

When God Draws Near, Everything Changes

When God draws near, everything changes!

Your agenda changes. Your program changes. Your opinion changes.

And most importantly, your heart changes.

When God draws near, your hunger and quest for greater intimacy with God are forever changed!

You desperately need God's manifest presence.

Do you desire His presence more than anything else in this life?

It is often stated that His presence with you is His greatest present to you. In this season of giving and receiving of gifts, I can shout a loud "Amen" to that statement.

"Here's the one thing I crave from Yahweh, the one thing I seek above all else: I want to live with him every moment in his house, beholding the marvelous beauty of Yahweh, filled with awe, delighting in his glory and grace. I want to contemplate in his temple" (Ps. 27:4, TPT).

The Quest for Greater Intimacy

You cannot fully achieve true intimacy with God until you learn how to come before Him in quietness of spirit, mind and body.

An atmosphere of stillness is absolutely essential for us if you wish to experience deep, loving communion with your Lord.

David the psalmist wrote, "I am standing in absolute stillness, silent before the one I love, waiting as long as it

takes for him to rescue me” (Ps. 62:5).

The prophet Habakkuk proclaimed, “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him” (Hab. 2:20, NASB). When Elijah listened for the counsel of God, he heard the Lord not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in “a still small voice” (see 1 Kings 19:11–13, NKJV).

In Psalm 46, the Lord calls on us to “Be still and realize that I am God” (v. 10, TPT).

This “realizing” goes far beyond mere informational knowledge.

The Hebrew word *yada* is used for all types of knowledge, including the most intimate relationships. It is the same word used in the phrase “And Adam knew Eve his wife.”

To know God in this sense means to have His Spirit infilling you, His breath inspiring you and His heart invigorating you.

Knowing God means to be brought into vital, personal union with Jesus Christ your Lord. That’s the kind of intimacy He seeks with you but entering into it requires quietness of spirit on your part.

Unfortunately, society does not encourage or prepare you for quietness. You are surrounded daily by a bedlam of competing voices—both good and evil—that constantly clamor for your attention.

If you don’t know how to listen, the “still small voice” of God can easily be drowned in the din.

Identifying the Hindrances

In your quest for intimacy with God, you face two primary hindrances: external distractions and internal chaos.

The first involves disturbances and interruptions that come from your surroundings while the second relates to struggles

on the battlefield of your mind.

Neither of these will go away on their own or by accident. You must conquer them by firm commitment and deliberate action.

When you are free of external distractions, you can center down into your heart.

The phrase “center down” in church history comes from the Quakers. “Centering” is a truth the Quakers have stewarded for generations and it is a major part of their theology.

Basically, to center down means to recognize the center of quiet in the midst of the storm of your soul—kind of like the eye of a hurricane—and to focus on that center until the surrounding turmoil fades away.

Even though your soul may be rushing and roiling, there is a quiet place in the center where God commands peace and where His kingdom is manifested.

It is in that center of quiet where you meet God in genuine fellowship and close communion. Achieving quietness of spirit is the means to that end; it is not an end in itself.

This center of quiet is often not easy to find. You must consciously desire it, deliberately plan for it and diligently pursue it.

The rewards of success will justify all the time, energy, effort and rigorous self-discipline required to get there. You will be at peace in the presence of your Lord. In these moments, you are aware that in stillness God draws near to your heart.

David summed it up well when he wrote, “Quiet your heart in his presence and wait patiently for Yahweh. ... But the humble of heart will inherit every promise and enjoy abundant peace” (Ps. 37:7, 11).

This type of contemplative waiting on God is just one of many legitimate expressions of prayer. And while it is not a quick fix to all your problems, it is a powerful yet sorely neglected weapon in God's arsenal to help you find His safe path through the perplexing maze of life.

The Lost Art of Meditating on Scripture

One practice that is very helpful in learning to quiet yourself before the Lord is to meditate on a passage of Scripture.

Understand me here. I'm not talking about some Far East or New Age method of emptying the mind but rather a focused concentration on a portion of God's Word.

You are not to be empty-headed but rather Christ-minded.

As you let your mind dwell on Scripture, the Holy Spirit, who inspired all Scripture, interprets it in your heart and brings your spirit into harmony with Himself. God's Word is alive and active, and meditating on it can usher you into the realm of the Spirit.

Meditating on Scripture is different from simply reading it.

In meditation, you focus on one or two verses at most, sometimes only part of a verse, a single phrase or even just one or two words. You mull over these words: chewing on them, reflecting on them and turning them over in your mind to look at them from every angle.

As you concentrate on the Scripture, the Holy Spirit will use the living Word of God to bring you into the presence of God Himself.

The primary purpose of meditating on Scripture is to bring you to your beloved.

When You Draw Near, God Draws Near

Many times it is easy to be too mechanical or too technical in your approach to the Bible. You may focus on studying Scripture, dissecting and analyzing the verses, formulating theology and doctrine and such.

All of that is fine and good, but if you stop there, you miss the point. In fact, you will miss the person!

You don't want to be like the religious leaders to whom Jesus said, "You are busy analyzing the Scriptures, poring over them hoping to gain eternal life. Everything you read points to me, yet you still refuse to come to me so I can give you the life you're looking for—eternal life!" (John 5:39–40)

Bible study is very important, but in the end, it accomplishes little if it does not lead you into a *personal encounter* with the divine author.

Yes, His presence with you is His greatest present to you.

Have you considered that your greatest present to God is your presence back to Him? In this season of giving and receiving of gifts, God desires your presence as well.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8, ESV)

And when God draws near, everything changes! {eoa}

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