

Pentecost: Experience God

Acts 2:1-20.

This Sunday we are revisiting our theme for the year: experience God. God is always with us, but we experience him when we respond to his calling and pay loving attention to him. When we experience God, usually we have a sense of his joy, peace, love and comfort. Occasionally, we feel nothing at all – that's ok; it's not a sign that God is not happy with us. Usually, it is him inviting us into a deeper relationship with him, where we grow to love him for him, not for the feelings he gives us.

God will encounter us however God wants to, but if it helps, there are some steps we can take to help foster an experience with God.

The first step is to take time out; this might be by gathering together for worship or by practising spiritual disciplines like prayer, Sabbath keeping or Bible reading.

The second step is put it all on the table, letting God know how we are feeling: maybe we are happy and ready to hear from him, maybe we are feeling content or maybe we are angry with him, maybe we've been faithful or maybe we haven't and need to confess to hear his forgiveness spoken over us. When we are honest with God, we are able to come before God as our true selves, not trying to hide from him.

It's hard to jump from here straight into contemplation of God, so the third step involves recounting the good things that have happened in your day, week, year or even life, recognise them as gifts from God and thank him for them.

By this stage, it's natural for us to enter step four: directing our thoughts toward God, praising him, dwelling on his goodness and love.

It is here that we respond to God's calling, pay loving attention to him and meet with him. We do this not because we are required to but because it is a joy to do so. We were made to live in union with God's love and beauty, and here we can experience that.

It is encounters like these that transform and equip us to go on and serve God and the world.

Questions

1. How do you most naturally experience God? (In a worship service, in silence, in nature etc.)
2. Is there a spiritual practise that you've heard of that you would like to try?