

Volume 2, Day 11: Anything Worthwhile Is Worth Time

For those of you who say, "I'm trying to get this connection to God, but it's not happening, I want to draw attention to the person who said he tried it for a week. A week is not long at all and we're really not trying it. This is about opening your heart to the degree that let's God make himself known to you.

Many people are afraid that God is ignoring them or He's not going to do for them what He does for others. We know that God is not a respecter of persons. I wouldn't be talking about having a relationship with God in these writings, if I didn't think it was just as available to you as it is to me. God wants us to learn how to live inside His love wrapped in intimate relationship with Him.

We've got to appreciate the fact that, when the transcendent God is connecting with broken humanity, it's a journey of transformation more dramatic than the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. It takes intentionality and resolve. It takes time. It requires discipline such that we are willing to suffer greatly in order to attain it.

If God seems distant from you, number one, it's not about your sin. Almost all of us go to that place. Somehow, if I could just give up this evil habit or this bad thought, then God would make Himself known to me. When you think that, this journey is impossible, your life is miserable and so is your relationship with God. The second thing, God's not ignoring you. God is always pursuing you and trying to make Himself known to you. It is us who are not seeing it. Paul says to unbelievers, "... in Him, we all live and move and have our being." If it's true for unbelievers, how much more true it is for seekers of intimacy with God.

Volume 2, Day 12: Helter-Skelter or Divine Design

Hopefully we can agree that, from God's point of view, the problem is not your sin. It's not because God's ignoring you. And it's not because it's too difficult. It may be because of misplaced expectations. I'm expecting God to show up in a certain way or to have a certain feeling or to replicate an experience. Relationships evolve naturally and spontaneously. There are no prescriptions for them.

These devotional messages are intended to be an encouragement to help you take this journey. Every stimulus has its limitations. And it might help you to know that you are the largest hindrance to your own growth in any relationship. This entire mentoring program is designed to help people catch the vision of a greater journey that is awaiting your entrance. But, if you noticed in the introduction, this journey is not a solo event. You may not need a host of helpers, but you need at least one who has made significant progress in this journey. It really comes to life person to person.

“ENGAGING God,” is a collection of tools and building specifications for erecting a life full of awe and wonder at the unconditional nature of God's love. This collection can, if you will embrace it, kindle a fire of desire in their heart. We want you to find another person to walk alongside you and encourage you to continue this journey for the rest of your life. “... until death do us part!” We want to encourage those who can't see to take their blinders off. God is always doing things in your life. Look for the signs and recognize them as sacred echoes or fingerprints of God. Sacred echoes are the same message coming from totally unrelated sources. And God's fingerprints are those events which, you see in retrospect, that God had intervened in a very evident manner.

Volume 2, Day 13: Be Aware of and Open to God's Love

I'm just sure God's doing everything possible to make Himself known. You're likely missing it because you are afraid to open your heart, soul and mind to new truth (that is truth that is new to you). Let yourself get out of your comfort zone of what you thought were closed issues. Let God show you what's going on. That's what I think was the meaning of Jesus' words about "asking, seeking and knocking." Don't stop seeking!

God wants to open doors to you that make His life happen in you. That is what the Holy Spirit was dispatched to do. Ask God to show you someone who can help you on this journey. A brother or sister can be a great help. Someone more mature than you in the faith may well be much younger than you. So don't limit your vision to older, wiser, more educated or highly credentialed people. Actually you will likely find the best help in persons who are quite 'poor in spirit' (humble).

Just engaging others in conversations that help you focus on what God is doing will take you a long way down this road. A friend of mine from Florida shared an illustration he uses to help pastors recognize how community expresses itself in the world. He takes them out to a parking lot and they're looking at the asphalt. They notice finally that little sprigs of grass are growing up in the cracks. That's how the kingdom of God comes to us.

It's what Jesus said about the mustard seed. It starts very small, but it grows very large. Most of us look for some cathartic, euphoric experience that finally affirms God's presence with me (actually **in** me). It actually awakens in much simpler ways. There are fingerprints, sacred echoes and emotional nudges in our spirits. He's awakening you to an intimate relationship with Him.

Volume 2, Day 14: Tranquility Facilitates Intimacy

My friend from Australia told a banker one day that he was struggling to hear God's voice, struggling to find if God is real for him. The banker said, "Listen. Why don't you go to the most peaceful place you know where you really feel peace. While you are there, ask God what you want to ask Him. Then wait to hear what He puts in your mind or lets you feel in your soul."

My friend responded, "I have this little pond down at the bottom of my property. I always feel peaceful there." And he went there and it opened his spirit to have the kind of communication with God we're talking about. You may not have a pond on your property or personal garden, but being in a quiet place seems to be a helpful part of opening our heart to detect where and how God wants to reveal Himself to us.

It's really the heart that quiets down enough so that we can hear a different rhythm than just the rhythms of our life, our fears, our anxieties and what we feel driven by in the world we live in. Concerns about what other people think of us and by how successful we are. These distractions hinder cultivating an inner life of listening to the still small voice and of knowing God intimately.

"Take no thought . . ."

"Don't take the pressure of forethought upon yourself. It is not only wrong to worry, it is infidelity, because worrying means that we do not think that God can look after the practical details of our lives, and it is never anything else that worries us. Have you ever noticed what Jesus said would choke the word He puts in? The devil? No! It's the cares of this world. It is the little worries always that keep us from intimacy."

ENGAGING God -- Alan - Jacobsen

Volume 2, Day 15: Tranquility in the Midst of the Noise

Unfortunately, the culture we live in is lived at a frantic pace. The 21st century is probably worse than any other time in history. The distractions of technology with iPods, smart phones, computers, video games and other entertainment like TV, movies, sports and work, and you just name it, our lives are full of noise. Our lives are full of those things that draw our hearts away from God. We have difficulty finding a quiet space where God can most easily reveal Himself to our inner being. And, of course, that is the essence of relationship.

Getting away from that frantic pace, the demands and distractions of our world, is essential to eliminating the fears and anxiety that these distractions cause us. Living largely distracted is the very thing that will dull our hearts to spiritual sensitivity that is within us. We have to make a choice at some point, after finding God in the quiet place, to develop a relationship with God which brings tranquility to the noisiest places on earth. The journey ultimately enables us to take the quiet of God out into the noise of the natural life. We discover that it is the quiet of our hearts. It really isn't the place of quiet after all.

It's really the heart that quiets down enough so that it listens to a different rhythm than just the rhythms of our life, our fears, our anxieties and what we feel driven by in the world we live in. It's listening to the still small voice and of knowing God intimately. I look to quiet my heart everywhere I happen to go. It's knowing that He is with me and providing opportunities for Him to say anything He might want to say to me. And most importantly, it's about letting God express Himself using my human body.

Volume 2, Day 16: Even Adolescents Can Have This

It's when I'm driving to an appointment or talking to somebody that wants to talk to me. It's always finding that quietness in my current space. Maybe we can actually inject quiet into the situation we are in. We make it possible by reserving a place in our heart in which to be quiet. So, on the spur of the moment, we can draw into that place when we're in a difficult conversation or we're stressing about something at work. That will give us our mobile, ever present, quiet place into which we can retreat.

Jesus often spent a whole night walking with His Father in prayer, getting alone. It's an important part of this journey. You must not trivialize or dismiss it. And in that quiet space is where we can really listen to Him even if the outside noise is deafening. We live in the moment with our Most Significant Other instead of writhing in our fears about the future.

When my daughter was 12, she had a difficult decision to make and she thought I was going to tell her she needed to do a certain thing. She presented this to us. But we'd told her from age 12 on there were going to be more decisions she would make. So I said, "Honey, if you don't want to do what I think is best here, you are free to do what you think best." The next question she asked was intriguing. She asked, "Well, how do I make a decision then?" I said, "Well, if you don't have a preference that's clear, why don't you ask God? Maybe he does." She asked, "How do I do that?" I replied, "You'll go to your room, or some quiet place and just ask Him." I thought she'd do it over the next day or two. Twenty minutes later, she came back to me and she was actually choosing to do the thing she didn't want to do.

Volume 2, Day 17: Don't Try to Parent Adults

When our children reach the age at which they are able to make adult choices, it behooves us to change our role in their lives. It might be wise to follow the example of the Jews in their celebration of adulthood of their children. In this celebration (Bar Mitzvah or Bah Mitzvah) the father presents the son or daughter to God to report directly to Him as their parent. This may have been in our minds when we told our 12 year old daughter to consult God about a decision she was trying to make. It certainly took a lot of angst out of our teenage parenting.

Having experienced for the first time the challenge of approaching God as her father to advise her in making a decision, she actually chose to do what I would have preferred. But she would have been far more likely to push back against my wishes than she was with God. So, I asked, "What happened, darling? She said, I just got up and sat on my bed and I just said, "God, do you have a will here? Is there something you want me to do?" And it just seemed clear in my heart that he wanted me to do what I didn't want to do. And since I sensed what God wanted, I made that decision with great joy.

Listening to God is not complicated. He doesn't always speak what we want when we want Him to. If you've been asking God for weeks, months or years and He hasn't responded, as we've said before, "Relax. He'll let you know when you need to know. But the more you find quiet in spirit, the more you'll experience His peace.