

Experiencing God

God's Invitation

John 17:3
August 6, 2016

Today

This series is about experiencing God.

We spoke last week about God's pursuit of us and about the importance of KNOWING Him. Knowing ABOUT Him is not enough to develop an intimate love relationship with Him. Knowing ABOUT God will never transform you. Transformation only happens as a result of KNOWING Him personally.

He is inviting us to experience that kind of transforming relationship with Him.

There are over 900 names for God in Scripture and each new name follows an event in which someone experienced Him in a personal way.

Each name describes a different aspect of His character.

Let's look at a few examples:

- **YHWH / YAHWEH / JEHOVAH:** "LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4; Daniel 9:14) – strictly speaking, the only proper name for God. The revelation of the name is first given to Moses "I Am who I Am" (Exodus 3:14). This name specifies immediacy.
- "The Lord Will Provide" (Genesis 22:14)
- "The Lord Who Heals" (Exodus 15:26)
- "The Lord Our Banner" (Exodus 17:15)
- "The Lord Our Peace" (Judges 6:24)
- "The Lord Our Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1)
- "God of Seeing" (Genesis 16:13)

One of the ways we experience God is through song:

- *Redeemer* (Ps 19:14)
- *Holy Lord* (Daniel 9:24; Hosea 11:9)
- *Lamb of God* (John 1:29)
- *My Hope* (Ps 71:5)
- *Holy and True* (Rev 19:11)

By using Names of God in this way we acknowledge that He is worthy of our Praise and Worship and we are reminded of the greatness of the God we serve.

These examples show us how much God desires to reveal Himself to us. God's desire to know and be known did not end with the book of Revelation. He desires the same today. He wants to be to you and me what He was then – healer, guide, redeemer, friend.

As we have noted, God never intended that we should know anything about sin, but we chose it and now the world we live in is one massive mine field that can harm us or destroy our lives. How do we navigate a mine field if we don't know where the mines are?

God's commands are designed to give us the best possible life and help us navigate the mine field – He desires to protect us.

- **Deuteronomy 32:46-47** - He said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, *even* all the words of this law. ⁴⁷ "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed, ***it is your life***. And by this word you shall prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."
- **Deuteronomy 6:20-25** - When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *do* the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments *mean* which the LORD our God commanded you?' ²¹ then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² 'Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; ²³

and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.' ²⁴ "So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God ***for our good always and for our survival***, as *it is* today. ²⁵ "***And it will be righteousness for us*** if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.

I don't know about you, but I would want to stay as close to the guy with the map as is humanly possible. It is certainly not the time to go wandering off smelling flowers..... God never intended for us to know anything about the mine field, but now that we do, the best way to live life is to follow the map.

Another expression of His love is discipline:

- **Proverbs 3:11-12** - My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD, Or loathe His reproof, ¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproves, Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.
- **Hebrews 12:5-6** - and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."
- **Hebrews 12:11** – All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

The commands and disciplines of God are intended to make our life on earth better, but they are also designed to prepare us for eternity. It is only during our life here that our character is developed. God's desire is to shape us for eternity. I don't know about you, but there are things in my life, things that I do and think that are not eternity worthy. Those things have to go and God is willing to do whatever it takes - because He wants me with Him. The same is true for you.

God loves us and wants to be loved back. The way we demonstrate our love back to God is through obedience.

- **Luke 10:27** - And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."
- **John 14:15** - If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Obedience is the outward expression of your love and gratitude for God. If you love Him you will obey Him. It is not about following the letter of the law with clenched fists – the Jews did that better than anyone. It is about the spirit of the law – Why do you keep the law..... What is your motivation for keeping God's law? Is it fear or is it love and gratitude?

The Sermon on the Mount teaches us that what God wants is internal motivation NOT external law keeping.

- You can keep the letter of the law and have no relationship with God. Obedience without relationship is possible but it does not last. That's how the best law keepers in the world could kill the Law Giver – they didn't know Him.
- You can't, however, have a relationship with God and not keep the law. Law keeping is a natural expression of our love relationship with God. Obedience that comes because of relationship is eternal.

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

- God's commands are intended to give you the best life possible. But you won't obey Him unless you believe He desires your best good.
- You won't trust Him unless you love Him
- You won't love Him unless you know Him.
- You come to know and love and trust Him through personal experience.
- And all that ONLY HAPPENS because He is pursuing you FIRST.

God Pursues → We Experience → We Know → We Love → We Trust → We Obey

This is the process that God is inviting you to - EXPERIENCING HIM

As your experience grows, God begins to include you in His activity. He invites you to join Him in what He is already doing in your church and community.

- **John 5:19-20** - Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever *the Father* does, these things the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.

Jesus WATCHED to see what His Father was doing.

What this shows us is that we must be aware of the world around us. We have to pay attention. We must have tender and sensitive hearts to see the circumstances around us.

There is a great prayer in the book, "Windows of the Soul" – by Ken Gire

Thank you, O God for seeing beyond the surface of my life to the child sitting at the mirror. Thank you for sitting down beside me, putting your arms around me, and speaking to me with such tenderness, such compassion, and such understanding. Help me to be aware of the pictures in my life that are everywhere around me showing me something I need to see, telling me something I need hear, offering me something I need to receive. Help me look beyond the surface of those pictures to see windows. Give me eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to receive what You are offering me through those windows, that I might sense what is dear to You so that it might become dear to me.

Is it possible for God to be working around you and you be completely unaware of it? YES

- **2 Kings 6:14-17** - And he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
- God was at work through Jesus and most the church leadership completely missed it.

Often, we choose to wear blinders so we don't see God's activity because deep down we don't want to join Him. Its inconvenient. It might cost something I'm not prepared to pay. I won't get the glory..... **We want God to bless us, not work through us.** God's blessing is a by-product of our obedience to Him. As we bless others, we experience God's blessings in ways we will never experience otherwise.

Again, God has not asked us to go do what we can for Him and we waste a lot of time pursuing things of our own devising. He invites us to be in a relationship with Him and through that relationship we begin to see what He is doing and we adjust our lives to join Him in what he is ALREADY doing.

When God speaks, He is about to do something:

- **Amos 3:7** - Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.

What initiates, He completes:

- **Isaiah 46:9-11** - Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; ¹¹ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it, surely* I will do it.
- **Isaiah 14:24-27** - The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, ²⁵ to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulder. ²⁶ "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. ²⁷ "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate *it*? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

So how do we develop the sensitivity needed to participate in what God is inviting us to do?

Pray – Jesus prayed, often all night

Watch – Jesus watched to see where God was working – He was aware.

Make connections – Jesus engaged with people

Ask questions – Jesus got to know them

Listen – Jesus paid attention

Act – Jesus took action

Today, God is extending you an invitation:

- To experience Him in a real and transformational way
- To participate in His redemptive work