

Why You Need a Fresh Encounter With God

Have you ever wondered why there are so many professing Christians in America yet so few cities that have been truly transformed for Christ? Or why, in prayer meetings and conferences, we passionately cry out for nations to be saved in a day, yet our local spheres of influence remain largely unchanged year after year?

The answer can be found by examining the historical seeds of past revivals.

For example, legend has it that Jonathan Edwards, before the birthing of the Great Awakening, made a covenant with God. Standing on a riverbank, he cried out to God for revival in the land.

Drawing a circle in the sand, he pledged that before God could take the city, the region, the nation, He must start here—and he pointed to the circle. Then Edwards stepped into the circle.

For a community, a city or a nation to be gripped with revival, a man or woman must first be fully gripped by God. Personal visitation is always the catalyst for revival.

From Visitation to Transformation

Visitation always precedes transformation. In order to shake the nations for God, we must first let God shake us!

Perhaps you're thinking, "A radical visitation from God is great for people such as Moses, the apostle Paul, Jonathan Edwards or Benny Hinn. But that kind of thing would never happen to little ol' me."

But what if it wasn't the greatness of these men that prompted

their visitations? What if their personal visitations prompted their greatness, giving them the faith to walk out their incredible destinies?

Throughout history God has always used weak, broken vessels whose very fragility is the perfect conduit for His glory and power to change cities and nations.

The truth is, God doesn't wait until we have "arrived" at our destiny to encounter us. Rather, He uses personal visitation as a key part of our commissioning.

Think about it. Seventy percent of the Bible is about trances, dreams, visions, signs and wonders, angelic encounters and other supernatural accounts of God's visiting men and women.

God is not a respecter of persons. Could it be that He wants to radically meet with you, too?

Fear of the Supernatural

Unfortunately, many Christians in America don't believe in visitations from God because they don't believe in the supernatural. The Western church as a whole is barren because of its utter dependence on logic and intellectualism.

We know the Word of God, but we lack the experience of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, church is little more than a routine, a social club—totally devoid of mass salvations, deliverances and other supernatural touches for suffering humanity.

We claim to believe that the Bible is true, yet somehow we ignore the fact that Jesus commissioned us to walk in greater works than He did. Miracles are not an option but rather a trademark of Basic Christianity 101.

Why is there such a resistance to the supernatural? For many of us, the answer is fear.

Does fear haunt your heart? Ask yourself: When you think of

someone being “transported,” is your first thought of New Age astral projection?

Or do you remember Philip’s translation after he shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29)? Or perhaps Elijah’s transportation to heaven by the Spirit of God (2 Kings 2:11)?

The truth is, Satan is unable to create anything new, so he counterfeits the authentic. The New Age Movement is a prime example of his counterfeiting.

Because American Christians have not walked in their inheritance—which includes the supernatural—New Age thought has been able to make headway. People are so thirsty for the supernatural that they’re willing to go wherever they can find it.

And like starving souls in the desert, they’re willing to take whatever they can get. Unfortunately, instead of discovering the refreshing, living waters of God’s supernatural realm through the church, they have to settle for drinking the dry sand of New Age ideas.

Meanwhile, Satan keeps feeding Christians the lie that if we dare to move in the supernatural realm, we will slip into deception. What this implies, however, is that God is unable to protect us from being deceived.

But if God had His eyes on us before we even knew Him, how much more is He able and willing, as our Father in heaven, to lead us into all truth—with His Word as the glorious boundary line?

Where is our confidence—in the ability of Satan to deceive us, or in God’s ability to protect us?

Are we more fearful of Satan than we are desperate to experience God?

We don't have to be afraid! Experts say that the best way to discern a counterfeit is to study and memorize the real thing. You and I can know the "real thing" by examining biblical examples of people who've had real, authentic, life- and world-changing encounters with God.

Abraham: The Father of Faith

Did you ever notice that at the time of his divine call, Abraham did not yet have a history of faithfulness to the one true God? Obviously, God's visitations are not dependent on our track records!

The sovereignty of God simply interrupted Abraham's life, promising to make him into a mighty nation. So forsaking his family, leaving behind everything sacred, Abraham followed after a God he had just met, wandering in search of a far-off promised land.

When the time came to officially establish His covenant with Abraham, God arranged for a radical visitation. He appeared to Abraham in the form of a burning oven and a fiery torch passing through a sacrifice (Gen. 15:17).

This supernatural encounter enabled Abraham to believe God for the impossible—a son—even though he was old and his wife was barren. Because he'd met with God personally, he knew it would be the power of his Creator—not his own abilities—that would bring the prophecy to pass.

As Abraham learned, a visitation from God changes a person—literally. Before his covenant, he had been called Abram. But afterward God changed his name to Abraham.

He went from being a wandering, childless nomad to being the father of Faith, the cornerstone of the Abrahamic Covenant. One encounter—and a nation was born!

Jacob the Deceiver

We might think that someone as sneaky and manipulative as Jacob, Abraham's grandson, would not be deserving of a personal encounter with God. But our righteousness is not what qualifies us for visitations. It is our hunger for Him that God cannot resist!

Jacob's first visitation took place when he was fleeing for his life. Stopping just long enough to lie down to sleep, he dreamed of a ladder, with angels ascending and descending and the Lord standing at the top (Gen. 28:10-15).

Through this supernatural vision, God re-established the Abrahamic covenant, promising Jacob that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth.

Notice that God didn't use the opportunity to scold Jacob for being crafty and deceptive. Quite the contrary: God promised to never leave him or forsake him.

Our pasts never disqualify us from pressing in for a visitation from God! In fact, the more we see of God's mercy and kindness, the greater our faith and expectancy of what He can and will do.

In a second supernatural visitation, Jacob wrestled overnight with an angel, contending, "I will not let you go unless you bless me!" (Gen. 32:26, NIV). How could he make such a demand? His divine encounters gave him the confidence to press in to his prophetic promises and demand God's blessing—even if it meant wrestling through the night.

As Jacob learned, it is through our private encounters with the Lord that we are subdued by His power and transformed. By the next morning, Jacob was such a new man that God changed his name to Israel. Two heavenly visions, and Jacob was eternally changed from a deceptive wanderer to a devoted worshiper!

Isaiah: Commissioned by Fire

As a young man, Isaiah also had a supernatural visitation from God. How would you like to have seraphim firebrand you with a coal in order to commission you as a prophet to the nations? That's exactly what Isaiah experienced (Is. 6:1-13).

Could the same thing happen to you?

A modern-day Isaiah 6 happened to a pastor I know. In a vision she saw an altar with a Man standing behind it, holding a knife in His hand. When He told her to get on the altar, she started screaming, "No! No! No!"

He continued to stand there, waiting. Finally she said yes and climbed willingly onto the altar.

Wings closed around her, and a hot coal of fire was put on her mouth. Suddenly she found herself traveling in the Spirit, flying to nations where the Lord revealed cities she would visit and individuals she would meet in the future.

"I have called you to be a prophetess, an oracle and a voice!" the Man said.

With this visitation, the woman was ordained into prophetic ministry and forever changed.

In 1987, I personally had a 21-day visitation in which I met with the Lord each day from 3 in the afternoon until 7 in the morning. Through intense times of intercession, God revealed to me His heart for the nations.

He explained many mysteries—how to move with the Holy Spirit, the different kinds of fires and anointings, how to open up the heavens. He taught me that what you touch in heaven, you can bring down to earth!

These visitations transformed my ministry from one of just praying for individuals to one with a more corporate anointing, in which pools of glory and radical encounters with

Jesus pervade my meetings.

Changing Your DNA

For lives and cities and nations to be changed, personal, supernatural visitations from God are essential. These are not radical joyrides in the Spirit; they are DNA-altering experiences that transform us, giving us the faith and confidence to believe for and do the impossible.

Comb through the Scriptures and try to find one hero of faith whose life was not interrupted by the supernatural. You can't! Nor can you find one in the history of church revivals.

Why not contend for your own personal visitation? Here is the key: As much as you want to meet with God, He passionately desires to encounter you even more.

Your life and your world can begin to change, starting today. All it takes is one radical encounter with God.

Read a companion devotional.

*The late **Jill Austin** founded Master Potter Ministries and traveled internationally as a conference speaker and prophetic voice.*