



UNBLOCKING THE FLOW: EXPERIENCING GOD'S PRESENCE IN LISTENING PRAYER

Some “Biblical basis” references or examples for experiencing God’s presence as a living Person in prayer.

On listening:

- There are so many Scriptures!! Many times the English translation affects our understanding, so we don’t see them all. This is just a few.
- **Listening is often commanded:** In the key Old Testament Scripture, the Sh’ma, “Hear O Israel...” In the New Testament Jesus often said: “Let the one who has ears...hear...”
- “**Obey**” in Hebrew is the same word! A primary meaning is to “heed, or listen.” *To obey (sh’ma) is better than sacrifice; paying attention/to listen is better than the fat of rams.* 1 Sam 15:22
- Jesus **promised:** “My sheep hear my voice...” John 10:27
- The Holy Spirit will remind us of all Jesus communicated, (and wanted to — but they weren’t ready). John 14:26, 15:26 (— **revealing** Jesus to us. Also, John 16:13-14.)
- The **example** of Jesus. John 15:15 The example of the Holy Spirit. John 16:13

Other spiritual senses or perception of God:

- We intuitively understand that good “listening” is not simply “hearing,” nor exclusively receiving words, messages or symbols — though we are all thankful for texting! Good communication, listening, is noticing *all* of another person’s cues, including nonverbal things such as movement and posture, emotion, tone of communicating, expression, and other subtleties.
- “**Presence**” in Hebrew is literally “face.” Whether “his face shining upon us,” or “his presence going with us.”
- “**Know**” in original languages almost always means a *personal* knowledge, rather than “to know *about*” — as in English we tend to understand, or “hear.”
- Sight: Ephesians 1:18: “I ask that the eyes of your hearts be enlightened.” Num. 6:25 God’s face shines upon us.
- Taste: Psalm 34:8 “Taste and see...”
- Touch, movement: Rev. 1:17 “he placed his right hand on me.” Lev. 25:11. “I will walk among you, and I will be your God and you will be my people.”
- Personal characteristics: Expect the Lord’s true revelation of his presence to display the fruit of the Spirit – kindness, patience, gentleness, love etc. Gal. 5:22, and other characteristics of God as seen in the whole of Scripture. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the exact representation of his being. Col. 1:15

On interacting with his glad **personal presence** in prayer:

- We are made in the image of God for **personal interaction** with Him. Gen. 1.
- For this, Jesus endured the cross and made atonement — to **restore** our ability to interact personally with God. Heb. 12:2. “For the **joy** set before him...” Also Is. 53:11.
- Jesus is the image of the invisible God, **revealing** the Father, and his heart. (Colossians 1:15).
- The Holy Spirit has been outpoured and **reveals** Christ to us (John 14-16 references, above.)
- The **example** of all those who walked in listening to and interacting with God, Old Testament, New (including post- resurrection), and since, in church history — in a very personal way.

- “We have the mind of Christ.” 1 Cor. 2:16. Not just thinking *about* God but thinking **with** God.
- Regarding perceiving his living presence in a memory place: He is **I AM** — unlimited by space and time. The same yesterday, today and forever. Heb. 13:8

On being **with us** always:

- Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel**" (which means, God with us). Matt. 1:23
- Jesus said that He and the Father will come and make their **home** in our hearts. John 14:23
- Jesus said that God will send the Holy Spirit to us to come **alongside** and advocate for us. John 14:26
- And Jesus said very clearly that He will **never leave us** or forsake us, that He will abide with us always and desires to have us abiding with him, too. John 15. Heb. 13:5, etc. OT Deut. 31:6

On the nervous system and interacting with God:

- “The same God who inspired the writing of Scripture also designed the brain.... Since we now know more profoundly how our brains operate, we are more able to cooperate more effectively with the Holy Spirit...” —Michael Sullivant
- “God has created us to be relational beings in relationship with himself and with each other. And to this purpose God has created a big chunk of our brains to serve as the ‘neurological hardware’ for running relationships. I call this part of our brains our relational circuits. We can connect with each other and with God much more easily when these relational circuits are online and strongly active.” --Karl Lehman
- Many ways to activate relational circuits: Music, singing, nature, stillness and calming, activity, eating together, exchanging smiles of joy, feeling that someone is with us and understanding us and our emotion, feeling safe and comfortable and well....etc. Not just appreciation. BUT
- Deliberately feeling appreciation is a *convenient & accessible* option for being intentional.
- It is both a scriptural and brain science fact that listening prayer goes much better and has more impact when we share with other trustworthy people, “one another,” and at some point – preferably live but other times later, or in writing. (Just like counseling or coaching or talking or praying with a friend helps us more than trying to go through something alone
- There are numerous Psalms and other passages of Scripture that fit this general framework.
- Others are blessed and learn when we share our impressions. Plus, other people help you devote the space, grow and practice skills, and stay motivated for learning something new.
- Verbalizing it to someone else helps us understand the *significance* of what we are perceiving and often allows more depth to unfold, for greater personal impact.
- That is why **true Immanuel (Approach) prayer** is a facilitated experience with another person. It requires quite a bit of training and experience to consistently help someone else experience God’s presence, especially to navigate blockages and painful emotions.
- For this reason, trying this on your own in journaling *isn’t* optimal ☹ but it might be helpful for some.
- Please don’t be discouraged, therefore.
- We all have blockages that hinder us from connecting with God — big and small and situational ones. This is really a lifetime project, led by the Holy Spirit.

It is fine and good to want more Scriptural or other support. Search it out, or ask and we can refer you to some additional resources. Receive what you can. ☺



Some potential (solvable) blockages or hindrances to perceiving God's living, fresh presence in prayer:

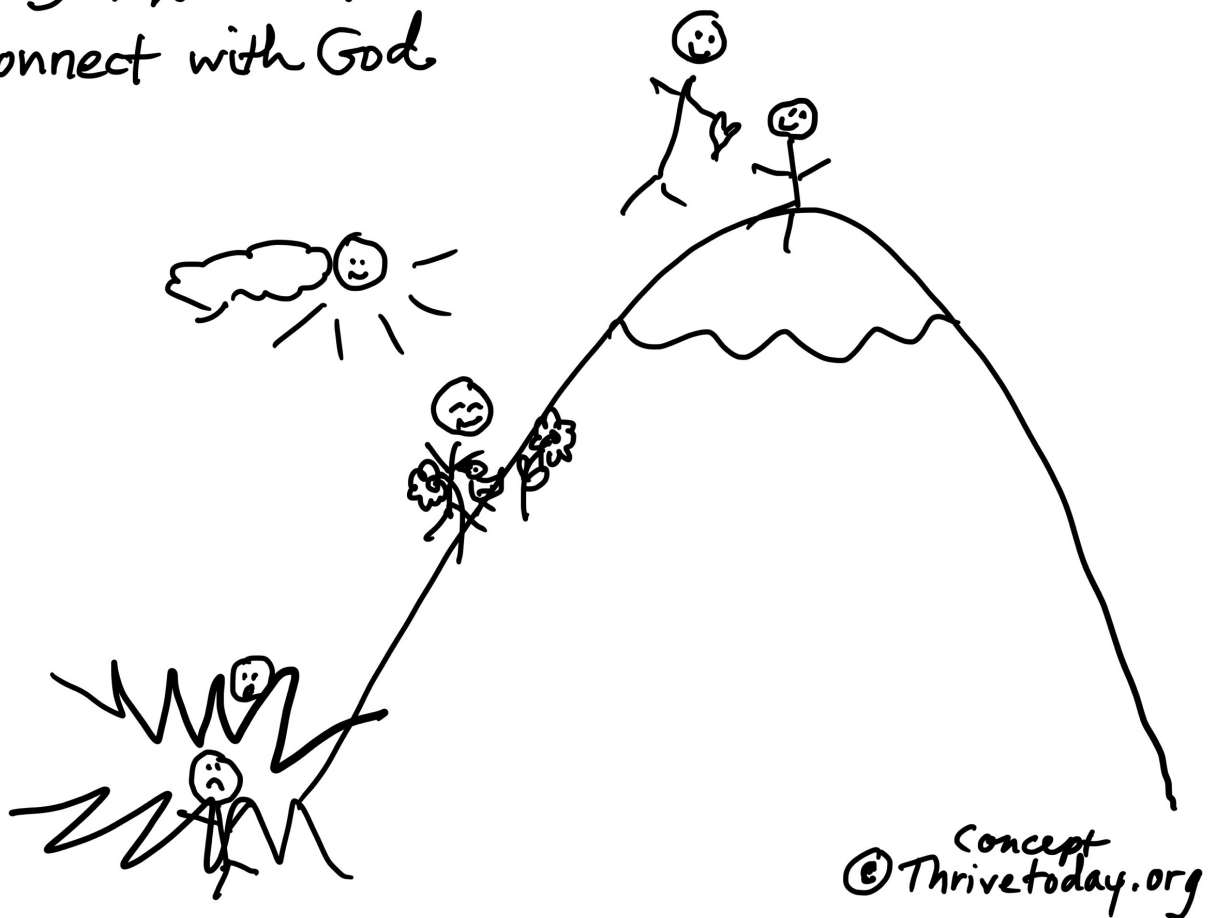
1. Lack of understanding, misunderstandings or misbeliefs.
2. Not expecting a "person," or aware of what to notice; expecting only certain types of communication.
3. Not having role models or mentors; examples to draw upon in our circles or traditions — for these interactions.
4. Emotions — understandable fears, anger/irritation with God or religion, despair, sadness/emotional pain.
5. Needing certain learnable skills or else capacity/support system — need practice, training, endurance, etc.
6. Unhealed sub- or semi-conscious wounding.
7. Nervous system on red alert for some reason.
8. Trying to tune in all by oneself without help.
9. Judging the result too fast without letting it flow freely and then checking for shalom.
10. Not realizing how subtle the manifestations of his presence can be, and so missing them.

Recommended resource for those who want more training: Alivewell.org.

This website has **Journey groups** (weekly listening prayer and Life Model curriculum discussion and support groups; up to 2 years long, some starting February 2023), **Immanuel prayer training courses** (7-10 weeks, some starting **January** 2023), a **FAQs** page, an Immanuel prayer **facilitator list**, and occasional **events** including a new course series (*Transformed by Joy*).

We are familiar with and recommend this ministry. Right brain skills need to be practiced and learned from people rather than books — though those can support our understanding. Note: they call their style of Immanuel prayer "Immanuel encounter."

3 Places to Connect with God



© Concept
Thrivetoday.org

See *Share Immanuel: The Healing Lifestyle* booklet (thrivetoday.org/resources) for a much deeper explanation of today's "mountain" diagram. They have other excellent training resources, as well.

See *The Five Minute Jesus Journal* (Amazon) for further **interactive appreciation** practice.



UNBLOCKING THE FLOW ~

God is always with us, God is always glad to be with us, and God always wants to connect with us. He is the most relational Being there is, and he created us for personal knowledge and interaction with himself and others — even in the way he wired our brains. Since we now know more profoundly how our brains operate, we can cooperate more effectively with the Holy Spirit -- who reveals Christ to us -- who reveals the Father. Below are some suggestions for beginning an interaction with the Lord and attempting to tune in to that living flow of his presence and/or peace (shalom). Starting with an appreciation memory (#1) gives you a “personal parable” and a “canvas” for interaction with God, in addition to the relational perception benefits. If you prefer, you may meditate on the Scriptures in the sidebar or elsewhere and journal on the back, giving the Lord access to your heart, noticing what the Lord wants you to focus on, and asking to experience His love and care as you open your heart and ears before Him.

1. You are invited to start with this page, once you are settled and quieted. You might ask God to hold your concerns and distractions during this time.

“Lord, please help me select a positive, peaceful memory experience to enjoy as we begin this quiet time together — one that will be a blessing to us both.”

- What was happening, who was there, when was this?
- Intentionally and deliberately notice and describe the physical experience, on the inside or outside of your body. What did you see, hear, taste or smell, and feel on your skin?
- Describe the emotions or feelings you had then, or now as you re-experience it.
- What was your favorite part or aspect of that experience? What did you appreciate the most?
- Describe awareness of God you were having then (however faint):
- Then, open your heart to the Lord if you like, welcome him to reveal himself to you further, and **notice** any sense you have of God or Jesus *with you* — in the memory or the present. Describe whatever you next see, sense, feel or simply know — in your heart.

(Continued on the next page.)

OUR THIRST, HIS PRESENCE ~

Psalm 63:1 ☩ You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

Isaiah 55:1-3 ☩ “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See also John 4:13-14; 7:37-39

Matthew 1:23 ☩ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, *God with us*).

(Continued from page one.)

- If you are aware of the Lord, however slightly, see if you can notice where his attention is focused. What is his feeling toward you? Anything else you notice about him? Enjoy the moment.

- Any idea why the Lord may have brought this memory up right now? Why it is significant for you?

- Now, if you feel like it, express your gratitude directly to him for the gift this experience was to you. Writing is optional.

- If you can, notice how he is receiving your gratitude, whether verbally or nonverbally.

2. Whether or not you feel aware of the Lord's living presence in any way, you may continue to interact with the Lord like this:

*"Lord, I know it's **true** that you are with us always, and I open my heart to you. Please help me perceive your presence with me in this memory place (or current moment) **even more clearly**."* Then, again describe (or draw) whatever flows into your heart that you see, sense, feel or know about him.

You may converse freely with the Lord as it flows, or simply be together. Ask him for more help if needed (see below — choose one that resonates.) Take breaths and breaks — knowing that you can still stay connected to your experience on some level, even during these.

Lord, I need more help with perceiving the flow of your presence.

Lord, I thirst for more of you. Help me know more of your mind and tender heart toward me.

Holy Spirit, please reveal something of how Jesus is with me — the living image of the Father.

Lord, what's in the way? What's my next step forward to cooperate with you? (If anything comes to mind.)

Lord, I am feeling _____. Show me somehow that you see and hear me.

3. “Lord, as I think about my gratitude memory from the first page, anything else you want me to know that would give me more peace?”

Then **pause, notice** something coming, and then try to start **writing** thoughts or images that just feel kind of right or true, and let it keep flowing, without judging. (You will discern later):

4. To close this prayer encounter, you may express anything else you want to say to the Lord or any additional gratitude. Remaining mindful of him receiving it. It may be helpful to return to your positive memory place or strongest sense of connection with the Lord for this.

(Wrap up --)

5. What was today’s message, demo *and/or* this exercise in gratitude and noticing God’s living presence like for you? How did it impact you? What invitation do you sense from the Lord? Any next steps you desire?

6. It’s very common for this to be challenging — especially if it was new, different, seemingly unfruitful, etc. What is true that could help you feel more peace? What was good from it? (If you managed 10 seconds of appreciation, this is a win! Know also that your skills and capacity to be aware of God’s personal presence will grow gradually, with practice and support.)

7. Think or pray about what aspects from this journaling time God may be prompting you to *remember* and/or to *share* with someone (who feels trustworthy.) This step will help you get more out of it.