

When God Draws Near, Everything Changes

When God draws near, everything changes!

Your agenda changes. Your program changes. Your opinion changes.

And most importantly, your heart changes.

When God draws near, your hunger and quest for greater intimacy with God is forever changed!

You desperately need God's manifest presence.

Do you desire His presence more than anything else in this life?

It is often stated that His presence with you is His greatest present to you! In this season of giving and receiving of gifts, I can shout a loud "Amen" to that statement!

"Here's the one thing I crave from Yahweh, the one thing I seek above all else: I want to live with him every moment in his house, beholding the marvelous beauty of Yahweh, filled with awe, delighting in his glory and grace. I want to contemplate in his temple" (Ps. 27:4, TPT).

The Quest for Greater Intimacy!

You cannot fully achieve true intimacy with God until you learn how to come before Him in quietness of spirit, mind and body.

An atmosphere of stillness is absolutely essential for us if you wish to experience deep, loving communion with your Lord.

David the psalmist wrote, "I am standing in absolute stillness, silent before the one I love, waiting as long as it

takes for him to rescue me” (Ps. 62:5).

The prophet Habakkuk proclaimed, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him” (Hab. 2:20, NASB). When Elijah listened for the counsel of God, he heard the Lord not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in “a still small voice” (see 1 Kings 19:11–13, NKJV).

In Psalm 46, the Lord calls on us to “Be still and realize that I am God” (v. 10, TPT).

This “realizing” goes far beyond mere informational knowledge.

The Hebrew word *yada* is used for all types of knowledge, including the most intimate relationships. It is the same word used in the phrase “And Adam knew Eve his wife.”

To know God in this sense means to have His Spirit infilling you, His breath inspiring you and His heart invigorating you.

Knowing God means to be brought into vital, personal union with Jesus Christ your Lord. That’s the kind of intimacy He seeks with you but entering into it requires quietness of spirit on your part.

Unfortunately, society does not encourage or prepare you for quietness. You are surrounded daily by a bedlam of competing voices—both good and evil—that constantly clamor for your attention.

If you don’t know how to listen, the “still small voice” of God can easily be drowned in the din.

Identifying the Hindrances

In your quest for intimacy with God, you face two primary hindrances: external distractions and internal chaos.

The first involves disturbances and interruptions that come from your surroundings while the second relates to struggles

on the battlefield of your mind.

Neither of these will go away on their own or by accident. You must conquer them by firm commitment and deliberate action.

When you are free of external distractions, you can center down into your heart.

The phrase “center down” in church history comes from the Quakers. “Centering” is a truth the Quakers have stewarded for generations and it is a major part of their theology.

Basically, to center down means to recognize the center of quiet in the midst of the storm of your soul—kind of like the eye of a hurricane—and to focus on that center until the surrounding turmoil fades away.

Even though your soul may be rushing and roiling, there is a quiet place in the center where God commands peace and where His kingdom is manifested.

It is in that center of quiet where you meet God in genuine fellowship and close communion. Achieving quietness of spirit is the means to that end; it is not an end in itself.

This center of quiet is often not easy to find. You must consciously desire it, deliberately plan for it and diligently pursue it.

The rewards of success will justify all the time, energy, effort and rigorous self-discipline required to get there. You will be at peace in the presence of your Lord. In these moments, you are aware that in stillness God draws near to your heart.

David summed it up well when he wrote, “Quiet your heart in his presence and wait patiently for Yahweh. . . . But the humble of heart will inherit every promise and enjoy abundant peace” (Ps. 37:7, 11).

This type of contemplative waiting on God is just one of many legitimate expressions of prayer. And while it is not a “quick fix” to all your problems, it is a powerful yet sorely neglected weapon in God’s arsenal to help you find His safe path through the perplexing maze of life.

The Lost Art of Meditating on Scripture

One practice that is very helpful in learning to quiet yourself before the Lord is to meditate on a passage of Scripture.

Understand me here. I’m not talking about some Far East or New Age method of emptying the mind but rather a focused concentration on a portion of God’s Word.

You are not to be empty-headed but rather Christ-minded.

As you let your mind dwell on Scripture, the Holy Spirit, who inspired all Scripture, interprets it in your heart and brings your spirit into harmony with Himself. God’s Word is alive and active, and meditating on it can usher you into the realm of the Spirit.

Meditating on Scripture is different from simply reading it.

In meditation, you focus on one or two verses at most, sometimes only part of a verse, a single phrase or even just one or two words. You mull over these words: chewing on them, reflecting on them and turning them over in your mind to look at them from every angle.

As you concentrate on the Scripture, the Holy Spirit will use the living Word of God to bring you into the presence of God Himself.

The primary purpose of meditating on Scripture is to bring you to your Beloved.

When You Draw Near, God Draws Near

Many times it is easy to be too mechanical or too technical in your approach to the Bible. You may focus on studying Scripture, dissecting and analyzing the verses, formulating theology and doctrine and such.

All of that is fine and good, but if you stop there, you miss the point. In fact, you will miss the Person!

You don't want to be like the religious leaders to whom Jesus said, "You are busy analyzing the Scriptures, poring over them hoping to gain eternal life. Everything you read points to me, yet you still refuse to come to me so I can give you the life you're looking for—eternal life!" (John 5:39–40)

Bible study is very important but in the end, it accomplishes little if it does not lead you into a *personal encounter* with the Divine Author.

Yes, His presence with you is His greatest present to you.

Have you considered that your greatest present to God is your presence back to Him? In this season of giving and receiving of gifts, God desires your presence as well.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." (James 4:8, ESV)

And when God draws near, everything changes! {eoa}

Dr. James W. Goll is the founder of God Encounters Ministries. He is an international bestselling author, a certified Life Language Coach, an adviser to leaders and ministries and a recording artist. James has traveled around the world ministering in more than 50 nations sharing the love of Jesus, imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry and life in the Spirit. He has recorded numerous classes with corresponding curriculum kits and is the author of more than 50 books, including *The Seer*, *The Prophet*, *The Discerner*, *The Lost Art of Intercession* and *Praying with God's Heart*. James

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Courageous and Prophetic Women of Faith, Part 1 (Old Testament)

Women have been faithful and courageous champions over the centuries for the whole history of the people of God.

We do not know about as many of them as we could, because the (largely male) history writers have ignored or minimized their accomplishments.

Naturally, another reason we don't know about all the great women of the past is that many of them were restricted from taking leadership. To some extent, this is still the case, which makes women's accomplishments all the more notable.

We are all supposed to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (see 1 Peter 5:6). By building a culture within the church of honor and relational authority, we can esteem one another across traditional dividing lines because, in Christ, there is no male or female (see Galatians 3:28). The simple fact of the matter is that in giving His gifts, God does not

discriminate because of gender.

“In the last days,” God says, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18, NLT).

With the Scriptures as our guide, let’s take a quick look into the courageous and prophetic women in the Old Testament.

Women Called Prophetesses in Old Testament Scripture

Let’s start back at the Exodus with *Miriam*, sister of Moses and Aaron. She was known as a spokesperson for God particularly as a leader in music and dance:

“Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them, ‘Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea’” (Exod. 15:20–21, NASB1995).

Moving on through the years, we find *Deborah*, who is mentioned in an unapologetic way as one of the judges of Israel. As a prophetess and judge, she stood before God on behalf of Israel and she was an advisor to the military leader Barak, as recorded in Judges 4. Eventually, because of Deborah’s leadership acumen, she was called a “mother in Israel” (see Judges 5:7).

Huldah was another early prophetess in Israel. This prophetess and keeper of the wardrobe sought the prophetic word of the Lord on behalf of the young King Josiah (see 2 Kings 22:14). There were other prophets in Israel at the time but King Josiah sought her out because of her seasoned and influential ministry as a prophetess.

Then we have the unnamed woman who was *Isaiah’s wife*. Almost

nothing was recorded about her, as Isaiah mentioned her only once: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son" (Isa. 8:3, NKJV). Some scholars have said that she was called "the prophetess" only because she was Mrs. Isaiah. I have personally come to believe that Isaiah and his wife operated as a prophetic team!

Courageous Women in the Old Testament

Some of the women mentioned in Old Testament were not called prophetesses but played important and courageous roles in prophetic events. Their example of godly obedience should encourage you to follow in their footsteps, "doing exploits" (see Daniel 11:32).

The prophetess/judge Deborah had told the army commander Barak that he should march against the forces of Sisera, their enemy—specifically saying that he (Barak) would prevail. What she did not say was how this prophetic word would be fulfilled. (The complete story is told in the fourth chapter of the book of Judges.) Barak marched and he did prevail in battle but the commander Sisera fled on foot and escaped. He happened to take refuge in the tent that belonged to a woman named *Jael* who rose to the occasion.

Jael was shrewd and brave. She welcomed the fugitive into her domain and gave him milk to drink. At her invitation, he lay down and fell into an exhausted sleep. Then:

"Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, 'Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.' And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple (Judg. 4:21–22).

Jael did her valiant part to serve the purposes of God, as

prophesied by Deborah.

In a later time, we learn from the scriptural account that a woman named *Abigail* behaved wisely and graciously in the face of an unfortunate conflict that had deadly potential (see 1 Samuel 25).

Her wealthy, “harsh and evil” husband Nabal (who, as she said herself, was “a worthless man”) rebuffed the generous assistance of David’s men to his men. David, still on the run from King Saul, took offense in turn. Things could have escalated badly. But Abigail intervened, presenting gifts to David and his men and praising him while apologizing for her husband’s actions. Disaster was averted. Within a short time Nabal died, whereupon David claimed Abigail as his wife.

Another such woman was so heroic that an entire book of the Bible is devoted to her: Queen *Esther*.

In brief, Esther, a Jewish woman in the harem of the Persian king Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes) in the capital city of Susa, caught wind of a nefarious plot against her fellow Jews. She had kept her own Jewish identity a secret. A nobleman named Haman found an excuse to promote a decree that every one of the Jewish people would be slaughtered across the land.

Tipped off by her guardian and cousin Mordecai, who told her, “who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” (Esth. 4:14), Esther insightfully deployed a plan to thwart the genocide.

After fasting for three days, she invited the king and Haman to a series of two banquets, and at the second one she revealed what Haman planned to do. He was hanged on the gallows that Haman had erected prematurely for Mordecai and the Jewish population was spared not only within Susa, but across all one hundred and twenty-seven of King Ahasuerus’ provinces.

By her prayer, fasting, courage and prophetic insight, godly Queen Esther had saved the entire Jewish race.

Before we finish the Old Testament, we would not want to miss the nameless *Proverbs 31 woman*, who was prophetic in both her insight and her lifestyle. She was an excellent woman and her worth was far above jewels. "Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 'Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:28-31).

By presenting such a sweeping composite of admirable qualities, the term "Proverbs 31 Woman" signifies all of the best that a woman has to offer in any culture or period of history.

Let's not forget that the highest form of being prophetic, if not just giftedness, is your lifestyle!

A Culture of Mutual Honor

The Spirit invites us to be all that we can be in Christ Jesus. As men and women of faith, we are equals before Him, co-heirs of His grace and gifts.

My aim and goal is to live out the kingdom cultural value of "Mutual Honor." What a high calling!

Jesus consistently honored women and after He rose from the dead and ascended, He left behind a growing church full of fiery women who proclaim, "He is not here. He is Risen!"

Women, I invite you to join the courageous and prophetic ranks of those who have gone before you in doing exploits for Christ Jesus!

Men, I invite you to join me in doing those same exploits while confidently cheering for and encouraging the women

champions of our day!

Let's Pray:

Father, we are thankful for all of the progress that has been made over the centuries and decades within the church to ensure that women can be welcomed to become all they can be in Christ Jesus. We call forth prophetic women to be modern-day Annas, Deborahs and Priscillas for the sake of this generation and the generations to come. Raise them up! May prophetic women everywhere flourish in a culture of honor to the end that they can influence every sphere of public and church life, helping You to expand Your glorious kingdom. For Jesus Christ's sake and in His name, Amen and Amen! {eoa}

Dr. James W. Goll is the founder of God Encounters Ministries. He is an international bestselling author, a certified Life Language Coach, an adviser to leaders and ministries and a recording artist. James has traveled around the world ministering in more than 50 nations sharing the love of Jesus, imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry and life in the Spirit. He has recorded numerous classes with corresponding curriculum kits and is the author of more than 50 books, including *The Seer, The Prophet, The Discerner, The Lost Art of Intercession and Praying with God's Heart*. James is also the founder of GOLL Ideation LLC, where creativity, consulting and leadership training come together.

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Hope Restores in Every Situation

Every one of us goes through dark valleys and troubled times. But in Christ Jesus we have hope. And hope restores in every situation—no matter how dark it may seem.

To say that the last year has been challenging would be an understatement for most of the world.

On a national level, almost everyone has experienced a COVID-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty. Added to that, you may have walked through political volatility or personal struggles like a job crisis, health challenges or relational struggles.

After you have walked with the Lord long enough, you begin to see the truth that the place of trouble always, always leads to a door of hope.

Always.

God takes your deepest valley, your Valley of Achor, and He transforms it into a door of hope.

After the door of hope, Hosea says, comes joyful celebration: “She will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt” (Hos. 2:15, NASB1995).

You will sing and celebrate as Miriam did when God had worked a miracle and delivered the Israelites from Egypt, right through the midst of the Red Sea (Exod. 15:20).

Don't Stop in the Middle

But too many people stop in the middle.

Perhaps you can't get even a glimpse of the door of hope so you sit down. I know; I've done it.

But if you believe that the valley is only a way of passage through to the mountain heights, the only logical thing to do is get back up and keep moving again.

This means that if you find yourself in a valley right now, keep on walking.

As you walk, you will be gaining new strength so that you will be capable of climbing the mountain when you get there. And once you get high enough up on the mountainside, your perspective will change about the valley of trouble behind you.

You will surely exclaim, "Why, that valley is full of flowers. Just look at them! Look at that rushing brook. Look at that green grass. I must have missed it when I was down there!"

You will be so glad you kept walking because hope restores.

He Restores What Is Lost

There is a crazy story about the prophet Elisha and an iron ax head that floated on water, and the story foreshadows the events that made Jesus our Redeemer.

Here is a quick review of the story:

"One day the group of prophets came to Elisha and told him, 'As you can see, this place where we meet with you is too small. Let's go down to the Jordan River, where there are plenty of logs. There we can build a new place for us to meet.'

"'All right,' he told them, 'go ahead.'

"'Please come with us,' someone suggested.

“‘I will,’ he said. So, he [Elisha] went with them.

“When they arrived at the Jordan, they began cutting down trees. But as one of them was cutting a tree, his ax head fell into the river.

“‘Oh, sir!’ he cried. ‘It was a borrowed ax!’

“‘Where did it fall?’ the man of God asked.

“When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at that spot.

“Then the ax head floated to the surface. ‘Grab it,’ Elisha said. And the man reached out and grabbed it” (2 Kings 6:1–7 NLT).

Have you ever flown off the handle? Have you ever lost your head? Have you ever been defeated right in the middle of your hard work?

Have you ever experienced a loss that you just can’t fix? Have you ever forgotten until the mishap occurs that what you have lost was actually borrowed? Your life is not your own, you know.

But the remedy for the lost ax head points to the remedy for every one of your losses. You find it at the end of the story.

Elisha had the man point to the exact spot where the ax head had entered the water. (In the same way, God has you humble yourself and identify honestly what has happened.)

And then, wonder of wonders, there is hope after all!

Elisha cut a stick from a tree. (The cross of Jesus is called the “tree.”) He pulled back his arm and lobbed the stick right to that spot. A miracle occurred. The heavy ax head that had just sunk like a stone to the bottom of the river bobbed to the surface as if it were made of wood itself.

Hope!

Miracles still happen. They never happen the way you may think they should but in the end, you are altogether grateful.

With God, your valleys of trouble yield to doorways of hope every time. And hope restores.

I'm grateful to report that years ago, my cancer miracle happened in Zion, Illinois. I had to endure some extremely difficult and expensive treatments. I also had some powerful prayer afterward. But as I sat in a small examination room, uncertain of what I would hear, my doctor matter-of-factly told me that my cancer was gone.

"What? Could you repeat that?"

"Your cancer is gone. It melted."

"You said the cancer melted?"

"Yes, it melted and is no longer in your body."

I left the treatment center stunned by what I had just heard. I found a small, quiet restaurant and took out my phone to share the amazing news with my four children and a few close friends. Waves of gratitude and awe washed over me each time I said, "The cancer is gone. The doctor said it melted."

Miraculously, that cancer has never come back and it is never going to come back again. I appeared before God in Zion (Ps. 84:5). I know beyond a shadow of doubt that I made it through the valley of the shadow of death.

Iron can float and cancer can melt away. I know. I am more than a survivor. I am an overcomer in Christ Jesus!

No matter what you are going through right now—nationally, personally, physically, emotionally, spiritually—there is hope in Christ Jesus.

And hope restores in every situation—no matter how dark it may seem. {eoa}

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The Significance of Changing Garments

One of the most powerful themes I have observed in Scripture is “changing garments.” This principle is spiritual but manifests itself clearly in the natural. As you move from glory to glory and exchange the “old” for the “new,” there is a period of testing and vulnerability once the old is cast off and then finally the new is brought forth in due time, both

sparkling and radiant—a testimony to transformation.

Let's observe this principle at work in some of our most loved biblical heroes.

Changing Garments: Joseph, Ruth and Lazarus

We can start with the example of Joseph, who initially received a multicolored tunic that was supposed to be a symbol of favor and promise. The problem is that his brothers interpreted that garment as something else. In jealousy, they barely avoided murdering him and instead sold him into foreign slavery.

Then from slavery, he descended further when his Egyptian master unjustly cast him into prison. So, from being given a multicolored tunic to wearing prison garments, Joseph was tested. These circumstances also prepared him for the best change of garments so that when he was lifted from the prison to the palace, he could then wear royal garments in wisdom and humility.

We can continue with the example of Ruth, who, at the beginning of her story in Scripture, was married. I believe she was wonderfully married but her husband died, she became a widow and she dressed accordingly in widow's garments.

But then the God of another chance came to Ruth when she chose to follow her mother-in-law back to the nation she'd come from—Israel. She became a foreigner and a widow in Israel but through humility and service, she actually lay at the feet of another.

This man, Boaz, took the corner of his garment and placed it over her. She became accepted! In short order, she also became beautified and was able to exchange the garments of a widow for the garments of a bride.

Then we have the example of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, who

died and was wrapped in grave clothes. His body was placed in a tomb and it lay there for four days.

When Jesus appeared on the scene, He called Lazarus forth. John 11:44 (NASB) describes the scene, "Out came the man who had died, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to [his disciples], 'Unbind him and let him go.'"

Once Lazarus was alive again, it would have been inappropriate for him to stay in the grave clothes of his past. They had to rip those off him and guess what? He would have been vulnerable and naked until someone gave him a new garment to put on.

How about you? What garment do you need to cast off?

Are you prepared to be vulnerable in the in-between time? What garments do you need to put on?

Remember, He gives us beauty for ashes, joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. He always offers us the divine exchange in the process of changing garments.

The Challenge

I give you a challenge today and I receive the same challenge myself: Cast off the old. Become vulnerable. Risk being present so that faith will come alive in your heart all over again.

Allow God to take your ashes—evidence that the fire has burned within you—and let the pleasing aroma of your sacrifice arise to God. Let it become what He breathes in so that He may breathe out upon you anew.

I want to encourage you in this challenge with Psalm 42:5, "Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you restless within me? Wait for God, for I will again praise Him for the

help of His presence, My God.”

His presence is with you always. Let the Holy Spirit wash over your soul and allow praise to rise from the depths within you. Speak to your soul. Tell it to hope again in God!

Heroine of Hope: Queen Esther

From humble beginnings, Hadassah leaves all she knows to go into a foreign land. Hadassah is Hebrew for “myrtle,” an indication that her life and actions were as pleasing as the fragrance of myrtle. Esther, on the other hand, is a Persian name related to “morning star.” In Hebrew, it is related to the root word for “hidden,” as God’s intervention was hidden throughout the entire history-making turn of events.

On the surface, all one sees is a dramatic tale of palace intrigue but behind the scenes every step is saturated with faith, hope and sacrificial love. Doubly orphaned as a young girl, Hadassah was raised by her cousin Mordecai, a wise leader of the Jewish people living in exile. After King Ahasuerus dismissed his wife Vashti for insubordination, scouts were sent across the vast Persian Empire to find a replacement. Upon Hadassah’s departure for Susa, Mordecai instructed her not to reveal her Jewish identity.

The harem amassed across the kingdom and the young women were given beauty treatments. Esther’s natural beauty and charm caused her to find favor in the eyes of all who saw her. And when her turn came to be presented, the king chose Esther to be his reigning queen.

In a turn of events, Ahasuerus elevated Haman, a notorious anti-Semite, to be his prime minister. Enraged that Mordecai refused to bow to him, Haman asked the king to allow him to have all Jews killed on a single day.

Upon learning of the plot, Mordecai asked Esther to intercede on behalf of her people. Esther agreed to speak to the king

but only if Mordecai and the Jews would fast and pray for three consecutive days. With prayer as her backing, Esther bravely approached Ahasuerus and stood in the gap. Esther's petition for the salvation of the Jewish people was heard. Thus, in an act of intervention, royal decrees were sent out to all provinces declaring protection over the Jewish people.

There are many lessons to be learned from this dear woman, who displayed such humility, bravery, faith and devotion. But what I want to focus on is the amount of good that came from Queen Esther's reign. She became the reluctant heroine of the biblical Purim story. Taken to the palace of the King of Persia, she was used to expose the plot of evil and prevent the annihilation of all the Jewish people in his extensive empire.

We are each chosen for such a time as this. The transformation of Hadassah into Queen Esther is a dazzling display of how God makes beauty out of ashes. Hadassah— Esther—is a heroine of hope. Esther is yet another brilliant example of one who learned the significance of changing garments in the strategic season of life.

I invite you to step from your own ashes into the radiant garments God has prepared for you! Yes, it will take courage. But the glory that is to come will cause you to forget your season of mourning as His beauty comes forth in you. It's time for changing garments in your life!

Prayer for the Grace of Changing Garments

"Heavenly Father, we come to You in the mighty name of Jesus and we believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We confess that what You did in the past, You still do today. Help us to take off the garments of heaviness and put on the garments of praise in the way that only You can turn the ash heap of our lives into a masterpiece of beauty, releasing a colorful display of Your brilliant presence. Do

these marvelous things for the glory of God. Amen and Amen.”
{eoa}

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Get Ready for Your Personal God Encounter

By the grace of God, my life has been filled with “God encounters”—God taking me to mountain tops, leading me through the valleys and walking with me in the small moments, every step of every day.

Really?

Yes, and you can live a life filled with personal God encounters too.

Just think about the experience of the disciples. Their lives had been transformed during three years of walking with Jesus.

They were fresh from the rollercoaster of losing their Master, then getting Him back. Now He was telling them it was better for them if He left because then they would receive the Holy Spirit.

Of all the rather incredible things Jesus had said to them, this may have been one of the most difficult to believe.

How could it possibly improve their lives to have Jesus' substitute teacher instead of Jesus Himself?

But then the day of Pentecost came. The Holy Spirit fell with wind and fire.

And everyone knew immediately that Jesus had been right. He had transformed their lives yet again, as Peter described when he quoted Joel's prophecy:

"It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke" (Joel 2:28-30, NASB).

God is drawing near to His people in these days.

Perhaps the old line from the children's game fits: "Ready or not, here I come!"

Get ready, guys!

The Holy Spirit is breaking out of our manmade religious boxes

and is showing up in diverse, awe-inspiring ways.

Have you been crying out for greater intimacy with Christ?

Have you been asking for His presence to draw near?

Do you desire to see His raw power displayed?

Do you want to see Jesus receive the rewards for His suffering?

Then watch out! You are a prime target for an invasion.

Guiding people into encounters with God has been my passionate pursuit for many decades.

During all this time, I have seen proof over and over again:
God encounters are for everyone!

There is no better place to encounter God than in His Word.

But we must come expectantly.

We must come with faith.

In contemplating appropriate material to include in the foreword for *the God Encounters TPT* with James W. Goll, I thought it was important to highlight some of the things I am known for, namely:

- prayer
- the presence of God
- and prophecy...

...all things that are vital for encountering God in His Word.

But as I prayed more about this, I felt the Holy Spirit reveal a couple more key ingredients that I needed to mention.

So the fourth message I want to convey is:

– the necessity of perseverance.

Absolutely, do not quit!

Then last but the best part of all:

– the person of God Himself.

He is the goal of your life. I want to passionately pursue God Himself.

I think Jesus said it something like this: “So above all, constantly seek God’s kingdom” (Matt. 6:33, TPT).

In your quest for God encounters, make sure that your goal is the author of the God encounters.

Now, get ready for your personal God Encounters! {eoa}

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Who Is the Apple of God's Eye?

It seems as if God has been conducting a monumental chess game throughout the ages, waiting for the strategic moment in history to make His move. Yes, the playing board has been set and the pieces have been chosen. The call for watchmen is the strategic positioning of His intercessory knights and prophetic bishops being brought together for a sweeping move—one that all the world will observe closely. No eye will miss this mysterious and fascinating time. We must pray, therefore, for our eyes to be opened with spiritual understanding.

Seeing through God's Eyes

After our move from Kansas City to "Music City," the first conference that my wife, Michal Ann, and I hosted in Nashville was on "The Mystery of the Church and Israel." Our friends Avner and Rachel Boskey of Final Frontier Ministries in the Beersheva region of Israel led the worship. During one of the worship times, I saw an open vision of an eye staring right at me. In the middle of this eye, I saw the Star of David. As I gazed more intently upon the vision, I saw a Scripture reference written in the middle of the Star of David. The Scripture I saw was Zechariah 2:8.

At that time, I did not have the foggiest idea what Zechariah 2:8 (NASB) was, so I found it in my Bible: "The one who touches you [Israel], touches the apple of His eye."

Some other translations render the phrase apple of God's eye as the pupil of God's eye. The pupil is the opening that allows light into the eye, beginning the process of sight. So

he who touches Israel touches the center of God's eye—the center of God's sight.

If you want an accurate prophetic perception of life, Scripture and God's purposes on earth, especially in the days before Christ returns, you must have God's vision, seeing through God's eyes and then holding dear to your heart the things that are closest to His heart. Since Israel is at the center of God's vision, we need to see through the lens of Israel's destiny if we are to see correctly and clearly.

Confirmation through the Words of Moses

Moses tells us in Deuteronomy 32:9-11, "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions."

Please understand that this is not an ethnic issue. It is about a promise-keeping God who is faithful to fulfill His plan for a people, a city and a nation through whom He has chosen to display His splendor. We cannot afford to poke at God's eye with prejudice and wrong concepts, such as replacement theology, cessationism and other false teachings. This is about God's faithful character being on lavish display for all to observe and know.

A phrase in a famous hymn says, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." Well, because God's eye is on the sparrow, we know His gaze has never lifted from the center of His attention. That center is Israel and His eye is ever gazing on them. His plans and His purposes will yet be fulfilled!

The Eye of the Lord

His eye is upon all the descendants of Abraham. Why? "Because God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." God's eye is upon every people, every tribe and every nation! God's eye is upon every city, every neighborhood and every family! God's eye is upon you right now! Why?

God loves you with an everlasting love. God has you in His sight right now! He really does! Amen and Amen! {eoa}

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A Prophetic Word: It's

Harvest Time for Your Life!

I have a word of exhortation for you—God is about to exhale a blessing upon your life. Your harvest is right upon you. Yes, you heard me. It's harvest time for your life!

Have you ever felt like giving up? Just don't quit and don't give up. God wants to give you a "finishing anointing" to complete your assignment or task and finish it well!

I have a word of exhortation for you—It's Harvest Time for Your Life!

For a moment, let's go to the Scriptures and look at a pertinent lesson from the life of Noah, as recorded in Genesis 8:20-22 (NKJV).

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. 'While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter, and summer, and day and night shall not cease.'"

Look at this! The first things Noah did after the flood subsided was build an altar to the Lord and offer up an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord Most High. Then the Lord smelled the "soothing aroma" that Noah offered up after the flood and He said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground."

This is so important to grasp this. The very last thing God breathed in became the next thing God exhaled!

God breathed in an acceptable sacrifice and then He breathed

out an extravagant blessing!

Mercy! Because what goes up comes back down! Oh, do you see it? Do you get it? Are you receiving this amazing insight?

You are about to have God exhale a blessing upon your life. Why? Because you have been sowing and sowing and sowing.

And there yet remains seed time and harvest. So hang in there. Galatians 6:9 (NIV), "Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Yes, I have a word for you! I have a word of exhortation for you!

Your harvest is right upon you. It's harvest time for your life. So don't give up!

I pray that the Holy Spirit strengthens you to keep your hand on that plow and not look back.

The best has not passed you by. Hope is standing right in front of you. Because there yet remains seed time and harvest. It's harvest time for your life in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen!
{eoa}

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Conviction: The Key to Revival

Revival depends on repentance. Repentance requires conviction of sin. Bringing conviction of sin to individual men and women is a vital aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry.

Many believers have written and preached and taught about the multifaceted ministry of the Holy Spirit but I believe that His ministry of bringing the conviction of sin has often been neglected.

Revival Results from Conviction

Watch out when the Spirit comes into your world with conviction "concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8, ESV)!

His conviction is irresistible, both positive and negative senses. He will put His mighty thumb down hard on your self-important sin and He will cause you to see it as you have never seen it before – as utterly offensive in the light of the perfection of your Creator.

He will also supply you with supernatural grace so that you can respond properly, even to a crushing revelation. For your sake, and far beyond what you deserve, He brings the

overwhelming love of God to bear against your sin, forgiving you and pulling you up out of it.

He doesn't come to destroy you; He comes to save you.

Your sin is what would, sooner or later, destroy you because nothing about it can ever put your feet on the path of salvation and true joy.

The Holy Spirit comes at just the right time and in just the right way to convince and convict you of this truth. He supplies you with all of the raw material for saving faith and then He molds it together for you.

He does this not only when you first bow to the lordship of Christ in your life but all along the way, as needed.

Sin has killed off something within you and He revives you. You were dead in your sin and He raises you from the dead.

When He comes like this, your emotions become inflamed with a combination of remorse and alarm and repentance – along with incredible relief and eager submission.

Nobody can come through the fire of the Holy Spirit's conviction passively or with clinical objectivity. It is an emotional experience. You are so sad and then you are so glad. You are laid low and then you are raised up high.

Revival! Revival means the recovery of life to something that was dead or seemingly dead, such as the revival of a drowned person.

If you think about it, you realize that "revival" can never apply to situations where there was never any life in the first place because it means coming back to life. Dead bodies were once alive and they can be revived by God. Long-gone dreams can be restored and revitalized. Long-neglected truth and obedience can come back into circulation.

Apathy and inattention can be reanimated. Faith and commitment that have been on life support can be reinstated and energized.

In the historic church, revival means that new life surges into the body of Christ. Faith is renewed and joy springs up. With the prompting of the Holy Spirit, people begin to work together again as a body. Everything seems fresh and exciting. Emotions run high.

You can't expect to have a revival without emotion.

Emotions animate people. Thus when God sends revival to reanimate the church, people will express their joy – or their alarm, if they don't happen to like what they see. Either way, when revival hits, no longer can they remain the "frozen chosen"!

Conviction: Key to Revival

The people of God invite Him to come and bring revival, regardless of what that may look like. Revival of life can become messy, just as life itself is messy. With the psalmist, people ask the Holy Spirit to come and clean house. "Revive us again!" they cry out:

"Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your anger toward us to cease. Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Ps. 85:4–6, NKJV).

They are praying, "Pull out the stops, Lord! Shake us and purify us and terrify us and carry us with You into battle! Have mercy on Your people. We need You desperately!"

"Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence—as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your

name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence! When You did awesome things for which we did not look, You came down, the mountains shook at Your presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him” (Isa. 64:1–4, NKJV).

“Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2, NIV).

Such prayers have always worked. In both the Old and the New Testaments, testimony of God’s faithfulness follows closely after the plea for revival:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14, NIV).

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus” (Acts 3:19–20, NIV).

These verses, along with many others, have been prayed throughout generations as the “forerunners” intercede for revival.

Their prayers go ahead of revival, breaking open a territory for God. Conviction falls on people as they become aware of their sinful, hopeless conditions and their urgent needs to “get right with God.”

How can the vast chasm be bridged between an all-righteous God and corrupted, selfish men and women? Only by the conviction and subsequent action of the Holy Spirit who brings the kingdom of God to earth and, with it, renewed life.

On what important transaction does revival depend? Repentance, which follows the conviction of sin.

God's people, whether individually or corporately, cannot be revived unless they abandon their death-dealing attachments to sin. Once the Holy Spirit brings conviction and they respond wholeheartedly, then revival can be planted and new growth can flourish.

Revival comes in response to hunger for God and for holiness.

Are you hungry for revival? Then allow the Holy Spirit to do His deep, abiding work in you and respond to His conviction in true repentance.

He will surely come!

Prayer of a Passionate Heart

"Father, I come to You in the fear of the Lord. I receive Your Word that tells me, 'Be holy, for I am holy.' I ask You, Holy Spirit, to point out to me the hard places in my heart. Send a revival into my life, my family's life, my church, my community and my nation. Convict me and all of Your chosen people. Convict us of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come. Cleanse me from sin. Draw me nearer to You. I want to live my life in a way that is pleasing to You. So I ask that You would send Your powerful Spirit of conviction upon me and upon those I pray for. Manifest Your holiness and bring me to Yourself. In Jesus' perfect name, amen." {eoa}

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15 Keys for Interpreting Your Dreams

Walking in the prophetic language of dreams is a form of tapping into the mind and heart of God, and can be an exciting and exhilarating journey. But understanding and interpreting your dreams, and other revelatory spiritual encounters, can often be a complex and even confusing process.

I encourage you above all else to keep interpretation simple! Keep the big picture of the dream and overarching theme in mind.

With too much detail, you could miss the interpretation. This is a lot like not seeing the forest for the trees.

Here are some basic principles of dream interpretation, presented in concise statements that will help bring clarity to the revelation you receive.

15 Keys for Interpreting Your Dreams

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 that 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. 2:12-14).
5. Ask the Holy Spirit what the central thought, word or issue is in the revelation. Reduce the dream to its simplest form. What is the main thought?
6. Search it out in the Word. Dreams from the Lord will never go against His written Word (Prov. 25:2).
7. What did you sense and feel from the dream? Was it a good or evil presence? What was the primary emotion?
8. Relate the dream to your circumstances and spheres of influence.
9. Consecutive dreams often have similar meanings (Gen. 41:1-7, 25-31). God will speak the same message more than once in more than one way.
10. What are the colors? Is everything black and white with one main object in color?
11. Interpretations can be on three levels: personal, church or national and international.
12. More than one interpretation can come forth in one dream. Just as with Scripture, there is the historical context as well as the personal, present implication. So it is with dreams. It might be a general word for the church with specific applications for yourself (or others).
13. Some dreams may only be understood in the future. They

unfold over time. Details will make sense down the road.

14. Write down in a journal the summary: date it; write down where you were, the time (if you woke up from it), the main emotions and a possible interpretation.

15. The key to proper interpretation is to ask questions, questions, questions!

Dream Interpretations Belong to God

Finally, remember that dreams are significant to all!

To receive a dream is the first step of a divine purpose moving from the mind of God to become reality in human history.

Dreams and visions are where space and time are pushed away: where God allows our inner selves to see beyond and behind the conscious plane and where possibilities and hopes come out unrestricted by natural limitations.

Remember, God wants to help you with interpreting your dreams. So don't forget to invite Him into the process.

Father, we know that dreams and visions and their interpretations belong to You. With honor coupled with a deep hunger, we ask You to give us Your wisdom applications to understand the revelation You are giving us, in Jesus' great name, amen. {eoa}

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The Importance of Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, the Feast of Ingathering, is the feast that the Jewish people celebrate every year in the fall, marking the end of the harvest time and representing the shadow of something yet to come. What could it be? Of the three great feasts, this feast has yet to find its greater fulfillment under or in the New Covenant but it is coming. It is the final harvest of souls, the great ingathering.

Yes, we are right at the door, at the beginning of the greatest global harvest the world has ever seen.

Five Major Points Concerning Sukkot

1. The word *Sukkot* is plural for *sukkah*, referring to a booth or hut. *Sukkah* stems from the Hebrew root *sakak*, meaning to cover over or protect. During the Feast of Sukkot, the Jewish people live in booths (*sukkot*) for seven days, remembering God's protective covering and provision during Israel's 40 years in the wilderness and celebrating His goodness (see Lev.

23:42-43).

2. Sukkot is the only *mo'ed* (feast) during which God commands His people to rejoice (see Lev. 23:40; Deut. 16:14). Recall that a *mo'ed* is a set time to meet with Him. This means our King wants to rejoice with us at Sukkot – even during a time of intense global shaking.

3. To celebrate Sukkot, Leviticus 23:40 (CJB) says, “Take choice fruits from trees, palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the Lord for seven days.” Different Jewish traditions interpret these natural elements differently. But by any interpretation, God wants us to see the fruit of the land as a prophetic, visual reminder of all He has provided for us in His covenant love. Even in uncertain times, we can rejoice that He is with us as the God who provides (see Gen. 22:14).

4. On *Hoshana Raba*, a climactic ceremony took place during the time of the temple. In a type of prophetic intercessory act, Israel’s priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam. Then they carefully poured it out, praying for rain for the next year’s harvest. Therefore, it was on Hoshana Raba that according to John 7:37-38 (NCB), Jesus said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘streams of living water will flow from within him.’”

5. Sukkot is called the Feast of Final Ingathering (*Chag HaAsif*) in Exodus 23:16 and 34:22. An aspect of the prophetic fulfillment of Sukkot involves a great and final ingathering, a spiritual harvest of souls, in connection with Yeshua’s return. Then He will tabernacle among us in unimaginable glory in the Messianic Age – and forever. Rejoice! Yes, let us rejoice!

It’s Time for the Final Feast to be Fulfilled!

There is a divine relationship between the mighty outpouring

of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of the Messiah through faith and prayer, evangelism, acts of compassion and moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. We each have a part to play that only we can do in this final great harvest.

Yes, we must partner together to see the billion-soul harvest, especially of youth. We must pray to the Lord of the harvest that He thrusts forth laborers into His great end-time field. It's time for the final Great Feast to find its fulfillment. Therefore the Feast of Sukkot of Tabernacles is so important. Let's pray unto that end! {eoa}

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