

Encountering God

God's invitation to you

Encountering God through biblical teachings.

Introduction

Hello, My name is David Peñate. I am currently in my final year of Theology and Ministry and this month I am going to take you through the monthly bible readings. This month we are going to journey together and discover how to encounter God. In other words, we are going to uncover how to experience God in our lives. God invites everyone into a loving relationship with Him and His ultimate purpose is to be deeply involved in our life. Therefore lets take a look at God's vision for our lives and how we can encounter God through the Bible.

Week 3, June 15-21.

Day 15 - Thursday 15th of June: “The Faithful Few”

Suggested Readings: Revelation 12:7, 14:6-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Peter 3:10-14.

“This means that God’s holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their faith in Jesus”
(Revelation 14:12)

So who’s your favorite sporting team? Whether it is basketball, cricket, rugby, soccer or the best sport in Australia: AFL (Ausssie rules), there must be a favorite sporting team. Now, as you ponder on your favorite team, do you remember a time when your team was doing badly? A time when it seemed that there was no hope? A time when all went wrong- one the field and off the field? I am sure there was. Now am a tragic AFL follower, I love it with a passion and I have been following the Western Bulldogs for years. However, before winning the premiership in 2016, I remember the dark years, the years when everything was going astray. I remember going to the games and seeing only a couple of faithful supporters, now when things are going good most games are paced to the rafters. You See friends, when things are going bad we tend, to sometimes, fall off the bandwagon we only want to be faithful when things are going good. God in the Bible averts us to exactly this, in spite of trails, tribulation and persecutions God warns us to stay faithful to Him, because he is going to get us through the hard times. The Bible talks about a faithful few whom when trails come will stand and defend the name of God. God seeks for all of us to be part of this faithful few who will keep the faith if Jesus Christ and the commandments of God. So friends, life may seem hard, but God seeks you and gives you the promise that he is always there with you and things are going to get better.

- **What does it mean to keep the faith and testimony of Jesus, and the commandments of God?**
- **The Bible talks about a remnant (remaining few), what characteristics, do you think, makes up the remnant? (Revelation 12:17)**

Day 16 - Friday 16th of June: “United in Differences ”

Suggested readings: Romans 12; 4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Galatians 3: 27-29.

“Just as our bodies have many parts and each part as a special function. So it is with Christ’s body. We re many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other”.

(Romans 12:4-5)

As we look at today’s world we see a lot of division. People tend to be divided about everything- about religion, politics, sports and many many many other things. It is hard to find a group of people that despite their differences can be truly united in the same purpose and mission. However, that’s exactly what Jesus is asking his church to be, that despite differences among us we come together in love and respect and seek the presence of God and together seek to bring other people into the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The church, as the Bible describes it, is a body with many individuals from many nations, ethnicities and culture. It’s made up of many different languages, between rich and poor, male and female and educated and uneducated. However, under God’s eyes we are all equal we are all led the same Spirit of God. Event though we may differ in opinion, God seeks you, because you are a valuable member of his church. God gives different gifts to all, some the gift of speaking, teaching, preaching, others, the gift of care and giving. We the children of God, even though we may feel inadequate, are called upon to represent Jesus and to show the goodness and the mercy of God. However, this can only happen if we stay united in Jesus Christ. Whatever differences you may have with someone, I invite you friends to not focus on those differences, but instead put your focus on Jesus and his love for you and your neighbor.

- **What does is mean to us the Jesus is the head of the body?**
- **Why is it so important to have unity among churchgoers?**
- **Are there any differences between you and other individuals in church, which are hindering your walk with God? Is so, what should be the next step to take?**

Day 17– Saturday 17th of June: “The Brotherhood”

Suggested Readings: Rom 6:1-6; Acts 16:30, 22:16; Matthew 28: 19-20.

“Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the King”
(1 Peter 2:17)

Have you ever been initiated? Whether be because you have joined a new institution, club or any other social organization? If so, I bet we would all have fascinating stories to tell. I remember when I first came to Avondale College and decided to stay in the dormitories, a couple of weeks in I was initiated into the brotherhood of dorms. Food dye was thrown, flour, eggs, food and many other things we poured unto us. This ritual of initiation meant that I now belonged to the brotherhood; it was visible symbol that I now belonged and was welcomed to the brotherhood of dorms (Watson Hall). In the same way Jesus showed us to initiate new believers into the church. On day Jesus left his daily work and went down to the Jordan River, where His cousin John was preaching and baptizing. As He approached John, He asked to be baptized. Christ taught, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Jesus was giving an example on how to receive new believers into the community of God. Baptism therefore is a visible and public demonstration of one's commitment to Jesus. Baptism demonstrates that we have entered into a personal relationship with Jesus and that we are committed in living a life in harmony with the principles with His kingdom of grace. The intimacy of the believer's relationship with Christ is revealed through expressions like baptism into the church of Christ. It is God's will and upmost desire that we enter into God's brotherhood.

- **Why do you think baptism is a public event?**
- **What do you think baptism symbolizes? (Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 2:20)**
- **How important is forgiveness? Whether one is considering baptism, or is already baptized?**

Day 18- Sunday 18th of June: “A Blood-stained Reminder”

Suggested Readings: 1 Corinthians 10:16-7, 11:23-30; Matthew 26:17-30.

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.”
(Revelation 3:20)

“Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:53-54). Eating Jesus Flesh and drinking His blood is symbolic of the Word of God, which we maintain communion with Christ. In the book of John, John describes Jesus last supper story. Here, Jesus quietly got up, knelt down and began to wash the feet of the disciples, INCREDIBLE! Jesus the master stooped down to the level of man and acted as a servant to his disciples. Then Jesus at the table, after He had washed their feet, broke bread and ate it with His disciples as a reminder of His own body. Further, Jesus took a cup and drank grape juice with His disciples as a reminder of His blood. By this stage you may be asking yourself “a reminder of what kind?” Well, this was meant to be a reminder for all of humanity of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The last supper that Jesus ordained is a reminder for all of us, of Jesus death for all of our sins. Jesus calls us to reflect on what he did for every single one of us, what His sacrifice means for us personally. The master, creator and God came down to earth to suffer and die for you and me. Friends, God knocks on the door of your heart, will you let God in and have an experience with him?

- **What are you doing to let God into your life? Are you seeking an encounter with God?**
- **How can you experience God through the Jesus instituted practice of foot washing, eating of the bread and drinking of the juice (Lord’s supper)?**

Day 19- Monday 19th of June: “The Gifts of God”

Suggested Readings: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:9-11; Acts 6: 1-7.

“God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another”

(1 Peter 4:10)

To most of us, especially to the younger guys, birthdays are great occasions. The older you are the less you probably want to be reminded of your birthday, because unfortunately we get older not younger. However, what makes our birthday exciting is the anticipation of all the gifts we are going to receive. In the same way God gives every individual gifts according to his will. You and me- we all receive gifts from God for the purpose of witnessing to others about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The gifts function as a compass, directing every individual to where God wants them to ministry. In God’s great power and majesty, it is not necessary for God to need human help in His mission of reaching the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. However, because God wants us to experience him more through helping others, God gives every individual gifts, that we can use to enhance our personal experience with him and at the same time, through those gifts, minister and bring the story of Jesus’ love, mercy and saving grace to the world. Friends, today, God invites you to seek Him that He may show you and reveal to you the spiritual gifts he has for you. Only through a personal relationship, devoted prayer and reading of the scriptures will we be able to discover the abundance of blessings God has prepared for us.

- **What spiritual gifts has God blessed you with? (Example: music, teaching, preaching, helping or praying)**
- **How can you use your skills and talents for the glory of God?**

Day 20- Tuesday 20th of June: “S.O.S”

Suggested Readings: Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-21; Revelation 19:10

“Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets.”

(Hebrews 1:1)

In the beginning God created everything perfect, everything that He created served a deliberate purpose. The sun, the moon, the trees, the flowers, the waters and all living creatures were created and into a perfect peaceful and harmonized environment, and God saw that everything was good. However, something was missing, the crowning piece of His creation was missing, that been, humans. So God personally created humanity, He stooped down to our level and personally created us, and God reflected on His creation and He saw that it was very good, God pursued and dwelled among His creation at a personal and intimate level (Genesis 1:31).

However, humanity’s sin (Genesis 3) ended the face-to-face communication between God and humanity. But God developed other ways in communicating with us, you see God is not a God whom stands still and lets things and time pass by, instead God is a lovable God that even when humanity don’t want to seek God, God seeks humanity. God, in his love for you and me always finds ways in communicating messages of encouragement, warning and reproof to us. He does this through His prophets. In a world with so much suffering, pain and death, it is evident that this world needs help, this world is in a S.O.S mode, seeking help and that help comes from God through His prophets. The Bible reveals the messages of hope that were foretold by the Prophets, messages to encourage us but also messages of warning of future events. God has bestowed the gift of prophecy to certain people so that we may know God’s workings for humanity. Peter said, *“for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Peter 1:21)

- **Can you think of any prophets in the Bible and their messages to us today?**
- **Read Isaiah 8:20, how do we know a prophet is speaking truth?**

Day 14- Wednesday 21th of June: “Delight of the Heart”

Suggested Readings: Exodus 20:1-17; John 15:7-10; Romans 8:3-4; Psalms 19:7.

“I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart”
(Psalm 40:7)

The great principles of God’s law are expressed on God’s law and exemplified in the life of Jesus. The law of God in our lives should not be viewed as a burden but instead a light that guides our path. They express God’s love and will for our lives. The law expresses God’s concern for every individual. The Psalmist writes:

*Teach me your decrees, O LORD;
I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions;
I will put them into practice with all my heart. Make me walk along the path of your
commands,
for that is where my happiness is found.
Give me an eagerness for your laws
rather than a love for money!
Turn my eyes from worthless things,
and give me life through your word
Reassure me of your promise,
made to those who fear you’ Help me abandon my shameful ways;
for your regulations are good.
I long to obey your commandments!
Renew my life with your goodness.*

Friends, blessed is the person who walks in the law of the Lord, whose delight is in the law of the Lord.

- **How do you think the world would be without God’s law?**
- **Do you delight and pleasure in keepings God’s law?**

Week's Summary

Humanities greatest need is having a genuine encounter and experience with God.

This week we have looked at how to encounter God through different bible teachings. This included, mainly, how to encounter God through his word. However, we also touched on how to experience God through God's teaching of the Remnant, unity in the body of Christ, Baptism, Lord's Supper, God's spiritual gifts, the gift of prophecy and the law of God. It is my prayer that you will continue to seek God with all your heart, mind and strength.

Many Blessings.