

## As Near as Life

*For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the Lord our God is [to us] whenever we call to Him? – Deuteronomy 4:7 HCSB*

God told Amos, *“I hate, I despise your feasts! I can't stand the stench of your solemn assemblies. Even if you offer Me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept [them]; I will have no regard for your fellowship offerings of fattened cattle. Take away from Me the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice flow like water, and righteousness, like an unfailing stream...”*<sup>1</sup>

Pastors and priests sometimes make us feel that religion must be complex. They develop detailed liturgy and stress the importance of ritualism but in actuality, this is done only to promote their own importance, not to elevate God. These wolves in sheep's clothing would have you believe that you cannot achieve a state of worship without the cathedrals, the stained glass, the clergy dressed in various uniforms droning on and on about things that have little or nothing to do with the Way. In fact, some religions even practice their ceremonies in languages their followers don't even understand!

Gaining your Beloved's attention does not require elaborate ceremony. He does not need an organ prelude to hear you. Mass choirs and choreographed movement, interpretive dance and power point presentations are not necessary to keep Him from losing interest. If your church has bells, you can rest assured that they are for humans, not for the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. A single thought unites you with Him. He is so close that He inhales your exhalations. As you lean over to tie your shoes, you move through Him “for in Him we live and move and exist.”<sup>2</sup> As you eat at your dinner table, you might as well set an extra chair because you have a listening host. God is closer to you than the vein in your neck. He is your very life. He throbs through you in a passionate call for intimacy.

Try placing your fingers on your throat's jugular vein. Leave them there, feeling your heart's pulse deep within your body. Meditate on the fact that God *allows* each individual beat. Believe that He is intimately *involved* in each beat. He cares about you. He is concerned over your body's function. Take five minutes and focus on your heart's beating. Make yourself aware of how many functions your body is performing during that time without your conscious control. Imagine what it would be like for one or more of these autonomous activities to cease! Feel the throbbing life that is His gift to you. Then thank God for sustaining you.

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<sup>1</sup> Amos 5:21-24

<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:28