

Step Into a Moment of Holy Visitation

As we journey to a place of deeper intimacy with God, we will have times of special visitation by the Holy Spirit. These times of precious fellowship are a foretaste of glory—a glimpse of the heavenly ecstasy that awaits us beyond the veil of this life. They are direct encounters with the love of God.

Holy visitations are not experiences we can make happen. Most of the time they come as a surprise. But there are several things we can do to prepare our hearts and lay the groundwork for God's coming.

Pour out your heart. One of the first things is to pour out our hearts to God and express our desire for more of Him. This is the way I began a brief prayer retreat recently in a rustic cabin at Lord's Land Retreat in California.

When I first entered the cabin, I looked out a giant window and was taken aback by the display of beauty. I felt surrounded by the God of all creation.

I climbed up to the loft, which contained one small window and a skylight. Through the skylight I watched clouds pass across the bright blue sky. I delighted in the view out the window of tall redwood trees and dense woods. Thanksgiving and praise to God flowed out of my spirit for the glory of His workmanship.

I began to pray earnestly, "Lord, I feel that I scarcely know You, but I want to know You much better. The more I know You, the more I realize how very little I truly know You. I want to see You. I want to sense Your presence. I want to be like You, and I want to be with You."

My heart yearned for more of Jesus.

Suddenly God's presence poured over me like liquid love. I sensed, in a very tangible way, the nature of His unconditional love for me. He flooded my soul with His indescribable glory.

Give Him first place. If we want to experience God's presence in a deeper way, we must be willing to yield our minds, our time and our plans to the Lord. He must always have preeminence.

When God's presence rushed in upon me, I hadn't been seeking a particular experience. I wasn't trying to make anything happen. I simply prayed, "I just want to know You, Lord."

But when God responded to my heart's cry, I could not say, "God, wait. Just hold off for a few minutes, and let me climb down from this loft because I need to go back up the hill to get something." That was never a consideration.

At that moment of visitation, nothing else mattered but God. He came first.

Develop a sensitivity to His presence. It is crucial that we practice the presence of God daily and spend time in prayer so that we become sensitive to Him. As we do this, He gives us an ability to discern His nearness.

I have done this for years. Now, when I sense the slightest nudge of the Holy Spirit, my spiritual ears perk up. I start listening, and my spirit-man opens up to receive Him.

I try constantly to be receptive to the Lord. It's not a difficult thing; entering into His presence requires less and less effort as we yield our spirits to Him. It's like keeping spiritual antennae up, always waiting for a signal from above.

Respond to His urging.

At times it requires no effort to enter into God's presence. There are seasons when we have a deep, Spirit-driven hunger

and thirst for the things of God. These are times of intense spiritual desire for Him.

At such times I try to respond to the slightest whisper of the Holy Spirit's call. I know that if I fail to respond to His prompting, the opportunity for that particular spiritual experience may never come again. Something wonderful may have been lost forever.

This is one of the most important lessons I've learned over the years about waiting on the Lord and receiving from His Spirit. Often people come to me and share how they shrugged off or pushed away the presence of the Lord, and later they were sorry.

Pride got in the way and caused them to miss something that God had for them. They let circumstances and worldly pressures dictate how they should use their time. The Lord called them into a wonderful experience, but they felt compelled to get up and get busy, or they had to do a few more chores before waiting for Him on their knees.

If you get a nudging from the Lord to enter into prayer, never shrug it off—never turn away. Never say, "Not now, Lord." Allow Him, at that very moment, to minister to you or touch you or speak to you—whatever it is He desires to do.

This is how you develop a greater sensitivity to His voice and learn to surrender to Him. Every time you yield yourself to God, you give more of yourself to Him—more of your heart, your plans, your desires, your hopes and your dreams. And you open yourself up to having a life-changing encounter with the divine Lover of your soul.

Press in. I learned how to yield to the presence of God by pressing into Him; that is, by being deliberate about my pursuit. When I sensed His presence, I humbled myself enough to admit that I wanted Him desperately. I longed for His

nearness. I wanted whatever He had for me.

The Bible encourages, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8, NASB). We have to make an effort to pursue God. However, even our desire for God comes from Him.

Ask Him to draw you to Himself. Ask Him from a pure heart to renew the flame of desire within you. Pray to your Beloved, “Draw me after you and let us run together!” (Song 1:4)

Remove the rocks. Why do some of our encounters with the Lord seem to be deeper than others? We have many layers in our beings, and sometimes we hit a layer of “rock” that needs to be removed in order to get down to the next level of living water. These layers of rock are hindrances to prayer that reside in the realm of our souls.

As we press into God, the Holy Spirit reveals the hindrances—unforgiveness or stubbornness or rebellion, for example—that are keeping us from Him. Once they have been removed through repentance, our hearts become softer and more yielded to the Spirit. Free of these hindrances, we often experience a release of the anointing into our lives and ministries.

When you pass through a layer of rock and get to the next level, something wonderful happens. You begin to drink from His storehouse of pleasures. His love refreshes you and fills your every longing. You realize what you’ve been searching for all your life.

His loving presence brings wholeness, health and a sense of well-being that no food, drug, medicine, person, material good or worldly pleasure can ever produce. This kind of release in prayer will leave you breathless.

Wait patiently for Him.

The discipline of waiting is something many of us know little about. The Lord calls; He beckons us to come and be with Him,

but we don't know how to wait. So we often give up too soon—we get discouraged.

Then we try to fulfill our desires and longings with substitutes. But what is required of us is simply to wait—sometimes for days. We must set aside times for God alone—times of remaining quiet, of meditating upon His Word, of praising and of worshiping Him.

When His presence comes into our prayer closets, He often comes with power, love and passion. His Spirit enters like a mighty, rushing wind—a great big surprise package wrapped with a big bow.

When you experience Him in this way, you may cry aloud, “You, Lord, are the joy of my soul's desire! You fill my heart with laughter and song. My heart is filled with love for You, O God.

“Put back together all the broken pieces of my life. Blow away my insecurities with the breath of Your Spirit. Wash me in Your presence. I want nothing more than to be with You.”

At other times, He may come with utter silence and stillness, and you may not be able to move or speak a word. Such a visitation of God's presence is fearsome.

You may also experience long seasons during which you feel nothing, see nothing and hear nothing as you wait for His presence. It doesn't matter. He is there watching your every move and listening to your every thought. He knows, and He is there with you.

Are you willing to wait silently, expectantly, for Him? Will you pay this price for intimacy with your heavenly Bridegroom? Ask Him to teach you to wait upon Him.

Persist in prayer. Pray the prayer of importunity; in other words, keep going, keep asking. This is persistent, prevailing

prayer, and God encourages us to engage in it

Jesus said, “‘Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

“‘Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?’” (Luke 11:9-13).

We are carnal and yet know how to give good gifts. How much better and kinder is our Father in heaven! He will delight you with His response when you ask Him for more of His Spirit.

Ask God for more of Himself, seek Him for a deeper walk in the Spirit and use the prayer of importunity with faith, knowing that He is a good God who desires to respond and give you all you need.

Read a companion devotional.

Pat Chen is founder and president of First Love Ministries International. She is an ordained minister, and she has written on the topics of prayer, fasting and reconciliation.