

Retreat to Advance

Presence: Living Connected to God

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well on May 15, 2022

Exodus 33:14

So what? We need God's presence with us on our journey.

Feel what? The powerful and comforting presence of God in whatever scary chapter you're in.

Now what? Retreat with God to advance for God.

VISION CASTING – We must retreat with God to advance for God.

INTRODUCTION

Graduation Weekend

Presence: Living Connected to God

- PRESENCE is my 2022 Word of the Year and has proven even more timely than I thought when I chose it.

- Discussion about our sermon series graphic in our #messageplanning Slack Channel
 - Ethereal grandeur of the mountains (my 1st Mt. Bierstadt Hike) vs. the familiarity of a couch or coffee table
 - Camel pose in yoga! I wear a lot of hats and demystifier of yoga is one of them.
 - God's presence is everywhere but there's times He shows up with greater power or relational intimacy AND/OR there are times we are more fully aware of His presence.
- Awareness – The life of Jacob
- Commissioning – Order or authorize (a person or organization) to do or produce something
 - The life of Moses
 - I love the story of Moses because it gives me so much hope to keep growing in my friendship with God and leadership.
 - Moses killed a guy at age 40 in his anger.
 - He didn't hear from God from the burning bush until he was 80.
 - He was at the "living connected with God" thing for awhile.

Exodus 33:1-3 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' ² I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ³ Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

- I understand some of what God felt like as a Father because I'm also a father.

Exodus 33:7, 9-10 ⁷ Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. ⁹ As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. ¹⁰ Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent.

- Moses would retreat before advancing.

Exodus 33:11-13 ¹¹ The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. ¹² Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

- Moses was a lifelong friend of God's.

Exodus 33:15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."

PRAY

- Moses made a demand of God.
- If You are not Present with me, do not ask me to lead these people into this next frightening place.
- If You are not Present with us, do not send us on the next leg of this journey.

Maddox and the High Dive:

- I remember the first time I asked Maddox to go off the high dive.
- Joy and fear intermingled.
- Pure joy when he emerged from the water that first time.
- Then Maddox exercised leadership by encouraging his friends to also jump off the high dive.
- Now the first thing Maddox does at the pool is jump off the high dive!
- A young son feeling safe with his dad present but also a little on edge...
- Sometimes Maddox calls for Dad because he's scared and wants my presence with him. Sometimes Maddox is a little scared of Dad's presence.

Retreat at the Stone Barn before becoming the Interim Pastor at New Hope Church:

- Thin places – the Stone Barn
- Becoming the Interim Pastor during a very difficult time at the church I was on staff at. I strongly sensed that I had to get away for a personal retreat to connect with God before stepping into the next chapter.

- I realized that I had to get away with God and connect with God and hear from God if I was going to be able to faithfully lead in the next chapter.
- Where do you need more of God's power and friendship?

Challenging Chapters in Life:

- Are you in over your head with a new job that's overwhelming and hard to figure out?
 - Taking on my a new part-time job with a local nonprofit. My new boss threw me in the deep end. Learn by doing!
- Are you in over your head with a new degree, lots of debt, and no clear plan for a job?
- Are you in over your head in a marriage where things just are not working out and you cannot see a clear path forward?
- Are you in over your head as a parent with an oppositionally defiant child?
- Are you in over your head with an addiction or some other unwanted behavior that you just can't seem to shake no matter what you try?
- Are you in over your head with a cancer diagnosis and tired from the ongoing battle for health?

- Are you in over your head with deconstructing your faith and not sure if you'll ever be able to reconstruct your faith?
- Are you in over your head knowing that God is asking you to do something that is very scary to you right now?

Do you feel like God has thrown you in the deep end and you're not sure how to swim?

That's where our capacity for God's PRESENCE can increase... but it's often terrifying.

Gary DeLashmutt – We expect smooth sailing through life but life is mostly very choppy and turbulent waters with occasional smooth spots.

Moses had been at this "living connected to God thing" awhile already.

The Burning Bush

- **Exodus 3:2-4** ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange

sight—why the bush does not burn up.”⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

Earth’s crammed with heaven,
and every common bush afire with God;
but only he who sees, takes off his shoes—
the rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.

Deliverance out of Egypt

The Parting of the Red Sea

- **Exodus 14:10-19a** ¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” ¹³ Moses answered the

people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still." ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." ¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them.

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

by Ruth Haley Barton

- "The greater that call for decisive action, the more we must be sure that we have waited long enough to receive clear direction. This was a rhythm that Moses had learned so well that when the challenges of leadership came, his first response was to be still and wait (as he instructed the people at the Red Sea) until

he recognized God's instruction. His action emerged from a clear sense of what he had heard from God."

- "When God's instruction came for the Israelites to move forward and for Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand so that the water would divide, it was the exactly right thing to do. But it was something they would have never thought up on their own. Moses would not have known to do this had he not been orienting himself internally to God and waiting until God's guidance was clear." -p. 125
- Orienting himself to God through retreat!

SOLUTION

Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

- My Word of the Year is Presence and this is the key verse.
- We can face the exhausting challenges God is calling us into...but only if God's PRESENCE goes with us and He gives us rest.

APPLICATION

Retreat to Advance

- Moses went away to be with God before a difficult and scary chapter of life and leadership.
- Jesus went away to be with God before a difficult and scary chapter of life and leadership.
 - 40 days in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-2 – Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.
 - 4 hours in the Garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22:39-46 – ³⁹ Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why

are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

- The only time someone retreated with God and God's PRESENCE didn't go with them and God gave no rest was when Jesus hung on the cross in your place.
- Sometimes you've got God's presence and just need His Word like in Moses' case.
- Sometimes you need to stop what you're doing and wait for God's presence. Chill out!

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

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- "Times of extended retreat give us a chance to come home to ourselves in God's presence and to bring the realities of our life to God in utter privacy. This is important for us and for those we serve. When we repress what is real in our life and just keep soldiering on, we get weary from holding it in, and eventually it leaks out in ways that are damaging to ourselves and to others."
- "But on retreat there is time and space to attend to what is real in my own life—to celebrate the joys, grieve the losses, shed tears, sit with the questions, feel my anger, attend to my loneliness—and allow God to be

with me in those places. These are not times for problem-solving or fixing, because not everything can be fixed or solved. On retreat we rest in God and wait on him to do what is needed. Eventually we return to the battle with fresh energy and keener insight.” -p. 124

24 Hour Retreat at St. Benedict's Abbey on October 24, 2019:

- Year and a half after planting Tallgrass Church
- *Invitation to Solitude & Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence* by Ruth Haley Barton
- Journal entry on 10/24/2019: “As I lay down and breathe deeply the phrase that comes to mind for what's needed or why I seem drawn to solitude and silence is relational capacity. I get tired of people so quickly. I'm sluggish to want to connect with people deeply even though I know that is good. I truly want what's best for people and want to make an impact on their lives but just seem to grow weary so quickly. I know You're calling me into greater relational capacity with You, Father. And with You, Jesus. I want to be relationally available and present.”

- Journal entry later on 10/24/2019: Jesus said to me, "If you want to be a shepherd, like Me, you've got to allow others to love you."
 - Luke 7 – The woman loved Jesus much... and He received her love.

When you are in a transition you need both God's...

1. Power
2. Friendship

How do we retreat with God?

Retreating with God before advancing for God
(Commissioning into the next chapter of leadership and influence):

1. Corporate Retreat

- What is God asking us to do in this next chapter?
Where do we need to plead with Him for His Presence in the task at hand?
- Our Action Team is regularly retreating to hear from God together about the next chapter in the life of our church.

- We are in over our head, trying to take the Good News of Jesus to the 80,000 people in the Manhattan Area.
- I'm often in awe of those who are consistently present at a weeknight church small group. That's paddling upstream from our culture.

2. Individual Retreat

- What is God asking you to do in this next chapter? Where do you need to plead with Him for His Presence in the task at hand?
- Take 40 days or 4 hours.
- Find a mentor living or dead along the way.

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- Jesus is asking you to do the work, but He is right beside you, doing the heavy lifting.
- We may not be physically present with Jesus like we will be one day. But we do have His Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:3-9 ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

OBJECTIONS

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

by Ruth Haley Barton

- “The process of cultivating a life-giving way of life in community is led by leaders who make it a norm in their working relationships to listen deeply to each person’s capacities, the demands of their job, what is realistic and sane given that person’s stage of life, personality type, extenuating circumstances (a marriage that is struggling, a health crisis, caring for aging parents and the like).”

INSPIRATION

I want to take us all on a 4-minute retreat together separately from *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* by Ruth Haley Barton. Close your eyes if you’d like or keep them open.

- “In the quietness, allow yourself to remember the time when you first began to sense God’s call on your life. Maybe it was a moment like Moses’ when you heard God speak deep into your heart with great clarity, or perhaps your sense of calling grew in strength and conviction over time. Maybe that moment is now. Remember where you were, what it sounded like, what it felt like, what you said to God, how you resisted and how you said yes.”

- "After taking time to be with that initial experience, ask,
 - *What is God saying to me these days about my calling?*
 - *As I settle into myself more fully, what am I learning about my calling?*
 - *Is there any place where I am resisting who I am or have lost touch with who I am?*
 - *Where am I still wrestling with God and needing assurance of his presence with me?*
 - *Am I willing to say yes again?"*

CONCLUSION

Next Step:

Retreat with God before advancing for God into the next chapter of life.

Prayer

Invitation

Commissioning!

Chopping Block:

Ideas:

- Moses
 - The stick was a symbol of God's presence
 - Needed Aaron's presence earlier but now needs God's presence
 - Faithful in small things, Faithful in big things
 - Moses was graduating
- Bilbo's journey in *The Hobbit* – "He had many hardships and adventures before he got back. The Wild was still the Wild, and there were many other things in it in those days beside goblins; but he was well guided and well guarded—the wizard was with him, and Beorn for much of the way—and he was never in great danger again."
- Prophetic Promises
- Soul Care - Sit until God speaks.
- Mount Bierstadt and the blizzard
- Tornado near Leavenworth
- Word of the Year
- May The Fourth Be With You (Jesus with the three in the book of Daniel)
- Increased capacity
- Paul went away to be with God before a difficult and scary chapter of life and leadership.
 - Three years away! See Galatians 1:18.
- *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* by Ruth Haley Barton
 - "Spiritual leadership springs forth in grace from our very desire for God's presence. This does not take effort or striving. It takes courage, a kind of showing up, attentiveness." -Gerald May, Lecture at Shalem Institute, May 1998, p. 64
 - "It is good to be between a ruined house of bondage and a holy promised land." - Leonard Cohen, p. 93
 - "In the quietness, allow yourself to remember the time when you first began to sense God's call on your life. Maybe it was a moment like Moses' when you heard God speak deep into your heart with great clarity, or perhaps your sense of calling grew in strength and conviction over time. Remember where you were, what it sounded like, what it felt like, what you said to God, how you resisted and how you said yes."
 - "After taking time to be with that initial experience, ask, *What is God saying to me these days about my calling? As I settle into myself more fully, what am I learning about my calling? Is there any place where I am resisting who I am or have lost touch with who I am? Where am I still wrestling with God and needing assurance of his presence with me? Am I willing to say yes again?*" -p. 85
 - "Times of extended retreat give us a chance to come home to ourselves in God's presence and to bring the realities of our life to God in utter privacy. This is important for us and for those we serve. When we repress what is real in our life and just keep

- soldiering on, we get weary from holding it in, and eventually it leaks out in ways that are damaging to ourselves and to others.”
- “But on retreat there is time and space to attend to what is real in my own life—to celebrate the joys, grieve the losses, shed tears, sit with the questions, feel my anger, attend to my loneliness—and allow God to be with me in those places.”
 - “These are not times for problem-solving or fixing, because not everything can be fixed or solved. On retreat we rest in God and wait on him to do what is needed. Eventually we return to the battle with fresh energy and keener insight.” -p. 124
 - “The greater that call for decisive action, the more we must be sure that we have waited long enough to receive clear direction. This was a rhythm that Moses had learned so well that when the challenges of leadership came, his first response was to be still and wait (as he instructed the people at the Red Sea) until he recognized God’s instruction. His action emerged from a clear sense of what he had heard from God.”
 - “When God’s instruction came for the Israelites to move forward and for Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand so that the water would divide, it was the exactly right thing to do. But it was something they would have never thought up on their own. Moses would not have known to do this had he not been orienting himself internally to God and waiting until God’s guidance was clear.” -p. 125
 - “The process of cultivating a life-giving way of life in community is led by leaders who make it a norm in their working relationships to listen deeply to each person’s capacities, the demands of their job, what is realistic and sane given that person’s stage of life, personality type, extenuating circumstances (a marriage that is struggling, a health crisis, caring for aging parents and the like).” -p. 133
 - When Moses raised his staff in Exodus 17 – “This battle was literally won on the basis of Moses’ ability to remain in a stance of intercessory prayer on behalf of those God had given him to lead.” – p. 144
 - “What is the use of praying if at the very moment of prayer, we have so little confidence in God that we are busy planning our own kind of answer to our prayer?” - p. 145
 - “I realize now that intercessory prayer is not primarily about thinking that I know what someone else needs and trying to wrestle it from God. Rather, it is being present to God on another’s behalf, listening for the prayer of the Holy Spirit that is already being prayed for that person before the throne of grace, and being willing to join God in that prayer.” -p. 146
 - “I look at God, I look at you, and I keep looking at God.” -Julian of Norwich, p. 147

Passages:

- **Exodus 3:2-4 MSG** ² The angel of GOD appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn’t burn up. ³ Moses said, “What’s going on here? I can’t believe this! Amazing! Why doesn’t the bush burn up?” ⁴ GOD saw that he had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, “Moses! Moses!” He said, “Yes? I’m right here!”

- **Exodus 18:17-18** ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.
- **Deuteronomy 34:10-12** ¹⁰ Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ¹¹ who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. ¹² For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.
- **Exodus 3:11-15** ¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." ¹³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'
 "This is my name forever,
 the name you shall call me
 from generation to generation.
- Moses and Aaron – Exodus 4
- Exodus 33:14 NIV The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."
- Exodus 33:11-23 ¹¹ The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. ¹² Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' ¹³ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."
¹⁴ The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." ¹⁵ Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. ¹⁶ How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" ¹⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." ¹⁸ Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." ¹⁹ And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." ²¹ Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. ²² When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. ²³ Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."
- Acts 1:3-9 ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of

God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." ⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.