

A star streaks
A leaf rustles
Lightening crashes
He passes by
Or He stops to stay
Pressing His prints on my day

Virginia drove up the Lewiston Grade as everything seemed to close in around her. Situations she pondered seemed as bleak and dark as the clouds in the sky. She was depressed, discouraged.

"In the midst of this mood," she says, "I sent up a prayer of desperation. All of a sudden my car was caught up in a blaze of sunrays. They shined on me and around me, as though guiding me and the car up the hill. It was like the arms of God around me."

Joyce's husband endured many health problems and had just gone through heart surgery. Stressed, exhausted, overcome with anxiety, she finally got some sleep. Then, she was suddenly awakened. She felt God's presence with her. He seemed to fill the whole room.

"I felt I could reach out and touch him," she says. "I felt like he was letting me know that he was there for me. Not that I doubted it, but it was like nothing I ever experienced before or since. I was filled with so much love and thankfulness for his presence that I began to cry. I'll never forget it."

Multitudes want a touch from God, in some form or fashion.

Many folks try to get God's attention, to call him out, in order to confirm he's there or confront him.

Habakkuk climbed a tower and refused to leave until God answered his questions (Habakkuk 1:1-4).

Jonah hid under a plant and pouted (Jonah 4).

Moses challenged, "Let me see your glory!" (Exodus 33:12-23).

Each of these humans had an encounter with God. In very different settings, situations, and mind-sets. Because of one of these principles for making personal contact with the Almighty. . .the one who wants to be your heavenly Father.

1. SEEK HIM

When You said, Seek My face,

My heart said to You,
Your face, Lord, I will seek.
Do not hide Your face from me.

Psalms 27:8,9 NKJV

Do something. Get active. Make an effort to notice God today. Find out where people he knows hang out. Go to where the spiritual action is.

Search with an open mind. Be objective in a meaningful search for ultimate truth. Be willing to accept what you're shown.

Do something crazy. . . .

You could attempt to become a part of the Large Hadron Collider atom smasher project. Physicists wanting to understand the universe and the mind of God have slaved for years to inject particles and other such things into this machine to attempt to manufacture Z particles and analyze how they decay. Through such means scientists hope to study the makeup of matter and the fundamental forces that govern the development of everything that exists. Or destroy all life on earth by sucking it into a black hole in the process.

"We yearn for visibility," Philip Yancey writes. He tells of a supposed image of Jesus that appeared on a glass office building in Florida in 1999, observed by a few



Why you should want to see God. . . .
"Once you see the face of God, the world is forever transformed into his features." Peter Kreeft

gawkers from a certain angle. "The next day a mile-long procession of cars snarled traffic on the street outside."

Or get serious. . . .

Become a simple, sincere seeker. Search daily for sightings of him. Stay alert to small things and large events that come to your attention. You'll see signs of him all around you.

Pay attention to your surroundings. God delights in revealing secret and hidden knowledge of himself, in his time, in his own way, for his purpose. To someone just like you.

Seek and you will find.

Matthew 7:7 NIV

God offers a tantalizing promise. He will reveal himself to anyone who really wants to find him.

Seek him when you're in big, fat trouble. Like King David did during a 3-year famine (2 Samuel 21:1). Or when you're lonely. Or something seems missing from your life.

To contact the divine. To contend with the celestial. It may freak you or thrill you. Some seek to remind themselves why they trudge this earth. Others want to leave this life, faith intact. Maybe you need more than that. You long to be assured of his love. You really want to know him. You kneel before your Maker as a needy child, who desires an encouraging word, a hug.

Whatever your motive, seek him.

2. PUT HIM FIRST

And you shall seek me, and find me,
when you shall search for me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 AKJV

If you're consumed with gaining fame. Or amassing fortune. You're not going to spend serious time to seek God. When you stuff those pursuits, you'll yearn to get closer. Or when you care more about your inner being, you'll bump the outer hankerings down the list.

At that time, you'll covet more than academic analysis of God's existence. Or character. You'll pine for personal, sensory experience. You'll want to see as much of the spiritual world as you can. You'll ache to see his face.

You'll find him when you seek him with everything you've got. Your whole heart. Tremulous, timid, you search for this supposed all-sufficient Person, for you "must have a heart to throb against," as Alexander Maclaren expressed it.

To know him is to experience his personality, not mere facts about him. To lean against his chest. To feel his breath, to cuddle in His lap. Who can be content with abstract affection? Passion, tenderness can't be seen without a face. You need to gaze into his eyes.

Spiritual desires like these indicate there must be a God. Or why yearn for anything beyond this earth at all?

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

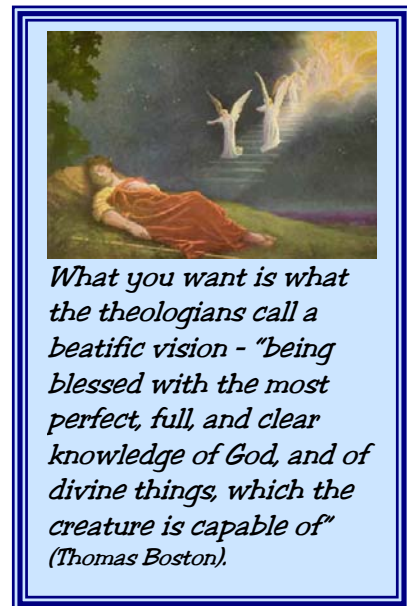
Psalms 42:1

Become a true pilgrim. On a crusade. Devoted to your goal. Take a day to search for God. Look for his footprints. His hands. His face. His heart. In the stillness of the country. In the buzz of the city. At home alone.

Your self-absorption can be reversed when you seek him with all your strength, all your mind. Talk about him with others. Listen to voices other than your own. Pay more attention to silence in busy seasons. Learn about God for yourself.

But now I seek the One in every form,
Scorning no vision that a dewdrop holds.

Eva Gore-Booth



What you want is what the theologians call a beatific vision - "being blessed with the most perfect, full, and clear knowledge of God, and of divine things, which the creature is capable of"
(Thomas Boston).

3. SPOT THE SIGNS

God revealed or demonstrated
the reality of His existence to mortal human beings
as fully and convincingly as if
His actual being, essence, or person
had visibly appeared to them.

Renald E. Showers

In *Surprised By Joy*, C. S. Lewis described the joy and ardor he felt as a youth when he listened to Wagner's music. He later in life considered that evidence of the existence of something or Someone truly awe-inspiring.

Peggy tells a part of her story. "Some years ago I was walking out to my garden on a bright, sunny spring day. All of a sudden this great feeling of pleasure came over

me. I was surrounded by an even greater brightness than the sunny day. I believe it was God's presence filling me with His love and goodness. From that moment on, I never had a doubt that I was His child."

Peggy had an epiphany—a spiritual perception, an insight, a sudden inspiration, a revelation.

I can relate. Sometimes I sense his presence--in a spirited moment in church. Or in a hushed winter wood. Or when I cry out, "Help!" It's both a physical and spiritual thing. I'm quickened. I'm quieted. I'm calmed to the core. Sometimes I notice the rustle of his activity. I just know that he passed my way. Someone's healed. A prayer's answered. An attitude's reversed. A disaster's averted. I feel His ambience. I observe his prints.

Nancy Wright, who commutes monthly from New York City to Seattle, claims to see God in the big cities where "the sightings and hearings jar me out of my distractions and self-introspection." She discerns his presence and handiwork in jewel-like spider's webs—the delicate fibers, the incarnate fragility and beauty that indicate patient, perfect crafting (from "The Sanctity of Place", www.globaleduc.org).

He is near. . . .

Whenever you notice hints of true goodness, you know that God had something to do with it. That he has not given up on this world. . .yet.

"Since God is the highest good in the universe, anything that humans perceive as delightful will turn out to echo some aspect of divinity" (Professor George P. Landow).

Any sample of beauty shines a window into heaven, at times into eternity itself.

Where the maples' altars flame—

Even there the splendour came.

Mary McCullough

God makes his presence and power known in after-affects, like the wake left by a motorboat after it has passed. You see the afterglow. Such as when you're able to break through a situation of deception and discover truth and justice.

He delights to reveal bits of himself through homey things—like poor people, feisty kids, and a human representation who "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him" (Isaiah 54:2).

Look up. . . .

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge...
Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.

Psalm 19:1

You can see God by a careful study of what he made. No human created anything that's part of the natural firmament. Above and all around you is "the conspicuous, distinctive stamp of His divine handiwork" (Renald E. Showers).

Expand your view of God. Think in terms of light years, not miles. Investigate websites such as www.Hubblesite.org to see what's "out of the ordinary. . .out of this world." Study the depth of stunning celestial images. Travel the cosmos, peer into its majesty, the known universe—and marvel at his mark, his fingerprints on everything.

God is love. . . .

Wherever you witness love in action, God is the instigator, the inspiration, whether admitted by humans involved or not. Genuine love reveals God's face, a

window into his invisible nature. It's impossible to love without God. You would know that in an instant if God ever pulled himself completely out of this world. Hell would reign. You've never known a moment of your life devoid of God's presence, even at its worst.

You know you have seen him at work when you recognize his mastery in the intimate, delicate details of doing relationships. When a stubborn heart's hit with the lightening of his truth.

Think about an instance when you received mercy or compassion. Or you seemed lifted above your mean circumstance. A pause of peace. Or you had a strong inkling to get some things right in your life. That was a God moment.

4. ASK FOR OPENED EYES

Lord, heal our eyes that we may see!

(Bernard of Clairvaux)

God is invisible, most of the time. He's here. He's there. He's everywhere. But you can't see him, unless he allows, gives you that ability. Any information about God can only be known if God chooses to reveal it. Or he knows you're able to bear it. Eagles can gaze at the sun and not be blinded. You can't. You need your spiritual eyes opened. . .in just the right way. Then your vision is renewed or restored.

One of the most astounding accounts in the Bible:

"And Elisa prayed, 'O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

Pray for the eyes of your heart to be enlightened (see Ephesians 1:18). Pray for the gift of spiritual sight, to "see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Jesus gives sight to the blind. He can provide vision for you too. Ask him to increase your faith to see beyond your doubt, your lack of love light, your crust of cynicism, your bitter gall. Whatever it is that prevents a clear view of the real world beyond your own.

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

Ask God to enlighten your mind, open the door to a spirit of understanding. Your mind must be opened before you can ever understand spiritual truth.

5. CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Matthew 5:8

No one could enter the holy of holies of the Jewish temple unless they were considered spotless. Any sacrifice brought had stringent rules attached.

"When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the Lord to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable" (Leviticus 22:21).

No animal was accepted if it was blind, injured, or maimed. Nothing with warts or sores. No castaways. The best of the herd or flock was expected.

Sinless Jesus proved to be the final, ideal sacrifice. . .so you can enter a holy heaven, free of the pockmarks of sin. " . . .but now he has reconciled you by Christ's

physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (Colossians 1:22).

You don't have to be perfect. But you must be free of certain improprieties before you're capable of seeing God. You approach him like a child, with openness, humility, expectation. The innocence of youth is allowed first choice for an audience with His Majesty.



Perhaps you should make something right that maybe you or someone in your domain did wrong, like King David did (2 Samuel 21). God will nudge you if this is what he wants of you.

Renew your mind. . . .

Remove from your thoughts all limits of God that make Him seem small. Compare him instead with powers and forces which you regard as great (from J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 75).

Practice the art of meditation. . . call to mind, think over, dwell on and apply to yourself all you know about God. His works. His ways. His purposes and promises.

It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God.

J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 19

You must do this one thing: Make the Lord—and His most holy, lovely nature—your heart's meditation. No, we cannot see Him perfectly, yet we can cleanse the eye of the soul from its most foolish, false, and impure thoughts about Him. . . . Do not turn your soul

from Him until you have seen the overwhelming beauty of His holiness. . . which will cause you to long and cry out to be pure within" (Bernard of Clairvaux).

Pay attention to warnings. . . .

Appearances of God sometimes come with conditions attached (Leviticus 9:6). Read any directions. Be aware of risks. Difficulties and dangers, as well as delights, await those who seek a view of God. Sounds like a prescription ad, with all the potential side effects.

You can't see God's face and live, according to the Moses story. But you might glimpse him dimly like in a grimy mirror. And still you could need your face covered.

Realize that God does not grant every and any request made of him. But there's a hosts of responses he gives that fit this promise:

My God shall supply all your need
according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

6.) READ THE BOOK

God is the main character in the Bible. He's the protagonist, the hero, from beginning to end. You want to see God? Read his story. Know who he is.

Is the Bible fiction or nonfiction? Depends on whom you reference. There's plenty of facts and figures to explore.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and other finds continue to substantiate the Bible's historical accuracy. reliability of Bible . . . "Archaeological findings continue to confirm rather than refute the accuracy of the Bible. For example, an archeological find in

northern Israel in August 1993 confirmed the existence of King David, author of many of the Psalms in the Bible" (Albert Talker, www.learning-systems.org).

The Bible was written over a 1500-year span, by 40 different authors, in different locations and on separate continents, written in three different languages, covering diverse subject matters at different points in history (Evidence That Demands A Verdict, Josh McDowell, p.90-91). Yet, there's an astounding consistency, an amazing unity in its message. It's incredibly honest in its portrayal of the human condition.

This is stated clearly:

1. God created the world you live in.
2. God created humankind to have a relationship with him.
3. God deeply loves you.
4. You have sinned and fall under a holy God's judgment.
5. You need his forgiveness.
6. God provided a way for your sins to be forgiven.
7. He wants you to receive his forgiveness and live with him forever.

The Bible has incredibly been preserved, though countless antagonists have tried to destroy the record, stamp out every copy.

7. KNOCK ON DOORS

Do the research. . . .

"Divine knowledge is the uncovering by God for mankind of a body of knowledge formerly hidden from mankind and totally undiscoverable by mankind" (Renald E. Showers). You've got to dig into resources. Where can you go?

Interrogate the witnesses. . . .

There's plenty of recorded events.

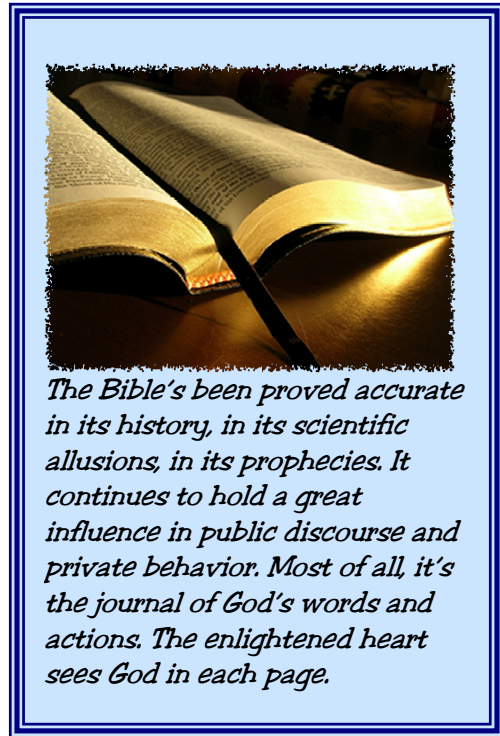
The first and most infamous -- God strolled in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. But disobedience disrupted their chummy closeness. Driven from the Garden, they no longer walked with God (Genesis 2,3).

The Israelites viewed him within a dense, luminous cloud column by day, and floating fire by night. He seemed like a glorious burst of light to them (Exodus 40:34-38).

That was eons ago. Who do you know among your friends or circle of acquaintances or networks that claims to know God? Who has seen him in some way? Talk to them. Get his or her firsthand account.

8. FACE THE FACTS OF FAITH

We don't yet see things clearly.
We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist.
But it won't be long before the weather clears
and the sun shines bright!



We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us,
knowing him directly just as he knows us!

(1 Corinthians 13:12 MSG)

Today you could see him, his purpose in a life or event. Tomorrow you don't. It is good to seek. It is better to learn to trust. Faith is to your spirit what the five senses are to your body. Instead of interacting with your world, you make your peace with the mystery that is God.

A friend gave me a gold frame sign for my office wall that says: "Janet, Trust Me. I have everything under control. Jesus." I look at it often. It takes time for a fact to penetrate into the soul part of the being—to become such a deeply held power point that you move and act in foundational belief.

Your faith draws him out. Humble, persistent faith touches his heart. Faith elicits a response from God, but maybe not the one you expect. You want him to show himself. He desires that you look at yourself—your motives, your readiness to interact with him, at the level he chooses.

You will one day know him as well as you are now known. Some day you will see God fully, nothing held back. You'll witness his grand glory, like Peter, James and John observed Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Faith looks forward. . . .

To the final unveiling. Without any human garbage to muddy the view.

You'll see him then as just. As holy. As the ultimate power. The one who's absolutely fair and compassionate.

Everything will make sense. You'll have all eternity to uncover the deeps of the layers of meaning.

Meanwhile, you strive to be at peace with partial answers and ancient mysteries. . .and keep watch for that next sighting of God.

Janet Chester Bly has authored 11 books on devotional topics, women's issues, and family, including *Awakening Your Sense of Wonder* and *Hope Lives Here*. She has also co-written 18 other books of nonfiction and fiction with her husband, Stephen, such as *The Hidden West Series* and *The Carson City Chronicles*. She serves as music director and teacher of special adults at Winchester Community Church in Winchester, ID. She enjoys instant gardening with hanging petunias, rustic country décor, and wearing dressy denim. You may contact her at address below or by e-mail: janet@blybooks.com or janetbly@connectwireless.us



QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS & STUDY GROUPS:

When have you witnessed a 'sighting' of God?

Of all the examples of encounters with God in this article, with which one do you most relate and why?

How does the ability to love prove the existence of God? Or does it?

How would your life be different if God were in your view at all times?

Some mystics say you can see God with the eyes of the inner person, that is, your soul. What do you think that means?