

A CLOSER WALK WITH GOD

Most people whom I've met in church seem to have some clarity about what they believe about God, the two great commandments (Love God . . . and love your neighbor as yourself), faith, hope, love, sin, forgiveness, worship and the Bible. We aren't always happy about what we believe, but we have some idea of what being a Christian person in the 21st century is about.

There are, however, some of us who feel like there must be more to being on a spiritual journey than what we already know and do. In my experience, there is. Along with what we believe and then do, we also have reason to ask how this all relates to God's presence in our lives.

Yes, I know that we are tempted to do as much as we can to help others, to be involved in the Church and to lend our support to meet the needs of the Church. However, as important as these things are, there is more to being a Christian. The "more" involves focusing on our actual relationship with God. So, here are a few of what I hope are thought-provoking as well as soul-arousing questions that may help us to come to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God:

1. What do I think about God? (For those for whom everything must be rational.)
2. What do I believe about God? (What did we learn in Sunday school and Church worship about God?)
3. What do I feel about God? (Yes, some of us respond to God emotionally.)
4. What have I experienced with God?
5. What do I want from God?

If you have a spiritual director or a pastoral counselor, you may already be monitoring these areas of your spirituality. You may also have daily Scripture readings and other spiritual disciplines to support your day-to-day walk with God. However, writing about our spiritual journey helps us to be more aware of how our spiritual journey has developed over time and where we need to go next.

The point is that I/we need to clarify what our spiritual journey is about. If we are so busy "doing" (i.e. all the daily and non-daily tasks of living) that we have no time to just sit with God or otherwise be aware of God, we may not know where God is trying to lead us. We need opportunities to be aware of God's presence with us. It sounds so simple as I write this, but I know that it is not simple.

To hear God's voice we need to listen for it. To listen we have to be willing to believe that God wants to communicate with us. To believe that God wants to communicate with us requires faith that, in the words of the United Church of Christ, "God is still speaking!" We also need to be quiet and not distracted by our duties or the various ideas that race through our minds when we are quiet. That means setting aside time to do nothing but listen for God's message. No telephone calls, no scanning the newspaper or watching a streaming video, etc. After we do all of that then we sit and listen. If we don't hear God at first, we need to be patient. We may not recognize God's voice at first, but that could be because we have not practiced quiet listening.

If weeks go by and there is no word from God, we could ask ourselves, have I ever asked to hear God speaking to us? If we are not sure, then let's review how we pray. If our prayer sounds like "Help me, Help me" or "Fix this" or "Don't let this bad thing happen," we might need to change our prayer life a bit. We might begin our daily list of requests to God by sitting quietly and saying to God, using the words given to Samuel in the Old Testament; Samuel by Eli whom he served, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening." (Chapter [3:8-10](#))

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