

## THE HOME GOD WANTS FOR HIS PRESENCE

It was perhaps the greatest opportunity ever. God tells Moses that he wants to come to his people and dwell right in the middle of their camp. Not on the outskirts. Not in the 'burbs. But right in the middle of where they were living.

You might wonder, "What preparations would a people need to make for God to live in their midst?" Would it be like getting ready for weekend guests or someone special coming to dinner? You feel compelled to make sure your home looks as good as possible. You want to make a good impression and you want your guest to feel welcome.

God anticipated the question and told Moses what needed to be in place for his coming. First, he wanted to be close to them but there was the problem of sin that created a breach between them. So God provided Moses with instructions about the practice of sacrificing, offering a covering for the people's indiscretions before a Holy God. Sin is serious stuff, not to be taken lightly, and the sacrifice of unblemished animals was necessary to give the people a picture of sin.

Second, he wanted to stay close to them. Moses was given the blueprints for the building of the Tabernacle. It's a big word for "tent." A portable place of worship. Kind of a mobile Motel 6. And he wanted to camp out right in the middle of where they were camping. God wanted to be close to his people.

But he also wanted them to be close to each other. So he declared a third thing to get ready. He gave them Ten Commandments concerning relationships. The first four commandments focus on how we are to demonstrate our love to God. The second set of six have to do with how to show love to other people. In seeing these relationships of love it was God's desire that people would come to know Him too.

Jesus said the same in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. . . By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

God gave the Israelites guidelines so that, when they sought to live by them, other nations would see them as different and know that they were God's people. God gave us Jesus so that, when we live like him, others will know that we are his people.

For those who know him, God took care of our sin through the sacrifice of Jesus. He tabernacles in the hearts of those who have drawn near to him. Could it be then that the degree to which we are obedient to him in this command to love each other is the degree of his presence we will find among us? It could be our greatest opportunity ever.