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***How have I experienced God in my life?***

I experience God in every breath I take

In every person I embrace

and in

The perfection of a flower!

I could stop at this point, leave the podium, go back to my seat ,take a deep breath and say to myself,

“Well, got that over with!”

However, this all encompassing poetic response to the vital question of God in my life deserves more than romantic lines of poetry. I feel I would be remiss if I didn't take this precious opportunity to share with you some detailed insight into how I experience God.

I went to the Bible study group and woke up. I knew I needed to learn much, much more of what the Bible was all about. The study of the Bible was extremely lacking in my religious upbringing. Every week I experience a continual awakening. This awareness is due to the leadership of Rev. Given. We are able to discuss honestly and comment on how a particular word, phrase or paragraph of the Bible relates to our daily lives. At a recent meeting I blurted out spontaneously, “In order to live, you have to give up your life!” I don't remember what prompted me to spew out this revelation, but I know the dynamics of the group made it possible. I realized that I was truly, actually, clearly experiencing God. As I drove away that day with that sentence pounding in my head, I knew that it was a message. It was the message of the Cross to me. At no other time in my life has the experience of God been so potent to me. No longer will the words of the Bible languish on the page.

This is my “Believability Bar Chart”. I dare say that the skeptics among us, me included, can dismiss many of my claimed experiences of God, saying that it's luck, a fantasy, wishful thinking, coincidence, and just maybe downright mental confusion.

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On the left hand side of the graph is a measurement in percentages of how I claim that I have experienced God. On the bottom of the graph I listed some of the ways I spend my time: Prayer, Church Community, Silence, Photography, Bible Study, and Nursing Home.

**Prayer** -70%, I try to say a daily Rosary. There are times that minor miracles followed these prayers. I found something I thought I lost. I encountered someone that I wanted to meet again. I was upset at something and praying calmed me and gave me a better perspective on the situation. Now I have begun the 40 days of prayer. This is a very special time, and I am looking forward as the prayers prepare me for Easter.

**Church community** -85%, It is wonderful being a part of the living Church. You are around people who enrich you with spiritual thought and practice. The pulpit speaks to me serving as an anchor for the coming week.

**Silence** 60%, - At times I really, really relish total silence. I sometimes practice walking so that when I put my shoe down on the pavement there is no sound. Silence sharpens my senses. I am in the present completely. I am more able to empty myself, becoming more receptive to my relationship with God.

**Photography**- 40%, To convince someone that photography has spiritual elements can be stretching the envelope. However, when you focus the lens of the camera and you're conscious of the light and you're very patient, you become one with the image. The result is what's called the WOW factor; you see there is even a word for God in The Art of Photography!

**Bible Study**- off the charts!- I don't like the word "study". I much prefer calling it The Bible Swim Team, (just a symptom of my off kilter imagination). Why a swim team? Picture yourself jumping into cool waters with other people. You are all in sync, swimming in unison, letting the waves wash over you. There are even life jackets available. This is not an advertisement, but the Bible study takes place every Wednesday at 10:45 am and is listed in back of your program.

**Nursing Home**- 75%. My wife Barbara, and I visit her mother almost every day. We have had the opportunity to get to know many of the residents. A smile, a touch, a wave of the hand, conversation and honest expressions of love have transformed us and them.

For Craft Day I worked with the residents to make Valentine Cards to send to their loved ones. On Christmas I was Santa Claus at the nursing home.

There are many other rituals in my life that didn't make the bar graph. They include drinking my morning cup of coffee and washing dishes, These activities afford me daily meditation time.

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In closing, I would like to recite a few lines from Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass.

"Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,

Healthy, free, the world before me,

The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here, I believe that much unseen is also here."