

James Goll: Soaking in His Presence

You hear a lot these days in the church about “soaking.” Some people object to it because that term is not in the Bible (Of course, a lot of things we do are not directly stated in the Bible. Sunday school, bus ministry and electric guitar music among others are some examples).

But the soaking concept is there—it’s all over the place. It’s in almost every book of the Bible, including 1 Samuel. You can see it in this familiar story:

“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no vision coming forth. At that time, Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow weak that he could not see), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called to Samuel, and he answered, ‘Here I am.’ He ran to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called to me.’ And he said, ‘I did not call. Return, lie down again.’ And he went and lay down. The Lord called Samuel again. So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ And he answered, ‘I did not call, my son. Return, lie down again” (1 Sam. 3:1-6).

Where did young Samuel lie down? Where did he sleep? He *“was lying down in the house of the Lord where the ark of God was.”* Little Samuel had been brought to the old priest Eli by his mother Hannah, and he lived there in the temple, ministering to the Lord and learning about God. At night, he lay down to rest near the ark itself.

And when the voice of the Lord was released, but Samuel couldn’t yet discern that it was God’s voice, what did Eli

tell him to do? He told him to go lie down there again. He didn't keep him wherever he was sleeping, and he didn't send him somewhere else to do something. In essence, Eli told Samuel to go and soak up some more of God's presence so he would recognize the voice of God when he heard it.

This is instructive for us. Like Samuel, we need to spend time resting in God's presence, going back again and again, falling in love with God all over again. We can be changed, not just temporarily stirred up, by returning to our first love (or by finding that first love if we've never tasted it before). We can learn to recognize His voice and we can experience personal revival. Out of that renewal, we can obey the Voice as we minister.

Hide and Seek

When you seek Him, you will find Him. Imagine for a moment that you could spend a day with Jesus—just the two of you. If that's too much time to imagine spending with Him, imagine spending only an hour with Him. Imagine that it's right now; right this minute. Just you and the lover of your soul. Just be ...

Go ahead, soak in His presence. If it helps to put on a quiet worship CD, feel free to do that. You can find Him in ever so many ways. One of my favorite ways is hiking alone in the woods or in growing up walking on the railroads tracks outside my parent's house in rural Missouri. You can find Him in the love letters (the Bible) that He wrote for you to read. You can see Him in the flowers that are blooming and in the creation that's groaning around you. You can see Him in the body of Christ. But draw closer still. Yes, draw closer to His loving heart.

While going through my cancer battles, I would simply put on some great "healing, soaking music" and rest in the presence of the Lord right in my bed. I found Him waiting to meet me

every time.

Get alone with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Rest around the ark, like Samuel did. Take a “Selah” pause from the hectic pace of this life. Rest ... wait ... repose ... reflect on the one who loves you more than you love yourself.

Worship, Listen, Respond

Get still before Him in order to commune with Him (read Psalm 46:10; 2 Samuel 7:18; Revelation 3:20; and Habakkuk 2:20).

Draw near to His heart (read James 4:8; Psalm 42:1-2; Isaiah 55:1-3,6; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 73:28; Psalm 84:1-4,10; and Hebrews 10:22).

Seek His face. Seek God for God’s sake. To become an effective intercessor, I encourage you to engage yourself with the Lord, in order to be able to engage yourself in the work of praying (read Matthew 7:7,8; Psalm 27:4,8; Psalm 63:1-8; Hebrews 11:6; and Jeremiah 29:11-14).

Just spend time in His presence. Become an Exodus-33-aholic like Moses (read Exodus 33:14,15; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 89:15; Isaiah 29:13; Isaiah 63:9; Lamentations 2:19; and Jude 24, 25).

Have Plenty of Oil

Keep that oil replenished. Keep your lamp trimmed and ready. Get to know God. Address Him by one of His many names. You can find over a hundred of them in His Word. Sometimes one of them will capture your heart. Stay with it a while; even for the rest of the day.

I remember one time when I landed on “Friend of Sinners,” and the Holy Spirit just fastened it onto my heart and unfolded it to me. You can get to know God—and you can minister His presence to others—when you address Him by various names and

get to know Him through His Word (See Matthew 11:29; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; and Philippians 3:8, 10).

If you count all things as loss in comparison to knowing Him, that's getting oil in your lamp (read Philippians 3:7,8; 1 Chronicles 21:23; and 2 Samuel 24:24). It's also a great trade.

Allow yourself to be overwhelmed with the amazing Person you are speaking with. You are talking with Him, not merely to Him; He is speaking back to you. The God of the universe likes to hear your voice (read Romans 5:5; Psalm 143:8,10; Isaiah 54:10; Lamentations 3:22-25; John 17:23b; and Romans 8:35-39).

Gather Strength in the Eye of the Storm

You'll be more effective as an intercessor when you maintain your private "watching and waiting" times with the Lord. You've got the lamp in your hand already—God gave it to you when you were saved. Now it's time to gather the lamp oil and keep it fresh.

It's like being in the eye of the hurricane, where you can regather your strength and your resources for the next onslaught. Your strength is in Him. Sit, rest and sleep right at His feet. Gather strength from being in His presence.

The oil of His presence will soothe your wounds and aching muscles. It will lubricate your joints and limber up your mental processes. It will tenderize your heart.

Seek Him. Soak Him in. Let Him prepare you for what's next.

Closing Prayer

Father, I present myself before You in Jesus' great name. I come as an intercessor, but this time all I want is more of You. Let my words be pleasing to You. Awaken my soul and spirit to hear Your voice. I love you and I want to love you more.

I want to be like young Samuel and learn to rest around the ark. I want to soak in Your presence. Draw me close to You. Let me hear Your heartbeat. Pull my deepest heartstrings. I want to know Your voice and mirror Your ways. I choose Your ways over mine.

Give me oil in my lamp and grace me to be a wise attendant in these days I live in. I come to You with expectancy and joy. Amen!

(This article is an excerpt from chapter six of *Prayer Storm*. Other materials to build on your understanding come from *The Lost Art of Practicing His Presence Book* and *Consecrated, Contemplative Prayer Study Guide*).

How Do We Make an Entrance Into God's Presence?

We will be looking at the subject of opening the gates in the realm of the spirit. In the natural, gates are used for two primary purposes:

- To keep things or persons out by being closed.
- To let things or persons in by being open.

As it is in the natural, so it is as well in the spiritual.

A. From the Life of Abraham

“I will indeed bless you and I will indeed multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens and as the sand that is on the seashore. Your descendants will possess the gate of their enemies. Through your offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Gen.

22:17-18).

1. Gal. 3:16 – “Now the promises were made to Abraham and his Seed. He does not say, “and to seeds,” meaning many, but ‘and to your Seed,’ meaning one, who is Christ.”
2. It is through Christ that you are blessed. The power of the blessing will flow to such an extent that the power of the blessing will overpower the curse.
 1. Jesus is the seed (singular) who possessed the “gates” of the enemy. We also are to possess what Christ has redeemed for us.
 2. A “gate” is a portal, passageway, doorway, threshold, entrances or opening. We are to possess, buy back or take back those gates the enemy has stolen and open up—through the battering ram of Jesus’ name—gates which have historically been closed.

B. The Victor Has Overcome

Matt. 16:18 – And I tell you that you are Peter (*stone*), and on this rock (*petra*) I (*Jesus*) will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matt. 18; Rev. 1).

1. We are called to possess the gates.
2. Jesus is the victor who has overcome.
3. Jesus has taken the keys of death and Hades away from the enemy.
4. We have been given the keys of the enemy.
5. Remember gates are to: a) Shut—to keep things in and keep things out; b) Open—allow things in and out.
6. Little keys open big doors.
7. Let’s learn to put in the keys to set the captives free and for God’s glory to be manifest.

C. Gates of the Heavenly

Not only are there dark gates of the demonic worldly, but

there are good gates of the heavenly world—God’s kingdom. Through attitudes and actions of thanksgiving, sacrifice and praise we can make entrance into our Lord’s presence.

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise; give thanks to him, and bless his name” (Psalm 100:4).

D. Jacob and the Gate of Heaven

“Then Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Harran. He came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of that place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. He dreamed and saw a ladder set up on the earth with the top of it reaching to heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending on it. The Lord stood above it and said, ‘I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, to you will I give it and to your descendants. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your descendants all the families of the earth will be blessed. Remember, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you.’ Jacob awoke out of his sleep, and he said, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’” (Gen. 28:10-17).

1. Like in Jacob’s time, our dry, hard and rocky places can become places of visitation.

2. We need the “eyes of the Lord” to get proper spiritual understanding of the place we dwell in and to see the gates of heaven.

3. When we do, everything around us changes, we see through God’s redemption lens and see His purposes, plans and destiny.

E. A Psalm of David

“Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may enter. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may enter” (Psalm 24:7-9).

1. This is first of all, a Messianic prophecy concerning the historic moment when the King of Glory (Jesus Christ) would have the “keys” and would be welcomed into heaven.

2. In like manner our prayer becomes: “Open be the way for a great visitation.”

3. Let there be gateways opened from heaven to earth for the power and the glory and of His presence and God’s angelic army be released to come to our aid.

F. The Elders Gate—Jesus Our Chief Elder

“Her husband is known (respected, NIV) in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land” (Prov. 31:4).

1. It is my conviction that city church government will take on new understandings of being Gatekeepers of His Presence.

2. Church and marketplace leaders who will know what to let in and what to forbid into a city will be recognized and work together.

3. John 10:7-9 says, “Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.’”

4. Jesus will be honored as the Chief Gatekeeper in our midst and all other gatekeepers will honor and submit to His leadership.

How Do We Enter These Gates?

We enter through His gate through:

A. Praise

“But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise” (Is. 60:18b).

B. Worship

“Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable serve with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).

C. Sacrifice

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Ps. 51:17).

D. Thanksgiving

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise, give thanks to Him; bless his name” (Ps. 100:4).

E. Unity

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1).

F. Death

“Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27).

The Call to be Gatekeepers

There are many levels of being gatekeepers, but in one dimension we are all called to be gatekeepers of our own soul and mind as well as gatekeepers of His presence.

A. Gatekeepers of Our Minds

1. In the book of Nehemiah, part of building the walls was the gates being put in place. So symbolically it is also true with building the walls around our own soul. Isaiah 60:18 says, "But you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise."

2. The Hebrew word for 'Gates' is to think or render a decision.

3. *As you think, so you are.* Your quality of life is governed by what goes on in your mind. To be in a place of seating in the city gates of your own soul, then one must control his thoughts taking every thought captive to Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

B. From the Soul to the Spirit

We are to welcome into the gates of our soul, both individually and corporately the mind of Christ. Then in the pattern of the rewards for faithfulness, if you are faithful in the little you will be given much. God rewards faithfulness with increase. You will gradually graduate! You will go from the "soul" to the "spirit." Do you want to be a "spirit bearer" for the Lord? Then be faithful and watch Him by His grace reward your cooperation.

B. The Call Released

In our day, the Holy Spirit is looking for modern day Simeons and Annas who will minister in the temple and welcome the manifested presence of Jesus. "If they wait He will come" is a word that must be heard! The call for gatekeepers of His presence is going forth. Do you hear it? Will you be one?

The Brilliance of His Presence

A. Primary Text—Exodus 33:13-23

"Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, and that I

may find favor in Your sight. Consider too that this nation is Your people.' And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' Then he said to Him, 'If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here. For how will it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?' The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do this thing of which you have spoken, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name.' Then Moses said, 'I pray, show me Your glory.' Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live.' Then the Lord said, 'Indeed, there is a place by Me. You must stand on the rock. While My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and will cover you with My hand while I pass by'" (Ex. 33:13-22).

B. My Personal Testimony—An Invitation

One time when I was "resting" in the Lord's presence, the Holy Spirit said, I want to teach you to release the highest weapon of spiritual warfare." I continued to listen as I knew there must be more. I was eager to hear what He had to say on this subject as I had studied it for years. He continued, "I will teach you to release, the brilliance of My presence." In a moment, it seemed all theological debate on the issues of spiritual warfare were answered. What is the highest weapon? Why He is! He is the highest weapon of spiritual warfare. He wants us to be gatekeepers so we can release the brilliance of His great presence!

C. A Day in Your Courts

Yes, once you have truly tasted the goodness of the Lord's presence, nothing else will satisfy you! You are ruined for

the rest of your life! It is true! Oh how I have found it be true! A day is better than the best this world could ever offer! Tell the Lord now that you want to be a gatekeeper—a gatekeeper of His presence.

“For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give favor and glory, for no good thing will He withhold from the one who walks uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You” (Ps. 84:10-12).

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6 Ways to Grow Your Faith

Whereas we can view hope as a mental expectation of something good, faith arises in our hearts. And it grows as we follow Jesus. How can we encourage the growth of faith in our own hearts and in others'? Let me give you some scriptural examples of what causes faith to arise. By the grace of God, I can say that I have had encounters with the Lord in every one of these examples. It works!

1. Faith arises by the preaching of the gospel. Remember the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). He also wrote: “And we also [especially] thank God continually for this, that when you received the message of God [which you heard] from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the Word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its superhuman power in those who adhere to and trust in and rely on it]” (1 Thess. 2:13, AMP).

To learn more about the connection between the preaching of the Good News and the growth of faith, look at John 1:1, Romans 10:8 and Titus 1:3.

2. Faith arises through reading the written Word. The Word is powerful, and it causes the light of faith to shine (see Acts 17:13 and Psalm 119:105). On the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–32) after Jesus’ death on the cross, the disciples’ hearts burned within them as faith burst forth. It happened as they heard the written Word explained to them (by the Word Himself!).

3. Faith arises in times of prayer. Prayer is not just our yapping to God. Prayer pauses in communion to hear what He has to say. God says, “Before they call, I will answer” (Is. 65:24, NKJV) and “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3). Anytime you have received something from Him directly, your faith grows. With this dynamic in mind, read what God told the apostle Paul, and how His words built faith in Paul’s heart: “He [God] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom.

10:17).

4. Faith arises by means of a word of testimony or an exhortation. When you hear an account of a “God thing,” what happens in your heart? Faith arises; it comes by hearing. When you hear a testimony about healing or some amazing breakthrough, what happens? Faith arises in your heart and at times also in the corporate atmosphere around you. You believe. This must be true! It works!

We are supposed to encourage each other in our faith, either by speaking words of exhortation and truth, or by sharing good testimonies about the power of God in action (see also Col. 3:16).

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:23–25).

For further scriptural support of how a word “fitly spoken” (see Prov. 25:11) can produce faith in someone’s heart, review the recommendations of Colossians 3:16 and also see John 4:29, about the birth of faith in the heart of the Samaritan woman.

5. Faith arises because of dreams, visions and supernatural experiences. Dreams, visions and supernatural experiences except to raise faith represent a meshing of the supernatural realm with the human realm, and faith pulls them together. Thanks to Jesus’ sending of the Holy Spirit such experiences are not in short supply, nor do they belong only to a few elite individuals:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

When Saul was knocked down on the road to Damascus, the extraordinary experience birthed instantaneous faith in his heart, to the point that the violent, anti-faith bounty hunter became faith-filled, compliant and obedient: "He, trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'" (Acts 9:6).

Much later, when the apostle Paul found himself onboard the ship in the violent storm, it was the words of an angelic visitor that brought faith-grounded peace to the apostle Paul and his fellow travelers (see Acts 27:22–25). These are only a couple of scriptural examples of faith arising from a supernatural encounter.

6. Faith arises because of the audible voice of God. Paul's and Ananias' experiences included each of them hearing the audible voice of God (see again Acts 9:4–6, 10). Interestingly, the voice Paul heard was loud, while the voice Ananias heard was soft. The Lord knew that Ananias did not require the same treatment as Paul. In each case, the words spoken by the voice furnished just the right type of faith for the situation. Obviously Ananias needed a different type of faith (quietly courageous and decisive) from the type of faith that Paul needed at that profoundly life-altering moment.

Whether we hear a fresh word from God or whether we read a scriptural account of one, faith surges up inside us. Consider the effect of the voice from heaven that declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), or the audible words that John heard on Patmos: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'" (Rev. 1:8), or:

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7). And, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Rev.

22:12-13).

As soon as the meaning of the Word registers in the mind of the reader or hearer, faith rises up to meet it.

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Where Are the Josephs, Daniels and Esthers for Our Day?

When traveling by train from the Frankfurt, Germany region to Rossenheim in southern Bavaria in the middle of the night, I kept hearing the Holy Spirit speak to me over and over, "Where are the Daniels, the Josephs and the Esthers?"

As I have pondered deeply on this word for years, I believe the Holy Spirit is searching. Yes, He is on a quest to find believers who dream dreams at any cost, have a discerning spirit to properly interpret the times, and who learn to intercede out of a posture of revelation. Where are the Josephs and Daniels for this generation? Perhaps some of them are those reading this message studying to show yourself

approved as a workman for God.

Interpretations Belong to God

1. From the life of Joseph (Gen. 40:8)—"And they said to him, 'We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter for it.' Then Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.'

2. From the Life of Daniel (Dan. 1:17, 20)—"As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in every *branch of learning* and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all *kinds of visions and dreams*. ... In all matters of wisdom and understanding which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm."

3. From the Life of Issachar (1 Chr. 12:32)—"From the sons of Issachar, those having understanding of times and what Israel should do: two hundred of their captains with all their brothers at their command."

4. First Corinthians 12: 7, 8—"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for the common good. ... To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit."

5. Summation—What God did before, He wants to do again!

Basic Points for Interpreting Dreams

Revelation Is Full of Symbolism

As dreams, visions and revelations are full of symbolism, they need to be viewed much the same as parables. Ask the Lord to show you the central issue. When dreams, etc. are broken down into too many details, the meaning becomes increasingly obscure. Frame it out like a giant jigsaw puzzle and the rest of the pieces will fall into place and the picture will be

seen.

Dreams are the often language of emotions and therefore contain much symbolism. We must learn to take our interpretations first from Scripture, and then from our own life. How God spoke in Genesis will be similar to the symbols and types in the book of Revelation. This holds true in our own lives as well.

Three Realms for Interpretation of Symbols

The first place to look is in Scripture. The Bible is full of parables and allegories from which to draw types, shadows and symbols. Examples like the mustard seed being faith; incense being the prayers of the saints, seed representing the “Word of God” and the candlesticks being the church.

Second, dream symbols are often colloquial expressions which fill our memory bank. They become turned into pictorial language by the Holy Spirit. God takes the “sayings and idioms” and uses them to speak spiritual truth. An example is Gideon in Judges 7:9 -15, where a barley cake appears. Gideon grew up as a thresher of wheat and barley. The barley cake therefore was a symbol from his colloquial spiritual alphabet with distinct meaning to him.

The third realm of symbols comes from our own personal revelatory alphabet. In this case, the object or symbol does not mean the same to you as it would to others. Every believer has a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit also has a personal relationship with you and He will speak to you out of symbols from your own very life.

Major Points for Greater Understanding

Reduce the Dream to Its Simplest Form

1. With too much detail you will lose the interpretation. Keep it simple—with too much detail and you will obscure the

meaning—take the dream to the simplest form and build on that.

2. Context determines interpretation. The meaning is not always the same. An example: a seed can mean faith, the Word, the kingdom of God, a future harvest and so on. There are no formulas—1 Cor. 2—the things of the spirit are spiritually discerned, not naturally discerned.

3. Scenes of dreams or repetitious dreams. Is it four dreams or is it different aspects of the same issue? More than one dream in the same night is often a different look or version of the same message.

4. The First Questions to Ask

a. Are you observing? Where are you in the dream? If you are in the observation mode, then the dream is not about you. It is about someone or somewhere else. God does nothing without a witness observing issues.

b. Are you participating? Are you participating but still not the main figure? This dream is not about you as the center figure, but includes you.

c. Are you the focus? Is everyone watching you? First—where am I located in the encounter?

5. What are the objects, thoughts and emotions in the dream? Are there words in the dream? What impressions and thoughts are you left with when you are awakened or recall the dream? What is the intensity of the dream—the main emotion? You will know intuitively what are more important issues.

6. The cultural interpretive process. West vs. East—North vs. South There are cultural and social interpretations that must also be brought into our understanding. It depends on the sphere of one's influence how much they must consider these things.

7. Meditating on the Laws of God. Read Psalms 63:6, 77:12,

119:15, 143:5. We must gain understanding of the principles or metaphors of Scripture—meditate on them day and night. They can have layers of meaning!

Keeping Interpretation Simple

Summary of Things to Remember

1. Most of all, dreams should be interpreted on a personal basis first (John 10:3).
2. Most dreams should not be taken literally. They need interpretation (Dan. 1:17; Gen. 40:8).
3. God will use familiar terms you know (Matt. 4:19).
4. Ponder on the dream or revelation and ask the Holy Spirit for insight (Dan. 7:8; 8:15-16; Luke 2:19; 1 Cor. 2:10-12).
5. Ask the Holy Spirit what the certain thought, word or issue is in the revelation. Reduce the dream to its simplest form. What is the main thought? What object or thought occurs most often? Frame it out like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Once you get the frame, the rest of it will fit together.
6. Search it out in the Word. Dreams from the Lord will never go against His word (Prov. 25:2).
7. What did you sense and feel from the dream? Was it a good or evil presence, fear, love, concern, hopelessness, disappointment? What was the primary emotion?
8. Relate the dreams to your circumstances and spheres of influence.
9. Consecutive dreams often have the same or similar meaning (Gen. 41:1-7; 25-31). God will speak the same message more than once.
10. Interpretations can be three levels

- Personal
- Church–Congregation; city church; church in a nation; global body of Christ
- National and international, these can be governmental in nature.

11. More than one interpretation can come forth from one dream. Just as with Scripture, there is the historical context as well as the personal, present implication. So it is with dreams, etc. It might be a general word for the church with specific applications for yourself (or others).

12. Some dreams may only be understood in the future. They unfold over time. Details will make sense down the road.

13. Write down the summary, date it, where you were, the time if you woke up from it, the main emotions and a possible interpretation in a journal.

14. The key to proper interpretation is question, question, question. See Zechariah 4 as an example of “how to respond” to a revelatory experience. Humility is marked by being teachable.

Life Is More Than Dreams!

“If we idolize that primary mental image and cling to it too tenaciously, we may well despise the realization of the dream when it finally arrives. An overly cherished fantasy has the capacity to steal our joy and even blind us to the dream for which we have longed.” –Mark Rutland from *Dreams*, page 38.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 says not to base your life on dreams alone, “for when there is an abundance of dreams and futilities, then words increase too. Therefore it is God you should fear.”

May dreams be multiplied unto You!

The Controversy Over Unbridled Worship

Religious people think extravagant worship is a waste of time. But Mary of Bethany taught us that Jesus deserves only the best praise.

Do you want to be a passionate worshipper of Jesus the Messiah? Although we may sincerely desire to worship our Savior with abandonment, many of us have grown up in a religious or home environment where we were never allowed, or never encouraged, to freely express our emotions.

Emotions are the language of a person's internal state of being. They are a form of communication that powerfully conveys the intensity of things we are feeling on the inside. Unbridled emotion will permit us to express ourselves in free, spontaneous and profound responses to the God who longs to have intimacy with us.

God has always wanted to be near His people. In the beginning, the first human couple enjoyed open, unbroken intimacy and fellowship with their Creator as they walked with Him "in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8).

As we all know, sin broke that relationship and erected a "veil" of separation between the holy God and His own creation. God wanted to be near us so much—to repair the breach—that He became one of us. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, He "became flesh and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

By His death and resurrection, Christ tore away the veil and opened the way once more for face-to-face intimacy with the

Father. But intimacy with God is not automatic; it takes time and commitment, motivated by a **ravishing hunger for Him**. Typically we rush into our “time with God,” rattle off our list of requests and then rush off again. We must take the time to get to know Him as He knows us—just as His friends and disciples did.

Among Jesus’ closest friends when He was on earth was Mary of Bethany. She was one who publicly expressed her love for Jesus in an amazingly lavish way. The Bible tells us in John 12:1-3 that Jesus was attending a dinner party when Mary “took a pint of very costly ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.”

In another Gospel account, we read that Mary’s sister, Martha, complained to Jesus because Mary wasn’t helping her serve the meal; but Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the good part (see Luke 10:40-42). That part was to sit at the feet of her Lord and friend, rapt in His words and His holy presence (see v. 39). Then, in an act of breathtaking extravagance, Mary lavished her love on Jesus in a display of unbridled devotion and abandoned worship.

According to the parallel accounts recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, this supper on Jesus’ behalf was held in the home of a man known as “Simon the leper” (Matt. 26:6; Mark 14:3). Luke’s account further identifies Simon as a Pharisee (see Luke 7:36,39). Although some biblical scholars contend that the story related in Matthew, Mark and Luke is a record of two different women, it is possible that all four accounts tell of two different acts by the same person.

John’s account, however, is the only one that identifies Mary by name; the other Gospel writers refer to her simply as “a woman.” Luke goes a little further, identifying her as a “sinner” (Luke 7:37). In that context the word “sinner” (Greek hamartolos) refers specifically to an immoral woman, or a

woman of ill repute.

Matthew and Mark record that she poured the perfume on Jesus' head (see Matt. 26:7; Mark 14:3); Luke and John say that she poured it on His feet, adding the additional detail that she wiped His feet with her hair (see Luke 7:38; John 12:3). We know from the different accounts that Jesus' disciples as well as others were in attendance and witnessed Mary's controversial act.

Let's try to consolidate these various accounts and see if we can frame the complete picture. Jesus is in Bethany, the village where Lazarus, Martha and Mary live. While there, He attends a supper in the home of a Pharisee known as Simon the leper. Lazarus is also one of the dinner guests, as are Jesus' disciples and others, perhaps some of Simon's friends.

Martha is there to serve. It appears that this was not a small, intimate meal but rather a large dinner party.

Suddenly, in the middle of everything, Mary appears, carrying an ornate bottle of very expensive perfume. Seemingly oblivious to the presence of perhaps two dozen or more witnesses, she stands behind Jesus' feet, wetting them with her tears (see Luke 7:38). Breaking open the vial of perfume, Mary first anoints Jesus' head and then His feet.

Then, kneeling down, she gently and lovingly wipes Jesus' feet with her hair.

Such a blatantly public display of intimate affection probably caused a sudden embarrassed silence from everyone else in the room. For some, that embarrassed silence quickly became shocked outrage, but Mary didn't care. She was deeply in love with a man—the Messiah—who had forgiven her and saved her and who treated her with a love, dignity and respect that no one else had ever afforded her. Whatever else she may once have been or done, no matter how she may have wasted her life before, Mary is different now. **Jesus has changed her.**

Now she is bent on wasting her life on her Lord—the God who loved her and forgave her—and she doesn't care who knows about it or what anyone else thinks. For Mary, the expensive perfume means nothing; it is merely a symbol of the unrestrained love she feels in her spirit and of her determination from that day forward to waste her life on God.

Religious Criticism

It didn't take long for Mary's radical expression of love for Jesus to provoke strong criticism. "There were some with indignation within themselves, saying, 'Why was this ointment wasted? 5 It might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they grumbled against her" (Mark 14:4-5).

On the surface, the criticism appears quite practical and religiously correct. The perfume was worth 300 denarii, equivalent in those days to a year's wages for a common laborer. Why "waste" such valuable essence on one person (no matter who he was) in a matter of a few seconds?

This is the typical response of religious people when confronted with an act of genuine spiritual devotion; it is incomprehensible to them. The religious mind counts the cost of such extravagance and concludes that it is a waste. Such criticism is almost always clothed in pious garb: "The perfume might have been sold ... and the money given to the poor."

What religious critics fail to understand is that extravagant acts of abandoned, "wasted" worship that are motivated by unfettered **Love for God** need no justification or explanation before men. In fact, as I study the Bible, I find that extravagance in worship always wins out with God over self-conscious conservatism.

The real issue is whether we are trying to give attention or gain attention. God looks at the heart and welcomes the open, unfeigned adoration of His children, however it is expressed.

This is why Jesus **jealously** rose to Mary's defense. "Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. You always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish, you may do good to them. But you will not always have Me. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, what she has done will also be spoken of as a memorial to her'" (Mark 14:6-9). He cut right through the pious hypocrisy to focus on matters of the heart.

What is the true object of our love? Jesus said that wherever a man's treasure is, that is where his heart will be also (see Matt. 6:21). Mary's heart was in the right place, and Jesus affirmed her.

Once again, Mary had chosen that good part, and it would not be taken away from her. She wasted everything she had ever achieved or earned on her new Lord!

The Door to Greater Intimacy

Wasting our life on God is a doorway to greater intimacy with Him. It is a lifestyle practice that has been sorely missing in the modern, "fast-food" church for many years. It's beginning to make a comeback, however.

Hungry believers in all parts of the world and in every stream and denomination are starting to rediscover this lost key to the simpler, deeper life. The Lord Himself is stirring it up and bringing it to the remembrance and awareness of His people. He is raising up a company of friends, a society of the brokenhearted yet grateful.

This is neither a gender issue nor a theological, doctrinal or sectarian issue, but an issue of the heart; a heart overflowing with love and gratitude to the One who poured out and "wasted" His divine fragrance on us. What greater "waste" could there be but that "while we were still sinners, Christ

died for us" (Rom. 5:8)?

God is drawing and calling His people to a deeper, focused walk with Him, not just into the inner court but also all the way into the most holy place, that safe, quiet inner chamber to which He alone has the key. But He has given us the key and has invited us to come in.

Jesus said, "But you, when you pray, enter your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6:6). Our prayers are welcomed and received before Him just as Jesus welcomed and received Mary's tears that wetted His feet and her perfume that anointed His body for burial. Like Mary, a people of God are arising whose chief goal will be to waste their lives on Him.

A key to living a life wasted on God is to learn to enter the place of quietness before God; a place of meditation and what many writers of old have called contemplative prayer. That is where true intimacy and spiritual communion reach their fullest realization.

I invite you and challenge you to go on a journey with me to that secret inner place, a life wasted on Jesus. It is an invitation to join the society of the brokenhearted, a people of gratitude, meekness and faith who have felt the warm gaze of the Lord into their inmost being and have heard His affirmation, "I knew you were like that all the time."

Out of that brokenness will come forth a fragrance that will fill the house, the fragrance of abandoned, "wasted worship" and a life completely poured out for God. That fragrance will rise and be collected in heaven, where one day the Messiah Himself will be pleased to pour it back out as an ointment to draw His people to Himself and bring healing to the nations.

The road to **true intimacy with God** is an inward journey, proceeding into His presence through the entrance gate of

quietness of the soul. It is a narrow track that lies well off the beaten path, virtually unseen and ignored by the vast majority of humanity careening headlong through life. Although it is not easy to find, the riches and rewards are well worth the effort.

Why don't you begin to follow it? Set off today on a road less traveled and allow the adventure that awaits to whet your appetite to get "wasted" on Jesus!

James W. Goll is the founder of Encounters Network and Prayer Storm. He has written over 50 books and study guides and taken the power, presence and love of God to over 50 nations. Visit for more information.

Inspirationally Praying the Word

The Beauty of the Lord

I sense the intense desire of the Holy Spirit to take a whisk broom and dust off some of *The Lost Treasures of the Body of Christ* and present them as brilliant gems to gaze upon. Like a spiritual archaeologist or perhaps something like a modern-day Indiana Jones of the fabled movies, let's search through the treasure chest of God and church history and bring these jewels to the forefront once again.

Madame Jeanne Guyon, in her classic book, *Experiencing God through Prayer*, preserved great treasures for us from the past and we get to bring them forward in our day. She brought forth the following concepts: "In 'beholding the Lord,' you come to the Lord in a totally different way. ... As you come before the

Lord to sit in His presence ..., beholding Him, make use of the Scripture to quiet your mind. First, (prayerfully) read a passage of Scripture. Once you sense the Lord's presence, the Scripture has been wonderfully used to quiet your mind and has now brought you to Him."

One of the "lost arts" being recovered is growing more intimate with our Lord and gazing upon His beauty. It is the time-tested model often referred to as Christian reflective or meditative prayer. So let's start there for now and build upon these understandings.

Toward a Working Definition

Elmer L. Towns—Vice president of *Liberty University*

"Christian Meditative Prayer is about God, it is meditation that will change your life because you focus on God—and when you experience God, it is God who changes you."

Peter Toon—Author of *Meditating as a Christian*

"Meditation is ... (t)hinking about, reflecting upon, considering, taking to heart, reading slowly and carefully, prayerfully taking in, and humbly receiving into mind, heart and will that which God has revealed."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer—German author of *The Way to Freedom*

"Just as you do not analyze the assets of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, then accept the word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all."

Dr. Sam Storms—Author and founder of Enjoying God Ministries

"(Christian) Meditation, then, is being attentive to God. It is a conscious, continuous engagement of the mind with God. This renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:1-2) is part of the process by which the Word of God penetrates the soul and spirit with the light of illumination and the power of transformation."

7 Guidelines for Meditating on God's Word

The following seven guidelines all begin with the letter “P” are those that I have gleaned over the years from multiple authors and sources.

Memorize a Bible verse each day.

Prepare Yourself—Always begin by practicing the presence of the living God. Perhaps reading and chewing on Psalm 139:1-10 will help. Focus your attention on God’s inescapable presence, the intimate nearness of God Himself. Remember, we want to encounter the living Word of God. Now select your Scripture text.

Peruse the Word—By this I mean read, repeat the reading, write it out, re-write it, etc. Read your verse(s) aloud ever so slowly and marinate in their beauty.

We must keep in mind the difference between informative reading of the Scriptures and formative reading. The former focuses on the collecting information and the increase of knowledge. The purpose of the latter is to be formed or shaped by the Word by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Picture the Passage—Sanctify your thoughts and desires by the blood of Jesus. Then apply your surrendered natural senses to the truth contained within the Scripture verse. Then in worship to the One True God, Jesus Christ the Lord, let the Holy Spirit fill your senses—your entire being (Heb. 5:14). Personally engage in a relationship with the Holy Spirit to encounter or experience what the text speaks. Hear, feel, taste, smell and see the truths God reveals.

Ponder the Truths—Reflect on the truth of the Word; brood over the truth of the chosen Scripture; absorb it, soak in it, as you turn it over within your heart and soul. By all means, internalize and personalize the passage. Let the Word of God speak to you!

Pray the Word—This is now one of my favorite parts of the process. Take the truths, which the Holy Spirit has illuminated, and now pray them back to God, whether in petition, thanksgiving, intercession, spiritual warfare or declaration. I often sing my Scripture-based prayers back to God. It adds oil to the entire dynamic.

Praise Him!—Worship the Lord for who He is, what He has done and how it has been revealed in Scripture. Offer thanksgiving and the sacrifice of praise. Meditation ought always to lead us into adoration and celebration of the personhood of God Himself.

Practice His Presence—Commit yourself to doing what the Word of God commands. The aim of inspirational reading of the Word of God is transformation. The ultimate aim of Scripture-praying is pleasing God, fellowshiping with Him and obedience (see Josh. 1:8; Ps. 119:11).

Keeping It Simple

Remember:

1. Think on these things.
2. Ponder deeply.
3. Behold the rich love of God.
4. Muse on the works of His hands.
5. Meditate.
6. Consider.
7. Let the mind of Christ be in you.
8. Set your mind on things above.
9. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

BENEFITS OF INSPIRATIONAL PRAYING THE WORD

The Benefits of Scriptural Meditation

1. You gain insight and instruction of truth (Ps. 119:99, 2 Tim. 2:7).

2. You get a positive outlook on life (Ps. 104:34).
3. You deepen your love for the Scriptures and God (Ps. 119:97).
4. You become prosperous as you apply the insights gained (Josh. 1:8).
5. You grow and become stable in the Christian life (Ps. 1:2,3; John 15:4).
6. You develop a strong prayer life (John 15:7).
7. You are motivated to ministry (1 Sam. 12:24; 1 Tim. 4:15).
8. You are motivated to repent and live better (Ps. 39:3, Rev. 2:5).
9. You find the peace of God (Phil. 4:8-9).
10. You get a clear focus to guide you in making decisions (Matt. 6:33, Col. 3:2).
11. You focus your life on Christ (Heb. 12:3, 1 John 3:1).
12. You worship God in His majestic glory (Deut. 4:39).

Pray Without Ceasing

The Blessings of Scriptural Praying

1. Divine Protection: Psalm 91:1
2. Heart's Desire: Psalm 37:4
3. Joy of the Lord: Psalm 104:34
4. Peace of God: Isaiah 26:3
5. Overcoming Anger: Psalm 4:4
6. Overcoming Fear: Deuteronomy 7:17-19
7. Overcoming Sin: Psalm 119:11
8. Renewed Mind: Romans 12:2
9. Stability: Psalm 37:31
10. Wisdom: Psalm 49:3

THE GOAL: GETTING TO KNOW THE NEARNESS OF GOD

Getting Comfortable With God

Many of us struggle with resting and waiting in God's presence, perhaps because we think He has something against us

or we are just too busy. While He calls us into change, He does so by wrapping His arms of love all around us. God delights in hug therapy.

This might take some time before you learn to trust that the best place to be is in your Father's arms. But this will happen. Why? Because He is more committed to the journey than you are! So come on in and commune with Him. Encounter Him. He is waiting for you.

Let This Be Our Prayer

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His won glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:2-4).

Our Father, in the majestic name of Jesus, I declare that I to know You as intimately as You know me. Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, precious Lord, to Your ever-loving side. Identify the hard places in my heart and send forth Your Word, which shatters every rock. Give me a greater hunger for the written and living Word of God. By the ministry of the Holy Spirit and Your great grace, and by the power of the shed blood of the Lamb, set me apart and make me wholly Yours. I declare that the chief end of my life is to glorify You and enjoy You forever! Amen and Amen!

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Need Confirmation and Direction From God?

Are there any absolutes? Any standards or parts of the moral code that do not change? Most of the world seems to think that we are becoming more enlightened as time goes on, and that this means we must leave old standards behind. In the Western world, “inclusiveness” reigns supreme.

If you stand for absolutes, you are accused of being old-fashioned and not progressive enough. Even some Christians accuse other believers who hold to absolutes of having a “religious spirit” and of not understanding true love, mercy and grace. Well, I guess, count me in!

I, for one, am here to say that absolutes have not changed in God’s inspired, authoritative Word, the Bible. You can trust the God of the Word, and you can trust the Word of God.

The Bible—So Much More

Let’s take a fresh look at God’s Word, starting out with the words of Jesus the Word, as recorded in the Word!

The Authoritative Word

The disciple John wrote down Jesus’ reply to a group of Jewish men who were unhappy with Him because He had called Himself the Son of God, which they considered blasphemy.

Has it not been written in your Law, “I said, you are gods”? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, “I am the Son of God”? (John

10:34–36).

I want you to notice how Jesus referred to the Word here. First, He called it “*your Law.*” By that, He meant the Scriptures as the Jews knew them—the books that we call the Old Testament. The “*Law,*” in other words, did not refer only to the first five books of our Bible, known to Jews as the Torah, but also to all the rest of the books that had been collected as Scripture to date, including the Psalms. “The Law” was a broad term for the whole collection, referring to a wider range of books than just the ones that laid down rules and regulations.

Then Jesus said of the psalmist and the psalmist’s original audience, “If ... [these] to whom the word of God came...” Thus, we can see that Jesus recognized that the Psalms and the rest of the known Scriptures were the very “word of God.”

So, within two related sentences, Jesus referred to the “Law,” “the word of God,” and “the Scripture,” all three being equivalent. The word “Scripture” means “that which is written.” From this, we learn that the Bible does not contain the entire knowledge of God but rather is the authoritative portion of the vast spoken words of God for humankind that has been recorded in writing.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit

The entire Word of God has been inspired directly by the Spirit of God, as we read in Paul’s letter to Timothy (he was referring solely to our Old Testament, since the New Testament was just beginning to be written then): “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16 KJV). The word translated “inspiration of God” is the Greek word *theopneustos*, which means “divinely breathed in,” “God-breathed,” or “inspired by God.” *Theopneustos* is derived from

two other Greek words: *theos*, meaning "God," and *pneo*, meaning "to blow" or "to breathe hard." The word *pneo* is also connected to the Greek word for "spirit," *pneuma*, which literally means "wind" or "breath."

Again, this Spirit-inspired book will take the warp out of our lives. It will set our course straight and keep us from deviating from the path of righteousness. Light comes into your soul when you read the words of the Bible. If you put it away and stop looking at it, darkness can re-enter your soul; but the more you keep this Book in front of you, the more training in righteousness you receive.

Moved by the Holy Spirit

Not only has the Holy Spirit inspired the written Word, but He also inspires fresh words to this day. Such words never carry the same level of authority as the written Word, but that does not invalidate them. It's just that, as Peter and John wrote, the Spirit must verify any word from God and help us to understand it.

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

We need confirmation and direction from the written Word, which we can trust is thoroughly God-directed. The Greek word in the passage from 2 Peter that is translated "moved by" can also be rendered "directed their course by [had their course directed by]" or "borne along by." It's like sailing: Without the wind (we could say Wind), the sailboat doesn't go anywhere.

God controlled the human "vessels" who wrote the Scriptures by the interplay of His divine Spirit with their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical faculties. When the Spirit breathed on them, they were blown out of the natural realm

into the supernatural. They sailed over into revelation.

The Purified Word

By the time the Psalms were written, people had long been creating valuable objects out of silver. When the silver came out of the ground, it was impure, mixed with other elements. After being mined, each lump of stuff would be purified in a clay furnace or oven. David had that in mind when he wrote this line about God's words:

"The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6, NKJV).

The furnace made of earth (clay) represents the human element, while the silver represents the divine message. The fire ensures the absolute purity of the silver—that is, the message—and the notation "seven times" indicates the complete and perfect work of the Holy Spirit. (Seven is considered the number of completion or perfection.) Therefore, the Holy Spirit, while burning inside human hearts, overruled human frailties and errors in producing the divine message of Scripture.

The Consistency of Scripture

It's been settled—the Word of the Lord, that is: "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). When the psalmist wrote that line, he wanted to emphasize that the Word of God is not a product of time but of eternity. Eternity goes both ways—clear back to Genesis 1 (and beyond), and forward to the heavenly drama of John's Revelation (and beyond).

This was the testimony of Jesus, as well. He said, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). Even if all the elements of heaven or earth pass away, His words will hold firm; they cannot be destroyed. They stand through all the tests of time and eternity. No cataclysmic

event or ignorant interpretation can obliterate God's words. Forever, they remain as the standard of life.

Such was Jesus' confidence in the effectiveness and strength of the written Word that He selected certain Scriptures to cut down the lying temptations of Satan. During His 40-day wilderness sojourn, He confronted the devil's temptations with direct quotes from Scripture. Each time, He said, "It is written" and proceeded to quote a line from the book of Deuteronomy (see Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

Even Satan did not deny the absolute authority of Scripture. This shows us that the darkest evil is under subjection to the Word of God, which should be good news to those who adhere to the Scriptures.

"That the Scripture May Be Fulfilled"

Even when we have not yet seen a particular fulfillment with our own eyes, we can trust that the words foretelling it are true.

Jesus knew all the Scriptures that pointed to Him as the Messiah, and after His resurrection, He cited them on the road to Emmaus to two of His downcast disciples, who hadn't yet recognized who He was. "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27).

The prophets whose words are recorded in the Old Testament specifically and accurately predicted each of the following incidents in the earthly life of Jesus the Messiah: His birth to a virgin mother at Bethlehem, His flight into Egypt, His home in Nazareth, His anointing by the Holy Spirit, His ministry in Galilee, His healing of the sick, the rejection by the Jews of His teaching and miracles, His use of parables, His being betrayed by a friend, His being forsaken by His disciples, His being hated without a cause, His being condemned along with criminals, His garments' being parceled

out by lot to others, His being offered vinegar to quench His thirst on the cross, His body's being pierced without His bones being broken, His burial in a rich man's tomb and His resurrection from the dead on the third day. Again and again, the Word proves true.

You Can Trust the God of the Word

The earthly life of Jesus was guided in every aspect by the authority and prophetic influence of God's Word. The Word of God is cohesive, complete and all-sufficient. From Genesis to Revelation, it unfolds the nature and consequences of sin, along with the way of deliverance from sin and its consequences—through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we heed these words and obey them, we will find and receive true, abundant and eternal life.

Let the consistency and reliability of the Scriptures encourage you as you think about knowing God better, because He obviously *makes Himself known* in countless ways, and the Bible is one of His primary means. He is not hiding or keeping Himself remote and secret.

Instead of neglecting the written Word out of apathy or ignorance of its value, we need to devour it if we want to know its Author. Let the Word of God be your companion and friend. Believe me, there will always be something new to discover in it—for the rest of your life!

Great news, indeed! You have a lifetime to spend getting to know God by getting to know His Word.

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Adventures in Prophetic Diversity

I would love for it to be said of me that I was “like Anna,” (Luke 2:36-38) someone who focused on nothing and nobody except Jesus. In every prophetic word, long ones or short ones; every vision; every dream; every inspired prayer, I want to be declaring the testimony of Jesus (see Rev. 19:10). I want to be like John the Beloved, leaning my head on His chest, and then telling others about Him.

Do you love Him? If you love Him, your heart will overflow with words about Him. In loving Him, none of us will be exactly like Anna, because the overflow will take different forms. The message of love will come in different wrappings and it will be presented in different styles. Marketplace manners are a little different from prophetic conferences. Culture differs from place to place.

But the simple truth is that all adventures in the prophetic realm must be rooted in the same soil—expressing the love of God.

How Much God Loves Somebody Else

The prophetic gift helps us understand how much God loves us personally. But as the gift operates upon, in and through you, it becomes a demonstration of how much God loves someone else.

When you stir up the gift and release it, you are doing what the apostle Paul taught: “Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:1). Prophecy in its purest form is supposed to be about loving people with Jesus’ love. God has put into you a tiny

measure of His massive heart of love and His Spirit decides to open up a little spigot. Even a tiny measure of His love overwhelms us, whether it comes with signs and wonders or in the midst of a quiet, calm, little conversation.

For each of us, the various expressions of the prophetic gift differ, depending upon our personalities and what God has called us to. Each of us is a unique creature. God never uses a cookie cutter. The varieties of giftings and ministries that we read about in the New Testament become further varied as they are expressed through such a wide variety of individuals. "There are various gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. There are various operations, but it is the same God who operates all of them in all people" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

Relevant Shifts

Besides the differences in personalities and in applications of the prophetic gifts, I am continually noticing additional diversity in the prophetic realm. Within the body of Christ, we are finding a wider ethnic diversity than ever before, and we are also hearing fresh voices. More new people are just over the horizon.

We are hearing new prophetic sounds, in terms of up-to-the-minute media presentations. Continuous change seems to be the new norm. New ways of thinking require flexibility and adjustment. From prophetic evangelism at New Age fairs to solemn assemblies of hungry, passionate young people, the name of Jesus is being proclaimed as never before.

Year after year, new models of kingdom life are developing. They include everything from megachurches to small house churches, from crowded stadiums to widely dispersed webcasts. Some flourish in places that have become centers of spiritual life, while others remain hidden from the public eye. Such a wide variety of new possibilities abound in this shifting

prophetic landscape that I have tried to capture them in a *memorable* way. Here are my “nine M’s”:

1. *Mighty* streams of prayer and praise, combined with the prophetic, are encouraging the *manifest presence* of God. The worship movement is maturing and bringing us into higher realms of glory.
2. *Miracle manifestations* are proliferating, not only in Third World countries, but also in the West.
3. *Marketplace ministry*, never heard of until recently, is increasing. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Christians exercise their prophetic gifts in their places of secular employment, bringing much-needed wisdom and prophetic intercession into new situations.
4. The *matrix* of relationships. The gifts do not thrive in isolation; they require a healthy relational community of faith.
5. *Missions* outreach. In spite of world recession and the well-established indigenous church, both long-term and short-term missions continue to be launched, based in many countries, including new places.
6. *Middle East* emphasis: God is doing something in Israel and in the regions surrounding Israel as people bring the gospel of the kingdom to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (see Rom. 1:16).
7. *Ministry* training. With the proliferation of ministry training centers and the organic spreading of the mentoring movement, established prophets, pastors and teachers are able to give away what they have earned and learned. People are realizing that the little bit they have may be someone else’s magnificent meal
8. *Mercy ministries*. My late wife, Michal Ann Goll,

responded to a call for this one. She ministered in Mozambique, Thailand, Burma, among the First Nations and wherever else she was able to release the message that Compassion Acts.

9. *Media mania*—another way of saying that every new means of communication, public and private, is being used by people of the kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is helping the worldwide church to achieve a remarkable level of unity and energy in “doing the stuff.” Whether we face more storms or times of fulfillment, it is time to seize the moment, listening to the Spirit for direction. The body of Christ is accepting an incredible opportunity to shift and move into kingdom alignment.

Getting It Together

I wish personal character could have been an outright gift of the Spirit like the gift of prophecy or the word of wisdom. Our character flaws contribute more to our ministry failures than any other factor. And yet, bequeathing us such puny character represents a stroke of genius on the part of God, who wants us to rely on Him for everything.

Here He is, living inside each person who names Him as Lord, with a goal of transforming us into His image day by day. As we come into union with the Creator of the universe, who knows us better than we will ever know ourselves, we grow in our experience of new creation realities. Christ in us is the hope of glory (see Col. 1:27).

The Spirit who dwells inside us is also the spirit of prophecy, and as you will remember, the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (see Rev. 19:10). As the spirit of prophecy draws you continually to the Lord of love, you will know God better and better.

There is our cure for weak character—and our primary prophetic message. What an adventure this life with Him is turning out to be! Yes, there will be a generation that walks in the double: fullness of fruit (character) and fullness of power (gifts of the Holy Spirit). And when we add the Spirit of Wisdom to that, oh, what an adventure that will truly be!

James W. Goll is the founder of Encounters Network and Prayer Storm. He has written over 50 books and study guides and taken the power, presence and love of God to over 50 nations. Visit for more information.

10 Pictures of Christian Reflective Prayer

The Lord is truly revealing fresh insights into these ancient truths. As you know, books have often been my mentors in my journey in life and ministry. The following is a combination of gleanings of years of research and time just spent with the Father.

The David Model: Considering God's Creation and Might

From the Life of David

Imagine as the shepherd boy David spent many nights under the stars—looking, gazing, pondering, musing on creation and God the Creator. Creation is where most all of us first encounter God. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handwork (Ps. 19). Before people first read about God in the Scriptures, they tend to learn about our heavenly Father through nature. Consider the rainbow—a sign of God's covenant after the great flood (Gen. 9:13). Study the David

Model to meditate on the splendor and majesty of God.

Scripture Passages on God's Majesty

Job 37:1-24

Psalms 8:1-8

Psalms 19:1-4

Psalms 29:1-11

Psalms 39:1-13

Psalms 90:1-17

Isaiah 40:1-31

Isaiah 44:1-45

The Mary Model: Pondering the Person of Jesus

From Mary the Mother of Jesus

Can you begin to imagine what Mary pondered on? Just think—the Son of God growing inside of you. You feel His heart beat; you feel His foot move; you bring Him to birth! Truly, one of the closest people ever to Jesus was His mother, Mary. Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart (Luke 2:19). She knew Him better than anyone, yet just like us, she wanted to know Him still better. Mary becomes our example of what it means to really know Christ—to come into intimacy with the lover of our soul. Let's join in her model of meditating on the person of Christ Jesus.

Scripture Passages on the Person of Jesus

Matthew 1:18-2:23

Matthew 3:13-4:11

Matthew 9:35-10:7

Matthew 16:13-17:13

Luke 2:42-52

Luke 24:1-53

John 1:1-18

John 2:1-12

John 13:1-35

John 19:1-42

Philippians 2:2-12

Hebrews 5:5-14

Revelation 1:9-20

Revelation 19:11-16

The Saint John Model: Thinking About the Cross

From the Life of John the Beloved

When you consider the St. John Model of meditation you center your focus on the finished work of the cross of Jesus. John was the only one of the 12 disciples to stand at the foot of the cross and actually witness the death of our Savior. It changed John. It will change you too. You too will boast only in the great immense love of God. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. Let's follow John's example and always keep the love of God demonstrated through the cross of Christ ever before us.

Scripture Passages on the Cross

Isaiah 53:1-12

John 19:16-37

Acts 4:10-12

Romans 3:21-26

1 Corinthians 11:23,24

Ephesians 1:7; 2:13-18

Colossians 1:14; 2:9-15

Hebrews 9:11-28

1 Peter 1:18-23

The Joshua Model: Focusing on Biblical Principles

From the Life Joshua, the Successor of Moses

Those who follow the Joshua Model of meditation muse on the promises and principles of God's Word to bring them God's

success. This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success (Josh. 1:8). Wow! Joshua chewed on the words given to him by God through Moses and thus he found success. Should we not learn this art of meditation of focusing on biblical principles and bear much fruit?

Scripture Passages for Focusing on Biblical Principles

Joshua 1:1-9

Psalm 19:7-14

Psalm 119:1-176

Jeremiah 15:16

John 6:63-69

Acts 17:11

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Hebrews 4:12

The Saint Paul Model: Becoming Like Christ

From the Life of Paul the Apostle

Here we find the example of meditating or becoming like Christ from the life of Paul who said, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth" (Col. 3:2). Paul taught others to follow his example: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Perhaps we, like Paul, could become so heavenly minded that we become of earthly good!

Scripture Passages on Becoming Like Christ

Galatians 2:19-21

Philippians 2:5-12
Colossians 1:14-23
Colossians 3:1-11
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
2 Timothy 2:15
Philemon 4:21

The Timothy Model: Meditating on Your Calling and Giftings

From the Life of Young Timothy the Disciple

The Timothy Model reminds you to consider God's unique calling in your life and the reason He has gifted you for service. Remember the admonition, Do not neglect the gift that is in you ...meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all (1 Tim. 4:14,15). We too can grasp a clearer vision of what the Lord has for us if we will pause, reflect and meditate on God's mission for our life and therefore achieve greater effectiveness just as young Timothy was urged to do.

Scripture Passages on Meditating on Your Gifts

Acts 13:1-4
Romans 1:11-16
Romans 11:29-12:1-8
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Ephesians 4:7-16
1 Timothy 4:11-16
2 Timothy 4:1-2

The Haggai Model: Considering Your Failures

From the Life of Haggai the Prophet

In learning to meditate as Haggai did, we look at our problems, failures and sins and "consider [our] ways" (Hag. 1:5, 7). Haggai motivates us to look at our shortcomings, change our thinking and then change our ways. By considering

the flaws we can learn not to repeat them.

Scripture Passages About Problem-Solving

Haggai 1:3-11

Haggai 2:14-19

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 15:1-27

Romans 10:17-21

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

1 John 1:7-2:11

The Asaph Model: Meditating on God's Intervention

From the Life of the Psalmist Asaph

Asaph wrote 12 psalms that exalt the Lord for His interventions in his life. What God did for Asaph in the past, (and you and I also) will present a key of encouragement for difficult times for the future. "I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your work and ponder on Your mighty deeds" (Ps. 77:11-12). Through this model you will be encouraged to record significant answers to prayer so you can remember God's faithful ways.

Scripture Passages on God's Intervention

Psalm 3

Psalm 50

Psalm 77

Psalm 79

Psalm 82

Psalms 90

Acts 9:20-25

The Malachi Model: Meditating on God's Name

From the Life of Malachi, The Last Old Testament Prophet

Here we find a model of meditating on the names of God. Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name (Mal. 3:16). Each name of God depicts a unique character or task of God that teaches us more of who He is and how He relates to us. Practicing the Malachi Model draws us into a greater trust relationship with the one who holds our hand.

Scripture Passages for Meditating on the Names of God

Exodus 3:14-15

Exodus 33:18-34:8

Psalms 138:1-8

Malachi 3:16-4:2

Matthew 6:9-13

John 4:19-26

1 John 2:12

The Sons of Korah Model: Contemplating Intimacy With God

From the Life the Sons of Korah as Portrayed in the Psalms

The Sons of Korah Model focuses on knowing God intimately. Twelve descriptive psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah who declared, "We have thought of Your lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Your temple" (Ps. 48:9). These psalmists loved and longed to know God more deeply. This generation was different from their patriarchal Korah, who was judged by God for not coming into the sanctuary of God. But the sons cried out, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps. 42:1-2). Oh yes, let's follow the next generation and hunger for His presence and meditate on the call to greater intimacy with God.

Scripture Passages on Intimacy With God

Psalms 2

Psalm 46:1-11

Psalm 84

Matthew 6:1-34

John 15:1-7

John 17:1-26

I John 2:1-18

I John 4:7-21

I trust that this Scripture teaching has been a blessing to you. If you want to learn more on this and other related subjects, then I need to refer you to the book *The Lost Art of Practicing His Presence* and the study guide *Consecrated, Contemplative Prayer* and the full class in our online school.

Dr. James Goll is the Founder of Encounters Network, Prayer Storm and helps carry on the work of Compassion Acts. For information on his online school visit: . James continues to live in TN and is a joyful father and grandfather today.

A Fresh Word for God's Women in This Hour

“When the leaders in Israel lead, when the people freely volunteer, bless the Lord!” (Judg. 5:2).

This comes from a rather intense story found right in the middle of the pages of Bible concerning Deborah the Deliverer (read Judg. 4-5). But as a male spiritual leader, I have something to say to you, mighty women of God! We cannot afford for you to be fearful “little women” in your own eyes. It is time for you to *arise!* We need you!

Instead, you must arise like Deborah of old and pick up your

warrior's mantle for such a time as this. Today, across the globe and right in our own backyards, there are enemies on the rampage tearing apart society at every corner. My late wife, Michal Ann Goll, and I founded the Women on the Frontlines conference movement. In her inaugural book, *Women on the Frontlines – A Call to Courage*, she issued a clarion call that still needs to be answered today.

We live in an age that is sorely lacking in heroes. Think about it. Who can we look at today and regard as a hero? Certainly there are some, but they sure are hard to find!

Isaiah the prophet said that when a people comes under judgment, God takes away wise leadership from the land—the hero, warrior, judge, prophet, elders and others (see Isaiah 3:1-4, NIV). During a time of restoration, the Lord restores the land. We are now entering a time of restoration, and the Lord is calling us to be heroes.

He is preparing us for a time soon to come when the world will cry out for leaders who are in touch with the heart and the mind of God (Michal Ann Goll, *Women on the Frontlines*, 145).

It's time to *arise* and carry Deborah's heart and anointing! But to do so, you must hold close to your heart the teachings of Zechariah 7:9-10, which says, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts: Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother. Do not oppress the widow, orphan, sojourner, or poor. And let none of you contemplate evil deeds in your hearts against his brother."

Who was Deborah anyway? She was a prophetess, a judge, a wife, a warrior and a worshipper of her God and ultimate King. Deborah brought healing, deliverance and restoration to her land. She changed the justice system and she brought trade and commerce back to her people. She and Barak joined together in the infamous battle against Sisera, and won!

It's time for men and women to join together and provide real

leadership and justice like Deborah and Barak. As a male spiritual leader in the global prayer and prophetic movement, I say to you, "arise!" Come on now! We can do the same today! Change society. Shift the courts. Bring revival and restoration to the land. Because, always remember, together in Jesus, we make a great team!

Be sure to tune in to my podcast, "God Encounters Today," on the Charisma Podcast Network. [Click here to subscribe!](#)