

LET US PRESS ON TO KNOW THE LORD

Hosea 6:3: ***“Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know Him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring.”***

The message for 2014 is simple.. “Let us press on to know the Lord.” “Pressing on” suggests effort and determination. Unless you decide at the start of the year what you intend to pursue, you are unlikely to achieve your objective. The apostle Paul knew this principle well: ***“I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me”*** (Philippians 3:12). Notice (in both these verses), if you “press on,” there is a trade-off. In Hosea 6:3 it promises a positive response from God, and in Philippians 3:12 it mentions taking possession of that which Christ has already attained. I’m sure you will agree, these are great and precious rewards for your endeavours! Wouldn't you love to know that God is guaranteed to respond every time you press on?

Observe, there is an important Hebrew word used in Hosea, and it’s repeated twice - it is the word “know.” The basic meaning of the term “to know” is ‘a physical apprehension / recognition’ (whether through sight, touch or hearing). This is interesting because it implies an **intimate** relationship whereby ‘physical recognition’ is established through seeing, touching or hearing. In the context of “knowing” God, this is very profound. It’s as if we are to pursue a “face-to-face” encounter with God - as Moses did when the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle! ***“So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”*** (Exodus 33:11). But Moses wasn’t the first to have a “face-to-face” encounter with God. In Genesis 32:30 it says, ***“So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved’.”*** Knowing God intimately will preserve your life!

Hosea 6:3 could read... ***“Oh, that we might encounter the Lord face to face! Let us press on to know Him more intimately.*** Not only is knowing God intimately a good thing; it is a necessity. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, the people gave up on God and built an idol. God then told Moses He would send an angel in front of them and defeat their enemies (Exodus 33:1-2). But He added in verse three; *“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”* God said He would send them and protect them, but not go with them. When Moses heard that, a chill must have gone up his spine. So Moses replied, *“God, if you’re not going, I’m not going.”*

Please understand... You can have provision and protection, and still not have God’s presence. Now, that ought to startle some of you! A lot of believers accept eternal security but don’t want the intimate presence of God. How sad. Moses knew God because he spoke to Him face to face. Yet, this didn’t just happen! Moses kept pressing on (and pressing in) until he could **know** God enough to have a face-to-face encounter with Him. This is confirmed in verses 13 and 14; ***Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people. And God said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*** Notice how “knowing” God and God’s presence are inseparable!

So why is pressing on (and pressing in) so important? Because God has a desire to **revive** the hearts of those who would earnestly seek His face. If you want revival to start it must begin inside of you! In the land of Israel they had usually two rains in a year; the one in autumn, or quickly after the seed was sown; the other in the spring when the corn was ripe and harvest near.

This rain was very reviving and refreshing to the earth, and the fruits of it. Therefore, in Hosea 6:3 the coming of the rains in the early spring symbolises two things; **refreshment** and **revival**. And this is a function of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men and women who are fervently seeking God's face. I would like to reiterate that God desires to respond when we get to "know" Him intimately by pouring out His Spirit and bringing revival and refreshment to His people.

In 1904 a young student named Evan Roberts felt strongly that God was going to pour out a mighty spirit of revival on Wales. As a result of this prompting, Roberts returned to his home church to preach the message of revival. However, his pastor was reluctant to allow him to speak. After reaching a compromise, the pastor announced that Roberts would be speaking following the regular prayer meeting and that anyone who wished to stay was welcome. Only 17 people decided to stay and hear Evan speak, and most of them were teenagers and young adults.

Roberts was obedient to God 's voice, and after he finished speaking about revival all 17 young people were at the altar on their knees crying out to God. They prayed until 2.00 am that night and it was the beginning of one of the greatest moves of God's Spirit in all history. By the end of the week, some 60 people were won to Christ and during the course of the next eighteen months revival swept through the nation of Wales. Over 1,000,000 people came to know Christ. This revival was so great that the national culture changed dramatically.

- Most of the pubs, taverns and liquor stores went out of business.
- Work at the coal mines was brought to a near standstill. The mules who pulled the wagons were so accustomed to hearing foul language

from the workers that after the men were saved the mules no longer recognised their voice commands.

- The entire police force was dismissed due to a complete lack of crime.
- One of the few court cases that was actually brought before a judge was unusual. The defendant came into the court and admitted his guilt, the judge led the man to Christ and the jury closed the case by singing a hymn.

If we want to see revival in 2014 we must 'press on' to know Him intimately. We must seek His face in everything and in every situation. If we do, this year will be the greatest year yet! Hosea tells us what God promises to do if we seek to have a face-to-face encounter with Him. Hosea describes two different things with the same result. The word **revive** means to give life but not just in the sense of saving it. This is more than just rekindling life within a person like paramedics may do. It is the giving of physical wellbeing but with the promise of divine blessings upon that life. So we are given a life that not only holds the promise of health but also the promise of super-abundant living - which is what Jesus promised in John 10:10. The second word that Hosea uses here is **restore**. God promises not just to give us new life but to raise us up, to restore that which has been stolen or lost - to prove His faithfulness! When God brings restoration to us, it is to make things as they are meant to be (not as they were). It is to give us back that which we stolen or lost and to ensure we have a prosperous, happy and wonderful life.

Pressing on to "know" Him intimately also means living in God's presence! The understanding of the Hebrew word here for 'presence' is to be given the opportunity to see God "face to face." So let us recognise the Lord; let us press on to know Him completely and acknowledge Him in all our ways! When we do this there are two blessings we can expect:

(1) He will respond by manifesting His Divine presence

The promise is that God will respond by appearing to us when we actively seek Him out. This means that whenever we are genuine in desiring God, He will show Himself to us. Hosea affirms this through the description of the promise. Look at what Hosea says, “*As surely as the sun rises.*” Hosea is making it clear that if we seek God’s face, He will appear to us. This is an unchangeable fact. It’s something that we can totally count on - just like the rising of the sun.

(2) He will come to us like the spring rains

The spring rains played a specific role in Israel’s agriculture. The spring rains watered the ground for the planting season. This made the springs rains vital for the coming of new life. These rains were the renewing of the land for a new season of life. Spring rains made it possible for the seeds to take on a new cycle of life and brought growth to the new plants. Without a good season of rain in the spring there would not be a good harvest.

Paul speaks of this same spiritual truth in 2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold everything has become brand new! God gives the offer of new life to those who will actively seek His face. Jesus brings to us the promise of new and abundant life for every circumstance. Therefore, as we start down this new journey in 2014, let us be mindful that God is looking to do something “brand new” - something that has never existed before. Like the new seed that has been sown, and is awaiting the spring rain, let us fervently await revival and refreshment. Reminding ourselves constantly that nothing will happen unless we genuinely seek a **face-to-face** encounter with the Most High God!

This morning you have a choice to make, and no one else can make it for you. Right now, you are only as close to God as you choose to be. Therefore, I'd like you to examine yourself and see whether you share the same sentiment as Hosea. Is this the cry of your heart? ***“Oh, that I might encounter the Lord face to face! Let me press on to know Him more intimately.”*** If that is what you genuinely seek, then I guarantee that God Almighty will respond by pouring out His Spirit upon you throughout the year. Furthermore, I guarantee that you will have a face to face encounter with God along the way! And that His presence will go with you and give you rest!

Let us press on, and press in to God in 2014! Let us have the greatest year yet! Amen!