

## **God Reveals Himself To Those Who Seek Him**

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*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21)*

Something extraordinary separates Christians from those who are unsaved, and that is the powerful truth that God reveals Himself to those who love Him. Because Gospel teachings are so contrary to the usual behavior and expectations of the world, and tend to challenge our social conventions of what is acceptable, we can miss the truth that certain things operate according to the same processes that govern the natural world. The most obvious of these is interaction and relationship. We don't make a habit of revealing too much of ourselves to strangers, and the process of trust determines the degree to which we put ourselves out there. It's an instinct that has roots in the same understanding of the relationship between God and His people.

God reveals Himself to those who love Him and who willingly reveal themselves to Him.

There is no escaping the reality that what happens in the natural world is directly related to what happens in the spiritual world. This is the foundation of the truth that our spiritual life is able to profoundly impact and alter our natural reality. It's the very basis of the principle of faith. Because we live in the world and this is the obvious 'reality' – that which we see, touch, hear, smell, and feel is constantly visible – we all too often simply presume that our physical reality is what defines life rather than the other way round. When God reveals Himself, it is an essentially spiritual experience which defines everything that happens in our lives, both spiritually and in the natural world.

This can be a difficult concept, particularly for new Christians whose awareness of life is centered in the natural. That is the reason why so many struggle to enter real relationship and interaction with God. They still separate the spiritual from the natural and continue in an expectation that experience of and with God must be enjoyed in the natural. The Bible teaches us very clearly that this is not true. With God, the spiritual 'experience' must come first. We relate to Him on that level, and gradually, through ongoing relationship, our physical and natural reality is infused with the vital spiritual life. God reveals Himself on a spiritual level and then impacts our life, our activities, and our emotional experience. Today's verse highlights the truth that relationship with God comes first. **We must first be obedient. This is the foundation of interaction with God, and it starts on a very basic level of reading His Word and then acting on it. This vital**

step is, I believe, a revelation of His grace – He knows that we’re essentially world-bound and require the total transformation granted to us as part of salvation to gradually manifest itself. While on a spiritual level, Christ’s work is complete, it needs to be outworked in our lives. In other words, we need to grow into it. God reveals Himself to us through His Word. The entire who and what of God is contained in the Bible, and that is the first place to start if we desire to know Him.

The key here is the word ‘seek.’ It implies earnest desire and commitment. Because we’ve been world-centered for such a long time, it goes against our nature to even read the Bible sometimes. We get distracted, despondent, and tied up in the busyness of life. ‘Seek’ requires an active participation in the process of knowing God. It requires us to make the choice to seek, firstly, and then to apply an active discipline in pursuing Him through the Word. It is only when we begin to get the Word into us that we will begin to discover how powerfully God reveals Himself.

But the other critical step is obedience. It is through obeying the Word that we begin to apply the Word. Again, obedience is against every natural inclination. Self will always rebel against the Word of God because it wants to remain in control. Once again, discipline and diligence must always follow the choice to obey. This is where so many of us come unstuck. We desire God, but we somehow have this perception that the things of God are ‘above and beyond’ the ordinary things of life. We imagine that when God reveals Himself, it must be some powerful spiritual experience. Yet the real truth is that God desires to be a part of our complete lives, including the ordinary, daily details.

The Bible is an immensely practical ‘guide to life.’ That is why it has endured for centuries, and why it remains one of the most purchased books of all time. While it contains a wealth of truth that is entirely spiritual, being rooted in the very nature and character of God, its power comes from its uniquely practical application. It has the ability to answer every human need on a fundamentally real and practical level. It emphasizes the truth that God reveals Himself in the day-to-day details of our natural lives. But this only happens when we make the choice to obey the Word, i.e. to apply it in every aspect of life. Again, this requires discipline. It’s not enough to say ‘I will.’ We need to reach the point of saying ‘I am’ in order to allow God to empower and transform us and our lives. It is only when we begin to enact each and every revelation of the nature and character of God that we get from the Word that it becomes a reality for us. Unless we do this, we remain at the point of knowing about God rather than knowing God. He only becomes personal when He becomes ‘in us,’ i.e. when our revelation of Him infuses our lives at the most practical level. When God

reveals Himself to us, it only becomes real in the most practical, ordinary, day-to-day ways. Until then, the spiritual and the physical are entirely separate.

To understand this truth and begin to live it, we must lose the perception that the things of God have to be experienced on an emotional level. This is our greatest mistake. When God reveals Himself, it has nothing at all to do with our feelings or even our intellect and human understanding. It is very true that God gave us our emotions, and that they are a reflection of Him – we are made in His image, so He must have those same emotions. The difference, however, is that before salvation, our emotions are fundamentally carnal, the expression of the self-life. God does not want to remove our emotions or even ‘turn them off,’ but He does want to transform them.

Consider anger for a moment to grasp this. Carnal anger is destructive, both to ourselves and to others. It precipitates resentment, judgement, bitterness, division, and strife. Righteous anger, on the other hand is of God. It is a pure and acceptable response that is powered by the Word, and therefore by the nature and character of God. It inspires biblical conviction and response. It encourages us to stand for what is right, to speak the truth of God in love, and to avoid those things that are contrary to the teachings of the Word. What was once a fleshly, carnally controlled emotion, becomes a spiritually empowered, God-infused emotion. The transformation that results when God reveals Himself includes reshaping our emotions, bringing them under the control of our spirits through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is a transformation into the righteousness of Christ.

The perfect example of this is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We cannot dispute that this was an intense and consuming ‘emotional experience.’ It was so extreme, that He sweated blood. Yet, in all this, it remained ‘righteous.’ The evidence of this lies in the words He spoke: ‘nevertheless, not My will but Your will be done.’ While we cannot argue that His emotions were deep and intensely real, and that they encompassed the full spectrum of human experience, they remained subject to His commitment to absolute obedience to the will of God. This is the outworking of the relationship through which God reveals Himself to us. We come to know Him as sovereign and almighty, and we begin to yield more readily and more willingly to obeying His Word.

The world places a strong emphasis on our emotional life, as evidenced by the growing number of psychologists, personal trainers, and life coaches. We’re taught to harness our emotions as a power for personal development. We’re taught to regard our emotions as ‘sacrosanct,’ that they’re ‘real’ and the true expression of who we are and our engagement in life and with others. How we feel is constantly justified as being an inalienable right, even when that runs

contrary to the teachings of God. This is part of the new age movement which idolizes self as the ultimate pursuit. The Bible, however, teaches us to surrender and submit our emotions to God, to yield personal preference to the teachings of the Word and God's will as He reveals Himself to us.

Love is, without doubt, the most powerful human emotion. It can empower us to achieve absolutely anything. Fear, of course, comes a close second, and it's the devil's 'antidote' to love. But God still retains the upper hand, because perfect love casts out all fear. As we begin to read the Word and as God reveals Himself to us, we begin to love Him – not emotionally, but with agape love, the kind of love that is not dependent on emotions or on the world's expectation of 'warm and fuzzy.' It's a pure love that slowly begins to infuse who we are and how we relate to God and others. It stirs us to seek Him more and more. We love Him because it becomes clear that He first loved us. The greatest evidence of pure and powerful love is, of course, that He laid down all in the suffering and death of Jesus – pure love will always result in absolute surrender.

The process, in us, always takes time. God reveals Himself gradually, building on our existing knowledge and revelation as we enact each new revelation in obedience. As our love for Him grows, so our desire for Him grows and we will start to seek Him more actively and with greater hunger. And as we seek Him, He reveals Himself. This is a 'take-home' promise. It's an absolute guarantee. We don't have to question it, work for it, earn it, or deserve it. We can live in the reality of it in total assurance that He will keep His Word because He already has in Christ. We can also be sure that, as God reveals Himself, it will totally upend every single worldly expectation and understanding regarding our emotions and especially love. Where the world exalts self, revelation of God results in laying down self – not constrained or forced, but a loving, willing, joyful yielding of all that we are and hope to be.

As we enter into and grow into a deeper relationship with Him, we can take hold of the promise that God reveals Himself to us because we can be sure that this is what He wants. It is His will that He reveal Himself. It may take time, and we may encounter difficulty as the self rears itself in rebellion, but discipline, commitment, and consistency will always be rewarded. The first step is one of choice. Thereafter, God Himself will empower a willing heart through His own love and grace and draw us into that place where His life in us begins to impact and transform our natural lives in both a spiritual and practical level.