

The following exercise, excerpted from *A Guide to Practicing God's Presence*, offers a way to help you live wisely—with a long-term perspective and an awareness of your identity and destiny. Try it for a week (or longer)!

THE KINGDOM  
OF GOD  
IN 7 G'S

Every time you're inclined to worry, doubt, despair, or simply get bogged down in the temporal, pull out this list of seven words, all starting with "G," that help refocus your mind to an eternal perspective:

**Greatness** | God's transcendence, omnipresence, and omniscience

**Goodness** | God's love for you, as a lover has for His beloved bride

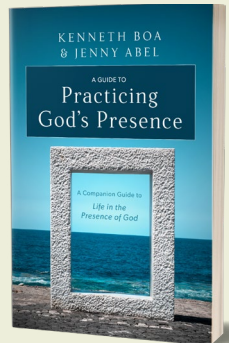
**Grace** | God's mercy on us and sacrifice for us while we were still sinners

**Gratitude** | For His grace even though we deserve His wrath

**Growing** | To become in practice (day-to-day living) who God, through His Son, has made us in position (a new being or creation in Christ)

**Going** | In obedience to Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19–20 (the Great Commission)

**Glory** | Our entrance into the next life (the culmination of our growing and going)



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# The Promises of God

YOUR FEET ON HIGH PLACES  
HABAKKUK 3:17–19

*Oreamnos americanus*—better known as the Rocky Mountain goat—makes Barnum & Bailey tightrope walkers (before the circus shut down last year) look like amateurs by comparison.

In search of pockets of vegetation rooted in sheer rock faces, these shaggy cliff-climbers make us gasp in amazement at their surefooted acrobatics. And just when it appears they are stuck—can't go forward and no room to turn around—they defy gravity by turning their stubby legs into pogo sticks that launch them 10 feet or more to a new perch.

In the summer, when the cliffs are free of ice, the mountain goat's sharp-edged hoof can hook over the slightest piece of rock projecting from a cliff face. Which is exactly what it needs—the hotter it gets, the higher it climbs. Why? They have confidence in the high places—food is available, predators can't touch them, and it's cooler than the stifling heat below.

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk never saw an American Rocky Mountain goat, but he saw plenty of similarly sure-footed creatures: the deer, gazelle, roe deer, wild goat, ibex, antelope, and mountain sheep. They were as confident in dangerous places as he wanted to be in the place where he was. It was getting hot in Israel, but not because of the weather. An army of human predators from Babylon was bearing down on Israel to reap God's judgment. He had been fearful—he knew that the crops and livestock they depended on for their sustenance were about to be destroyed. But he also had learned that the righteous live by faith, not by sight (Habakkuk 2:4). And suddenly,

like hinds' hooves, Habakkuk's faith was taking him to high places: "Let the heat come!" he seems to have been thinking. "The hotter it gets, the higher I'll climb on the mountain that is my God."

What do you do when the heat rises in your life and the predators who would steal your faith come near? Fear, insecurity, worry, discouragement—they will always attack. But start climbing. God has given you feet of faith like hinds' hooves that will allow you to live where no predator can follow—in the high places of God's protection.

**GOD'S PROMISE TO YOU:**

"If you will only climb higher,  
I will keep you from falling."

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REFLECTIONS

Reflections on God's  
revealed truth

a new heart & nature



Holy Son of the living God, You did what no one ever did and taught what no one ever taught. Unlike other teachers and rabbis in Israel, You taught out of your own authority and revealed truths that were previously unknown. You taught that the standard of righteousness the Father requires is nothing short of His own perfection. When the religious leaders were trying to externalize the moral law and reduce it to manageable proportions, You taught the radical truth that the Law concerns not only what we do but also what we say and even what we think. You revealed that the problem is not external but internal; it concerns the corruption of the human heart. Our only hope is the new birth in which You implant a new heart and nature within us. I praise You that You perfectly fulfilled the Law in thought, word, and deed and that You impute your righteousness to all who trust in You.

A teaching letter encouraging believers  
to develop a clear mind and a warm heart



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## WISDOM || THE PERSEVERANCE OF WISDOM

When writing to the young men who were being educated for leadership, King Solomon told them that wisdom was essential for their future hope. Was this the kind of wisdom that they could reproduce on a test, or the kind of wisdom that they could recite in front of an audience? No—that’s a better description of information than it is of wisdom. Leadership without wisdom will do more harm than good.

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Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it,  
there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.  
(Proverbs 24:14)

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As much as students prepare for leadership, there is no textbook that will give them a technical answer to every difficult situation they will face. Still, Solomon instructs: “Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off” (Proverbs 24:14). John Piper writes about why biblical wisdom is so essential:

Of course, the Bible does not answer every question about life. Not every fork in the road has a biblical arrow. We have need of wisdom in ourselves to know the path of lasting joy. But that, too, is a gift of Scripture. “The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. . . . The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:7–8; 119:98). People whose minds are saturated with God’s Word and submissive to his thoughts have a wisdom that in eternity will prove superior to all the secular wisdom in the world. “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding” (Proverbs 3:13).<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. There were two trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve picked the wrong tree. The knowledge of good and evil isn’t the kind of knowledge we necessarily want. From experiencing evil, we gain knowledge of it, but what good does that do? It only serves to alienate us from God and each other.

T. S. Eliot said it this way in *Choruses from “The Rock”*:

*The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?²*

At the end of the poem, which was penned in the 1930s, Eliot concludes that our knowledge has only served to take us further from God rather than closer. And this is no less true today, even in our Information Age.

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They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them. Therefore, they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way, choking on their own schemes. For simpletons turn away from me—to death. Fools are destroyed by their own complacency. But all who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm. (Proverbs 1:30–33 NLT)

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Our culture is fat on information but thin on wisdom. Those of us who aspire to godly living must know how to take the raw material of knowledge and refine it into wisdom, turning crude data into high-octane wisdom. Wisdom perseveres; it lasts beyond all the currents of culture, beyond the fashions of the day. Wisdom seeks that which will last and is willing to trade immediate gratification for an eternal reward. Failure to acknowledge this will result in people and leaders who carefully spend their lives constructing a house of cards.

### BECOMING A

## Faithful Presence

“Formation into a vision of *human flourishing* requires an environment that embodies continuity, historical memory, rituals marking seasons of life, intergenerational interdependence, and most important of all, common worship.”

“In our tasks, the call of *faithful presence* implies a certain modesty that gives priority to substance over style; the enduring over the ephemeral, depth over breadth, and quality, skill, and excellence over slick packaging or ‘high production values.’ It would encourage ambition, but the instrumentalities of ambition are always subservient to the requirements of humility and charity.”

—James Davison Hunter, in *To Change the World*

Full citation: *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010). The quotes are from pp. 253 and 283, respectively.



<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 128–129. <sup>2</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from “The Rock,”* in *Selected Poems* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, n.d.), 107.