

3 Steps to a More Authentic Relationship With God

Bible study can be encouraging—until we begin to put the people of the Bible on a pedestal.

It's so easy to think of them as almost mythical individuals. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Peter, Paul—we read their accounts and imagine them to be larger than life. We even excuse their foibles, frailties and outright sins because, well, they're biblical *heroes* of the faith!

But doing this creates a problem. The problem is that we begin to believe the lie that the transformative power of God isn't for real people like us with real problems and real sin. After all, the people of the Bible didn't live lives that included the kind of things we deal with today ... or did they?

Then we get to the book of Psalms. In the psalms, we read authors who bare their hearts and tell it like it is. They get real.

Here are just a few examples:

Ever feel as if God doesn't care about your troubled circumstances? So did David in Psalm 10:1 Why do You stand far off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"

But David did not remain stuck there. He refocused on God's character in verses 16-18: "The Lord is King forever and ever; the nations perished from His land. The desire of the humble You have heard, O Lord; You make their heart attentive; You bend Your ear to judge the orphan and the oppressed; man on earth no longer trembles."

We see a similar response in Psalm 13. David began with verses 1-2: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me for good? How long

will you hide Your face from me? How long will I harbor cares in my soul and sorrow in my heart by day? How long will my enemy loom over me? How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?"

Then he concluded in verses 5-6 (NIV): "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me."

Ever feel envious of the wicked and wonder why they prosper while you're trying to do what's right? So did Asaph in Psalm 73:3-5: "I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills."

But just like David, Asaph changed his perspective by the end of the Psalm in verse 28 (MEV): "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have taken my refuge in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works."

Perhaps you've been falsely accused. David understood that, too, as he wrote in Psalm 109:1-2 (NIV): "My God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, for people who are wicked and deceitful have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues."

And once again, he concluded with a different perspective in verses 30-31: "With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord; in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him. For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save their lives from those who would condemn them."

David and Asaph did not allow their circumstances to define God. Yet they were authentic and transparent about their struggles. And from reading passages such as these, I've learned three things to help me as a follower of Christ in my

relationship with God

–**Problem:** I can be real about my problems in talking with God and with others. Being a Christian doesn't mean we slap a plastic smile on our face and pretend life is wonderful while we're crying on the inside. Being authentic means facing reality, whether it's pleasant or not.

–**Pour out your heart to God:** God can handle whatever I need to tell Him. He is omniscient—He knows everything. Which means He already knows what I'm thinking, so nothing I say to Him will be a surprise.

–**Perspective:** It's okay to tell God how we feel. Even Jesus did it in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42, MEV). But like David and Asaph, He also refocused on who God is—in this case, His sovereignty—when He finished the sentence by saying, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

I can be real about my circumstances and my discouragement, but I can't stay stuck there. As a child of God, in Christ, and with the indwelling Holy Spirit, I need to look up. To consider the character of God. To rest in the truth of His attributes. And to trust that He is always at work for my good and for His glory.

Those people in the Bible? Yes, they were real people with real problems. Let's learn from them and model the same authenticity. For as we read what they wrote, we hear echoes of the cry of our own heart.

And when we get real with God and others, a watching world will see His power lived out in real people. {eo}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul"

books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .