

GOING DEEPER WITH GOD

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As believers, deepening our relationship with God should be our number one priority. It's easy to be lulled into complacency in our Christian life.

When the apostle Paul wrote Philippians, he had been a Christian for about 25 years. God had used him to perform many mighty miracles. He had several encounters with the risen Lord, including being caught up into the third heaven. But he didn't rest in those experiences. He said that he wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:12-14).

He goes on to say that we all should have that same attitude. We all need to fight against spiritual complacency. No matter where we're at spiritually, we should desire to go deeper with God (Exodus 33).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MEET GOD FACE-TO-FACE?

The Hebrew word for 'face' in the Old Testament is often translated as 'presence'. When we seek the face of God, we are seeking His presence. God created us to have intimate fellowship with Him.

The Lord wants us to seek Him and spend time with Him, in His presence more than anything else. He promises that we will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

When we talk about seeking God's face, it means we are seeking to know Him, understand His character through the word, and hear His voice through prayer.

Since the time of Adam, God desired a relationship with those created in His image. God had a face-to-face fellowship with Adam and Eve until the fall (Genesis 3:8). Adam and Eve could not face God after sin entered their lives. Their conscience was no longer comfortable in the presence of God's holiness.

The Bible instructs us to seek God's face: 'Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always' (Psalm 105:4)

MEETING GOD FACE TO FACE HELPS US GO DEEPER WITH HIM

HOW DO WE GO DEEPER WITH GOD IN PRAYER?

We go deeper with God in prayer by getting to know Him better. True knowledge of God goes beyond facts about God to a personal relationship with Him. Knowledge of God comes from walking through life with God, thinking of Him, talking to Him, and worshipping Him. It goes beyond merely understanding the truth about Him, but applying that truth in our personal lives. Knowledge of God comes from listening to Him speak through His Word, from learning what He loves and what He hates.

As Christians our desire should be to move from merely knowing *about* God to knowing *of* God. We must intentionally set aside time to think deeply (meditate) about the truth revealed in the Bible and consider the way it ought to impact our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

HOW DO WE GET TO KNOW HIM BETTER?

1. Through His Word

Let's dig a little deeper into this concept of understanding God's word. Going deeper with God means studying His word for yourself, because your life and future depend on it. Deuteronomy 11:18–20 mentions several of the ways we can learn, teach and store up God's word in our hearts:

- **Read the Bible:** We get to know God and understand His plan for our lives through the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 119:10; Hebrews 4:12)
- **Listen:** The spoken Word of Christ—the peaching of the gospel message—has the power to produce faith and reveal Christ. When we listen to the Scriptures, either in music or read out loud, we reinforce God's Word in our hearts (Romans 10:17; Proverbs 2:1-5)
- **Write:** Writing down our thoughts as we read and listen to the Bible helps us clarify and strengthen those biblical truths in our hearts (Habakuk 2:2)
- **Talk About:** There is power in declaring and sharing God's word. Discussing God's Word with our children, spouse, friends, and in small groups will further strengthen and solidify these teachings in our hearts and minds (Deuteronomy 6:7)

- **Study:** The Bible urges us to study the Scriptures for greater understanding (Acts 17:11; Joshua 1:8)
- **Meditate:** We are to think about God's instructions and promises all day and night long (Psalm 119:97, 148)

2. Through Worship

Worship, at its core, is an expression of our reverence, adoration, and love for God.

3. Through Prayer

Prayer is how 'we make contact with God, and likewise God communicates with us.' Prayer is a lifestyle of communion with God in which we develop a deep intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

In the Old Testament, God spoke to ordinary people through priests and the prophets. People could not reach to God direct (Exodus 33:7-8).

When Jesus Christ began to operate as our High Priest, the Old Covenant high priesthood finished (Hebrews 7:11-8:6). All believers have the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit Himself is the main guide for New Covenant believers (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 John 4:13).

Why is prayer so hard? We know we need to grow in our prayer life, but it can be such a struggle. And, too often, instead of using it as the first line of defence, we go to it as a last resort. Many people struggle with prayer because they feel God is far away and they are not sure if He is listening. Faith is required in prayer (Hebrews 11:6).

Every time we pray, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to pray through us and intercede for us. In prayer the Holy Spirit is our mentor, our guide and our equipper (Romans 8:26-27).

When we pray, we are inviting God into our lives. We experience the following:

- Fellowship: We become 'workers together with Him' (2 Corinthians 6:1)
- Dependency: God never wants us to live our lives independently of Him. Prayer binds us to God.

IF PRAYER IS TALKING TO GOD AND GOD TALKING TO YOU, HOW DO WE HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

Through prayer we have access to deep encounters with the heart and mind of our heavenly Father (Jeremiah 33:3). Hearing and interpreting God's voice is a skill that is paramount for our success as believers.

God wants us to learn to recognise His voice as we go deeper with Him. Here are some of the ways God speaks:

- God always speaks through Scripture (Psalm 138:2)
- Audible Voice
(Genesis 3:8; Exodus 3:4-6; 20:1-22; Acts 9:3-7)
- Visions and Dreams
(Acts 2:17; Genesis 40:5-8; 41:17-32)
- The Living Word (John 6:63)
- Through People
(1 Peter 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10)
- Through Our Conscience
- His Still Small Voice
(1 Kings 19:9-12; Romans 8:14-16)

HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN IT'S GOD'S VOICE?

1. God's voice brings peace
2. God's voice never contradicts the Bible
3. God's voice brings clarity (not confusion)

God will speak to us more often if we seek Him passionately. We will become more aware of it as we learn to recognize His voice. Jesus clearly indicated, 'My sheep hear My voice', so if He is your Shepherd, this is His commitment to you (John 10:27). God is always speaking; the question is: 'Are we listening?'

In conclusion: In Luke 10:38-42, when Jesus addresses Martha and says what Mary chooses was what was important, He is demonstrating to us that there is a time and a place for everything. It is essential to make time to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear what he has to say during this time of prayer and fasting.