

# Experiencing God

## God Pursues Us

John 15:15-16

July 30, 2016

### Today

As you know, I have been married before. At the time I was a marginal Christian at best. I went to church. I was on the praise team. I did all the right things, but the fact is I was far from God and had no real heart relationship with Him. Even though I was far from Him, God was pursuing me and when my husband left me, I ran smack into Him on the floor of my bathroom. Life did not necessarily become easier after that encounter – my husband still divorced me. Life remained uncertain. Often, I only had a few dollars in the bank. Through it all God remained faithful. Those were some of the best years of my life.

I can count a million times  
People asking me how I  
Can praise You with all that I've gone through  
The question just amazes me  
Can circumstances possibly  
Change who I forever am in You {Mercy Me – “Bring the Rain”}

We were created to be in relationship with God. Prior to sin it was mutual, after sin, things changed. We changed. We live on a quickly deteriorating planet. It is not a safe place to live.

Understand this – what happens here, the violence and death we face was NEVER a part of God's plan. We experience things that God wishes we never had a knowledge of. We chose to have the knowledge of good and evil and God has been doing damage control ever since.

**In our natural human condition, we don't seek God.**

- **Romans 3:10-12** - As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

**Therefore, if we are going to have a relationship with God, He is the one who will have come in search of us. And He does!!**

- **John 6:44-45** - No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.
- **Jeremiah 31:3** - The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.
- **Hosea 11:4** - I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.
- **Revelation 3:20** - Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

**Regardless of your life experience, or the choices you have made, or the circumstances you find yourself in, God loves you. He doesn't love you still. He doesn't love you anyway. He just LOVES you. Let us settle that in our minds right now.**

- **John Eldredge {EPIC}**: The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus answers once and for all the question, "What is God's heart toward me?" At the point of our deepest betrayal, when we had run our farthest from him and gotten so lost we could never find our way home, God came and died to rescue us. You have never been loved like this. He has come to save you in every way a person can be saved. That is God's heart toward you"

**Jesus didn't come to planet earth and die in order for God to love you; He came BECAUSE God loves you. Never allow your heart to question God's love.**

The Bible testifies to the fact that God pursues us. As we noticed last week, God made Himself known to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Gideon and Paul, to name a few. From Genesis to Revelation we see that it is God who takes the initiative for each person to experience Him in a personal and unique way.

**Probably the most amazing part of God's pursuit of us is that He does it BEFORE we want to have anything to do with Him. He doesn't pursue us because we are friends; He pursues us despite the fact that we are enemies.**

- **Romans 5:6-10** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!
- **1 John 4:9-10** - This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Everything in your Christian life; knowing God, experiencing Him, learning His plans and purposes – all of it depends on the quality of relationship you have with Him.

What I believed about God deeply influenced my relationship with Him. Before my bathroom floor experience, I believed two possibilities: either He was pacing the floor with a big stick just waiting for me to step out of line or He had simply washed His hands of me – written me off. I knew that I was going through the motions and I actually longed for something more, but I believed Him to be just as unapproachable as the people who claimed to represent Him. I certainly did not believe that He loved me!!

### What you assume about God or what you believe to be true about God will profoundly influence your relationship with God.

But notice what the Bible says:

- **John 3:16-17** - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
- **Romans 8:35-39** - Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **1 John 3:16** - This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

Do you realize that you would not even be sitting here today listening to this “fabulous” sermon if God had not taken the initiative to draw you to Himself? The fact that you are here means that God has something in mind for you to become and something for you to do.

- **Deuteronomy 30:6** - The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.
- **John 15:15-16** - I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.

God loves you and the one thing He yearns for and desires most is that you would love Him back. Knowing about God is not enough. The goal is to KNOW God and that only happens through experience.

A few of us here have been married for a while now, but think WAY back to the time you first met your spouse. You wanted to spend all your time with them. You talked about them all the time to your friends and anyone who would listen. You wanted to get to know them; you hung on their every word. What were their likes and dislikes? What was it that made them so wonderful? You just wanted to spend every moment you could getting to know this amazing, perfect creature. The point is you took the time to get to know them. You invested time in them because you WANTED to.

That's how it is with God. You have to take the time to get to know Him. The more you come to know and experience firsthand the depths of His love for you, the more you come to love Him. The more time you spend the more time you want to spend because you enjoy being around Him so much. This takes time!!!

Your life, no matter how long it lasts, provides the opportunity to get to know God.

- **Psalms 34:8** - Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
- **Isaiah 1:18** - Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

God takes the time to develop our character into the likeness of Jesus. He uses the experiences of our lives to mold us and shape us for eternity.

Remember the story of Joseph –

- **Genesis 45:4-8** - Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! <sup>5</sup> And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead

of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup> "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

Begin orienting your life to God. His purposes go far beyond the here and now. God knows what is best for you and that is why the relationship you have with Him is so important. Make sure that you are investing your time, and resources into things that will last for eternity.

- **Matthew 6:19-21** - Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
- **Philippians 3:7-14** - But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

What things are you investing your life in? Are there any adjustments you need to make to the priorities in your life? Is God the priority He should be?

Let us all commit today to make our relationship with God a priority.