

Draw Near to God

Psalm 73:28

Often we have heard the admonition, “Draw near to God”. But just what is it like to draw near to God? What does it mean to draw near to God? What is it like?

Suppose a person shuts himself up in a room by himself for the purpose of drawing near to God. He spends a lot of time praying, meditating, fasting, studying the Holy Bible, what good will it do, or what will it be like drawing near to God? Here are some of the things that I have learned during the time I wanted to draw near to God.

1. Such spiritual exercises do not remove temptations to sin. A person who wants to cleanse himself of sin, must follow Jesus’ admonition to “deny himself” (Mark 8:34). If Jesus were speaking modern English, perhaps he would have said, “Discipline yourself”. If a person wants to draw near to God, the first thing he will need to do, is discipline him/herself. Just as an athlete wins by disciplining him/herself, so we can win in life by disciplining ourselves. If we admire an athlete who disciplines him/herself, we condemn ourselves if we do not discipline ourselves.
2. When we draw near to God, the enemy—the devil—Satan, will throw every stumbling block he can before us.
 - a. Some of those stumbling blocks will be our closest friends coming to us and telling us we are too fanatical or crazy or wasting our time.
 - b. Evil thoughts will come into our minds even while we are praying to God. This is the work of the devil. If evil thoughts come into your mind in a time of prayer, you must remind yourself that this is the work of the devil; those evil thoughts did not necessarily originate with you.
 - c. A thousand thoughts of “things I’ve got to do” will come into your mind. This too is a trick of the devil.
 - d. There will be desires for food, sleep, companionship, rest, pleasure, etc. These also are temptations that the devil is putting before you. Are these things legitimate? Yes, but these are the same things that athletes have to deny themselves in order to win.
 - e. With some people, the devil will put thoughts into their minds such as: “Now I am becoming so holy; there are few people on the face of the earth who are as good as I am”. The name of this sin is: Pride—which the Bible declares is a stench in God’s nostrils.
3. This is what it will be like: While in a place of drawing near to God, thoughts will come into a person’s mind about some very minor failing/shortcoming/sin. Ordinarily it may look very minor, but while we are in the presence of God, it will seem like a horrible monster. After all, big sins always started out as small sins, just as a murder may start out with jealousy or hatred, or a raging fire started with one match stick. When that happens, you will know that you are on the right track. Is this not the reason that the apostle Paul, at the end of his life, wrote these words: “I am the chief of sinners”. Paul, himself, walked in the very presence of God, and in that place, the most minute sins looks like a horrible monster.

All these things together constitute what is sometimes called “spiritual warfare”. This warfare is primarily against our own human nature. It is only after we have done this warfare against our own human nature that we will be prepared to do spiritual battle against the forces that are coming against our society.

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High-Level Temptations

The heavenly father has given me to understand that those who walk very closely to him, face levels of temptations that ordinary mortals don't know anything about. Why? Because the enemy, the devil, knows that those who walk very closely to God will do much damage to his (the devil's) kingdom of evil. And it is for this reason that against those people he throws levels of temptations that we could not even imagine.

Example: The enemy knows most of us have already overcome the ordinary temptations, the adulteries, drunkenness, crimes, etc. So, he will come and implant these thoughts in our minds: "Now, I'm more holy, more God-like than the vast number of mankind." The problem with this is, it brings up pride—another sin. Eventually, pride will lead a man to become slack in repulsing other temptations, till before long, one of those temptations will seduce him.

Paul also wrote that the enemy will come to you as "an angel of light". It will look like the most beautiful anointing you have ever seen, but watch it carefully. The false anointing will eventually say something that will expose itself to those who know the one who is The Truth.

If we walk closely with the Lord, we will face temptations constantly. There will be a constant stream of distractions—all for the purpose of side-tracking us from the dedication/commitment we have made to follow the Lord Jesus closely.

Example: God touches a young man's heart in such a way that he wants to do nothing but serve God and rescue the lost souls from their evil ways. We'll call him Thomas. Because this young man has his heart so set on God, he has a successful and prosperous ministry. He becomes well known and good-size crowds come to his meetings. As his ministry grows, so do offerings and prosperity. Many have started out as Thomas did, but later got side-tracked from the truth. They set up ministries in their own names: The Reverend Dr. Thomas Ministries, International. They take the offering of the people and build a ministry headquarters with a large sign: The Thomas Ministry International. Newsletters/magazines flow out of that building with the Thomas name and a glamorous picture of Reverend Thomas on almost every page. Thomas has built a memorial to himself rather than to the God who saved him.

This is what Jesus said, "I came in my father's name, but you did not receive me; if someone else comes in his own name, you will receive him" —John 5:43. Many have gone this route. Notice the next verse: "How can you believe while receiving honor from one another? You are not seeking the honor that comes only from God" —John 5:44.

I visited one such ministry headquarters recently, and in the lobby I noticed many pictures of this "Thomas"; one was a life-size picture—6 feet tall. Also in the lobby, I saw plaques in memory to those who had made donations for that building. Again, our Lord told us to do our charitable contributions in secret —Matthew 6:1-4. In the past 40 years, I have met/heard of numerous ministers/ministries that have gone down this route. May God open the eyes of our understanding —2 Corinthians 1:18.

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