

## Encountering God through Scripture - Ron Stullenbarger -

In Scripture, we have a perfect and direct avenue to powerful and transformational encounters with God. Jeremiah 15:16 says, *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts."* (ESV) In Scripture we find both our weakness and God's unfailing love portrayed through countless stories. God has spoken to us all we need in Scripture to both understand and pursue wholehearted relationship with Him.

The very Spirit who authored the words of Scripture longs to use it to guide you and me into powerful encounters with our heavenly Father. I fear that many believers today are missing the intended meaning behind Scripture. The Bible is not God. It is designed to act as a guide to knowing its Author. It is designed to give us a desire and understanding about this God who is living, active, and near to us.

Isaiah 55:11 says, *"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."* God's purpose has always been restored relationship with His people. His goal is our hearts. And His word is powerful in accomplishing His purpose. Psalm 1:1-3 says, *"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."*

The Lord longs to plant us by the streams of His presence. He longs for us to be a people that consistently and purposefully encounter His unending love. He longs for us to meditate on His laws that we might live according to His will and be blessed in all that we do. His heart is for us to know His love through His Spirit and word that we might live a truly abundant life marked by His unceasing faithfulness. *"More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."* (Romans 5:3-5)

May we as fully loved children of the Most High God seek all that is available to us in Scripture. May we gain heart-knowledge about our Father as His word guides us into more consistent, true, and impactful encounters with Him. May we be a people filled with the stories of God's redeeming love that we might live in response to the unchanging, active nature of our heavenly Father.