

No encounter with God is meaningless.

If you examine God's nature, his sovereignty, his omnipresence and omnipotence and that he is in eternity – occupying past, present and future all at the same time – then it does become apparent that no encounter with him could ever be by chance.

To go into that a little: the idea that there is an element of chance in our encounters with God would also suggest that there are things that are out of God's control. Imagine a Christian uttering the phrase: "I met God by chance – he happened to be there and I bumped right into Him".

Without delving much into that, we all know how "difficult" – for lack of a better word – it can be to have an experience with God in the way our weak flesh can demand for an experience. I can count with multiple fingers the number of times I have wished for Jesus to appear physically in front of me as he appeared to his disciples after he resurrected from death on the cross – and each time it just did not happen. I can also recall multiple situations where I have, for example, entered a competition on the radio to win some cash and followed it with a little silent prayer and before long started to have a growing feeling that I could just be the winner, only to have to settle in the end for just being able to do all things through Jesus Christ who gives me strength. All that to say that if the likelihood of meeting God physically by prayer is so slim, the chances of doing so by chance are probably just as bad if not worse. And how desperate our situation really would be if our life-changing encounter with God lay at the mercy of chance? Anyways, that was my nerd bit.

Now, let's look at what the Bible says about God's control over time and "chance": Psalm 104 is a meditation of just how intentional and powerful God is. Daniel 2:20 – 23 only adds to this. In Psalm 33 vs 18, King David testifies through personal experience how God's eyes are on those who revere him. Finally, Proverbs 15:3 is the sum of it really, it says: the eyes of God are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. So, could anyone really meet God by chance?

In fact, think about this: what actually is the Book of Revelations? We know what its focus is on. *It is primarily informing about the end times.* We have an idea of the message it is trying to pass across? *It is proposed as an encouragement to stay the course but also as a warning to be prepared for what is to come.* What more about it? *Well, it's not solely prophecy, in the sense that it only tells us about things that have not happened but that will happen. Some of it is a narration of things that were happening that John the writer could see by the grace of God.* Was he watching a movie? *No, he was not.* However, in Chapter 4, he was giving an account in the present continuous of constant worship. In, for example chapter 6, John is giving an account of things that will happen, but that were happening in front of him. It's one thing to prophesy. It's quite another to time travel and narrate. The point of this segue being that God is everywhere and in every timestamp. He knows everything and he is all-able and any encounter any of us have with Him is 1) incredible meaningful and 2) not at all by chance.

Every time we find ourselves in a place where God is present and making a move – perhaps to connect with others or to connect with us – it is best practice – and I say this as a growing Christian, but I think many established Christians will agree to this too – it is best practice to lean into what is going on and to draw close to Him.

Think about any of your encounters with God, with Jesus Christ or with the Holy Spirit. Or even, think about any time you have seen or heard anyone talk about God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

1. First of all, God meant you to have those encounters with Him. They may not come across as encounters – as in you met Him, He met you and you were formally introduced to each other – but if nothing involving God is by chance, then you were meant to have that encounter.

2. That time you read your bible as a child, or followed your parents to church, or when you saw the worthlessness of your righteousness in comparison to worth of his; that time a colleague mentioned going to church; that time you got a Christian leaflet or the time you declined one. These are all encounters he wanted you to have and whether or not they ended positively or negatively, if God is in the picture, He wanted that encounter for you.
3. If you examine Romans 9 vs 10 – 13 which is a brief exposition by the Apostle Paul on the lives of Jacob and Esau, you notice that a similar thing happens to each and every single one of us. In Jeremiah 1 vs 5, God is clear: before He formed us in our mother's wombs, He knew us. That's a huge scripture which is basically saying that to God we are all far more than simply our physical bodies. Our bodies are containers for something far more precious, namely: you. And that 'you' is someone God has been fully aware since before conception and will remain fully aware of through life on earth, in death and into the life after. Protect your body, of course, because it is intended as the temple of the Holy Spirit but be protective of your spirit and your soul and their destination because that is the most important part of you.
4. God wants connection with us but Satan, also referred to as the devil, wants to prevent that. He fully understands there is a purpose for God (and essentially against His interests) in every life. Why else would he fight for every life?
5. In Philippians 2 vs 13, using the Message translation, the Apostle Paul explains how the energy within us that pushes us to do anything towards pleasing God is actually God's own energy. It is actually God himself creating a will and its corollary actions in us, again for his pleasure (also his purpose). So, if you have ever sought for God or asked for Him, He was in control of that.

The question then is: if God is in control of all our actions towards Him – regardless of how well or badly we carried out those actions – what is the point?

1. Ephesians 1 vs 6, 12 and 14 – well, one certain reason is that we may be to the praise of His glory.
2. Pastor Solomon Ajayi, a friend of the podcast, once said "glory results from fulfilled purpose"
3. In the most radical understanding of this, everything and everyone will play a part in giving God glory, whether good or bad. The righteous will showcase a merciful, graceful and kind God. The evil will act as stark contrast to a holy, righteous and perfect God.

Sometimes I have wished for physical encounters with Jesus Christ, despite for sure having spurned many opportunities in the past to know Him more intimately.

1. In the past and sometimes even nowadays, I wish that Jesus Christ had come in my time. In the 90s, 2000s, the 2010s or even now.
2. Can anyone relate?
3. To have known him face to face, to see him, sit down and listen to him – so that I could be beyond doubt about who He is. It is nice but, really, we are meant for the moment we are in.
4. 1 Corinthians 3:19 clarifies that the wisdom of this world is foolishness, as is the desire to believe in Him by seeing Him.
5. Ecclesiastes 3 vs 1 is just as damning to this wish. It says: there is an appointed time for everything. So, if we can apply this scripture to just one thing, we should be able to apply it to everything. Where God is involved, chance is not present.

6. So, what about it that you were not around when Jesus was around. Honestly, you were meant for this moment, for this word, to be tuned in and reading this script or listening to it as a podcast. Reading or listening to this is an encounter with God and whether or not you the listener or I the host are the most perfect person in the world or the least perfect is inconsequential. God is meeting you. Are you ready to meet him?
7. It's not your faith, your history, your works – or anyone else's for that matter – that have brought any of your encounters with God. It is God.

Examples:

1. Bartimaeus: the man who used to be blind (Luke 18:35 – 43)
2. The healed woman who had the issue of blood (Luke 8:40-48)
3. The tax collector, Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

When Jesus comes, there is a responsibility to hear, to listen and pay attention, to be willing and to be obedient. Revelation 1 vs 12 ("I turned to see....").

1. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10 vs 17)
2. Of the ingredients of Christian faith: hearing is key.
3. What have you heard from God? Or about God? What has He said to you? Or what has someone said to you about him? What is the littlest thing you know or have noticed about Him? You can start with that.
4. The things you have heard are encounters but you must engage positively with them to make them more. Luke 15 vs 25 – 28.
5. There is a responsibility with hearing. Partly, it is that when you hear you act appropriately.
6. Hearing from God should create faith; it should lead to virtuous actions.
7. Do not give up on your encounters with God. When you have questioned everything including the encounters, why there is church, why there is a God, why bad things happen, why are people the way they are? Don't give up.
8. Continue to enjoy God. Join the feast he has prepared in the presence of your enemies. Drink at his table, let your head be anointed, eat from his hand. Come and eat (Isaiah 55:1)

How might the Prodigal Son Parable have ended?

Well, from what we gather, the older son has character but lacks the boldness of his younger sibling.

It is likely that, consistent with his nature, he would listen to his father and join in the party. This is conjecture though.

It is also likely that he asked for his own party not long afterwards.