

How to Seek God's Face

You can tell a lot about how someone is feeling just by looking at that person's face. An expression can reveal a person's mood—happiness, sadness, anger or annoyance. Though various modern methods of communication are available such as cellphones, e-mail, texting, and video web chat, nothing compares with face-to-face communication.

You are able to read a person's emotions through facial expression and know how that person feels in the moment. Face-to-face conversation provides an opportunity for intimate connection. There are times when only face-to-face interaction can meet the need for a clear understanding between two people.

There are moments when we need an intimate encounter with God. Every person reaches a place in life that makes him or her cry out to God in desperation. If you have reached that place before, you may have prayed "God, if You are with me, show me You are here in this moment." Such yearning for connection with God occurs often in the Bible. There are many instances where biblical figures struggled in their relationship with God. So what does it take to encounter the presence of the Holy God? We will begin our inquiry with Moses and the theophany on Mount Sinai. Let's take a look at Exodus 33:12-23 and 34:28, 29. Scripture says:

Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' 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. Then I will take away My hand, and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen (Ex. 33:12-23).

Moses was there with the Lord 40 days and 40 nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord.

God had just brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. As they made their way through the desert, they came to Mount Sinai. Moses had the daunting task of leading the Israelites into the promised land, but this was a difficult job. Moses

was under pressure. If he was going to continue to lead thousands of people through the desert, he wanted to make sure that God was going to be with him. On Mount Sinai, Moses asked God to reveal His glory to him. God agreed to his request but emphasized that no human could see the fullness of His glory and live. Moses witnessed the glory of God and it had an extraordinary effect on him. Those who seek God earnestly desire the same experience. So how do we seek God's face? How can we become witnesses to His glory? What can we expect to take place when we encounter the living God?

Passion

The foundation for drawing closer to God is a holy desire to know God. Passion is born from a love and honor of God and His Word, thanksgiving for what God has done for us, and an awe of God's greatness and goodness. Passion comes from a choice to seek after God in the good and bad times, when we're strong and when we're weak. It was passion that propelled Christ to carry the cross to Calvary. Passion should lead to obedience.

Christ tied love and obedience together when he said in John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commands." A passion for God is not just a feeling; it leads to actions of obedience to God's Word. Moses' passion for God was expressed when he said, "Teach me Your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with You." His desire was to know God and learn His will. Obedience to God's Word develops holiness in the life of the believer. Holiness pleases God and leads to the same response given to Moses: "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Scripture is filled with many examples of people who expressed their passion for knowing God. The writers of the Psalms demonstrated passion in their prayers. We can see glimpses of the beautiful pictures of passion painted throughout the Psalms:

As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When will I come and appear before God? (Ps. 42:1-2).

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my body cry out for the living God (Ps. 84:1-2).

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness (Ps. 17:15).

When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Ps. 27:8).

These passages also raise questions. Why would these writers want to seek God's face? They most certainly knew the story of Moses' encounter with God. They knew they could not see His face and live. It was their passion to seek God that made them want to know God on a deeper level, even being willing to risk their lives to know the God they loved more personally. During your next time of prayer, pray these verses to God and let Him know that you desire to know Him more deeply.

Prayer

When you are passionate for God, you want to talk with Him all the time. Most people know what it is like to fall in love with someone. When you want to know someone more intimately, you feel compelled to talk to that person as much as possible. I remember the early stages of my dating relationship with my wife. I texted, called, emailed and spent time with her as much as I could. Eventually, I wanted to be with her so much that I decided to spend the rest of my life with her. This is the kind of relationship God wants with His people. He calls us His bride and He wants us to pursue a relationship with Him daily.

Moses spent 40 continuous days and nights with God. What did

he do during that time? He talked with God. Sometimes our concept of prayer becomes overspiritualized. It is not a magic potion we use to get what we want on our wish list. Prayer simply means talking to God. In the same manner in which you can have a conversation with your friend or relative, you can talk to God too! If we want to learn how to pray more effectively, a good place to start is by studying the Lord's Prayer. We find that there are different types of prayer and that the right attitude should be exhibited as we pray. Matthew 6:9–13 says:

Therefore pray in this manner: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Within the Lord's Prayer we find these types of prayer:

- Prayers of praise and worship
- Prayers of request for provision
- Prayers of confession and repentance
- Prayers of request for deliverance

There are other types of prayers, but how we pray is more important than what we pray. Our attitude is of utmost importance. In contrast to the poor examples of prayer found in Matthew 6:5-8, we should always pray with humility, recognizing God's place as Creator and Sustainer of all things and our place as those in need of God's mercy and grace. How often should we pray? According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we should "pray continually." This means we should be in communication with God every moment we have the opportunity; at home, at work, at study, at play and at rest.

Bible Study

Moses says in Exodus 33:13, "Teach me Your ways." We cannot know God without knowing His Word. Hearing sermons on Sunday is not enough. We need to engage in consistent study of God's Word. If you have not read the entire Bible all the way through, I encourage you to do so. You will learn many wonderful things about God that will amaze you.

Begin your journey through the Bible with the Gospels, and then proceed with reading the entire New Testament. When you have done that, read through the entire Old Testament. Reading God's Word is the surest way to know that preaching and teaching is in line with the Word of God.

I challenge you to pray and read your Bible when you have a question about something you have heard. Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom to understand His Word. If you continue to have difficulty understanding a passage, ask a trusted church leader or experienced church member to guide you in the interpretation of the passage. As you begin to read God's Word regularly, it will stay with you. In the middle of a struggle, God's Word will come back to encourage you. Why can we always rely on God's Word? These passages provide the answer:

How shall a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word (Ps. 119:9).

The word of the Lord is proven (Ps. 18:30).

Jesus cited God's Word when tempted by Satan in Matthew 4.

And that since childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Fasting

Have you ever become so lost in conversation with someone that you lost track of time? Imagine losing track of time for 40 days, even forgetting to eat, drink or sleep? It appears that Moses was not worried about food and water when he was communing with God on Mount Sinai. According to Exodus 34:28, Moses was with the Lord for “forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water.” It could have been this experience along with God’s provision of manna in the wilderness that prompted him to declare to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man does not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

We need to keep this Scripture verse in mind when we fast. Fasting demonstrates dependence on God. We recognize that we need God more than food and water, more than the very basic human needs required for survival in the physical realm. Jesus reminds us: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Apart from God, we can do nothing and we are nothing. God is our lifeline, and in Christ, we can live life to the fullest. As you seek God’s face, engage in times of fasting. Allow this experience to draw you closer to God as you tell Him that you recognize He is all you need.

Meditation

During his experience with God on Mount Sinai, Moses experienced tunnel vision. His focus was exclusively on God. Unfortunately the busyness of today’s world has made it difficult for many of us to spend regular quality time with God. Daily meditation on God and His Word allows us to enjoy moments with God during any time of day. Meditation simply means to think deeply and consistently on something. In the biblical sense, it does not mean emptying your mind of

everything but rather thinking regularly about and ruminating on God's Word. When you are seeking God's face, you think about Him constantly. Dwell on His Word. Contemplate what God is telling you and how He wants you to respond.

Moses' desire was to please God and find favor with Him. He actively thought about what it meant to honor God and serve Him well. Psalm 19:14 says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." What does your heart meditate on the most? Does it meditate on the worries of this world or the promises found in God's Word? Do you find your mind focusing on everyday problems or thinking about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable—anything excellent or praiseworthy that comes from God?[1]

A Greater Experience than Mt. Sinai

As we seek God's face, are we willing to listen when He speaks? What is God telling you today? What part of this message is God impressing on you the most? Does God want you to respond by embarking on a journey to read the Bible in a year? Or maybe God is challenging you to pray at least five minutes a day instead of just praying for your food. Perhaps God is impressing you to meditate on His Word daily or to begin a fast. Listen to what the Holy Spirit is leading you to do. As you seek Him, your encounter with Him will lead to an even greater transformation than the one experienced by Moses. Our experience is contrasted with that of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3:7-8:

If the ministry that brought death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, the glory which was to fade away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?

As exceptional as the prophet Moses was, his experience with

God was limited because of the limitations of the Law he lived by. We however, are beneficiaries of the New Covenant. We have the opportunity to have an uninhibited encounter with God because we have direct access to the Father through Christ via the ministry of the Spirit. This access provides complete freedom to experience the fullness of the glory of God today. This experience brings transformation.

We are assured in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that “we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” As you seek Him, be encouraged that He will reveal Himself to you and you will never be the same.

[1] See Philippians 4:8

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