

Draw Near to God: The Scriptures (Part 6)

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Okay, please open up your Bibles to James 4:8. This has been our springboard text. This has been the truth from which this series has come from. James 4:8. Just the first part of this verse: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (incomplete thought) That is the truth that this series is being derived from. We've looked at numerous aspects of this truth. So draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Now, we've talked about a lot of different aspects of this. But you know, God has given us some very specific means for us to use in drawing near to Him. And that's what the rest of this series is going to be taken up with. Now, we can draw near to Him obviously. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I." So if you come to the gatherings, there is a sense of drawing near. That's just biblical. We'll look at that. Prayer, obviously. Fasting. I think there's aspects of drawing near to Him through obedience which Scripture seems to make plain. I think there's an aspect to drawing near to Him even in evangelism.

But of course, if we know our systematic theologies, we know where they always start. And you know, they don't start with God. And there's a reason they don't start with God. They start with Scripture because it's in Scripture where we find our God. And that's where I want to take us. Basically today is this, "Draw Near to God: The Scriptures."

But I think one of the things that we want to recognize is this: This is not a magic book. This is not to be treated like the Catholics treat their relics. And I know what I'm talking about here because even as a nominal Catholic, when I was in college, I was just living a wild life, a party life, but if you came to the houses I lived in, what you would find is I had a Bible over on my dresser. Oh, it was collecting dust. I had to wipe the dust off of it. I didn't read it. I'd look at Revelation once in a while, and it was all cryptic and weird. But the reality is why did I set that thing there? Well, anybody that ever saw an old vampire movie, you know how they use the cross or the Bible, you know, it warded off the evil. That's basically why I had it. I had it for superstitious reasons.

And look, I don't want anybody to have a false idea as much as I'm going to talk about drawing near to God in this book. There's a text that jumps out at me. I go through the Psalms very and I just recently went through Psalm 18. Listen, this is a verse or two from Psalm 18. "With the merciful, You show Yourself merciful." This is speaking of God. "With the merciful, You show Yourself merciful. With the blameless man, You show Yourself blameless. With the purified, You show Yourself pure. And with the crooked, You make Yourself seem tortuous." What's the truth there? The truth is this: God very clearly shows Himself to each of us individually according to our own character and our own manner of approaching Him. And so, just remember this, to this man, God says, I will look: humble, contrite, and trembles at My Word. It's not just enough to have the book. We need the book to find Him. That's what we're going to look at today. But remember, God is a God who shows Himself to each individual according to the character of that individual.

So, I want to talk about this book. How does it fit? How do we find God? Well, I think one of the things that we need to start with is: What is man's problem? What happened to man? Let's just think for a second. You go back there into the beginning and man sins. And you know what happened. Here comes God walking in the cool of the day. And it says Adam heard Him. Now one of the reasons I always refer to that text as I think that that is how God communed with Adam, is because what's interesting is Adam didn't see Him, Adam heard Him. And it must have been something he was familiar with because he didn't think it was a dinosaur or a lion. He recognized it was the Lord. And you know, it says he hid himself from the presence.

Well, think about it. Draw near to God. Running away from His presence. That's opposite. That's a contrast there. Man's running away. You know what we have now? Draw near to God. Do you know what that tells me? God wants us to find Him. God wants to be found! But not only did he hide from the presence, then he gets put out of the garden.

But then you know, you get this interesting statement about Cain. Have you ever read that after he kills his brother and the whole thing happens and this mark is put on him? You know what it says? I'm going to read it to you exactly as it comes from the ESV. "Cain went away from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod." Now you know, again, you want to look at things in Scripture. Nod. He went and settled in Nod. Do you know what Nod means? Somebody's going to shake their head, right? It means "wandering." It means "aimless." Here's a picture. This is so demonstrative of mankind. Wandering away. The place of aimlessness. Away from the presence of God. That is in stark contrast to draw near.

But here's the thing, where? Where? If you told me, over in Mesopotamia there's a Garden of Eden. That's where you find God. That's where He walks in the cool of the day. Okay, I have some idea about that. I've been over to the Middle East. I've got some idea. You get on an airplane. You fly over there. Or if somebody said He's in a temple in Jerusalem. And I haven't been to Israel, but I've been close and I have some idea about where that is, how you get there. If somebody said that God resides in the Catholic church. Okay, we've got San Fernando or whatever downtown. People have that idea. You go to a certain place. Is it a temple? Is it a garden?

Listen, you say, draw near to God. But wait, where is God? Well, I can't ascend to Heaven if there's some manifestation of Him there. And yet, the Scripture says, don't we have this idea about God's omnipresence? Isn't that strange? That if God is everywhere, isn't God right here? Isn't God right where I am? How do I draw near to Him? Am I not already near to Him? Apparently not.

I mean, look, when it comes to spatially or geographically searching for things, we've got an idea. If you're 2,000 feet above me - my son just went out and climbed mountains with Zach and some other guys. And if some guy calls me and says, hey, draw near to where I am. Where are you? Well, I'm up here on this ledge. Well, even though it may be difficult to get there, I've got some idea. Draw near. I've got an idea. Well, I've got to take that over there and that path, I've got to get up there, or I've got to scale this wall or ropes and whatever... when we're talking like that. But you're talking about an invisible God that I have to draw near to. Does that even compute? How do we do that? How do we get any nearer?

And one of the things that we definitely have to put out of our mind is get rid of the idea of a place. Now, I know you may have a place where you pray more than any other. I know you

may have places that are special to you. I know you may have places where God has manifested Himself to you in special ways and it makes that place special. But the reality is that we've got to get away from that mindset. I know, even Old Testament Israel, they had a temple, they had a tabernacle. There was a place where God was. Today, you know, people make pilgrimages to Mecca, or Catholics make pilgrimages to places where the Mary apparition [is].

We've got to get away from that mindset. Jesus tells us to get away from it. The woman said to Him - and you know what woman this is - the woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive You're a prophet." Now why would she think that? Well, because He just said: You're right. You don't have a husband. You've been married five times. Ooh, this guy knows all about me. I think He's a prophet. Yeah, He's somebody greater than a prophet. More than a prophet definitely. "Our fathers worshiped here." See, that is the mindset of people. Our fathers worshiped here. You Jews, you worship over there. Well, which is it? "You say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her: Woman, it's not like that. "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem..."

Where is it that we find God? How do we approach? Now see, I know you know this. But this is really essential that we think about it. Listen to this, "Let us draw near..." This is coming from Scripture. We're talking about drawing near to God. "Let us draw near with a true heart." That's Hebrews 10.

Or this, in Isaiah, "This people draw near..." There it is. Drawing near to God. Here's the concept again. "This people draw near to Me..." like this: "with their mouth. They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." You see, the idea of drawing near, but they're not near. They're actually far. Why are they far? Because inside, you see, that's where we approach God. We approach God in the mind. We approach God in the inner man. We approach God at the heart level.

Or this, Jeremiah 24, "I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord. They shall be My people. I will be their God. And they shall (here it is) return to Me." That's drawing near to God. "To Me." They will return "to Me." That means they come near. That means they draw near. That means they seek Me out. How will they do that? "...With their whole heart." They'll return to Me with their whole heart. It's the heart of the man.

Or we read this. When we even think about drawing near to God, what for? Communion. Fellowship. The idea is we are experiencing His love and we are loving Him. But you know when it comes to love and that closeness, there's no true closeness without love - not in any relationship. And yet, here's the thing, God wants us to love Him how? With all our heart, mind, soul. You see, it's the inner part of the man. Yes, and you've got some of the synoptics that add "strength." But the reality is we're talking the inside.

Or think about this. "Set your minds..." You know this from Colossians 3. "Set your minds on things above..." Do you see what happens? I can't go to Heaven, but what Scripture tells me is to take my mind and put it there. Have you ever thought about that? Where do we draw near to God? In here. That's where it happens. You don't have to be at the temple, in the cathedral, where Mary appeared somewhere, where Mohammed did some certain thing. We don't have to go to those places. It's not Mount Sinai. We don't have to go back and find the Garden of Eden somewhere.

Now look, I know you know this, but this is absolutely essential because when we're thinking about drawing near to God, you need to recognize, this happens here. And that's strategic. That's important when it comes to this book. Very important. We've got to get rid of the wrong thinking.

So, brethren, what really happened to man when he fell? You see, this is where we draw close. This is where we draw near, but what happened up here when man fell? Let me give you one of the greatest descriptions in all of Scripture as to what happened up here when man fell. And we came through it not too long ago in Ephesians 4. And you remember those words. "This I say to you and testify in the Lord that you no longer walk as the Gentiles walk..." In the what? The futility of the mind. You see, Gentile is basically a description of fallen man. It's lost man, but that's not all. In the futility of the mind, they're darkened in their understanding. See, it's the mind. It's the understanding.

But more than that, listen to this. "...Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." Now, we better camp there for a second because this is crucial. What does alienated mean? It doesn't mean near. It doesn't mean good relationship. It doesn't mean close. Alienated. From the life of God. That's distance. That's separation. How? Because of ignorance that is in them. Don't miss that. What is the ignorance? What are they ignorant of? They don't know God. Brethren, I'll tell you this, when Scripture talks about knowing God, that has everything to do with drawing near to Him. Nobody draws near to a God they don't know.

Ignorance. Do you know what Hebrews says? That they who draw near to God - again, there's our concept, drawing near to God - they must believe... the ESV says, "that He exists." But the word is basically "that He is." But brethren, we need to recognize that for what it is. It's not just believing in God. It's not believing in some distortion or something we've dreamed up in our imagination. Do you realize when it says you must believe that He is, what it means is you must believe that He is who He is. You must have some idea. Listen, even the simplest child who truly believes knows something. They have some knowledge. They have some understanding. Isn't that what Paul's telling Timothy? That even as a child, the Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation? But see, there has to be wisdom. There has to be knowledge. There has to be an attainment to this thing. Man is ignorant.

And listen, so Christ goes on with the woman at the well. You know this. You know what He says to her? After He says, "No, it's not on that mountain and it's not in Jerusalem." He says, "Woman, you worship what you do not know." That's always the issue. You don't know. However, God is looking for somebody to draw near, somebody to come worship Him, somebody to bow down before Him. And you know what He's looking for? Spirit - "what is born of the flesh is flesh; what is born of the Spirit is spirit." Maybe Thayer's Lexicon can help us here because it basically says it's that part of the man that thinks, that desires. It's the inside. It's the affections. It's the feelings. It's the mind. It's the thoughts. But not just anything that we dream up, it's spirit and truth. And you don't know anything about this God aside from this book. That is the reality.

You could say, what about creation? Yeah, but what about it? You go to Romans 1, Paul's not congratulating man because he's found God in nature. He's saying the opposite. Man has enough that he doesn't have any excuse out there, but he doesn't find Him. Where we find the salvation, where we find the Christ, it's here. It's in this book.

Brethren, there's no knowledge of God apart from what we have in this book. This is where our Bibles are so essential in drawing near. Listen to Paul. He tells us exactly how it is. He says there as he's working through that well known 1 Corinthians 1. He says this: In the wisdom of God, man has never come to know God through wisdom. He's never managed in his own thinking, his own thoughts, his own machinations, his own theories and opinions, he's never known in his own philosophy - philosophy: just a love of earthly wisdom and knowledge. Through the wisdom of God, man through wisdom never finds Him.

See, you know what we need? We need God to step down and condescend to reveal Himself to us. And that's what happens here. That's what happens in this book. Our problem as Jesus said, "No one has ascended to heaven." We haven't gone up there. God is beyond us. God is outside. Yes, He's close, but there's a sense that He's distant. That's how Jesus talked to Nicodemus. He says nobody's ascended to heaven. That's even how Paul talks in Romans 10. Nobody's ascended there. Nobody should talk about ascending there. The reality is that no one has seen God. We deal with an invisible God. He's hidden away in inapproachable light out there in the eternities.

And the trouble with man is no one's ever seen God. That's John 1:18. "No one's ever seen God." We haven't seen Him. That's the trouble. No man has been there. He's too far away. Nobody's scaled the heights.

And you know what happens? Paul comes along - what a perfect example - Athens. Timothy, Silas? Stay back here. Stay back in Berea. I've got to go on. There's persecution. They sent Paul on. Jumps on a ship, goes down. Athens. Do you know what Athens was? Plato. Socrates. Aristotle. Alexander the Great. I mean, you want to talk about where wisdom is. And that's what they say, they're always learning some new thing there. Oh, here's this guy. What's this babbler saying? He's teaching this new thing. Let's take him to the Areopagus. Okay, he gets there. Paul says you know what? I've been walking around your city for a few days. And you know what I've seen? I see these temples. You guys have a temple to everybody! A temple to this god, this god, this god. Seems like you're not very satisfied. You're always searching.

He said, but you know what? I found something that I found very interesting, and I want to tell you about it. You guys have a temple over there. You know that one? You have an inscription written above it. "To the unknown god..." He said, "Yep, you're exactly right." And he said you know what? You sense it, don't you? You know that there is a God that you missed in all this. You have some sense that there is the God - the Almighty God - behind all of this. And you know we all have that idea because eternity's written on our heart and our own conscience is bearing witness to it. We know something about this. The reality is Paul says this, this God who you worship ignorantly - unknown - you don't know Him. You built a temple to Him. You've got some idea that He's there. I want to tell you about Him. "Him I declare to you."

And you know what it says there in Acts 17? It says these words, listen, "He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him, yet He's actually not far from each one of us." He's unknown and therefore, not found. No matter how close He may be to us, they couldn't find Him. He's close. Paul says it. He's close to you. But you haven't found Him. He's unknown. You worship

Him ignorantly. You don't know who He is. But I'm here to tell you about Him. "Him I'm declaring to you."

Why is he declaring this God to them? Because there is no way to find Him apart from this method. You say what method? Preaching. And what do you preach? Preach the Word in season and out of season. You see what he's doing? He's basically saying this God is unknown to you. You don't know who He is. But I'm here bringing the method that you need to find Him. Oh, He's close to you, but no matter how close He's been to you, you haven't found Him. He's still unknown to you. And brethren, we have to find God as He is. Those who would draw near to Him need to believe that He is. He is as He is.

And you think of this, men have always sought for God. They have some sense of God. They're seeking for God. Oh, people try the occult. Saul did that. People dry drugs. They try their own reason, their own logic. I was watching some documentary on our national parks and there was a guy out in I think it was Yosemite back in the 1800's. And it was just like he was trying to find God in nature. People are trying to find God everywhere. Through science - the cosmonaut. Do you remember? The Russian? He came back from outer space. Do you remember his famous words? He said he flew out there and he didn't find God. People look for God through the telescope.

But you know what the main way is? You know what it is. It's through religion. I mean, it doesn't matter, you can go back all the way through the history of mankind, it doesn't matter what country you go to, it doesn't matter how much men try to be atheists, people have their religions. They're all over. Conscience just bears witness.

And you look around and you know what happens? Men just spout their opinions. Oh, men are so bold, so brash. They've got all sorts of things to say. But man never comes to an experience of the true and living God. Why? Because the world doesn't know Him through wisdom. That's what Scripture says, not through its own wisdom. They'll never find Him. They never do find Him.

So, brethren, what we need to recognize is this. Look, man is weak. We're fallen. We're backward. We're finite. We're limited. We just need to admit it. We can't find God on our own. The thing that we have to have is we have to have God just graciously reveal Himself, be pleased to reveal Himself to us. And that's exactly what He's done. I don't know what you think about this book, but the primary thing that this book is is revelation. It is God revealing Himself so that He may be found. If you would ever draw near to Him, it's got to be through a God who is known. There is undoubtedly this teaching in Scripture that alienation and ignorance of this God go together. That is what Paul is saying to the Athenians. He's unknown. You worship Him ignorantly. Let me declare Him to you. Why? So that they may find Him. So that they may draw near to Him.

The reality is that you think about it. What's the deal with Israel? What's the deal with all the wanderings of Israel in Scripture? Well, it's got to do with this, it's got to do with us coming to know who God is. Craig was talking about what about the Ten Commandments? What about the Ten Commandments? I'll tell you this, the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic Law, you know the great application they have to our lives is they help us to know who this God is. This is what Judges is about. This is what God's dealings with the prophets is about, the kings, the psalms. It's all that way.

And then the thing is, the glory is that something shines even brighter in this book than just all these ordeals. What happens? In Hebrews 1, we're told this, that at such-and-such times and places, God spoke to our fathers by way of what? The prophets. But in these last days, something else has happened. God has spoken to us by way of His Son. And see, that's the thing. He says to Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, you don't know My Father either." You're a teacher in Israel and you don't know the most basic things. But He says, you know what? I've been there. I came from Him. Man has never seen Him, but the only God, the only Son of God, He that is in the Father's bosom and at the Father's side, He declares Him.

You see what happens is the Son has come and the Son has spoken. And the Son has told us about His Father. Not only that, the Son reveals, He declares the Father. "Show us the Father and it suffices." "Philip, have I been so long with you and you don't recognize who I am? If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." Brethren, the thing is, who is this Christ who reveals the Father? You don't find out about Him looking at the rocks, looking at the stars. He's in here. If you're going to know Him, He's in here. If you're going to know what He declares about God, you find it in here. If you're going to come to any understanding whatsoever, that's it, brethren, that's the message. God is to be known through a Person, but that Person by which He is known is declared to you in a book. Only here. There's no other.

Brethren, you prize this book. Our path to God is here. It's not out there. It's not in what they publish at the newsstand. It's not what they publish on social media. It's not there. This is it. If we're going to draw close to God, draw near to Him, this is it.

And you know what Jesus said. You search the Scriptures, you think that in them you find eternal life, but they declare Me, they speak about Me. You're going to find out about Me. They bear witness. Scripture bears witness to Christ. Christ bears witness to the Father. It's the only way. It's the only way.

Man can't know God by his own striving because no man's been there. No man's ascended to glory. Christ tabernacled amongst us for a reason. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." And then you go down, "The Word became flesh and He dwelt among us." He tabernacled among us. Here's the one and only way of knowing God. There's no other way. The Son declares Him. Are you grasping all this? We have to grasp this. Man's problem - listen, alienated from God. Alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Man's problem? He doesn't know God. Man's ignorant. God is unknown to him.

And you know what? As I was thinking through this whole thought process of what to bring up with you, I got to thinking about this. I find this very interesting. Moses. See, Moses is saying, Lord, I want to draw near to You. I really want to draw near. I want to see Your glory. Notice what God does. God doesn't say: Well, Moses, I'm going to blow up this mountain over here. Or watch me drain the Pacific Ocean. He doesn't do that. You know what He does? He comes near and He proclaims His name. That's exactly what it says. He proclaims His name. He says, "I am the Lord." "I am Yahweh." "I AM." That's what He says. Twice, "The Lord, the Lord." And then He says, "A God merciful, gracious, slow to anger..." Do you see what He's doing? Do you want to know Me? Do you want to see My glory? Here's who I am. That's what this book is about. That's what this book reveals to us. It's His name. We come to Scripture as revelation from God. It's revelation from God that is about God meant to show us the glory of

God. It's God's self-revelation. This is a door to approaching Him and coming out of the ignorance that keeps us alienated.

And you recognize what's happening. There's an objective revelation in that book separate from my mind. And I need what's in there to be in here so that I can worship Him from here. But the thing is, there is an objective reality about a God. Do you realize God has thoughts about Himself in this book that I don't have and I don't know. And I go to this book so that He, having His thoughts, His self-revelation, His ideas about who He is, get projected into my eyeballs and then into my brain by going into this book. There is an objective reality, and objective truth, an objective existence of God apart from anything that I may believe. We don't read Scripture simply for some subjective experience. We read to discover who this objective reality is. God exists. He has insights. He has understanding that I don't have. And you see, this is what Scripture's saying, if you would approach Him, if you would draw near to Him, you must believe that He is. He says, "I AM THAT I AM." We need to believe He is who He is.

And listen, it doesn't mean you have to master this book in its entirety. But I'll tell you this, like I said before, not even the simplest child, they have to be made wise unto salvation through the Scripture. There has to be some revelation from here or there's no finding Him. That's the reality.

"Let the one who boasts boast in this..." This is what God says in Jeremiah. "...That He understands and knows Me. I am the Lord." You want to know who I am? "I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, righteousness." You see, He begins to say who He is. You want to boast? This is how we find Him.

And here's the thing, okay, we have to open this book and begin reading. But I would say this, brothers and sisters, don't be passive readers. You say what do you mean? There's a way you can open up this book and you can just begin reading. And you just read it. You read a chapter or two or three or eight and you close up your Bible. And you didn't really ask any questions of what you were reading. You weren't trying to solve any problems. You weren't asking: what is being said here? What am I supposed to be learning? What does this tell me about God? Brethren, one of the ways that you transition from being a passive reader of Scripture to being active is you actually start looking for things. You know what? That's just a reality. I recognize this in preaching oftentimes asking you a question. You know what happens when I ask you a question? Boom! Your minds kick in. I know that's a very effective way to teach. That's a very effective way to read your Bibles.

Don't just be satisfied that you read something and it's like what? That doesn't make sense to me. It's like here comes the centurion and he wants to see his son saved. Well, he already believes that Jesus can do it. That's why he's writing to Him. And yet Jesus looks around and He says, "Unless you see signs, you won't believe." See, I scratch my head. I say Jesus, why are You saying that? Because he obviously had enough faith to come over here. And then if you found such fault with it, why did You cure him? I look at different things.

We need to be asking questions all the time. Don't just read across these things. Who is God? Who is the Father? Who is the Son? Who is the Holy Spirit? I was telling Craig the other day that I have half a mind just to preach through some of the difficult texts in John's Gospel. But I said, I didn't want to go there because Jeff is preaching through it. And I thought maybe later. Maybe later I'll deal with it. There's so many difficult things. But see, we have to stop and

we have to say: Hm... what is this saying? What does this mean? What is this? Brethren, ask questions. Don't just mindlessly read. If you read across things that seem problematic, then stop and look at it. Examine it. Study it. Ask questions about it.

You know, one of the things that happened as a young believer, I would purposely go to my Bible and I would begin reading portions. Like I told somebody recently: Brother, you're planting a church. I said what you need to do is go start reading in Matthew 1:1, read all the way through the end of Revelation, and look for every single passage that has to do with something that tells you how the church should function, what the church should be about, what the early Christians did. You know what? When you start reading the Bible like that like you're specifically looking for that thing, and you're marking it wherever you find it, see, all of a sudden you've turned from a passive reader into a very active reader. You're looking for something.

And what you want to look for is what is God telling you? You don't want to be the kind of person - listen, God looks to the person who trembles at His Word. Not to the person who always has his opinion and is trying to read his own idea into the Scripture about what it means. It's a person who's honest who looks at sentences and paragraphs and wants to know: what is God saying here? Even if it doesn't fit with my system. You've got a lot of people that read the Bible to fit in all in their little system. Don't read that way. Read it and take it at face value. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Try to figure it out. Ask questions.

And I'm not saying ask questions of other people. Ask questions of the text. Try to figure it out. Wrestle through it. You know what Scripture says? It says if you want to find the knowledge of God - you know Scripture talks about finding the knowledge of God - anybody know where it talks about that? It talks about that in Proverbs 2. Listen to what it says: "If you seek it like silver and search for it as hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Brethren, the same way that you would look for silver or for treasure, you need to look for the knowledge of God. Ask yourself questions.

Here's the thing, the promise that you have is that as you seek God, God will seek you. Can I tell you something? Christians - many Christians - throughout the whole history of God's people walking upon this earth, there have been many who have found God in very unusual and very special ways. In fact, I think every true child of God can talk about times when the Spirit of God has shed abroad in their heart the love of God by way of the Spirit. The Spirit has borne witness, joy unspeakable and full of glory. Listen, you won't find a Christian who has had tremendous experiences of finding the presence of God where there has not been truth. Spirit and truth. Thy Word is truth. It's either as Christians are reading the Word, meditating on the Word, memorizing the Word, just praying and contemplating the biblical realities about God.

And I just reached back and I grabbed an example. Brethren, amazing things can happen when you start pondering Scripture, asking questions of Scripture. You abandon this passivity. You form this habit of really thinking: what do these things mean? I mean, just this week, I was pondering Melchizedek. What is it that makes him so unique? It's that he had an indestructible life. See, that's the thing about Christ. He lives forever. It's not because He's from the tribe of Judah. It's because He lives forever. You start really pondering that.

Here you had Jonathan Edwards. We all know that name. He says this, "I rode out into the woods..." And I know I've quoted this before, but bear with me. "I rode out into the woods for my health in 1737. Having alighted from my horse in a retired place as my manner commonly

has been, to walk for (here it is) divine contemplation and prayer. I had a view..." I had a view. Now just think about that. "Beholding the glory of the Lord." That's biblical terminology. 2 Corinthians 3:18 By beholding the glory of the Lord, we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. But how do I behold the glory? Not out there. Yes, I can see glory in the creation. But you behold the glory of the Lord in this book. And see, that's what he was doing. Divine contemplation and prayer. He was thinking. He said "...it came into view." Not with these eyes. He didn't see any apparition. He said, "I had a view that was for me extraordinary of the glory of the Son of God as Mediator."

See, what we don't want to do is miss the drawing close through the riches of the Scripture. And God says this: I will in turn meet you. At your coming to Me, I will draw near to you. What does that look like? It looks like this. What happened? He said, "I had a view of the glory of the Son of God as Mediator between God and man. His wonderful, great, full, pure, sweet grace and love and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The Person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent with an excellency great enough to swallow up all my thoughts, all my conceptions, which continued as near as I can judge about an hour such as to keep me to the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, weeping aloud, I felt an ardency of soul to be what I know not otherwise how to express. I felt myself emptied and annihilated, to lie in the dust and to be full of Christ alone, to love Him with a holy and pure love, to trust Him, live upon Him, serve Him, be perfectly sanctified and made pure with a divine and heavenly purity."

I'll tell you this, we come to God with our minds, with our heart, with our spirit. Affections and feelings, they're part of the spirit. But they're always raised by truth. Spirit and truth. Thy Word is truth. We have to have a mind that turns towards Him. Brethren, we draw near thinking. But just merely in wisdom we never find Him. The Scriptures make us wise. The law of the Lord is perfect. It converts the soul. We have to think about the riches, the power of God that comes forth from a book. To behold, to have in view, to set our gaze upon, behold the glory of the Lord. It means that our thoughts are on who He is. There is a spiritual apprehension. It's cognitive. We have to think. It's an image of God that comes forth from this book that is emblazoned upon our minds. Brethren, God help us, we should want this. To so be asking questions about Scripture and contemplating what does it mean that Christ should be a Mediator. To think on that to the place where like he says, "...Swallowed up his thoughts and his conceptions." That's where we meet God. That's where we draw near to God. It's in here. And it comes from here. There it is. That's what I have to say today. Draw near. The Scriptures - absolutely essential.

Father, I pray, You tell us we don't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I pray that You'd give these brethren a hunger for the Word of God. Lord, an ache for this Word, to find You. Lord, we don't want to be alienated by our ignorance. Help us, Lord. Make Your Word real. Help us to behold wondrous things. I pray, Lord, that this people would be a people of this book. Oh Lord, help us, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.