



**8 WAYS
TO
DRAW
CLOSER
TO GOD**

Rebecca Barlow Jordan

8 Ways to Draw Closer to God

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Website: <https://www.rebeccabarlowjordan.com>

Do you ever feel like a Grand Canyon-size vacuum has opened up between you and God? If so, what's the cause?

You are a child of God if you have accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You believe in your heart that Jesus was the Son of God who died for you and was risen the third day, taking the punishment for your sin. And you understand that all have sinned against God. By faith you have asked for God's forgiveness and now believe that you belong to Him—not because of good things you have done, but because of God's grace and what Jesus did for you.

But lately, you feel like something has changed. Is it you? God? You can't fully explain it, but you just don't "feel" the same way. You no longer sense a closeness between you and God. And you're looking for answers. What should you do?

- 1. Ask God to reveal any hidden pockets of sin in your life.**

Our hearts are deceitful, and our enemy is always trying to tempt us and cause us to question God's goodness.

While God's Word says nothing can separate us from His love, we can still break our fellowship with Him. That's what sin does.

So get alone, not just for five minutes, but for a quality chunk of undisturbed time. Get real with God, and ask Him to search your heart, like King David asked, and point out anything that might be displeasing or dishonoring to God (Psalm 139:23-24).

Any areas of selfishness? Pride? Apathy? Any hidden grudges, motives, or questionable activities? Any areas of neglect or discipline? Don't just do all the talking. Listen. Be still, and know that He is God, and that He will reveal anything to you if you really want to know.

You're not looking here for false guilt. Satan also loves to make you feel guilty about your Christian activity—or lack of it. He throws accusations at you like, "You aren't doing enough." "You don't really matter." "You're some Christian."

The truth, which God will more than confirm if we ask, is that (1) we can never do enough for our holy, loving Father, (2) Jesus would have died for us, even if we had been the only one, and (3) we are all weak Christians and all make mistakes. But we are also forgiven, loved, and accepted children of God whose strength is perfected in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

So if God doesn't reveal anything to you now or in the coming days, don't go digging in the past for things God has already forgiven. Learn to forgive yourself, and move on.

2. Get a physical check-up.

Does that sound strange?

Through over five decades of walking with God, I've discovered a pattern in myself and in others. Usually when we are dealing with physical issues, we don't think or reason well. Trying to gauge our spiritual health by our emotions or under physical duress can result in an inaccurate and imbalanced conclusion.

As a woman, severe PMS days were not good times to evaluate my spiritual intimacy with God—or with anyone, for that matter. My hormones played havoc with my mind and body, and I was not a happy camper. Nor was anyone around me!

I've seen scores of others—men and women—make false assumptions about their relationship with God—primarily due to some physical issues that were hampering their bodies at the time.

Anytime we are physically off balance, we need extra moments of rest and strong capsules of God's truths from His Word to remind us that our relationship with Him is not based on feelings or emotions. And we all react to physical problems differently.

So if you feel there is distance between you and God, make sure you have first checked out any possible physical factors involved.

Mind, body, and spirit are all connected in drawing spiritual conclusions.

3. Fill your heart and home with praise music.

Assuming you have taken care of any glaring physical issues, or at least now recognize that they could be influencing you, and you have asked God for forgiveness of anything that might be causing a gap in your fellowship with Him, then begin to take steps to strengthen that intimacy with God.

Music is a great way to do that. Build a playlist of Christian music on your phone or play Christian CD's at home, in the car, or

wherever you are. Then whenever you can, listen to praise music, joining in to worship God in your heart. Praise lifts your spirits and keeps your thoughts on things that are worthy and of good report. Praise will keep you in tune with God, as you allow your heart to worship.

Two of my favorite times of the day are in the morning and at meal time. I listen to praise and worship music from my favorite artists on my iPhone while I put on makeup in the morning. At mealtimes, or when I'm preparing meals, I turn on the pre-set CD's and enjoy another worship time.

Often, I even put soft, instrumental Christian music on in the background while I'm writing. If I were the only one in the house, I'd probably leave music on most of the day, simply because nothing draws me closer to the Lord than worshipping Him through praise music.

4. Get to know God through His Word

This is a no-brainer, but I remember painful times when I tried to solve things on my own instead of relying on God's Word for direction. The result was a temporary distance in my relationship with Him.

As soon as I started spending time in the Bible again, letting His Words sink into my heart and spirit, the gap was closed, and I felt His intimacy again.

Don't know where to start? During times of great stress or need, I usually gravitate toward Psalms. I love the rhythm and flow of

David's poetic petitions, many of which were actually songs probably set to music and played on his harp.

David experienced every kind of emotion imaginable: fear, abandonment, betrayal, anger, rejection, joy, love, conviction, sorrow, victory, and determination—to name a few. In one psalm, he'd begin by railing against his enemies—usually King Saul, as the jealous man sought David's life repeatedly.

But by the end of the psalm, David works through his anger, fear, and distress and is back to praising God for His faithful attributes.

During a severe post-partum depression early on in my marriage, I clung to those writings like a lifeline. Within those songs and psalms I found the strength, comfort, and joy not only to survive, but to thrive.

Focus on the four Gospels as well. Read the comforting words of Jesus. It will build your faith and your closeness to Him.

The Bible is God's love story to every person. It shows us not only the way to salvation through Jesus's death and resurrection, but it's filled with wisdom and principles for every situation life throws at us. Let God's Spirit lead you as you begin to search His Word for answers you need, for direction and purpose, for encouragement, and yes, to know God intimately.

Study His names and character in the Bible. He wants us to know Him and love Him deeply, as He loves us.

I try to read through the Bible in a different translation every year, but sometimes it takes a couple of years simply because I may park in a particular book or chapter where God wants to speak to me personally.

Read for content, not more mileage. Ask questions, but don't get hung up on things you don't understand or can't explain.

Ask God to help you apply what you read, and to interpret it accurately, explaining Scripture by other Scripture instead of pulling verses out of context.

Journal if you have time and memorize special verses that especially speak to you.

Grab a good commentary if you can, but don't worry about the things you can't explain. God's Holy Spirit is more than available to teach you and help you in your confusion.

Make your purpose and your motive to know God, to love Him, and to discover how you can make Him known—and God will give you all the light you need. As you grow closer to Him, He will give you even more light for your journey.

5. Communicate with God through prayer, both talking and listening.

Don't know how to approach God?

There is no right or wrong formula for prayer. Jesus gave us *The Lord's Prayer* in Matthew 6:9-13 as a pattern and a place to start. But there are no magic words to get God's attention.

The Bible does warn us not to ask selfishly (James 4:3). Instead, we are to ask in Jesus's name, always desiring for His will to be done. But you can talk to Him like a friend throughout the day about anything, because He wants to be your best friend, and He cares for you.

His Word tells us we can come "boldly" to His throne and "find help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Spend alone time praising Him for His character and awesome attributes. I love to do this, just working through the alphabet: "Lord, I praise You as my Abba, my heavenly Father, and as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. You are my Counselor, and I praise You for Your wisdom and guidance."

Don't forget to take time for gratitude, giving God thanks for the things He's done in the past, and for all the good things He's continuing to do in your life.

Try keeping a blessing/gratitude journal, and jot down at least one thing daily for which you are thankful. That practice alone will change your life. As you draw closer to God, He will draw close to you (James 4:8).

Always include confession in your prayer time, asking God to create a clean heart in you, and to keep your fellowship with Him

sweet and current. Admit any areas of neglect or sin that might have crept into your heart.

Tell God your needs and your dreams. Find out what God desires by praying Scripture in a particular situation. For example, pray for your family members or Christian friends specifically by asking God to help their “roots grow deep into God’s soil of love...so that they will understand how wide, how deep, how long, and how wide His love really is” (paraphrased, see Ephesians 3:16-19).

Pray for the lost, the hurting, and the broken. Pray for those in authority. Keep a list of prayer requests, asking God to give you wisdom to know how to pray for others.

As you read God’s Word each day, watch for verses you can pray back to God, knowing those things are His will. Ask for great faith so that you can believe God’s promises and apply them to your own life.

Spend time listening to God, too, just being still and quiet before Him. If you encounter too many distractions, find a place where you can go alone and close the door. Ask God to shut out all other voices and noises except His.

At first, your mind may take you to the day’s busy schedule, what you’ll fix for dinner, tomorrow’s big company meeting—anything else but keeping still in His presence.

Sometimes, God will speak to you in the quiet moments of your heart as you shower, walk, or as you are driving. As you still your heart before Him, He will begin to flood your heart with the kind

of peace, joy, and wisdom you desire. Take time to intentionally listen. God will do His part.

6. Listen for God through Nature

Creation is not a substitute for God; it's the original handiwork of God. Take time to listen and observe. Let the beauty and wisdom of God's creation saturate your life. Observe the colors, the variations, and the designs of His floral creations.

Listen to the varieties of songs from birds, and notice the amazing creativity of animals and sea creatures God made.

Allow each season to teach you about the ways of God and His life lessons to us through them: the sleep of winter; the newness of spring, the resting of summer, and the change of fall.

Sometimes I'll take my journal outside and simply sit and observe God's creation in my backyard. As a gardener, it's easy for me to see God's workmanship come alive in fragrant smells, vibrant colors, and unique sounds. Through these, God teaches me more about Himself and draws me closer to Him as Creator and Sustainer of life.

As I watch various animals, insects, and birds, I see God's humor—not just in my own backyard, but as I travel and observe.

When I reluctantly prune my roses, I understand the necessity of God's shears upon my own life each year as unwanted "branches" clutter up my priorities and basic God-shape. God wants me to

bloom and flourish, so I see the need for discipline and cutting away of excess, unnecessary “stuff.”

No matter where you go or look—near mountains, beside rivers or lakes, along a massive forest or quiet desert, or even as you gaze into the night skies or clouds by day—you can not only learn more about God, but you can also draw close to Him as you commune with Him and even record the things you see and the lessons you learn.

God is all around you, and His presence resides in you through the Holy Spirit.

7. Pay attention to your challenging circumstances.

Without over-analyzing, ask God what He is trying to teach you through the challenging things that happen to you. Determine to give Him praise no matter what the outcome of your circumstances.

Enjoy and thank Him for the good things He brings your way, understanding that every good gift comes from Him. But also recognize that the same God who sends and applauds celebrations in our lives also allows tests to make us stronger.

God may actually draw us closer to Him during our walks through the shadows or valleys than any other time—if we will let Him. That has happened to me time and time again, through illnesses, a miscarriage, marriage issues, unemployment, financial challenges, and even through deaths of loved ones.

Never look at your circumstances as your primary gauge of spirituality. Our enemy, Satan, can attack your strengths and your weaknesses, tempting you to give up or run from God's intimacy.

Accept blame and ask forgiveness for any circumstance that may have stemmed from your own sinfulness or careless behavior. Being tempted is not sinning; giving into the temptation is what draws us away from God's presence.

Because we live in a fallen world, and sin lurks all around us, we may face painful, discouraging situations through no fault of our own. Job lost everything, but that loss had nothing to do with his sinfulness, but everything to do with God's allowance of testing in Job's life. God had declared Him to be a righteous man who loved Him.

In the end, however, Job drew closer to God because he recognized the majesty and sovereignty of God—and maybe His own smallness in God's presence. God was able to both teach and elevate Job because Job was willing to listen to what God wanted to teach him.

And in Job's case, God restored far beyond what He had allowed to be removed.

But what if God doesn't? What if your situation doesn't change? Perhaps that's the hardest test of all in experiencing a deeper intimacy with God.

When we can find joy in any circumstance, like Paul did (Philippians 4:11), and like Jesus did, when His entire life moved

toward the joy that was set before Him—His death for you and me—we will find one of the keys to intimacy with God.

The truth is, some changes and some answers won't come this side of heaven. But an unwavering trust in God regardless of the outcome will usher us into God's presence—and keep us there.

8. Stay close to “community” with other believers and begin using your gifts.

God did not create us to live isolated from others. We need the fellowship, support, and teaching from other fellow believers.

Find a local body of believers who worship the Lord and teach the Bible, and become involved. Through honesty, accountability, and friendship, others can encourage you in your desire to draw closer to God.

Seek their counsel and wisdom. Other believers can help you with blind spots in your life and become your cheerleaders as you seek to draw closer to God.

Studying the Bible with other Christians can help you go deeper and gain a better, more accurate grasp of His Word. Use this time in small group study and actual teaching from the pulpit as an addition to your own personal study, not as the only time you get into God's Word.

Every believer needs to become a self-feeder to grow closer to God. But worshipping and studying with others can become a

highlight of celebration as we share and add to what we have already been learning.

Enjoying fellowship with those of like-minded faith and finding a place to belong will also strengthen our daily walk with God. Even the most extreme introverts need friends—people who will encourage, bless, and keep them on the right track.

Begin to use the spiritual gifts God has given you through His Holy Spirit. In addition to your natural talents and abilities, these spiritual gifts will help to build up the body of Christ, both in your local church and in the larger body of Christians wherever you go.

If you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, read through the list of gifts in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Volunteer for areas in your church when needs arise. Ask God to show you where you can be most effective.

As you begin to serve, you'll find some ministry areas are not a good fit. Instead of teaching, you may discover you have a gift for organizing, planning, and leadership. Or you might find great joy in using your hands to build or working in the kitchen and through hospitality.

God gives so many varieties of gifts and so many ways to use those gifts—all unique to your personality, and all at God's discretion. He chooses what's best for you, and He will give you great joy as you begin serving Him in the place or area with your name on it.

As you begin to pour out your life for God and others, you will find not only a deep satisfaction, but also a stronger relationship with the One you love. You will sense His smile on your life and His presence in an entirely different way.

These are only a few of the many ways we can draw closer to God. At first, focus on one or two in your desire to increase your intimacy with our Heavenly Father. Then add others. Ask God to help you in the areas where you lack or feel weak.

God is waiting for you. He longs for your fellowship more than you know and more than you desire His. He will always be faithful to meet you at your point of need if you will only ask—and trust.

You will find more encouragement in my weekly blog posts and occasional newsletters that I'll send you now that you have signed up on my website at <https://www.rebeccabarlowjordan.com/blog>. Each one is designed to encourage you in your Christian life and help you to become a *day-voted* follower of Jesus. And I have expanded many of the subjects above in different ways through my weekly posts for you.

In addition, you might check out my book page at <https://www.rebeccabarlowjordan.com/books>.

Without exception, every book I've authored or coauthored was written with you, the reader in mind: to make God and His ways known, and to encourage you in some area of your Christian life.

I find great joy in trying to encourage you through God's Word and as a follower of Christ myself. May you find hope and strength as you seek to know God better and more intimately.

As I do often in my weekly encouraging blog posts, may I pray for you?

Dear God,

Help us to draw closer to You every day. Teach us the way to go, and reveal to us which areas need more work—or more resting—in order for You to make Your presence more real to us.

Grant us wisdom, joy, and peace as we invite You to make yourself at home in our hearts. As we draw close to You, You have promised to draw close to us. Thank You for that promise. And thank You that not one of your promises has ever failed. You are so faithful!

Day-votedly yours,

Rebecca