

Come Near - An Invitation to Know God

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The Fire of God's Presence / Holiness / James 4:8; John 17:3

“We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit”

A. W. Tozer

Even though God has placed eternity within the human heart ([Ecclesiastes 3:11](#)), sadly few will discover the treasure hidden in the field or the pearl of great price ([Matthew 13:44–45](#)). It is not because God has concealed Himself or made Himself impossible to find. Scripture declares that creation itself testifies to His existence. [Romans 1:20](#) tells us that through the things that are made, God’s eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen. When we observe the vastness of the universe and the intricate order of creation, we are confronted with the reality that there is a Creator who is sovereign over all things. As Paul reminds us, all things were created by Him and for Him—things visible and invisible ([Colossians 1:16](#)). Yet despite this testimony, many still turn away. Though Christ died once for all ([Hebrews 10:10](#)), and though the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, countless people still reject the salvation God has provided. The tragic consequence of persistent rebellion is described in [Romans 1:24–28](#), where God gives people over to the results of their own hardened hearts—uncleanness, vile affections, and ultimately a reprobate mind. Scripture is painfully honest about our condition: “there is none righteous, no, not one” ([Romans 3:10](#)), and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ([Romans 3:23](#)). To the natural mind, the message of the cross is foolishness ([1 Corinthians 1:18](#)). So if no one is righteous—if every heart is stained by sin—how can anyone possibly be saved?

In a breathtaking demonstration of divine love, God Himself provided the answer. The Bible declares that Christ died once for all ([Hebrews 10:10](#)), and whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life ([John 3:16](#)). Jesus made the path unmistakably clear when He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” ([John 14:6](#)). Yet Scripture also warns that many—even those who appear religious, who perform works in His name, read the Scriptures, pray, and sing praises—will one day hear the sobering words, “I never knew you” ([Matthew 7:21–23](#)). For before we can truly know God, He must first call us. On one glorious day, the beautiful feet of Christ’s ambassador brought the good news of the gospel to our lives ([Romans 10:15](#); [2 Corinthians 5:20](#)), and everything changed. I want you to pause and reflect on that truth for a moment: God chose you. Many of us are ordinary people. Perhaps you were never the first to be chosen for a team—maybe you were the last. Yet the God who created the universe loved you so deeply that He sent His only Son to bear your sins on the cross. Through Christ, you have been given the invitation to come to Him—to be forgiven, cleansed of all unrighteousness ([1 John 1:9](#)), and adopted into God’s family as His child and heir ([Ephesians 1:13–14](#)).

God loves all of His creation and desires that none should perish, but if His Spirit lives within you, then rejoice in this marvelous truth: you have been chosen. Throughout this series we have seen that God is far from distant. He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. After forty years as a shepherd in the wilderness, one fiery encounter with the living God transformed Moses into the leader of a nation. God revealed Himself to Abraham and promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. God revealed Himself to Isaiah, and that vision of His holiness produced conviction, cleansing, and a calling that shaped one of the greatest prophetic ministries in Scripture ([Isaiah 6:1–8](#)). God revealed Himself to Daniel, and by His power even the mouths of lions were shut ([Daniel 6:22](#)). And Saul, the fierce persecutor of the church, encountered the risen Christ and was transformed into Paul—the devoted servant and apostle of the Most High ([Acts 9:3–6](#)).

We have also learned that under the shadow of the Almighty’s wings there is peace, rest, and a place to truly know our Creator ([Psalm 91:1-4](#)). Though we struggle at times to draw closer to God, the clouds that obscure the Son can be confessed and removed by the One who atoned for all our sins ([1 John 1:9](#)). God is calling us today into a relationship with Him—not one of mere knowledge, but one marked by intimacy, humility, submission, and truth. In Christ, we are no longer strangers and slaves, but beloved children of God—deeply loved and eternally secure. And in His presence we discover that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us ([Romans 8:37](#)).

The Pursuit of God

Spurgeon once said, “The Christian life is either progressing or declining—there is no standing still.” When a person is truly born again, the Spirit of God begins a lifelong work of transformation. Though believers become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), this does not mean our relationship with God begins with spiritual maturity. The Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us to say no to sin (Romans 6:12–14), yet we still wrestle with leaving behind the old patterns of life. Scripture calls us to put off the old self and put on the new (Ephesians 4:22–24), but too often our hearts drift toward the temporary things of this world rather than the eternal things of God. If we truly desire to draw near to God, it will never be accomplished by sheer determination, as though anyone could climb his way to heaven by personal effort.

Job’s story reminds us of this truth. Job begins as a man of deep faith and integrity. When catastrophic loss strikes—his wealth, his health, and even his children—his first response reveals a heart still reaching for God. In the midst of unimaginable grief he declares, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” ([Job 13:15](#)). Job refuses to abandon God, even when he cannot understand Him. Yet Job’s journey shows us how complicated the path toward God can feel. His friends offer explanations that fail to comfort him. Job cycles through despair,

anger, and confusion. He questions God's justice and wonders if God even hears him. For chapter after chapter he searches for answers but finds only silence.

When God finally speaks, He does not give Job the explanations he sought. Instead, God reveals His greatness and the vastness of His creation. In that moment Job realizes that the deepest transformation does not come through having every answer—it comes through humility before the God who knows all things. Job moves from demanding explanations to trusting the One whose wisdom is beyond human understanding. This reveals a profound truth about spiritual growth: sometimes we come closest to God not through achievement or certainty, but through the humbling recognition that we cannot fully comprehend His ways.

Nearness to God is not earned by human grit; it is a gracious invitation extended by the Creator Himself. The Lord desires that His children know Him more deeply, and He gives us this beautiful promise:

James 4:8-10 NIV

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

When we draw near to God, we do so with humble hearts. Moses turned aside to see the burning bush. The disciples left their nets to follow Jesus. The early church sought God in prayer. Though the heart is deceitful above all things ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)) when compared to His perfect holiness, the blood of Christ has been applied to cleanse us from a guilty conscience. Because of His sacrifice we have confidence to enter God's presence ([Hebrews 10:19-23](#)) and the incredible privilege of approaching the throne of grace ([Hebrews 4:16](#)). Therefore we heed the call of Scripture to seek the Lord while He may be found ([Isaiah 55:6](#)), for the Lord truly is near to all who call on Him in truth ([Psalm 145:18](#)). Throughout this series, we have seen that stepping into the fire of God's presence begins with His

invitation, but it leads to transforming grace only in the heart that is broken, humble, and seeking Him. And when we discover Him, we find that God Himself is our greatest treasure—our portion forever ([Psalm 73:26](#)).

The Knowledge of God

Let us beware lest we in our pride accept the erroneous notion that idolatry consists only in kneeling before visible objects of adoration, and that civilized peoples are therefore free from it. The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

We must be careful not to think that idolatry only happens when someone bows before a statue. Idolatry can live in the heart. It happens whenever we begin to imagine God as something smaller, safer, or more manageable than He truly is. When we attempt to speak of God, we must begin here: God is not like anything we can fully conceive. The moment we reduce Him to something we can fully understand, we have already diminished His glory. Tozer goes on to say:

Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms. We want to get Him where we can use Him, or at least know where He is when we need Him. We want a God we can in some measure control. We need the feeling of security that comes from knowing what God is like, and what He is like is of course a composite of all religious pictures we have seen, all the best people we have known or heard about, and all the sublime ideas we have entertained.

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

And isn't that true? We want a God we can predict, a God we can explain, a God we can fit into our expectations. But the moment we create a God we can

control, we are no longer worshipping God—we are worshipping an idol of our own making. Even though we are created in the image of God, we must never confuse that truth. We reflect Him—but we are not a replica of Him. As Tozer warns, if we reduce God to something we fully resemble, we lose the uniqueness of God altogether. And when that happens, we are left not with the true God—but with a god of our imagination. And this creates a deep problem. Because deep within us is a longing—a real longing—to know God. Tozer writes:

Deep calleth unto deep, and though polluted and landlocked by the mighty disaster the theologians call the Fall, the soul senses its origin and longs to return to its Source. How can this be realized?

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Tozer is right: it is through Christ that God discloses Himself to us—not by reason alone, but by faith and love.

That God can be known by the soul in tender personal experience while remaining infinitely aloof from the curious eyes of reason constitutes a paradox best described as darkness to the intellect but sunshine to the soul.

Frederick W. Faber

We feel it.

We sense it.

We long for it.

But how can we truly know God if our thoughts about Him are so easily distorted? The answer is this: God must reveal Himself. We do not discover God by intellect alone; we know Him because He chooses to make Himself known. As Scripture teaches:

1 Corinthians 2:11–12 NIV

For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we

have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

The deepest truths of God are not reached by human reasoning—they are revealed by the Spirit of God. And Jesus promised this very thing:

John 14:15–19 NIV

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

God reveals Himself in two primary ways: through His Word ([2 Timothy 3:16–17](#)), and through His Spirit, who illuminates that Word and makes it alive in our hearts. The Word of God is living and active ([Hebrews 4:12](#)), but it is the Spirit who presses that truth into our hearts and brings us into communion with God. This is not just knowledge—it is relationship. Not just information—but transformation. And Paul is a powerful example of this. Before his conversion, Paul was highly educated, deeply religious, and advancing beyond others his age ([Galatians 1:14](#)). He knew Scripture. He knew tradition. He knew theology. And yet—he did not know God. In fact, his knowledge led him to oppose Christ. How could Paul accept Jesus—a man who healed on the Sabbath ([Matthew 12:1–8](#)), forgave sins ([Mark 2:5–10](#)), and challenged long-held traditions ([Matthew 19:7–9](#))? To Paul, this could not be God—it had to be rejected. But on the road to Damascus, everything changed. Paul discovered that the One he was persecuting was the very God he claimed to serve ([Acts 9:3–5](#)). And from that moment on, Paul’s greatest desire was no longer knowledge about God—but to know God Himself:

[Philippians 3:10](#)

“That I may know him...”

Like Moses, Paul did not seek a list of attributes—he sought intimacy with God. And that is where we must come as well.

Not with pride.

Not with intellect alone.

But with humility.

We come like the woman who said, ‘Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table’ ([Matthew 15:27](#)). And even a crumb from Christ is enough to change a life forever. We come not trusting our understanding, but trusting His invitation:

[Revelation 3:20](#)

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock...”

We may not know everything about God, but what He has revealed is enough.

Enough to save us.

Enough to transform us.

Enough to draw us into His presence.

And when we truly encounter Him, we discover this: God Himself is our portion forever ([Psalm 73:26](#)).

I remember a time in my life when I felt distant from God. I was working full-time, pastoring my first church, and taking master’s courses all at once. To keep up, I was putting in nearly 100 to 120 hours a week—constantly moving, constantly working. I was young, and I thought I could handle it. On the outside, everything looked strong. I was spending six to seven hours a day reading and studying God’s Word. But on the inside, something felt dry. I was doing the work of God, but I was beginning to neglect the presence of God. The pace became overwhelming. I grew weary. And then one day, after being called to officiate a funeral while a major paper was due just days later, I finally broke. I came before

the Lord exhausted, overwhelmed, and empty—and I cried out to Him. I managed to finish the paper, but shortly after, I set aside time for what I called a “spiritual health day.” I went into the sanctuary alone—no agenda, no pressure—just me and God. And as I sat there in silence, something changed. It was as if the Lord was lifting me up on wings like eagles ([Isaiah 40:31](#)), refreshing and restoring my soul. In that moment, I learned something I have never forgotten: If I am going to feed others, I must first be fed. I experienced the fire of God’s presence—not because I was worthy, but because Christ is worthy. And I realized something simple but life-changing: The door was never closed.

God was not distant.

God was not silent.

God was not withholding Himself.

I was just too busy to come in.

All I needed to do was slow down, step through the open door, and sit at His feet—to know Him more fully, to receive His grace, and to be renewed in His presence.

Conclusion

And maybe that’s where some of you are today. You’re busy, you’re doing the right things, and you believe the right truths—but something feels distant. Not because God has moved, but because you haven’t drawn near. So how, then, do we draw near to God? Not by striving harder, not by trying to make ourselves worthy, and not by climbing our way to Him. We draw near by coming—coming humbly, because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble ([James 4:6](#)); coming honestly, confessing our sin and laying down our burdens, knowing that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us ([1 John 1:9](#)); and coming through Christ with confidence, not in ourselves but in Him, because we

are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace ([Hebrews 4:16](#)). This is not complicated: slow down, turn your heart toward Him, step away from the noise, and open the door. For Jesus Himself says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock’ ([Revelation 3:20](#)).

God is not distant. God is not silent. God is not withholding Himself. He is calling you—not into religion, but into relationship; not into mere knowledge, but into intimacy; not into performance, but into His presence. So today, come. Come back if you’ve drifted, come for the first time if you’ve never truly known Him, come not because you are worthy, but because He is. And when you do, you will discover what we have seen throughout this entire series: in His presence there is life, there is peace, there is transformation, and there is fire.

The fire still burns — the question is whether we will draw near.