

## ENCOUNTERING GOD – Part One - Hunger

1. Listen to this story, “I had my first experience with the presence of God when I was 5 years old. Arriving home from my ½ day of kindergarten, I usually ate lunch with my mom and then hurried off to play. When I would run out of things to do, I would resort to my favorite game of all, spying on my mom. I crept outside her shut bedroom door and pressed my ear to the door. I heard a familiar sound, the voice of my mother, talking to God in prayer. Suddenly I felt as if “something” had reached underneath that door and wrapped itself around me while she prayed. I felt the hair on my arm and my spine begin to tingle. I had an acute awareness that something good was happening all around me as my mother worshipped God with tender words of prayer and adoration. “What happened? There was something going on in that room that was not of this world. Something that was impossible to express with words. There was a conversation being conducted between heaven and earth.”
  - a. Perhaps you have been a witness to a conversation or a meeting between heaven and earth. Perhaps it was the result of seeing a meeting like this that led you to seek and respond to God.
  - b. Perhaps you have had such a divine encounter with God, that awareness that you were in Another Presence, the presence of perfect and holy love.
    - i. How did that affect you?
    - ii. How did that shape the way you viewed worship and the God who you meet in worship?
    - iii. Let me share how it affected me:
2. As a young Christian I was taught that people that worshipped with their hands raised or that got exuberant were weird and unbiblical, and emotional people. But I knew many of these people outside of their church settings and didn’t see much difference between them and the Christians who said we should be reverent and reserved and quiet in worship.
  - a. So I went to one of these “emotional worship services and found something that I didn’t experience in the quiet church. It was there that I experienced what I believed to be the presence of God – not just as an emotion, but in a deep and soulful way. Here is why:
    - i. They sang songs TO GOD in the first person.
    - ii. In the quiet church, they only sang songs ABOUT God and His love.
    - iii. Though they were sincere, it always seemed that they were looking backward and not at the present tense person of God.
    - iv. And then I realized that the freer, emotional, so called weird people weren’t encountering the Presence of God because they were emotional, but they had gotten emotional BECAUSE they had encountered the Presence of God.
  - b. I was ruined by what I tasted in those worship services.
    - i. I wanted to experience God personally and not just go through the motions on Sunday mornings. And being a part of a church that merely went through a ritual or through the motions would never satisfy me again. I hungered for an encounter with the Living God. Nothing else would ever satisfy.
    - ii. When we moved to Ft. Worth, we were a part of a fairly traditional SBC church, that was starting a mission. A core value of that new church plant was, “to do church differently” and to “experience God.” They found a pastor who was willing to go outside the box, whose passion it was to encounter God.
      1. They were not “charismatic”, but some people raised their hands, a few people danced quietly in the back of the worship center in an undistracting way.
      2. This church, called The Church in Cityview, was a fairly unique Southern Baptist Church, that invited us to worship God with our whole beings and not just with our lips. That was new to me.
        - a. I can’t dance before the Lord, but I now know better than to stop you if you want to!
        - b. I don’t have the gift of prophecy, but I know better than to suppress it in a congregation!

- c. I have also learned that worship is not about the wonderful time you had last week or last year, but it is about the now and present face-to-face encounter with God you are having.
    - d. And so, you can see where I have come from.
  - c. I want you know that no matter how much I like my comfort zone, I want to take you to the very Presence of God, who smashes our comfort zones.
  - d. Are you willing to go on this journey to encounter God? (Say Amen if you are).
- 3. Lets look at a practical, working definition of worship instead of a technical one:
  - a. **Worship is the both the goal and the result of the relationship between God and His people.**
    - i. God desires us to enter into a relationship with Him that leads us to become worshippers of Him.
  - b. John 4:23-24, *“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*
  - c. This passage tells us that God is seeking worshippers. He is seeking worshippers who desire to worship Him in spirit and in truth (as opposed to giving Him lip service).
  - d. God is seeking spiritual worship, He seeks worshipers whose hearts are inclined toward His.
  - e. Here is a powerful truth that I want you to wrap your head around today:
    - i. **Worship HAPPENS when our hearts RESPOND to God’s heart.**
      - 1. **Worship happens when our hearts meet God’s heart.**
        - a. Everything else is going through the motions.
        - b. Everything else is empty ritual.
        - c. Everything else is pious religion.
          - ii. Imagine thinking singing songs is the same as worshipping?
          - iii. Imagine thinking that music is the equivalent to worship?
          - iv. Imagine believing that hearing a fiery sermon is the same as worshipping.
          - v. Imagine believing that simply attending a church service is an act of worship?
      - vi. But we do it all the time.
        - a. **Music and Song and Sermons are tools** for worship, but they are not essential for worship. Neither do they by themselves constitute worship.
        - b. You can go to a Kenny Chesney Concert and hear and sing great music, but you will not have had an encounter with God. Music and Worship are not the same.
    - 2. God moves and we meet Him.
      - a. That meeting is called worship.
      - b. It is the divine encounter we call worship.
      - c. Can you erase everything you think you know about worship this morning and redefine it with me?
      - d. Worship is a meeting of hearts - God’s and ours.
      - e. It is only possible through a relationship with Jesus who brings our hearts together –
        - i. Jesus went to a cruel cross to pay the price of sin – of our rejection of God – to remove the barrier between God and man that was created by sin. Jesus paid a huge price that we could not pay, and in so doing, won our hearts!
    - 2. If you are trying to worship God and you aren’t doing it through Jesus Christ, then you are missing God’s heart.

- a. God's heart is wrapped up in His Son.
  - b. Jesus said, "if you have seen me you have seen the Father."
- ii. If your heart is not meeting God's heart, if your heart is not responding to God, then you aren't worshipping.
  1. Let me say something right now for those of you who think you are being told that you haven't worshipped if you haven't FELT God's presence.
  2. **Worship is not a feeling. It is an attitude of the heart.**
  3. And that is why heart preparation is so important to worship.
  4. That is why prayer and spiritual reflection is important on each person's part on Sunday.
  5. If you think you can roll out of bed and stroll into church and connect with God in a dynamic and life changing way, you are mistaken. You will be sadly disappointed. If you have ignored God and have lived for yourself all week, don't expect your heart to be soft enough to hear God on Sunday morning when your fellow believers gather together.
    - a. All too often, I have watched lukewarm Christians, who neglect prayer and their walk with God - leave their church and blame the worship style or the pastor for the reason they didn't "feel God."
    - b. Folks, we talk a lot about revival and wanting to see it come to our community, but until we are willing to get up early on Sunday morning to pray and prepare our hearts for a DIVINE ENCOUNTER and walk each day with Jesus – we are just doing a bunch of wishful thinking.
- iii. **God is seeking worshippers!**
  1. He moves toward us. He reveals His heart.
  2. He desires that our heart respond to His heart.
  3. I wonder what He thinks of the way that we DON'T respond to Him?
- iv. **Speaking of God seeking Worshipers –**
  1. People are hungry for an encounter with Almighty God.
  2. Our world is hungry for the presence of God.
  3. **In his article, 'Celebrating God in Authentic Worship', Glenn Wagner said: "I believe that one of the most evangelistic tools the church possesses, one desperately needed in today's society, is authentic worship. People want to know, first of all, if God exists; then second, can they relate to Him? If God exists, is it really possible to connect with Him in a vibrant, dynamic way? In genuine, authentic worship, observers see real people connecting powerfully with the real God."**
  4. People are hungry for God. They want to connect to God.
  5. Can people see you connecting to God? Why not?
  6. God made us that way, with a deep hunger to connect to Him.
  7. **Worship is the CATALYST that God has created whereby He manifests Himself in the midst of His people.**
  8. When our hearts respond to God, He reveals, manifests Himself, in that awesome atmosphere of worship that occurs when believers gather together in one accord.
  9. When we worship and praise God (and our hearts are in what we are doing) we INVOKE His presence.
  10. When we worship God, (when our hearts are in it), we ENTRHONE Him on our praises because we have enthroned Him on our Hearts.
  11. We are spiritually creating a throne where he can come and sit down in our midst and enjoy the praises of His children.

12. His presence is manifested, felt, seen (if you will) when His children are praising and worshipping Him wholeheartedly.

#### 4. Hungering for God's Presence:

- i. If you could ask God for anything, what would it be?
  - a. Would you ask for money, a car, a new job, your health? (write down one thing you would like)
- ii. What we would ask God for tells us a lot about our walk or relationship with Him.
  - a. It also tells us a lot about ourselves.
  - b. God promises to take care of our needs, our daily bread –we need to learn to pray at a higher level than our needs, because He has already promised to meet those.
  - c. Your kids don't worry about groceries.
    - a. They ask for other stuff, because they know you will provide.
    - b. We need the same attitude toward God.
    - c. Our needs are met. So what should we be praying for?
    - d. But what do we spend a lot of time asking God for, wishing for, wanting?
    - e. What **should** our heart be yearning for?
    - f. I think we ought to look at someone in the bible who figured that out.
- iii. Ex. 33:12-23 (key verse)
  - a. *12 Moses said to the LORD , "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."*
  - b. *14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" 17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." 18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD , in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*
  - c. Moses meets with God and has the opportunity to ask Him for anything in the universe. Imagine that!
  - d. **Moses asks for two things from God.: “show me your way” and “show me your glory”**
    - a. Moses could have asked for anything yet he asks for these.
    - b. What does that tell us about His heart, his attitude, his relationship with God?
    - c. Mt. 12:34 *“for the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.”*
      - i. These came from Moses' heart!
      - ii. This is what he dreamt of.
      - iii. This is what he hoped for. This is the sum of his existence.
      - iv. Imagine him thinking, *“If God ever gives me a chance to ask Him for something, this is what I want”*
  - d. **Show me your way:**
    - iv. He wasn't saying point me in the right direction, he was saying, “I want to sign up with you for the rest of my life – not just a chapter of it! I want to walk into eternity with you.”

- v. Make yourself known to me so I can worship you.
- vi. (you cannot worship what you do not know).
  - a. Have you experienced that joy of His presence? *If not, there is something important missing in your life. Maybe today you will find what it is*
  - b. Maybe you have been missing His Presence.
  - c. Maybe today you realized that you have been going through the motions of worship and not encountering God.
  - d. Do you want to change that?
- a. One of the keys to getting to know God is at the core of Moses' prayer.
- b. **Hungering for God is at the root of worship.**
  - i. Moses Hungered for God!
  - ii. Moses had a passion for God's presence.
  - iii. Moses realized that nothing else in this world or life compared with begin with God.
  - iv. Moses had lost his APPETITE for other people and things.
  - v. Moses hungered for God and God will ALWAYS answer that kind of hungry prayer.
  - e. Paul said, in Phippians 3:7-8, *"7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,"*
- 2. God is not going to reveal to us one thing until He see that we are hungry for His presence.
  - a. Jesus said that those who *"hunger and thirst after righteousness (God) will be satisfied."*
  - b. What is your appetite for God? How hungry, how thirsty are you for Him?
  - c. Or do you just want God for what He can do for you?
  - d. The Lord said to Moses, *"My Presence (face) shall go with you and I will give you rest"* to which Moses replied, *"if your presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here."* In other words, if God, if You, don't go with us, there is no use in us going at all.
  - e. "His presence" Heb. "paneh" means "face"
    - i. His countenance, His palpable physical presence.
    - ii. To dwell in and live in God's presence means that you have a vibrant, living, present tense, active relationship with God.
    - iii. God's presence transforms, energizes, encourages, heals, delivers, sanctifies, fills whatever He touches.
    - iv. All He is, is in His Presence.
      - 1. Sin cannot dwell in His Presence.
      - 2. Self-orientation will not want to come near Him.
      - 3. Are you more hungry for God or for stuff?
- 3. That 2<sup>nd</sup> thing Moses asked for: **Show me your glory:** Ex. 33:18 *chabod*, which means the manifest presence of God, the visible majesty of God, His visible splendor!
  - a. That is a picture I hope you will not forget. God's glory is his visible presence, majesty and splendor.
  - b. Moses asked to see God face to face, God knew that it would kill him to see Him in all his glory, so God reveals His "back"., in other words as much as Moses could stand.
  - c. And even then, just a glimpse of His glory would so transform Moses that he would never be the same.
  - d. God desires to reveal His glory to us because He desires that we be changed forever.

- e. Paul talked about being caught up into the 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven and hearing inexpressible words” (2 Cor 12:1-6) This left Paul with a deep insatiable hunger that said, “I want more of You God!”
- b. Folks, there is one thing God wants above all else for His children. For each of us to enjoy, hunger and long for His Presence. He desires for us to worship Him...forever!
- c. Jer 32:38-41 *They will be my people, and I will be their God. 39 And I will give them one heart and mind to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants. 40 "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, promising not to stop doing good for them. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me. 41 I will rejoice in doing good to them and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant them in this land.*
  - i. Has God replanted in your heart today a DESIRE to worship Him?
  - ii. Do you hunger for His presence?
  - iii. If not, you can ask Him...one prayer I guarantee He will honor is an honest prayer asking Him to change your heart!
    - 1. Ask Him today to take away your hunger for anything but Him
    - 2. Come forward for prayer or to the altar and begin to seek Him above all else.

Let's Pray.

Tonight, you can experience the presence of God at the Prayer on the Square at 7pm, Madison Village. If you say you want to worship God but don't participate in this dynamic and important event, your priorities are messed up!