

*Series graphic*

Reality check graphic: <https://i1.wp.com/www.digitalbolex.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/giving-yourself-a-reality-check.png>

**God is the great and eternal Reality.**

**Psalm 90:2**

Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world,  
**from eternity to eternity, You are God.**

**Sooner or later, we have to deal with the reality of God's presence.**

**Revelation 1:7-8**

Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him,  
even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.  
So it is to be. Amen.

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the One Who is, Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty."*

**God's presence is the **point**.**

**Revelation 21:3-4**

Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: *Look, God's dwelling is with humanity, and He will live **with** them. They will be His peoples, and God himself will be **with** them and will be their God.*  
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.

**God's presence is infinitely **satisfying**.**

**Psalm 16:11**

You will show me the way of life, granting me the **joy** of your presence and the **pleasures** of living **with** You forever.

**God's presence is severely **dangerous and disruptive**.**

**Hebrews 10:31**

It is a **terrifying thing** to fall into the hands of the living God.

**God/Christ + N/A = Happiness; Security; Identity**

**The self-disclosure of God → His initiative to alert us to Himself.**

### **I Samuel 5:1-4**

After the Philistines had captured the ark of God, they took it from Ebenezer to Ashdod, brought it into the temple of **Dagon** and placed it next to his statue. When the people of Ashdod got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and **returned him to his place**. But when they got up early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen with his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. This time, Dagon's head and both of his **hands were broken off** and lying on the threshold. Only Dagon's torso remained.

*{come up one at a time}*

**The God: Independent Supremacy**

- We are not needed.
- It's not about us.

**A god (~Dagon): we have to put "him" back in place**

**Our response to God's independent supremacy: dependent humility**

**Instead of asking "How God ...?" we need to start declaring, "God can ...!"**

### **I Samuel 5:5**

That is why, still today, the priests of Dagon and everyone who enters the temple of Dagon in Ashdod do not step on Dagon's threshold.

**Tradition is easier than transformation.**

### **I Samuel 5:6a**

The **Lord's hand** was **heavy** on the people of Ashdod.

*{all together; one slide}*

**God's presence creates a problem.**

**What is our response?**

### **I Samuel 5:6b-12**

He terrified the people of Ashdod and its territory and afflicted them with tumors. When the people of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of Israel's God must not stay

here with us, because His hand is strongly against us and our god Dagon.” So they called all the Philistine rulers together and asked, “**What should we do with the ark** of Israel’s God?” “The ark of Israel’s God should be **moved** to Gath,” they replied. So they moved the ark of Israel’s God. After they had moved it, the **Lord’s hand** was against the city of Gath, causing a great panic. He afflicted the people of the city, from the youngest to the oldest, with an outbreak of tumors.

The people of Gath then sent the ark of God to Ekron, but when it got there, the Ekronites cried out, “They’ve moved the ark of Israel’s God to us to kill us and our people!”

The Ekronites called all the Philistine rulers together. They said, “Send the ark of Israel’s God away. Let it return to its place so it won’t kill us and our people!” For the **fear of death** pervaded the city; **God’s hand** was oppressing them. Those who did not die were afflicted with tumors, and the outcry of the city went up to heaven.

*{come up one at a time}*

#### **Responses to the Problem of God’s Presence:**

- **My personal God ... (Redefining God)**
- **Distancing**

#### **What does closeness with God require?**

#### **1 Samuel 6:1-6**

When the ark of the Lord had been in Philistine territory for seven months, the Philistines summoned the priests and the diviners and pleaded, “What should we do with the ark of the Lord? Tell us how we can **send it back** to its place.” They replied, “If you send the ark of Israel’s God away, do not send it without an offering. Send back a **guilt offering** to Him, and you will be healed. Then the reason his hand hasn’t been removed from you will be revealed.”

They asked, “What guilt offering should we send back to him?”

And they answered, “Five gold tumors and five gold mice corresponding to the number of Philistine rulers, since there was one plague for both you and your rulers. Make images of your tumors and of your mice that are destroying the land. **Give glory** to Israel’s God, and perhaps he will stop oppressing you, your gods, and your land. Why **harden** your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened theirs? When he afflicted them, didn’t they send Israel away, and Israel left?

- 1) **Grasp the gravity of God’s presence.**

#### **1 Samuel 6:7-12**

“Now then, prepare one new cart and two milk cows that have never been yoked. Hitch the cows to the cart, but take their calves away and pen them up. Take the ark of the Lord, place it on the cart, and put the gold objects that you’re sending Him as a guilt offering in a box beside

the ark. Send it off and let it go its way. Then watch: If it goes up the road to its homeland toward Beth-shemesh, it is the Lord who has made this terrible trouble for us. However, if it doesn't, we will know that it was not His hand that punished us—it was just something that happened to us **by chance.**"

The men did this ... [and] the cows went straight up the road to Beth-shemesh. They stayed on that one highway, lowing as they went; they never strayed to the right or to the left. The Philistine rulers were walking behind them to the territory of Beth-shemesh.

## 2) Hear the **invitation to "draw near"**

### **Ephesians 2:13**

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

### **James 4:8a**

**Draw near** to God ...

**Philistines: easier to respond to the pain of the situation but not the reality of God's presence**

### **I Samuel 6:13-20**

The people of Beth-shemesh were harvesting wheat in the valley, and when they looked up and saw the ark, they were overjoyed to see it ... The people of the city chopped up the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord. The Levites removed the ark of the Lord, along with the box containing the gold objects, and placed them on the large rock. That day the people of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices to the Lord. When the five Philistine rulers observed this, they returned to Ekron that same day ... God struck down the people of Beth-shemesh because they looked inside the ark of the Lord. He struck down seventy persons. The people mourned because the Lord struck them with a great slaughter. The people of Beth-shemesh asked, "**Who is able to stand in the presence of the Lord this holy God? To whom should the ark go from here?**"

**The people of Beth-Shemesh: the burden of God's holiness**

## 3) Embrace the **holy fear** of the Lord.

### **I Samuel 6:21 - 7:1**

They sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the Lord. Come down and get it.”

So the people of Kiriath-jearim came for the ark of the Lord and took it to Abinadab’s house on the hill. They **consecrated** his son Eleazar to take care of it.

#### 4) Commit to **consecration**.

#### **Hebrews 11:6**

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would **draw near to God** must believe that He exists and that He **rewards** those who seek Him.