

Creating Space for God

Making God More Real

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What does it mean to have a relationship with God? How do we relate to someone who we can't see, hear, or touch? How can God be more real to us?

An Inward Experience

Sometimes, we experience God in a dramatic, physical way, but God is most often experienced inwardly. He interacts with and inhabits our inner beings. We encounter Him and relate to Him within our inner selves. I'm not talking about our minds. I'm referring to our core nature of who we are as spiritual beings, our eternal essence as unique individuals apart from our bodies, our souls.

For most of us, this inner space is unfamiliar, if not frightening. Yet, it's within this space we encounter God. This inner space isn't always a tranquil retreat where we hear the whisperings of God. Rather, it's dark or chaotic or rife with painful emotion. How fitting that God should meet us there, in the midst of our confusion and pain.

The problem then becomes that of clutter. This inner space is full of our egoic luggage, our emotions, our repetitive thoughts, our replayed stories of regret and betrayal. This stuffed interior leaves no room for God. So no wonder why He seems so far away.

Clearing a Space

We need to create a space for God within ourselves, a space He can inhabit, a space where He can interact with us in a meaningful way. We need to clear some of our clutter. The truth is we are all hoarders. We hoard everything we think and feel, stashing it all inside. We hoard words spoken against us, negative emotions, judgments, fears, and whatever makes us feel secure. A lifetime's worth of collecting. How then is God expected to find a place within us to meet with us?

I'm not asking you to get rid of all your stuff, although it would be liberating if you did. What I am asking is that you clear a small space within yourselves, an open space that's devoid of ego and agendas and expectations, a space that stands as an invitation for God to come and roost for at least as long as that space exists before your internal clutter rolls back and fills it again. Find a way to create that space for God whether through prayer or meditation or long walks. Think of this space as an empty spot within yourselves He can fill with His presence.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus says He is knocking on the door of our hearts, asking to be invited in. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." God never forces Himself. He waits to be invited. For me, the invitation is more than setting aside time for God. We also create a space where He can enter and feel welcome. We wouldn't ask a guest to enter a room so stuffed with boxes stacked to the ceiling that only one person could squeeze in. I think of my interior as a room I can make cozy for God, a place He would want to visit.

The aforementioned verse uses the illustration of a meal with God. A shared meal is a perfect example of comfortable fellowship, conversation, and laughter, something that God is asking us to invite Him to do with us. The Bible says that Jesus comes to dwell in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17). By faith, we invite Him, but I believe He inhabits us by degrees, to the extent we create space for Him to fill with His being. A few verses later (Ephesians 3:19 and 4:13), Paul describes the ultimate goal of attaining the whole measure of the fullness of God. My thinking is that God can only fill what has been made empty.

Cultivating Relationship

After you have created that space, spend time there. Get comfortable with it. Get to know it as you know yourself. Speak to God from that place. Be open to answers. God may point out some of the surrounding clutter and ask you to do

something about it. Or you may choose to show your hoarded stuff to God and ask His help to get rid of it. The more you clear, the bigger space you create for God to inhabit.

This exchange is a conversation of sorts. You share your inner self with God. You share your thoughts and fears. You communicate with Him throughout your day. And you quiet yourself to receive His peace and comfort, to receive his Life and Being. He may even impart messages to you. As in any relationship, this exchange is characterized by quality time spent together, shared experiences, and mutual disclosures. I believe God is as real as we allow Him to be.

Over time, God reveals Himself to us in response to our risk in trusting Him. The space we create for God expands. We include God in our thought processes and decisions. We rely on God more and we look to Him for direction. Direction from God takes the form of a sense of imparted peace and presence regarding decisions, and a felt assurance that God is with us and leading us. This way of relating to God needs to be cultivated and becomes a habitual practice of engaging God in our daily lives. At a deeper level, we allow God access to our inner selves and we partake of God's life as a vital source of empowerment and nurture.

Being Real

God is most real when we are real with Him. That's why our interactions with Him need to be honest, free from disguises and manipulation. We don't bring to God our best selves. That doesn't get us far with God, since He sees our hearts and knows when we are false. God desires truthfulness in our innermost being (Psalm 51:6). Instead, we bring to God our true selves. Fearful, impoverished, uncertain, wounded, we present ourselves to God, and He receives us and loves us as we are. And love is deepest in the context of a relationship. God desires a love relationship with us. As we allow God to love us, we grow in our love toward God and in our experience of Him.

God inhabits our inward selves. When we create space within us for God to inhabit, then we can interact with God and cultivate a relationship with Him. If you want more of God, then you have to relinquish more of yourself. Jesus challenges us to surrender our entire selves when He said, "Whoever loses their life will preserve it." (Luke 17:33)

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Rick Hocker

Author of *Four in the Garden*

An Allegory about One's Relationship with God

Readers' Favorite International Book Award Winner

Available in print and e-book at all online stores

Email: mail@rickhocker.com

Website: www.rickhocker.com

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