

Encounter(ing) God

Father Part 1

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ENCOUNTERING GOD – Father, Son, Holy Spirit (NOT Knowing...)

- a. Preparing to unpack **Father**
- b. However, today, I want to take the time to lay a good/solid foundation for this series by doing some defining and clarifying.
Now “*knowing*” is a good word! *I know Cheryl, I know Steve. I know the weather. I know the score of the game. I know how to do my job. I know my address/phone number...etc.*
 - **Contrast: Knowing and ENCOUNTERING**
 - **Knowing** is being **aware** and **informed**.
 - **Aware** – conscious of it, alert to it
 - **Informed** – knowledge of the facts, truth; familiarity via learning
 - For our series, we are using the word “knowing” to refer more to “knowing about” – or being **aware** and **informed**. *This could mean being aware that God is there, being informed about Him through our knowledge of the Bible.*
 - **ENCOUNTER** is different!
- c. Example: Recently in Nepal with some of our Grace guys...
 - **Aware** – saw it on the map.
 - **Informed** – read about it before I went; spoke to people who had been there.
 - **ENCOUNTERED** – it wasn’t until I went and could SEE the place and the people, that I ENCOUNTERED Nepal!
- d. If Knowing is “aware and informed”, **ENCOUNTER is “Revealing (Seeing) and Transforming (you’re different because of it!).”**
 - **Job 42:5** – “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you...”
 - Throughout the entire Scriptures, we see people ENCOUNTERING God in different settings, with various needs. Notice the *Revealing and Transforming* here...
 - Abraham Encounters God: *Friend of God/Father of Nations*
 - Sarah Encounters God: *From Barren to Motherhood*
 - Joshua Encounters God: *Leads Israel into Promised Land*
 - Zacchaeus Encounters God: *Restitution to all he’d wronged*
 - Paul Encounters God: *Called to Jews, Kings, Gentiles*
 - Peter Encounters God: *Brings Gospel to Cornelius*
 - **Contrast Knowing (Google) and Revealing (pulling back of curtains)**
 - We often settle in the land of knowing...the purpose of this series over these upcoming weeks and months is to encourage and equip us to really ENCOUNTER God for who He really is.

e. Illustration #1 – Willie Mays

- Willie Mays – my childhood hero
 - The “Say Hey Kid” out of Alabama; played in the Negro leagues and for the Minneapolis Millers in the minor leagues before being called up for a 22-year career with the SF Giants/NY Mets; I had his baseball cards, and a big poster on my wall.
 - I have an autographed picture of “The Catch” at home on my wall.
 - Know his stats: batted .302 – 3,283 hits – 660 home runs – 7,095 outfield putouts with his trademark “basket catch,” remains a Major League record to this day 46 years after retiring. Now 87 years of age.
 - As a kid living in San Diego, I saw him play on Thurs, April 8, 1971 against the Padres. Top of the 7th, bases loaded, down 4-1, change pitchers. Hit a Grand Slam to left field, 631st career HR.
- I have closely followed his baseball career, am fully aware of Willie, **quite informed about him** – yet I’ve never met him, looked him in the eyes, nor been transformed because of him. I’ve liked watching him play ball – **but have had no ENCOUNTER!**
- On the other hand...around the same time frame in my life, as a 16-year-old...

f. Illustration #2 – Loren Cunningham

- ...in my junior year of High School, my dad was invited to a 30-Day leadership training event in Kona, Hawaii, led by the founder of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), Loren Cunningham. My Mom, brother Tom and I went for 10 days. Met Loren – he challenged me about doing a Discipleship Training School, or DTS.
- Accepted at the U of M journalism school and DTS. Chose DTS
- Loren took an interest in my life, built a relationship with him.
- First youth camp at 18 – eyes dancing – “you’ll do a great job leading it!”
- Watched his leadership up close for seven years.
- Traveled with him to Dallas, L.A., Washington DC (March for Jesus 1980)
- Flight – gifts, “how you measure the fruitfulness of your life...have you invested in the 3rd and 4th generations”
- Over the years:
 - YWAM has 18,000 staff / 1,200 ministry centers in 181 nations / Over 5 million people have now gone through a DTS
 - Largest missions organization in history. Billy Graham of missions world.
 - See him when in Hawaii
 - Endorsed books I’ve written
- **ENCOUNTER: Revealing (see) and Transforming (different because of it)**
 - My life is significantly different because of my ENCOUNTER with Loren!

What happens when we encounter God, that produces revealing and transformation?

- **Isaiah 6:1-8 (ESV)**

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train^[a] of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he

covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

a. **Upward** – vv. 1-4

- Throne, high and lifted up, hem of His robe filling the temple (GOD LARGE)
- Seraphim – “fiery and flying ones”, seem to be a special class of attendants in God’s throne room, ministering to Him and worshipping Him continually!
- Vs. 3 – Holy, holy, holy; King; Lord of Hosts
- Foundations shook at the voice of him who called.
- ENCOUNTERING GOD: *Holiness, King, Lord of Hosts*

b. **Inward** – vv. 5-7

- Woe is me!
- I am lost! **UNDONE**. Disintegrated (opposite of integrated). Sin revealed due to God’s presence.
- A man of unclean lips – **EYES** have **SEEN** the King!
- Seraphim – burning coal; touched lips; guilt taken, sin atoned.

c. **Outward** – v.8

- Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?
- Here I am, send me!

d. The fruit in Isaiah’s life due to **ENCOUNTERING GOD**

- God reveals more of Himself – His Nature, Names, Titles, Attributes, in this case, *Holiness, King, Lord of Host*
- Inner transformation occurs – conviction of sin, getting clean
- Partners with God in His purposes – hears God’s heart and volunteers

e. **Upward – Inward – Outward:**

- **Upward:** God reveals more of Himself, inviting one into deeper friendship
- **Inward:** Because of that, transformation begins to happen within us
- **Outward:** We are moved towards partnering with God in His purposes

1) Example in my own life – Redemption

- a. Upward: at a Prayer Retreat – “My heart is always to intervene to redeem”
- b. Inward: a tenderness to redemption stories on TV, Fred (homeless), Nepal
- c. Outward: Carrying God’s redemptive heart, a willingness to obey His promptings

2) *Precious flock of God: Our heart behind this series is that you'll encounter God throughout this year like never before!*

- **Less Knowing** – aware and informed
- **More ENCOUNTERING** – Revealing and Transforming
How? Upward – Inward – Outward

Three Barriers to Encountering God's Character

- 1) Now because every ENCOUNTER begins with an UPWARD look, or meeting/seeing God, **how we view God is important!**
- 2) As we begin to unpack the character of God – via His Nature, Names, Titles and Attributes – in these upcoming weeks and months, I want to take some time with you today to look at how you see Him now – and how we got there. Can't move forward well without first seeing where you are!
- 3) **Psalm 50:21** – **“You thought I was one like yourself...”** (He is NOT a big one of us; NOT made in our image; imagine how misrepresented God likely feels)
- 4) Back in September of 2017, I was reflecting on 40 years of ministry, and what I had learned.
 - a. **#1 – The image of God that we carry around in our hearts and minds affects the way we live our daily lives!**
 - b. Reminds me of A.W. Tozer's quote: **“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”**¹
~ A.W. Tozer (1897-1963, Pastor, Author of 60 books, including *The Pursuit of God*)
 - c. How we see God has HUGE ramifications in our lives:
 - **Loved & Accepted** (*God knows me and loves me completely*)
 - **Belong and Secure** (*I am part of God's family and He is always with me*)
 - **Valuable and Called** (*I am uniquely valued and have a God-given purpose*)
 - **Can I really trust God with my whole life – joys and challenges, good and bad?**
 - d. Many misrepresentations that we carry inside of us about God. How'd they get there? I'd like to submit three of those ways to you so we can begin to realign to ENCOUNTERING God's character throughout this series this year.

Our Approach to Scripture

(where we tend to focus while in the Scriptures)

- a. For centuries now in the Church, we have tended to focus more on doctrines and do's-and-don'ts, while neglecting getting to know God's character!
 - We tend to focus more on making sure our doctrinal systems are intact (yes, important that we have right Theology [study of God]), while ignoring how loudly the scriptures speak of His character (Nature, Names, Titles, Attributes).
 - Our attention is often more on knowing “what to do or not do” rather than encountering “who” it is behind it all!
 - Results:
 - *Tons of knowledge (notebooks full)*

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Zondervan, November 15, 1978) 1

- *Know the rules and the appropriate expressions that go with them*
 - *Often do not know God's character or His ways or how to hear His voice*
 - The Scripture is God's self-revelation to people! It reveals His character, His ways, His words, and His works! **SEE ME – THIS IS WHO I AM!**
 - We've often become content with knowledge – aware and informed – and stop short of really encountering God – revealing and transforming.
 - Mind filled – heart not fully transformed!
- b. For Example:
- **We know the 10 commandments in Exodus 20:2-17** – *but have we personally encountered the loving and wise Lawgiver behind them?*
 - **We know the 23rd Psalm** – *but have we encountered the tender, protective, guiding hand of the Psalm's Shepherd?*
 - **We know that Proverbs 3:5-6** says we are to “trust in the Lord with all your heart” – *but have we encountered the faithfulness of God that allows us to fully let go?*
 - **We know that “God so loved the world”** in John 3:16 – *but have we personally encountered God's amazing, endless, and lavish love for us?*
 - **We know that Romans 8:28** encourages us that “all things work together for good for those who love God...” – *but have we encountered the Redeemer that can make all things right?*
 - **We know that Philippians 4:13** says “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” – *but have we encountered God as our Source when in time of desperate need?*
- c. We often are aware and informed of what the Scriptures say – but have we encountered God's character behind it?
- d. Imagine our understanding and appreciation of God's character had we spent as much time ENCOUNTERING GOD as we have in reading and studying Bible books and doctrines! **Not either – but both!!! Character of God as primary!!!**
- e. My Journey – my purple highlighted Bible
- Henry Blackaby's List of Scriptural Nature, Names, Titles, Attributes of God
 - 14 PP Slides: Father (and this is just Father!!!)

Influence of Authority Figures

As children, we as parents shape our kids' first impressions of God! We are the “biggest” and most influential people in their lives! Our actions speak loudly. Our words make an impact. The way we relate to our kids provides the template by which they will often relate to God (and of course, to others).

Think with me for a minute about your view of God. How do you see Him? How would you describe how He relates to you? How about you to Him?

- f. Absent – whether physically or emotionally, too busy, caught up in work, or just providing; *looking for love and acceptance*

- g. Accusing – points out every failure, comparing to others, no encouragement or deliberate equipping/discipling; *hoping for affirmation and approval*
- h. Authoritarian – rules more important than relationship; *desiring warmth, intimacy, closeness*
- i. Abusive (Anger) – inflicting pain internally or externally; *longing to be valued/sense of worth*

Where are you today? Invite God to begin to clear the clutter that hinders you from seeing what He is really like!

Satan's Strategy

- j. **Genesis 3:1** – “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”
 - k. **John 10:10** – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.
 - l. From the very beginning Satan's aim has been to ***distort, disfigure, and deface*** the character of God in our hearts and minds
 - He takes every opportunity to wreck our image of God (*like the mirrors at a fair*).
 - The enemy knows that if we see God for who He really is we will be ruined for the ordinary, will have a genuine, deep, and meaningful relationship with the Creator of all things, and we will have a vision for our lives – which allows us to glorify God by fulfilling the purpose for which we have been born! We become very dangerous and a threat to him.
 - From childhood – through our teen years – into adulthood, he'll strategically play on the events of our lives to drive home a distorted image of the One who loves you. He'll use:
 - Relationships
 - Words, Actions
 - Hurst, Wounds, Disappointments
 - Leaders
 - Not walking in the ways of God
 - Expectations we may have had that didn't get met
 - The Church
 - Life Circumstances / Traumatic Events where we've been sinned against
 - He does not play fair – ‘steal, kill, destroy’!
 - Reinforcing strongholds of thinking!
 - His target is always God! We are pawns that he knows that God loves! Aims to distort, disfigure and deface God's character.
- 5) Why am I taking time to unpack this? As we move forward, beginning next week, we are going to take a look at God's character – not to gain more information about Him – but to ENCOUNTER Him with our hearts and lives!
- Of these three barriers, which is your biggest hurdle? Where is your stuck place?
 - Where do you need to invite God in to remove that barrier so you can begin to see what God is really like afresh?
 - This is an invitation and opportunity to ***Seeking God (See King God)*** afresh!

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between “knowing about” and encountering”?
2. How would you characterize your current relationship with God?
3. What image of God have you carried around in your heart and mind from childhood?
4. How has this affected how you live your daily life?
5. Of the three barriers to encountering God’s character (Our approach to Scripture; Influence of authority figures; Satan’s strategy), which is your biggest hurdle?
6. Where is your stuck place?