

James Goll: Soaking in His Presence

You hear a lot these days in the church about “soaking.” Some people object to it because that term is not in the Bible (Of course, a lot of things we do are not directly stated in the Bible. Sunday school, bus ministry and electric guitar music among others are some examples).

But the soaking concept is there—it’s all over the place. It’s in almost every book of the Bible, including 1 Samuel. You can see it in this familiar story:

“Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There was no vision coming forth. At that time, Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyes had begun to grow weak that he could not see), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called to Samuel, and he answered, ‘Here I am.’ He ran to Eli and said, ‘Here I am, for you called to me.’ And he said, ‘I did not call. Return, lie down again.’ And he went and lay down. The Lord called Samuel again. So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ And he answered, ‘I did not call, my son. Return, lie down again” (1 Sam. 3:1-6).

Where did young Samuel lie down? Where did he sleep? He “*was lying down in the house of the Lord where the ark of God was.*” Little Samuel had been brought to the old priest Eli by his mother Hannah, and he lived there in the temple, ministering to the Lord and learning about God. At night, he lay down to rest near the ark itself.

And when the voice of the Lord was released, but Samuel couldn’t yet discern that it was God’s voice, what did Eli

tell him to do? He told him to go lie down there again. He didn't keep him wherever he was sleeping, and he didn't send him somewhere else to do something. In essence, Eli told Samuel to go and soak up some more of God's presence so he would recognize the voice of God when he heard it.

This is instructive for us. Like Samuel, we need to spend time resting in God's presence, going back again and again, falling in love with God all over again. We can be changed, not just temporarily stirred up, by returning to our first love (or by finding that first love if we've never tasted it before). We can learn to recognize His voice and we can experience personal revival. Out of that renewal, we can obey the Voice as we minister.

Hide and Seek

When you seek Him, you will find Him. Imagine for a moment that you could spend a day with Jesus—just the two of you. If that's too much time to imagine spending with Him, imagine spending only an hour with Him. Imagine that it's right now; right this minute. Just you and the lover of your soul. Just be ...

Go ahead, soak in His presence. If it helps to put on a quiet worship CD, feel free to do that. You can find Him in ever so many ways. One of my favorite ways is hiking alone in the woods or in growing up walking on the railroads tracks outside my parent's house in rural Missouri. You can find Him in the love letters (the Bible) that He wrote for you to read. You can see Him in the flowers that are blooming and in the creation that's groaning around you. You can see Him in the body of Christ. But draw closer still. Yes, draw closer to His loving heart.

While going through my cancer battles, I would simply put on some great "healing, soaking music" and rest in the presence of the Lord right in my bed. I found Him waiting to meet me

every time.

Get alone with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Rest around the ark, like Samuel did. Take a “Selah” pause from the hectic pace of this life. Rest ... wait ... repose ... reflect on the one who loves you more than you love yourself.

Worship, Listen, Respond

Get still before Him in order to commune with Him (read Psalm 46:10; 2 Samuel 7:18; Revelation 3:20; and Habakkuk 2:20).

Draw near to His heart (read James 4:8; Psalm 42:1-2; Isaiah 55:1-3,6; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 73:28; Psalm 84:1-4,10; and Hebrews 10:22).

Seek His face. Seek God for God’s sake. To become an effective intercessor, I encourage you to engage yourself with the Lord, in order to be able to engage yourself in the work of praying (read Matthew 7:7,8; Psalm 27:4,8; Psalm 63:1-8; Hebrews 11:6; and Jeremiah 29:11-14).

Just spend time in His presence. Become an Exodus-33-aholic like Moses (read Exodus 33:14,15; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 89:15; Isaiah 29:13; Isaiah 63:9; Lamentations 2:19; and Jude 24, 25).

Have Plenty of Oil

Keep that oil replenished. Keep your lamp trimmed and ready. Get to know God. Address Him by one of His many names. You can find over a hundred of them in His Word. Sometimes one of them will capture your heart. Stay with it a while; even for the rest of the day.

I remember one time when I landed on “Friend of Sinners,” and the Holy Spirit just fastened it onto my heart and unfolded it to me. You can get to know God—and you can minister His presence to others—when you address Him by various names and

get to know Him through His Word (See Matthew 11:29; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; and Philippians 3:8, 10).

If you count all things as loss in comparison to knowing Him, that's getting oil in your lamp (read Philippians 3:7,8; 1 Chronicles 21:23; and 2 Samuel 24:24). It's also a great trade.

Allow yourself to be overwhelmed with the amazing Person you are speaking with. You are talking with Him, not merely to Him; He is speaking back to you. The God of the universe likes to hear your voice (read Romans 5:5; Psalm 143:8,10; Isaiah 54:10; Lamentations 3:22-25; John 17:23b; and Romans 8:35-39).

Gather Strength in the Eye of the Storm

You'll be more effective as an intercessor when you maintain your private "watching and waiting" times with the Lord. You've got the lamp in your hand already—God gave it to you when you were saved. Now it's time to gather the lamp oil and keep it fresh.

It's like being in the eye of the hurricane, where you can regather your strength and your resources for the next onslaught. Your strength is in Him. Sit, rest and sleep right at His feet. Gather strength from being in His presence.

The oil of His presence will soothe your wounds and aching muscles. It will lubricate your joints and limber up your mental processes. It will tenderize your heart.

Seek Him. Soak Him in. Let Him prepare you for what's next.

Closing Prayer

Father, I present myself before You in Jesus' great name. I come as an intercessor, but this time all I want is more of You. Let my words be pleasing to You. Awaken my soul and spirit to hear Your voice. I love you and I want to love you more.

I want to be like young Samuel and learn to rest around the ark. I want to soak in Your presence. Draw me close to You. Let me hear Your heartbeat. Pull my deepest heartstrings. I want to know Your voice and mirror Your ways. I choose Your ways over mine.

Give me oil in my lamp and grace me to be a wise attendant in these days I live in. I come to You with expectancy and joy. Amen!

*(This article is an excerpt from chapter six of *Prayer Storm*. Other materials to build on your understanding come from *The Lost Art of Practicing His Presence Book* and *Consecrated, Contemplative Prayer Study Guide*).*