

Published based on [Encounters of the God Kind](#)

Encounters of the God Kind

Many times I find myself reading in the Psalms, and many times I find “myself” in the Psalms. Their beauty leads me to do what they themselves often recommend. *Selah*. Pause and think about it. Layers and layers of truth and richness. The entire range of human emotions. The entirety of the Psalms including the Psalms of David express a true picture of humanness. Love and hate. Joy and grief. Praise and cursing. Ah, David, a man after God’s own heart, unafraid to feel and express his heart.

One of my favorites is Psalm 42, a Psalm written to describe one’s yearning for God in the middle of distress. The depth and truth of the Psalmist’s longing resonates within my heart.

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?*

The picture is of a mature deer, not a Bambi, a powerfully beautiful animal thirsting, longing for running, moving, living water. And then the Psalmist declares, “God, that is how I long for you! My soul, my inner being, my emotions, long for an encounter with a living God.”

Maybe there are two ways we learn about thirst. One is by natural processes of our humanness. We need water to live and thrive. Secondly, once we experience the power of having our thirst satisfied, we are forevermore dissatisfied with any other experience.

Paralleling that human experience with our spiritual thirst, we are created to know God in an intimate way. We were made to run our spiritual fuel tanks on God-a-nol. Secondly, once we have tasted what it means to have God quench our inner thirst, we can no longer be satisfied with any thing or any experience that falls short of encountering the true living God.

What does it mean to experience a living God? Well, what does life mean? Life must be distinguished from death. Easy, huh? Well the definition of life includes the fact that it is identified by growth, by changes that originate internally. A living God moves, speaks, sees, hears, and touches. Encountering a living God causes us to live, to grow and change internally.

What is going on in the Psalmist’s heart in Psalm 42 as he declares his longing? Is it, at least in part, a feeling of abandonment? The Psalmist says “How long will it be before I see your face God?” That’s my interpretation of appearing before God. In His presence. Seeing His face. When we are able to see someone’s face, we can look into their eyes and they can look into ours and we can know much about what is in their heart. It is hard to hide your emotions when someone peers into your eyes. We have heard that the eyes are the window into the soul and maybe that is true.

The Psalmist’s emotions rose up to accuse him. “Where is your God?” His enemies rose up to accuse him. “Where is your God?” Can we also conclude that his friends accused him? He was breaking the law and failing in

his commitments. His emotions said that God had abandoned him. He was mourning because of the oppression of the enemy. His circumstances said that God had abandoned him.

In verse nine, the Psalmist cries out to God, "Why have you forgotten me?" The Psalmist found himself disconnected, disappointed, discouraged, disquieted. Disconnected with God, others (I used to go with the multitude), and his own soul. He was experiencing a loss of fellowship with others. He was experiencing a loss of the form of worship he was used to. I used to keep the pilgrim's feast with the multitude. (How do you know God apart from your traditions?)

There was a way that he could stoke the fire of his experience of God. He spoke to himself. Sometimes we have to remind ourselves, aloud even, of what the truth is. The Psalmist declared, "*I will hope in God. I will praise him.*" Then this word "yet" is there staring at us. Here is the commitment...

Even though I am overwhelmed emotionally... Even though I don't feel you God... Even though I feel alone...

Even though my circumstances scream that you have abandoned me... I will hope in You. I will praise You anyway. I will remember You from the land of my heritage. As I hear the noise of Your waterfalls and feel the brokenness as You wash relentlessly over me, I will believe in You day and night. I will pray to You. You are my life. I will be honest with You about my heart, my emotions. And yet, yet, yet...(as difficult as it may feel), I will hope in You, I will yet, yet, yet... praise You.

And then this beautiful phrase..."He is the help of my countenance and my God." This theme runs quietly through Psalm 42. A face to face encounter with God. Verse two..."When will I be in God's presence –the place where I can see Him?" Verse 5 "I need the help of seeing *His* face." Verse 11 "He will help my countenance – *my* face."

Change from the inside out. Encounters with a living God. Affecting our voice. Affecting our emotions. Affecting our face.

Yearning for God. You and I were created for relationship with Him. Nothing else can fill our deepest longings. No addiction can cover our longing completely. Alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, pornography, religion, nothing can completely quiet that inner longing within us. Nothing else is living water. Nothing else quenches our deepest thirsts. So even in times of distress, we reach out for His help. He is the only One who can change us from the inside out.

If you find yourself yearning, thirsting, and yet perhaps feeling abandoned, emotionally wiped out and broken, hope in God. Praise Him. Cry for His help. Remember how He helped you in the past. Look for His handprints around you. And know that He is not offended by your truth even if that means you feel abandoned by Him. That truth is the beginning place inside you. The place of growth. The place of life. The place of change where you can encounter a living God and be changed from the inside out.

You can also find this article published on [Encounters of the God Kind](#), and on the tag pages [42 Psalm](#), [encounters of God](#), [encounters of the God kind](#), [God thirst](#), [kingdom encounter](#), [Psalm Bible verse](#), [Psalm explanation](#), [Psalm KJV](#), [Psalm life](#), [soul thirst](#), [the Psalm](#), [worship encounter](#).