

Defending the Faith



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February 2018

Cultivating a Relationship with God

In last month's newsletter, "Something Holy Lives Within Us," I talked about the Holy Spirit who dwells inside of us. God lives within us. The Holy Spirit facilitates our relationship with God and our ability to communicate with Him. Generally, Christians understand this to refer to prayer. We spend time with God praying to Him. We thank Him, we ask for forgiveness, and then we ask for what we want or what believe we need. This can include blessings or healings for our loved ones and for ourselves. We may request a promotion or a raise. We may also ask for things, like a home or a car. Often, our prayers become a laundry list of things we would like God to do. Keep in mind, God knows what we truly need more than we do. If that is the case, then what can we talk about with God. How do we pray?

First, we come to God in humility, understanding that He is the all-powerful holy one who created us, and He knows what is best for us. We can contemplate Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. We can be in awe of the Holy Spirit who facilitates our communication with God and who lives within us. We can talk to God about our sins and think about how He has blessed us recently. However, all this talk and prayer is simply a one-way communication. Our relationship with God can most benefit us, if we can engage in a two-way communication, and if we can hear from God. Is that possible? Of course, it is! All things are possible with God, so how do we listen?

When we think about God speaking to us or listening to God, most of us understand the concept of listening to our conscience. Messages from our conscience are never good news. Those guilty feelings in our conscience remind us that we have sinned or are about to sin. However, there are other ways in which God speaks to us. We just need to learn how to listen. There are actually five other ways the Holy Spirit communicates with us; through our intuition, our hearts, our minds, through the Bible, and through the events which occur in our lives.

Excerpts from *A Journey Toward Perfection*:

"Our intuition is a gut feeling, and we do not know from where that feeling originated. We cannot explain why we have that gut feeling, but we do. Our intuition operates mystically. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in a whisper, but we recognize it as truth. If we were pressed to explain our gut feeling, we may be able to stumble through an explanation as to why we feel the way we do, but we could not explain how that feeling got there. It appeared in lightning speed without the awareness of

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Cultivating a Relationship with God (cont'd)

our conscious mind. We did not go through the normal logical steps of reasoning in our mind. Our hearts arrived at a conclusion without the reassuring processes of our mind...

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The Holy Spirit speaks to us through our hearts, where love is the language spoken. If we are His sheep, we recognize His voice. Hearing God's voice through our hearts is the most joyous experience. When we act in kindness and compassion, when we forgive those who are difficult to forgive, when we give of ourselves, He pours His perfect love into our hearts. This is where His love becomes so real to us, particularly when we contemplate Christ's love for us and His sacrifice for us. He touches the emotional center of our beings. Our spirit can overflow with God's love, manifesting through tears of joy and compassion. Listening to the Holy Spirit with our hearts is a very powerful form of communication with God...

God can also speak to us through our minds, where language is stored, where we make connections and understand symbolism, where revelation occurs. If we seek knowledge or wisdom or answers to our questions, God may reply to us through our minds. For example, an experience in our lives can bring to mind specific words from scripture to reveal a deeper understanding of God's truth. This is why it is so important to immerse ourselves in the Bible. God does answer us in words, but this communication may occur in our minds. We know it is God's voice because the words are filled with His truth. God's words connect with our hearts, our conscience, and our intuition to declare His truth to us. It is an experience, which involves our total being. We recognize God's truth through the Holy Spirit. The light bulb turns on...

The Bible, God's word, is His most powerful means of communicating to us. No matter how many times we may read a particular passage, we can learn something new each time. God can reveal new truths to us for specific situations in our lives through His own words. This is especially true as we go through various phases in our lives or are in various stages of our journey toward Him. His words speak to our conscience, intuition, our hearts and our minds. His words connect to our spirit through the Holy Spirit who reveals all truth to us. It is the Holy Spirit who helps our hearts or minds discern the truth."

God also communicates to us through coincidental events which may occur. God may place people in our lives to guide us and to lead us to wisdom. It may be a transitory encounter with someone who blesses us in some way. He may arrange circumstances in such a way that they may appear to be a coincidence, so pay attention. With God, there are no coincidences. For example, Sunday morning I found myself getting ready for church, realizing that I had forgotten my contacts at my mom's house. I am very self-conscious about going out wearing my glasses. I have always hated wearing glasses. It is my vanity, one of my weaknesses! For a moment, I thought to myself that I can't go to church without my contacts! Then I realized that it was my vanity speaking and I laughed to myself. God arranged it so that I would have to overcome my self-consciousness and go to church in my glasses. Was this a coincidence? Such a seemingly little insignificant thing, yet I knew what God was saying to me.

A two-way dialogue with God must be cultivated. It does not just happen. We must be alert, expecting a response from Him. We must look for reasons why coincidences occur. We must be attentive to our intuition and our hearts. We know when God is communicating with us because it is

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personal. It is filled with truth and love. We just know that we know. Perhaps, a Bible verse comes to mind or we realize that there is an answer to a question we asked. This is where faith becomes activated. We trust God, and we know that He loves us and wants the best for us. We have faith that His will is to transform us into the people we were created to be. His will is to teach us how to love. We know love when we encounter the genuine article. This is how we know God when we encounter Him. He lovingly guides us through the Holy Spirit. All we must do is be alert and listen!

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

Announcing....

"A Journey Toward Perfection" Book Club on Facebook



I have received feedback from many of you who have requested a forum to discuss my book, *A Journey Toward Perfection*. I have just launched an online Book Club on Facebook in response to your requests. **"A Journey Toward Perfection" Book Club** is an opportunity to learn more about our Christian faith from one another. It is a place where we can discuss issues, ask questions and share thoughts about our journey through life as Christians as discussed in the book. It is a friendly forum meant to engage others in a

meaningful conversation. We can delve into questions, such as how the Beatitudes can guide our lives, how can we meet the challenges of everyday life, how can we develop a real relationship with Christ, how can we become more Christ-like or how can we interpret Christ's instruction to "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Is this even possible? Join our group today and begin the conversation at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1951037488480944/about/>

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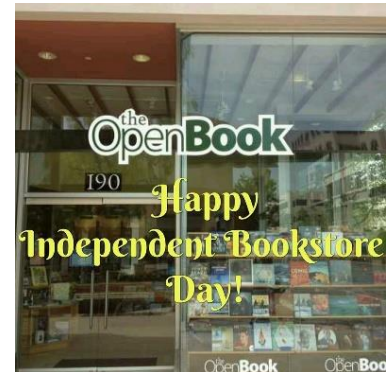
Upcoming Book Signings

JOIN US FEBRUARY 3, 2:00-4:00 PM in Canyon Country!

The Open Book Bookstore in Canyon Country is hosting my next Author Book Signing. Copies of A "Journey Toward Perfection" will be available for purchase.

19188 Soledad Canyon Rd, Canyon Country, CA 91351

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1622347634509798/>



JOIN US FEBRUARY 10, 2:00-4:30 PM in Thousand Oaks!

The Open Book Bookstore at the Oaks Mall in Thousand Oaks, CA is hosting an Author Book Signing. Copies of A "Journey Toward Perfection" will be available for purchase.

512 W Hillcrest Dr, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360-4228

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2120905817924561/>



Great Lent: February 19 – April 7

Great Lent precedes Holy Week and is meant to prepare us for Easter by renewing our devotion to Christ through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Often, the focus during lent is our fasting. However, we should take the time to reflect on our progress in moving toward Christ. We should contemplate God's will for us, and how we can better serve our fellow neighbors. It is a time for building our relationships with Christ and with our family and friends. It is a time to forgive those who have offended us. "In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification...It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God's mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent,

both Christ's Resurrection and our own" (Retrieved on 1/30/18 from:

<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-year/great-lent>).

We subject our body to fasting so that we can discipline our soul. Great Lent is the perfect time to reflect on our own humility, patience, compassion and kindness. Let us seek ways to bless others in our lives. Let us allow our *"lights to shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

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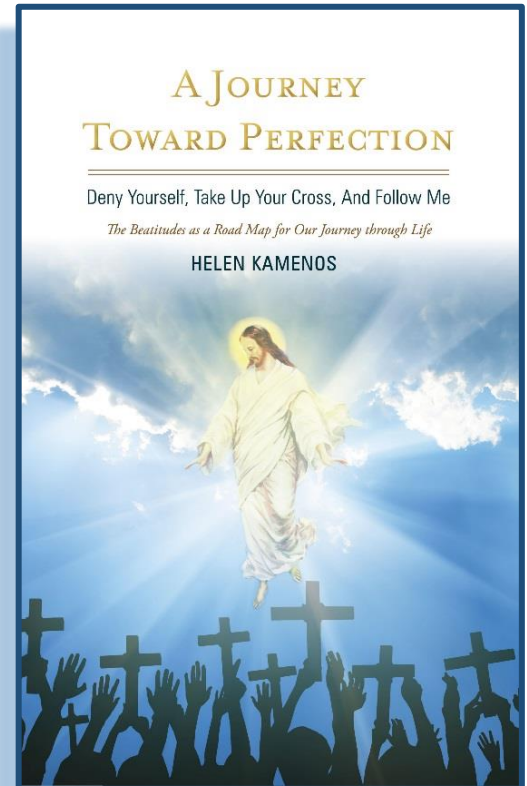
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A Journey Toward Perfection

Two thousand years ago, a fire humbly and meekly exploded into our reality. That fire was Christ. Take the Journey Toward Perfection and be transformed. You will undergo a metamorphosis. You will become the butterfly that God always meant for you to be.

A *Journey Toward Perfection* reveals a path toward developing an intimate experiential relationship with God. It is an in-depth study of the attributes recorded in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. These are the attributes God bestowed upon us when He created us in His image. God created us to love. These are the traits necessary to love others as God loves us. These characteristics are central to our Christian spiritual growth.

When Christ invited us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Him, He asked us to follow His example. He encouraged us to take a journey toward perfection, toward a loving God who extends His open arms to us even as Christ's arms were extended on the cross. He challenged us to develop characteristics, such as humility, meekness and purity of heart. If we accept His invitation, we will embark on a life-changing journey. We will find ourselves walking in the footsteps of Christ. We will experience what He experienced and see life through His eyes. We will learn how profound His love for us truly is. We will begin to develop attributes of Christ that will sustain us through the many trials and tribulations of our lives. We will experience God's true presence in our lives.



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To receive **Defending the Faith** each month, sign up at: www.helenkamenos.com

Forward this to your family and friends, so they can sign up, too!