

# Encounter(ing) God

## Longsuffering Part 5

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### Review... Truly encountering God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

- 1) Contrast “Knowing About” and “Encountering” God
  - a. Knowing – *aware and informed*
  - b. Encountering – *revealing (seeing) and transforming – MEETING!*
  - c. The image of God you carry around in your heart and mind affects the way you live your daily life.

**We want to make sure the image of God we carry is correct!**

***Listen – when we talk about Encountering God, we’re talking about Encountering Who He is – His character, IN US, THROUGH US, we become image bearers, no clearer summary of His character than in Exodus 34.***

**Background – Moses says, “Show me Your glory” – God shows Moses His character!  
If we want to know what’s glorious about God – it is Who He is!**

#### **Exodus 34:6-8**

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. (*Moses obviously encountered God*).

**Let’s Pray** – “Show Me!” That I might encounter You and have my life changed forever!

**Question** – *Have you ever heard or read someone say, “I’ll prove God isn’t real, watch. ‘God if you’re real kill me right now.’ I didn’t die, seeeeeee!”*

**Answer** – *The very thing some people would try to use to disprove God’s existence validates His character.*

**If God was anything less than longsuffering, he may have destroyed the sinner.  
It takes a lot to move God from longsuffering to condemning, even with blasphemers.**

**The only reason you and I haven’t been condemned and destroyed already because of our own sin – is because God is merciful, gracious and longsuffering!  
The only reason people who have wronged you haven’t been destroyed – is because God is longsuffering to all. Settle that debate in your mind.**

## Today — we're going to answer 3 questions...

- 1) What is God's longsuffering? Define it for you.
- 2) What does God's longsuffering do? What does its purpose seek to accomplish?
- 3) What is the danger associated with God's longsuffering? Very real spiritual dangers!

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## What is God's longsuffering?

- a) slow to anger, long nose (*in Hebrew, the longer nose would get redder with anger*), lengthens offers of mercy, delays executions of justice and punishment.
- b) totally contrasted with mankind's impulsiveness, impatience and wrath.
- c) God's longsuffering is the opposite of **Jonah** (Nineveh), **James** and **John** who wanted destruction of unwelcoming Samaritans. **Luke 9:54-55** "shall we call down fire from heaven and have them consumed?" *Jesus said — "you don't know what spirit you are of."*
- d) when we have the spirit that exalts ourselves and of sectarianism that wants to see the downfall of people who don't see our view of things, it is the same spirit Jesus spoke of.

**Warning** — *we have every opportunity today to be everything **but** longsuffering — there is so much evil and so much wrath — we get sucked into it. Quick, harsh, condemning words! **GOD IS LONGSUFFERING!***

**Important** — *not just **not** destroying, but **caring and providing** for the wicked as well.*

### **Matthew 5:45**

... He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust...

### **Luke 6:35-36**

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

**Notice** — it would take an encounter with the Spirit of God to produce the longsuffering of God in our hearts.

### **Galatians 5:22**

...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering...

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## What does God's longsuffering do?

### **1 Peter 3:20**

... the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared...

### **2 Peter 3:9,15**

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance... and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.

**What God is waiting for in His longsuffering is for people to repent and be saved, because He doesn't want them to perish! He endures profound wickedness in multitude and magnitude.**

**Ezekiel 18:23**

“Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezekiel 33:11)

**If God quickly wiped people out every time He was offended, or we were offended, there would be no one left — there would be no hope for anyone ever.**

***Because God wants to save people, He chooses to wait patiently for them to repent!***

***Aren't you glad that He was longsuffering with you? **Extend that to others!*****

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## **What is the danger associated with God's longsuffering?**

**Ecclesiastes 8:11**

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

***Danger*** — *because you don't get busted immediately, you think your behavior is being overlooked and you can continue in your sinful ways. You don't understand that God is not overlooking, He's waiting. He's waiting for repentance, so you can be saved.*

**Revelation 2:20-23**

Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

***Danger*** — *not recognizing your window of repentance. Jesus gave her **time**, she **rejected**, He **judged!***

**Romans 2:4**

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

***Danger*** — *despising, devaluing, His goodness/gentleness, His forbearance/self-restraint, His longsuffering. Not valuing that it is all those things that afford you the opportunity to repent and be saved. Devaluing so you blow off God-given opportunity to repent!*

“The ungodly so sadly misuse this longsuffering of God as a reason for greater sin... because God gives them space for repentance, they make it into space for iniquity; and because He will not deal out His judgements immediately, they say, ‘Where is the promise of His coming.’”<sup>1</sup> (God will do nothing about my sin).

~ Charles Spurgeon

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Essential Works of Charles Spurgeon* (Barbour Publishing, Jun 1, 2009)

***Friends, hear me – it is fully possible to take advantage or take for granted the attributes of God’s character... that’s dangerous!***

- a) He’s merciful and looks upon me with pity – *I don’t need to change.*
- b) He’s gracious and favors me unconditionally – *I don’t need to obey.*
- c) He’s longsuffering and slow to anger – *I don’t need to repent today.*

**Everything in scripture tells me that’s dangerous –  
and nothing that tells me it’s safe!**

***Question – Is today your day to acknowledge and accept God’s longsuffering so you can repent and be saved? It’s time to encounter God’s longsuffering and salvation.***

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do we want God to be merciful to us, but still to destroy those who have wronged us?
2. The exalting of self and our beliefs, and wanting to see the downfall of people who don’t see our view of things – how is that like the spirit Jesus speaks of in Luke 9:54-55 (NKJV)?
3. What is a spiritual danger associated with God’s longsuffering?
4. Do you know of anyone who keeps “holding on, and not wanting to take advantage of that window” of repentance? What can you say to them that they might hear?