

Keys to Experiencing God

Part 1 — Introduction

June 22, 2014

Why Do We Need to Experience God?

- Because God has always called His people to experience Him and what He has for them.
- Because there has always been the subtle temptation to replace “God-experience” with dead religion.
- Because we are entering into a time of human history where empty traditions, heady opinions, and weak theological arguments aren’t going to satisfy or sustain people in the midst of the coming fiery trials.
 - God’s will for His people was, is and forever shall be God-ordained, Jesus-centered, and Holy Spirit-led experience. Anything else is a cheap, unfulfilling, and powerless substitute that hasn’t any ability to deliver the goods, especially in tough times.

How Not to Experience God—Dead Religion

- Isaiah 1:10–15
- Isaiah 29:13
 - All of the effort the people put toward sacrificing, offering, gathering, feasting and praying was heartless lip service, futile, sinful, hated, troubling and wearisome to God. God was hiding from them and not hearing them because they had bloody hands and were guilty of hypocritical, disobedient, and dead religion.
 - They had demonstration without devotion.
- Dead religion is not just confined to the Old Testament.
 - Revelation 2:1–3:22
 - Ephesus left their First Love. Pergamos and Thyatira gave themselves to idolatry and sexual immorality. Sardis was alive but dead, Laodicea was lukewarm, and self-sufficient.
- God is not looking for dead, disobedient, man-made and insincere religion from us—nor will dead religion facilitate experiencing God.

Keys To Experiencing God

- We can experience Him and when we do, there is a reward.
- Hebrews 11:6
 - To fully experience God we have to **believe that He** exists, and,
 - That He is a **rewarder** of those who **diligently seek Him**.

Diligently Seek

- Diligently seek—*enzētēō*. “to seek out diligently for anything lost. To seek in order to obtain. To earnestly seek after God with a sincere and earnest desire to obtain His favor.”¹
- Examples of diligently seeking God:

¹ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, E-Sword edition

- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- Joel 2:12-13
 - When we turn to God with all of our heart and return to Him, He will reward us.
 - Zephaniah 3:14-15
 - We can sing, shout, be glad, and rejoice, with all our heart because God has taken away judgments, and cast out enemy. It's a perfect example of the LORD is in our midst!
- Mark 12:28-30
- Seeking Him diligently is seeking Him with all our heart, turning to Him with all our heart, singing, shouting, being glad, and rejoicing with all our heart.
- Seeking Him diligently is loving Him with all our heart... THEN we find Him, experience Him and are rewarded by Him!

Rewarded by God

- God requires us to diligently seek Him to be rewarded by Him.
 - Rewarded by God is not passively existing. He is generously rewarding. God is worth whatever effort we exert to experience Him.
- God rewards with:
 - His Presence
 - He tells us to call to Him, pray to Him, seek Him, search Him, turn to Him, return to Him. He tells us that He is in our midst
 - The reward is God.
 - His Presents
 - The gifts He gives to each of us.
 - Romans 12:6-8
 - 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
 - Galatians 5:22-23
 - His Power
 - Acts 1:8
 - God rewards the diligent seeker with power to live a supernatural life.
 - His Promises
 - 2 Peter 1:2-4
 - God rewards the diligent seeker with the knowledge of His promises that allow us to partake of His divine nature and escape worldly corruption. In other words, knowing and believing His promises leads to a transformed life!
- If we are going to experience God as He desires, we are going to have to seek God as He requires—diligently and with all our hearts. That's where the reward of His Presence, Presents, Power and Promises abide.

Discussion Questions

1. Read 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:17 and Micah 6:6-8. What do these verses tell you about experiencing God? How do these words contrast with Isaiah 1:10-15 and Judah's worship?

2. Read Revelation 2:1-3:22. What was the dead religion of the churches? How could their dead religion creep into the church today? What can we do to stop this kind of dead religion?
3. In Hebrews 11:6 there are two requirements, what are they? Why are both of these necessary for us to fully experience God?
4. Why do you think God values your faith and diligence in seeking Him (Hebrews 1:6) more than any other attitude you can direct toward Him?
5. How does diligently seek God differ from dead religion? Why is it important that we know and live the difference?
6. Read Jeremiah 29:11-13. How does this passage help you understand the difference between legalism (dead religion) and an “all-in” commitment to God?
7. What does it mean to be all-in for God? Are there areas of your life where you are not all-in and diligently seeking Him? What are they? Take time to commit them to Him and find, in your Bible, His promises to help you be all-in and diligently seeking Him.
8. In what ways does God’s Presence and His Presents help you combat dead religion? Can you commit to setting aside time to be along in His Presence? Set aside time to exercise your gifts?
9. How have God’s Promises sustained you in the past? What promises of God’s will sustain you in the future?
10. How do God’s Promises help you experience His nature? How do they help you escape worldly corruption?