

Connecting with God Seeking the Face of God

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This morning we begin a new series of messages entitled “Connecting with God”. Our last series of messages entitled “Impossible Dreams” encouraged us to join with God in his work of transforming the world—restoring it to what he intended it to be. I hope each of you will do something before Thanksgiving to make a difference for the kingdom of God. As we begin to engage in the problems and suffering of others, it is easy to become overwhelmed and drained—especially if we try to deal with the problems in our own strength. I purposely chose this series of messages to follow up Impossible Dreams. In order to live out those dreams we must live in the power of God’s Spirit. We must stay connected closely to God. Our ministry to others needs to come from an overflow of God’s love and grace in our lives. During the next few weeks we will look at ways to stay connected with God. Connecting with God begins as we experience a personal relationship with him. The Bible refers to this as seeking the face of God. Let’s listen as King David focuses on the importance of seeking God’s face.

Psalm 27:1-14

The LORD is my light and my salvation--
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life--
of whom shall I be afraid?

2When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

3Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

4One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

5For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

6Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make music to the LORD.

- 7 Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
- 8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.
- 9 Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Savior.
- 10 Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.
- 11 Teach me your way, O LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
- 12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.
- 13 I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
- 14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

David was a warrior. He was pursued by enemies most of his life. David played his harp to lift King Saul's spirit when he was depressed. Yet, King Saul hurled a spear at David trying to pin him to the wall. Saul's son, Jonathan, warned David that the King was plotting to assassinate him. David fled for his life with Saul's army pursuing him through the wilderness. The Philistines battled against David. And David even had to flee for his life from his own son, Absalom, who led a rebel force to kill his father.

David spent most of his life in battle. Few of us will experience assassination attempts or armies pursuing us through the wilderness. But most of us feel that our lives are a constant battle of some kind. David discovered how to live victoriously in the midst of battle. He shares this truth in Psalm 27. As we read this Psalm we see that David believed

that life does not just contain battles. David recognized that life is a battlefield—constantly. What is a battlefield? A battlefield is a place where you can never let down your guard. You are always in conflict. You are always on alert. Soldiers returning from the Middle East certainly know what it is like to live on constant alert. When terrorists are the enemy, you never know where they are or who they are. The enemy can be a child wired with explosives. Mine fields and booby traps are everywhere. There is no safe place.

A battlefield is the opposite of home. Home is a place of safety. A battlefield is a place of danger. Home is place of acceptance. A battlefield is place where you are tested. Home is a place to relax. A battlefield is a place where you are constantly vigilant—always scanning the crowd.

We all long for home—a safe place. Madison Avenue knows this. They show us pictures of relaxing vacations on tranquil beaches with crystal clear water. Yet they neglect to tell us about the battle you have to go through to get there. You battle through the security line. Your plane is delayed. You spend four hours sitting in the plane on the runway. The toilets overflow. You finally arrive without your luggage. The registration desk has no record of your reservation. David is right—all of life is a battlefield.

In verses 1 to 3 David says that evil men are out to get him—one was his own son. There are many evil people around. People eager to use you, abuse you, manipulate you and take advantage of you for their own purposes. There are people out to get you. If you have email, you are aware of this. There is hardly a day that goes by that I don't receive some appeal from someone in Nigeria offering to deposit millions of dollars in my bank account. All I have to do is give them complete access to my bank accounts.

David experienced his family as a battlefield. In verse 10 he says: "Though my mother and father forsake me." Home is supposed to be a place of safety. For many it is

an intense battlefield. Twenty percent of women are sexually abused as children. Most of them are abused by a family member. Parents forsake their children when they are emotionally unavailable or seldom at home. Even if you had a great mom and dad, guess what? They will forsake you. They will die and leave you.

David came to the conclusion that all of life is a battlefield. And at some point in life, we come to the same conclusion. We realize that the next job, the next house or the next spouse will not provide us with a safe place for very long.

How do we respond when we accept that life is a battlefield? Some choose the blood thirsty response. They enjoy fighting. They thrive on conflict. Yet when you choose a blood thirsty life style, you end up exhausted and eventually isolated. People flee from those who constantly stir up strife.

Another response is cynicism. If life is a battlefield, just surrender. Give up your expectations of home and safety. Don't trust anyone. Don't care about anyone but yourself. These folks end up bitter and depressed.

Another response is to be overwhelmed by the battle. To escape the pain of battle they turn to drugs, alcohol, gambling, food or sexual promiscuity. It numbs the pain for awhile, but then the addiction becomes the battle.

David found another way to respond. He discovered that life is meant to be lived in the face of God. In the midst of the battle he finds the only safe place: [Psalm 27:4](#)

One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

In David's time, people believed that God dwelled in the Tabernacle in a place called the Holy of Holies. When David says he wants to dwell in the house of the Lord for

all the days of his life, he is expressing his desire to be in the presence of God. He describes it another way as “seeking the face of God” in verse 8.

What does it mean to seek the face of God? When we desire to communicate most effectively with someone we say that we want to talk with them face to face. There is something about looking upon someone’s face that helps us to connect with them. Their character is etched into their face. Their facial expressions reveal so much about the meaning of their words. We miss something when someone is speaking and we can’t see their face. Phone conversations are missing something when you can’t see the persons face. Email and text are even less effective forms of communication. You cannot hear the tone of voice in an email. All kinds of miscommunication occur because of email and texts. If you have an issue to deal with, sit down face to face. Don’t address it in email.

If we want to experience God we do so face to face. Throughout the scriptures people wrestle with seeing God’s face. In Genesis 4, God commands Cain to leave the land because he has murdered his brother. Cain responds: “I will be hidden from your face; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth.” Cain understands that the only safe place is in the presence of God. Cain will be homeless roaming on the battlefield without God.

Moses experienced God face to face. “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.” (Exodus 33:11) Jacob and Gideon also experienced God face to face. (Genesis 32:30 and Judges 6:22)

It is ironic that in the same chapter, Exodus 33, where it says that Moses spoke with God face to face, God says to Moses: “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” (Exodus 33:20) How can one verse say that Moses and God spoke face to face and a few verses later it says no one can see the face of God and live? I think the Bible is describing two different experiences. Throughout the scriptures it is clear that something

that is unholy and sinful cannot survive in the fullness of the glory and holiness of God. We are all sinners and are all unholy—we have all fallen short of the glory of God. Therefore we could not see the fullness of God’s glory in this world and survive.

When the Bible speaks of Moses, Jacob and Gideon talking with God face to face, the scriptures are talking about an intimate relationship with God as friend to friend. They did not actually see the fullness of God’s glory, but they experienced the reality of his presence. They communicated clearly with Him. They heard his heart and they knew that he heard their heart.

In the midst of the battlefield we can experience a connection with God. We can know him face to face, friend to friend. In heaven, we will see the fullness of his glory. The Apostle Paul said: “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.” The Apostle John in Revelation saw heaven opened and this is how he described the face of the Son of God: “His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” (Revelation 1:16) And in the last chapter of the Bible, John says “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” In heaven we will see the fullness of God’s face. We will literally talk with him face to face.

But now in the midst the battlefield, this side of heaven, though we cannot see his glory we can still experience his presence. He is the only absolutely safe place on earth. He alone can promise: “I will never leave you or forsake you.” Everyone else may abandon us. Everyone else may forsake us emotionally or physically. But God will always be with us. He will always accept us. He will always love us.

David said:

For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:5

God will not exempt us from the battle, but he will always walk with us through the battles. As we begin to live out our Impossible Dreams, I predict that the battles will intensify. As we join with God in redeeming and restoring his world, we are attacking the strongholds of Satan. Satan came to kill and destroy. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly. As we offer life and hope to people, Satan will attack us. But when we stay connected with God face to face, he will see us through the battle.

There is another irony in how we see the face of God. We close our eyes, we bow our heads and we see him with the eyes of faith. We surrender not to the battle; we surrender to the Lord who has already overcome the battle. Do you see him? Close your eyes and he will be there.