

November 11, 2012

Intimacy with God through Discouragement

How do we approach God?

Sometimes we find difficulty in approaching God. Even Moses before he became an icon of faith also started out hesitant and fearful, but it was in his continuous and constant communication with God that his faith grew.

We all have told that the best way to approach God is through quiet time. This is a time set aside with the Lord. This is our special time alone with God. The only problem is that we often fall into the trap of having a fixed set of rituals or beliefs of who and what God is. This is in a sense putting God in a box. We try to copy a standard set of prayer, a set time, a fixed duration. . . And sometimes even a preconceived notion of how God will respond to us. We struggle and continue to make this work even when it doesn't — realizing this we should take a step back and STOP.

We should stop and re-assess our standards and preconceived notions. . . Because if we continue on in a path like this, we will never find the intimacy with God that we seek. When we continue to try to fit everything into a mold, forgetting that our God cannot be put in a mold, then our efforts become useless. Then we get frustrated and discouraged. Spending time with God should be unique and individualized. What may work for one person, may not necessarily work for another — our alone time with God should be spent in the way where we can feel closest to Him and where we can hear Him.

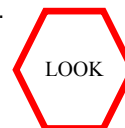
We should also be wary of falling into the trap of using that alone time with God just asking and asking and asking. This time should be spent basking in His presence, this time should be spent focusing on who God is. . . This is how we build relationship. We should not aim to spend time with God because we want something, or because we are expecting Him to give us something, because when He doesn't give us an answer right away we are opening ourselves up to discouragement and then we rant that God does not hear us.

So if our current practice in pursuing intimacy with God isn't working, we should
If in our current quiet practice, we do not hear God, we should



Often times we wait for God to answer us in a spectacular, extraordinary ways — like Moses and the burning bush, or Joseph in his dreams, or Paul in his blindness but God chooses to speak to each of us differently, much like a key is specific to only one lock. He says in Isaiah 55:8 **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.**

After we STOP, we should then check what works for us. Don't be stuck with just one way. Let us not fall into the trap of putting God in a box because when we do this, we limit God and what He can do in our lives. We should instead open ourselves to Him so that like a vessel, He can work in us and shine through us.



God is constantly talking to us. In Hebrews 4:7 it says **He again fixes a certain day, “Today”, saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.”**

But the problem is that more often than not we turn a deaf ear, or a blind eye to what God is telling us especially if we do not like what He is trying to tell us.



380 S. Rosemead Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91107

Sundays
945 AM
Heart
Preparation

1000 AM
WORSHIP

Dgroup Schedules

Tuesdays
700 pm
1102 E Swanee Lane
West Covina, CA

Thursdays
730 pm
2617 N Parish Place
Burbank, CA

Fridays
700 pm
5124 Ashworth St
Lakewood, CA

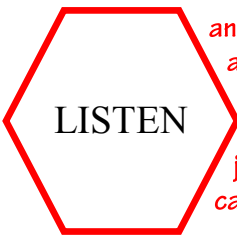
Fridays
730 PM
4706 Ivar Ave
Rosemead, CA

We only think of God as the mighty being, all-powerful, and all-knowing but we often forget that He is our creator, our maker and that He is intimately concerned about our life. But if we know this, then we must look forward to every situation, because each situation is a chance to experience God.

The challenge is to find and understand that God is constantly around us, the problem is we don't recognize Him.

So what should we do?

The solution is to think outside the box — to not limit what God can do in our lives, rather we should open ourselves in surrender and acceptance of God's purpose for our life. Sometimes the harder we try to fight or run away from God, the more miserable we are. So when we spend time with God, we should simply enjoy the time with Him, throw out any expectations we may have. Throwing out expectations also means that we should toss anything and everything we know and claim to know about God, and just immerse ourselves in the presence of God. When we come to God should be in self-denial, and we should have a willing, open and surrendered heart.



1 Kings 19:11-13 says *So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." and behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking pieces of the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gently blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold a voice came to him and said, "what are you doing here Elijah?"*

By putting God in a box, we are limiting ourselves to hear from Him through certain experiences. Often times, we look for in the grand and spectacular experiences. . .but what if God chooses to speak to us through a whisper. . . But we busy ourselves looking for the loud sounds that we barely hear His whisper.

So what does it really mean to LISTEN?

We often forget that communication is a two-way process, which involves both individuals getting a chance to talk and listen. However, we seem to forget this when it comes to our communication with God. Our tendency is to do all the talking and when we are done, we also end our time with God. We barely spend any time to listen and then we wonder why God has not spoken to us. But God wants to speak to us, if only we would listen. . . He wants to fill us, so that everything in our lives can be completely transformed. He wants us to come to Him not only for the big problems or issues but for the little ones as well. To come to Him with the good and the bad, with our rants and our raves, with our thanksgiving and our sorrow. We have a God who is completely and obsessively in love with us. He wants to be intricately entwined in our lives. . . And all we have to do is allow Him to work in us. . . And He will faithfully complete the work that He has started.

The formula for intimacy with God has never changed. The only way we can have intimacy with God if we spend time with Him. If we spend time focusing on who He is - on His love, His mercy, His grace. We should look forward to spending time with Him, not for the things that He can give us but because of the love we have for Him. We must continue to live each day knowing that He is the reason we live.

Often in life, we say that we feel as though God is so far away from us — but in reality, God isn't the one who has moved away, it is us who has chosen to move away. And all the while, God is there everyday trying to get us to talk to Him, urging us to open our hearts to Him, open our minds to hear His voice.

Discussion:

1. Are there routines, beliefs or any specific things that you need to stop?
2. In what ways are you looking for God?
3. Are you hearing God's voice today?
4. Are you listening and following Him?

Works: Journaling task

I thought I did what's right, I though I had the answers
I thought I chose the surest road, but that road brought me here
So I put up a fight, and told You how to help me
Now when I have given up
The truth is coming clear,
You know better than I, You know the way
I've let go the need to know why
For you know better than I

You Know Better Than I, from the movie Joseph King of Dreams

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RddBWJgvKDY



Take a moment and stop.

Make a list of our preconceived notions of who God is. What are our expectations from Him?

How do we describe our relationship with God?

Are we moving forward in our pursuit of intimacy with God?

What are the things in our life that may be a hindrance to my intimacy with God?

Do I have any sin? Bitterness? Anger? Unforgiveness? Have I become unpure?



Look around you. Look at your life.

Make a list of what you are thankful for. Of what you should be thankful for.

When was the last time you spent time with God just thanking Him? Praising Him?

Make a list of your life's plans. Perhaps this is the right time to offer them to the Lord, and ask Him to bless your plans.

Have you ever shared your plans with God?

Have you ever waited for His answer before you proceeded with your plan?

Have you truly allowed God to work in your life? Or are you still relying on your own resources?

Have we been telling God how to help us?



Take time to listen.

Make a list of the things that God is talking to you about? Is there something He is specifically asking of you?

Maybe He is asking you to surrender your worries? To forgive someone? To surrender your vices? To serve in ministry?

How is God speaking to you? Is He closing certain doors and opening new ones? Is there a constant, nagging reminder

to do something? Is there a burden in your heart to do something? A holy discontent perhaps?

Make a commitment on how you intend to start listen to God starting today.