

Living in the Throne Room

It's not enough just to know information about God. He wants you to experience His presence in a supernatural dimension.

Have you ever imagined yourself having a supernatural experience such as the ones described in the Bible? Have you ever wondered what it would be like, for example, to see the Lord on His throne or have a visitation from an angel?

Have you contemplated the possibility of outrunning chariots as Elijah did (see 1 Kin. 18:46), walking through walls as Jesus did (see John 20:19) or being transported from one geographical location to another by the Spirit of God as Philip was (see Acts 8:39)?

Are you willing to permit the Lord, if He desires, to fill your life with the same kind of God-directed and inspired supernatural occurrences?

If your answer to these questions is no, perhaps it is because you wonder what purpose they could possibly serve. How could having a supernatural vision, seeing an angel or hanging out in the "throne zone" enhance your worship of and devotion to the King of kings in any way? How could such experiences make you a stronger Christian and deepen your intimacy with Jesus? How could they make you a better witness for the Lord in this hour of awakened spirituality?

And even if there is a benefit, isn't it wrong to seek experiences rather than just the Lord Himself?

The short version of my response is an emphatic "No!" Throughout the Scriptures, we find indications that supernatural encounters are a normal part of a believer's experience and that the Lord desires for us to participate with Him in supernatural kingdom life.

It's true that many Christians are opposed to what is often referred to as "experience orientation"—the inclination to passionately pursue God-given experiences, including God's gifts and His presence and activity. Although I agree that we are to be careful not to worship "experience," I would like to respectfully challenge this concern.

Successful and meaningful relationships are based on a choice to express as well as experience love. If you were to take the experience dimension out of a relationship, you would be left with a cold and empty association and not a relationship at all. The more experience you share with someone, the deeper your relationship becomes.

Here is an example: Imagine a bridegroom standing at the altar with heart pounding, waiting to make a life commitment to his bride, who is walking down the aisle toward him arrayed in elaborate bridal apparel and appearing more ravishing than he has ever seen her. He is "experiencing" intense waves of passionate love and anticipation.

After she makes her way to the front of the church and stands beside him in all her bridal radiance, they begin to say their vows. She looks at the groom with sincerity during this moment of sealing a lifelong covenant and says tenderly and with conviction: "I vow to be your wife, to be faithful to you, to submit to you ... but don't expect to experience my love. I'm not into experience. I don't want our marriage to be based on experience.

"Oh, and I won't expect to feel your love, either. I will simply believe that you love me. I will stand faithfully on the words of this covenant every day, but I will not expect, nor will I pursue, experience in our relationship."

What a disappointment to the bridegroom! Perhaps he will change his mind right there at the altar. Why? Because experience has everything to do with relationship. It is

impossible to enjoy a rich, passionate and meaningful relationship without experience.

Of course, a healthy balance is based on an unshakable decision to commit to the relationship and to love the person more than you would love any experience. But in order to live in a flourishing kingdom relationship, you cannot have commitment without experience. Love must be expressed and received in order for it to operate.

This is also how it works in our walk with the Lord. He desires to know us intimately and for us to know Him just as deeply. He wants us to experience His love, His kindness and His truth; and He longs to experience our love as well.

Imagine how disappointed He would be if we told Him: "Reading the Bible is all I need. I can find everything I need to know about You, Lord, through Your Word. It doesn't matter to me if I experience Your love, presence or power."

This attitude would break His heart, for He longs to have us come to know Him through experience. He is a relational God.

When He was suffering on the cross, He had an expectation. He endured the cross "for the joy that was set before Him" (Heb. 12:2, NKJV). Having an eternal love relationship with you is that joy.

But there's more to that relationship than experiencing only the Lord Himself. It also involves experiencing His kingdom.

There is a real place called heaven within this kingdom. There are angels, chariots, fiery ones around the throne, a crystal sea, a river of life, the tree of life, the great cloud of witnesses, golden streets, and so much more. The Word of God is full of information and revelation about the kingdom of God, and we have been invited to discover and partake of it all.

Seek the Kingdom

As we experience daily this glorious kingdom life, then we will take on kingdom characteristics, kingdom language and kingdom activity. The Bible tells us that “it is [our] Father’s good pleasure to give [us] the kingdom” (Luke 12:32) and that if we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” then “all these things shall be added to [us]” (Matt. 6:33).

Yet I’ve had ministers warn me not to encourage believers to seek the things of God because it might take their focus off God Himself. One went so far as to claim that “they must seek only His face, and not His hands or His truth or His gifts.”

I fully believe that the person and presence of the Lord should be the focus of our attention. I also believe that we are to love Him with all our hearts.

Something this gentleman said, however, didn’t quite hit home with me even though I understood the general point he was trying to make. As I inquired of the Lord, He gave me a little scenario.

I saw a vision of a mother standing in her kitchen. In front of her was her little girl. They were facing each other, and the mother said: “Honey, I baked your favorite cookies today. They are over there on the counter, and I want you to help yourself. I made them just for you.”

The little girl, who appeared to be around 10 years old in the vision, replied: “No, Mommy! No, Mommy! I don’t want any cookies. I only want your face. I love your face, Mommy, and I only want to look at your face. No cookies.”

The mother looked rather shocked but gently answered: “Sweetie, I am so glad that you love me, and I am really happy that you like my face, but I want you to enjoy a cookie. I made them especially for you.”

"No, Mommy, no! No cookie. Nothing from your hand. Only your face."

Now, if this were to happen, we would think the child needed serious counseling for her unbalanced behavior. Children are to feel loved in their home environment, and when a parent gives his or her child a gift or an object of provision, it is natural for the child to receive it with joy and thankfulness.

So it is in our relationship with the Lord. We are to love Him in a deep and personal way, but we are also to enjoy all that He has prepared for us. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

The things that are given to us by His hand are an expression of His love for us. As we each experience Jesus and enjoy His free gifts, our own relationship with Him will deepen and become greatly enhanced.

Yet how often do we as believers behave before the Lord in the same way the young girl did before her mother? Thinking that we are being noble and highly spiritual, we say: "No, Lord, not Your hand. Only Your face, only Your face.

"No blessings. No angels. No glory manifestations. No power. No gifts. Only Your face!"

We carry on like this and don't realize that we are living in major spiritual dysfunction. This is not normal behavior for a healthy relationship.

The Lord has invited us into a real kingdom that is full of power and limitless measures of blessing. In fact, the Bible says we have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

Although it is an invisible kingdom, it is still very real. And, as I mentioned before, there are many things in the

unseen kingdom realm, from angels to glory clouds to bowls of incense.

And guess what? We are to seek these things. Not only are we to seek Jesus, but we are to actually seek the things of the kingdom—the things of the unseen realm.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

We are actually exhorted in God’s Word to seek the things above where Christ is seated. If we are to be people in pursuit of His power, we need to be seekers not only of the God of power Himself but also of the things in the kingdom that He created by His power.

I desire to draw as close to the Lord as possible. I pursue Him daily. I also want as much kingdom experience in my life as possible. I constantly believe for more of God, for more of the reality of His kingdom to be made known to me, for more embracing of the things He has created for me to enjoy, and for more of His manifest power.

And do you know what? He loves it when I ask for more.

Experience for the sake of experience has no eternal value at all, and the idolatry of it could possibly lead to great deception. Experience in knowing Him, His kingdom and His righteousness, however, is our upward call in Christ Jesus.

Preparation for the Last Days

Interestingly, if you look at the scriptural record, you’ll see that most of the supernatural empowerments of God occurred during days of great tumult and tension. When peace was in the land, there wasn’t much written about God’s mighty works and displays of His power.

For example, Moses lived in days of great oppression, and he experienced many awesome acts in the presence of the Lord. Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, as well as Christ's disciples and the believers in the book of Acts, also witnessed and experienced many supernatural and divine occurrences. The record of all God did during times of pressure and trials takes up a great deal of space in the Bible in contrast to the accounts of His activity during seasons of peace.

Currently, we are headed into some treacherous days—days when men's hearts will turn to evil, being seduced by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. In fact, these days are already upon us.

The world is full of confused and deceived people who are given over to great deceptions and trapped in demonic mind-sets. Paul prophesied in his letter to Timothy that the "last days" would be treacherous days. He wrote, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1).

God is preparing us for what is ahead. During this season of spiritual revolution, He will teach us how to experience Him, His kingdom and His power in greater ways. We will arise and shine in the midst of the darkness and manifest the power and glory of God.

Simply attending a spiritual service or conference or participating in a church program will no longer be enough. We will need to know Him and experience Him like never before. We will need to learn to walk and war as true kingdom children, living in true kingdom consecration, power and grace.

In this treacherous hour, we can expect "God-encounters." The Bible is full of them. In fact, if you were to remove all the records of experience from the Bible and allowed only doctrine to remain, there would be very little left.

And I emphasize that most biblical accounts of God-encounters

were found in times of turmoil. God's power is accelerated in such times.

The Scriptures reveal the reality of a God of power who desires for His children to walk in the fullness of kingdom life. In this treacherous hour, we must come out of the forms and mind-sets that have held us back from experiencing God, His power and His kingdom. We indeed need our eyes opened and our hearts enlarged to embrace all that the Lord wants to reveal to us.

In the days of the disciples, Paul prayed to the Lord on behalf of the church at Ephesus that they would receive "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" and the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened, so that they would know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe (Eph. 1:17-19).

Let's echo this prayer daily for today's church. Let's pray it for ourselves as well and prepare to experience God's presence in new ways.

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Avoiding Spiritual Pitfalls

As you pursue supernatural encounters with God, beware of the dangers of the invisible realm. Some advice from Patricia King.

Are there dangers in the school of spiritual experience? Yes! If a person lives outside the perimeters of the Word, way or

will of God in any area of his life, danger lurks.

Likewise, in your natural life, there are things that could be dangerous if you do not abide by proper principles. For example, driving a car can be hazardous if you do not abide by the laws of the road.

But if you read the owner's manual, abide by the rules, exercise caution and watch out for the other guy, you will most likely maintain a safe and successful driving record. Meanwhile, the inherent dangers of driving should not deter you from getting into your vehicle.

Below are some examples of dangers that one should be aware of before getting in the "driver's seat" of spiritual experience.

Witchcraft and Occultism

Any activity or manipulation of the spirit realm not under the rule of Christ is called witchcraft. This practice is forbidden in Scripture.

Be careful of "guided imagery," a practice in which someone else tells you what to see. This can lead to manipulation (see Deut. 18:10-14; Gal. 5:17-25). The Holy Spirit is the only one who can lead you into divine encounters.

If you have had previous experience with New Age, false religions, or the occult, you will need to fully renounce those practices along with any spirit guides or spiritual counselors who taught you. This is very important. You need to be cleansed from all that is false and submit to all that is true.

Idolatry and Unhealthy Fascination

Our primary passion must always be for the Lord Himself, and we must always place Him at the center of our affections. All spiritual experience needs to draw the heart and affections of the believer to deepened relationship with Christ.

Experience Orientation

Although God desires for us to experience Him and His kingdom to build relationship, when believers focus on only spiritual experiences, it can cause great problems with both their walk and their character. They can begin to believe that their spiritual encounters are endorsements of their character and maturity.

This is not the case. Love, worship of Christ, and faith and obedience to the Word of God are the hallmarks of authentic Christian living.

Pride and Self-Exaltation

No one is beyond being tempted by pride. Lucifer himself, even though he was a high-ranking angel in heaven, fell into the sin of pride. That sin cost him his place in heaven, and he was cast out!

The apostle Paul was aware that he was susceptible to pride because of the “abundance of revelations” he received (see 2 Cor. 12:7). If these Bible figures could be in danger, it is vital that we also guard against pride.

Error and Deception

Entering into spiritual experience without a proper and complete foundation in the Word of God can sometimes open the door to error and deception. Good solid Bible teaching should always accompany spiritual experience.

If you see a vision or enjoy an encounter in the “glory realm,” then study it out in the Word of God afterward. Always let the Word of God be the first testing place to validate experience.

It is also important to have a good accountability circle around you and some mature Christians who can help mentor and pastor you into maturity. In the multitude of counselors there

is wisdom.