to be fully present with my lost friends, whether that's in my neighborhood, at work, or elsewhere.*

*God, use my journey in this issue to help my family/friends learn to be fully present as well.*

## CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

*When life gets distracting and busy, we can unknowingly sacrifice quality family time. To help fight this tendency this week, each evening, leave your phones in the house and take the whole family out into the front yard and just be together. Play, talk, and engage your neighbors completely free of distractions. This will help you engage with both your family and the lost in a way that is fully present.*

## COMMENTARY

**EXODUS 33:7-11:** Whereas God wanted to be “in their midst” in the tabernacle, the tent is now described as being “outside the camp” because the people had violated their covenant with God a chapter before this. The people’s focus on Moses whenever he would go in and out of the camp foreshadows the way that his intercession will be the means by which the Lord commits himself to come back into their midst after they breached covenant with him.

If the Lord spoke face to face with Moses, why does the book later suggest that Moses never saw His face (33:20–23)? On three occasions the Bible states that God spoke “face to face” with Moses (33:11; Nm 12:8; Dt 5:4). However, it is also clear that this expression was not meant to be taken literally; in the book of Numbers, “speaking face to face” is equated with “openly, and not in riddles” (Nm 12:8).

**LUKE 10:39:** Sitting at the feet of a teacher was the formal posture of a religious student. When Mary sits at Jesus’ feet to learn, the author is communicating something very counter-cultural in Bible times: women can be disciples of Jesus. Jesus encouraged women to study the Scriptures, unlike many others in his society at the time.

**ACTS 2:44:** Though some people have referred to “having all things in common” as “early communism” or

socialism, this is clearly not the case, since (1) the giving was voluntary among the church community and not compelled by the government, and (2) people still had personal possessions, because they still met in “their homes” (v. 46) and many other Christians after this still owned homes. Further, Peter told Ananias and Sapphira that they did not have any obligation to sell their property and give away the money in Acts 5:4. In contrast to communist theory, doing away with private property is not commanded or even implied here. On the other hand, there is a principle to be followed for Christians: voluntary generosity in sharing possessions when seeing a need should be the heart of those who know Jesus, the ultimate giver.

**LUKE 17:4:** In Judaism it was considered honorable to forgive three times. Jesus teaches that his followers, as part of the new covenant community, were to exceed that standard by forgiving always.

**LUKE 5:30:** Table fellowship like this implies welcoming these people into extended interpersonal association, which the Pharisees thought would make a person “unclean.” However, for Christ and his people, the process works in reverse: instead of Jesus becoming “infected” by a sinner’s uncleanness, the sinner is “infected” with Jesus’ cleanness! Rather than being defiled by sinners, we extend the opportunity of forgiveness and cleanness.

*\*All commentary resourcing for Lesson 4 was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the NIV Compact Bible Commentary, and The Apologetics Study Bible.*

