

4 Keys to an Encounter With God

Being “face to face” with God is a popular concept in certain Christian circles. We sing songs and post trendy memes about it on Facebook.

But in a culture inundated with things meant to keep us from being face-to-face with **anyone**, I wonder if we really even know what that means.

You know what I’m talking about; meeting in person is becoming more and rarer. Phone calls are obsolete; countless messaging apps have apparently eliminated any need to see or even hear one another.

Even when we do find time to get together, we spend more time looking at our phones than at each other.

Then we go to church and expect to be able to lock eyes with God? Probably not. The same habits that keep us from connecting with people will keep us distanced from God, as well.

So what do we do? I’ve discovered four simple things that will help us reconnect.

Intentionality

In a world of instantaneous communication and calendar-driven schedules, it takes desire and purpose to choose a time that’s set apart just to get together with someone.

Our days get so busy with work, children, spouses, housework, grocery shopping, homework—if we don’t schedule something, it often doesn’t get done.

What makes us think time with God will be any different? If we

don't intentionally set aside time that is just for meeting with Him, it likely won't happen. Put it in your phone as an appointment if you have to, then prioritize that time as of the utmost importance.

Focus

Much like it's hard to feel connected to a person across the table who's looking at their phone instead of you, it's difficult to connect with God when you're distracted.

Focusing takes work. We have to choose to still our minds from everything that wants to steal our attention. Remember, our goal is to be face-to-face with God. That means our focus has to be **Him**, not our situations or even ourselves.

Worship is a great way to do this. The point of worship is to exalt the Lord, to make him bigger in our eyes. And the natural side effect of making God bigger is that everything else gets smaller. Then it's much easier to focus on Him.

Persistence

With intentionality and focus, it's relatively easy to have an encounter with God. He's already promised that when we draw near to Him, He's going to respond (James 4:8). But if you're like me, one encounter isn't enough.

I need more than a one-time experience with God. Like the old hymn says, "every hour" I need Him. Like anything else we want to be a regular part of our lives, we have to be persistent in making it happen. We have to **stay** intentional, **stay** focused.

Patience

This word makes some people cringe, but it's important. Real communication takes patience. It takes patience with your own efforts, and that patience sometimes seems so lacking as you learn or re-learn how to connect with God.

It also requires learning that God isn't interested in just hearing our problems and then watching us go on our way; communication is more than words. It's both speaking and listening, thinking about what's been said and simply enjoying each other's company.

The Result

God has promised, "When you seek Me, you will find Me." Seeking is an action word; active engagement with God doesn't happen on its own. But when we apply the keys of intentionality, focus, persistence and patience, we discover a nearness that satisfies us like distance never will.

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