

personally hear God's voice?

The final step to a deeper relationship with God is opening the door to Him. To do that we must intentionally create space for that encounter to occur. Christian author and philosopher Dallas Willard believed this to be essential to our spiritual formation. He considered it to be more than an occasional practice, but rather a part of our everyday lives.

You must arrange your days so that you are experiencing deep contentment, joy and confidence in your everyday life with God.
— Dallas Willard

What can you do to ensure that there is space for a regular encounter with God in your everyday life?

WRAP-UP

When we get caught up in “the Grind” we may fail to make space for an intimate relationship with God to develop. Even though He is always there extending the invitation we let sin block our path. The church of Laodicea had a personal invitation to open the door so that God could come in and develop that relationship. But they had let their pursuit of wealth and an over-rated view of themselves prevent acknowledging their true need for God. The good news is, if we open the door, we can be assured that He will come in to deepen our relationship to Him.

Memory Verse

"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 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- Jot down your typical daily schedule. Is there a place to encounter God (not just “do church”)? What do you need to change so that you can regularly deepen your relationship with Him?

“Intimacy with God”

The Grind- week #5

INTRODUCTION

If we consider ourselves Christian, then we have established a relationship with God. He is our Lord and Savior. But how close is that relationship? All too often we hold God at a distance. Whether from fear or ignorance or unbelief we fail to open the door and allow our loving Heavenly Father access to the deepest part of us. What would it take for us to give God the access he longs for? How do we make space in our lives for an intimate encounter with God?

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Do you tend to have many casual friends or a few close friends?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. God Makes the First Move

Genesis 3:8-9 NLT - 8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Genesis 17:7 NLT - 7 "I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

From the beginning God has made the first move to establish a relationship with us. He walked in the Garden and called to Adam. He pledged Himself to Abraham and his descendants with the offer of an everlasting covenant. What do you think this reveals about the how God feels about the relationship He has with His people? Have you ever

experienced a time when you felt God was calling you into a deeper relationship?

2. What Causes Distance?

Intimacy requires closeness, time together and familiarity. A lack of these can prevent us from developing an intimate relationship with God.

Isaiah 59:2 NLT - 2 It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

Closeness- What does Isaiah 59:2 identify as the chief reason we don't get close enough to God to develop an intimate relationship? Any sin can separate us, but how does the sin of pride, or self-sufficiency, prevent the church of Laodicea from a close relationship with God in Revelation 3? How does falling into the Grind set us on the same course as Laodicea?

Revelation 3:14, 17 NLT - 14 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen--the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation: ... 17 You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

Time together-Another thing that causes distance is substituting "doing church" for actually being with God. We may think all God really wants is for us to show up and do things for Him. In Psalm 50 we see that God is not seeking our sacrifices. What is it He does want from us, and how will He respond? How do you think an attitude of thankfulness helps to foster intimacy?

Psalm 50:7, 9-10, 14-15 NLT - 7 "O my people, listen as I speak. Here are my charges against you, O Israel: I am God, your God! ... 9 But I do not need the bulls from your barns or the goats from your pens. 10 For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. ... 14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High. 15 Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory."

Psalm 40:5 NLT - 5 O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them.

Familiarity- Another thing that may create distance between us and God is not being familiar with His character. Do we really trust that He intends good for us? Psalm 40 recognizes not only what God has done, but what He will do for our good. What causes us to doubt that God can be trusted and how do we overcome this?

3. Inviting God In

Revelation 3:20 NLT - 20 "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.

You may have heard Revelation 3:20 applied as a call to salvation, but it was written to "the church" of Laodicea. What did God reveal had resulted from relying on "the Grind of pursuing wealth" as the Laodiceans source of success? What was God's offer to those who would invite Him in? This was not an offer of salvation but one of a deeper relationship.

God is making a conditional offer in this verse. He doesn't force His way into your life, but He will come in on two conditions. What two things must we do for Him to "come in"? The first condition may be the hardest. There are many voices competing for our ear. To hear God means actively listening for it. What are the ways that you