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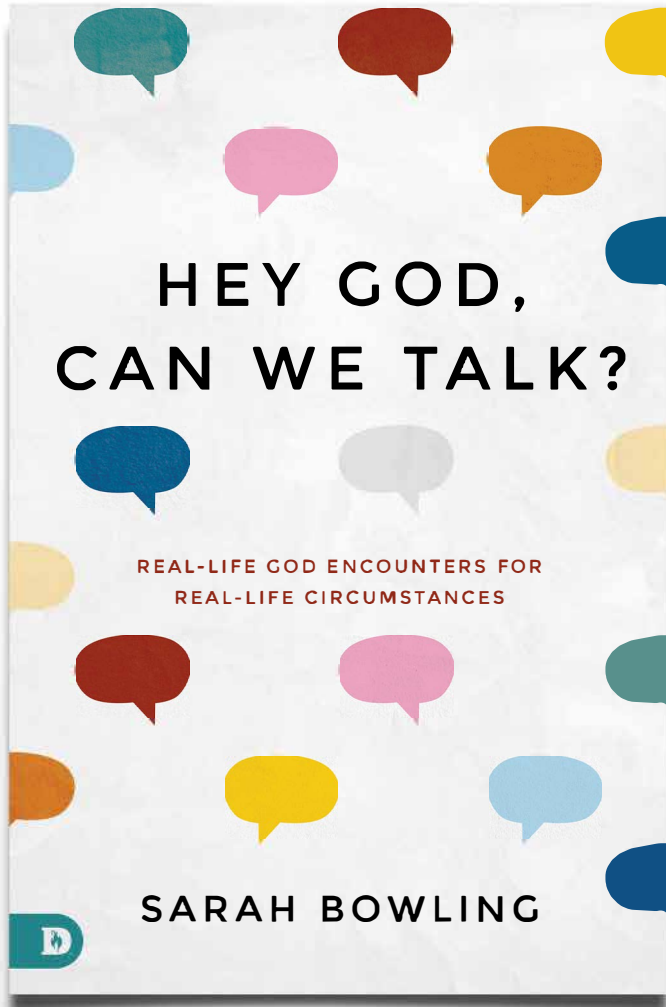
HEY GOD, CAN WE TALK?

REAL-LIFE GOD ENCOUNTERS FOR
REAL-LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES



SARAH BOWLING





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Every relationship has pivot points where a difficult conversation is inevitable—including our relationship with God. But how can we have a DTR (Define the Relationship) with the Divine? Sarah tackles this topic with her typical wit and grace. *Hey God, Can We Talk?* is a template for honesty with God when it matters most.

Mark E. Moore, PhD

Author, *Core 52*

Teaching Pastor, Christ's Church of the Valley

My friend Sarah Bowling has written a book that will bring you into a closer relationship with God than you have ever known. Here is a no-nonsense book that is designed to honor God—both the Word and Spirit—and will bring you joy. If it is intimacy with the Spirit you want, this is your book.

R. T. Kendall

Author, *Total Forgiveness*

Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. All fruitfulness flows from intimacy with Him. To grow in intimacy and bear fruit, we need to hear God's voice and follow His ways. Sarah Bowling is a faithful friend of Jesus with a huge heart for the Body of Christ. Her book *Hey God, Can We Talk?* provides step-by-step methods to hear His voice. Sarah delves deeply into the lives of biblical heroes, vulnerably shares her

story, and interviews friends to present many ways of building relationship with God. I am grateful for Sarah's life and for her passion to help everyone hear God's voice. Read this book, find yourself in the story, and experiment with the Conversation Starters. I pray God will speak to you clearly as you find the model that is right for you. You are created for intimacy and fruitfulness!

Heidi G. Baker, PhD

Iris Global Cofounder and Executive Chairman of the Board

How do I talk with God? As a pastor for more than forty years, I can affirm that this is one of the most frequently asked questions from those who want to have a deeper relationship with God. This book not only provides the practical how-to help for conversing with God, but is also firmly rooted in the stories of Scripture. Sarah's enthusiasm and life experience make for a compelling and life-changing read. Start talking with God today.

Dianne Leman

Founding Pastor, The Vineyard Church of Central Illinois

Sarah is a deep well, and her love for people can be felt in the pages of her book, *Hey God, Can We Talk?* Talking to God can leave us with a sense of overwhelm, underwhelm, or even loneliness; and while Sarah acknowledges the challenges we face in learning to engage with God, she encourages us to grow in our dialogue with ourselves, God, and others. Rather than commands, monologues, or one-sided relationships, we can learn from Scripture and our personal

experience how to lean into reciprocal, honest, and fulfilling relationships. Whatever your faith tradition, this book will help you on your journey, and is a great gift for friends.

Ashley Abercrombie

Author, *Rise of the Truth Teller*

Cohost, Why Tho Podcast

Sarah writes from the deepest places of the heart and soul. If you struggle to know how to talk to God when life makes no sense, here is a powerful conversation starter.

Sheila Walsh

Author, TV Host, Bible Teacher

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How to Keep Your Faith in an Upside Down World



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SARAH BOWLING

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I dedicate this book to Encounter Church in Denver. I deeply treasure and appreciate my church family—their grace, generosity, encouragement, and affording me the opportunity to explore these conversations with you on Wednesday nights!

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FOREWORD

God made us for connection and communication. We are wired for it, and our life of spending time reading the Bible helps us to access our spiritual journey of talking to God. This book is going to help redefine your times of prayer and connection with God. It will help to set your expectation for a new normal. It will also bring you into some honest self-awareness about your own heart and how to present it to God in a way that is authentic as well.

Hearing from God has sometimes been looked at as an art or talent—only certain people are gifted enough for it unless it's an emergency. God is helping us to grasp what He wanted all along—connection and communication. He created us to know His perceptions and thoughts about our world. I love what Paul says in First Corinthians 2 where

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Paul is basically giving us the keys to communication with God. He shares in verse 9 about how the Holy Spirit shows us what no man would normally see. On top of this, the Spirit looks into the deepest parts of God's perspective and shares it with us. He finishes it with a profound thought:

For who has ever intimately known the mind of the Lord Yahweh well enough to become his counselor? Christ has, and we possess Christ's perceptions (1 Corinthians 2:16 The Passion Translation).

Isn't that an amazing thought? We, as children of God filled with His Spirit, have the perceptions of Christ. As we learn how to converse with Him through His Spirit about the hardest and most beautiful parts of life, we will know Him in a way that changes our very real day-to-day existence. I am not just convinced of this; I have lived it, and His deep talks with me have changed my own life's outcome. I am not a self-made man limited to my skills, talents, and intelligence alone, but I have had an outcome based on walking out a very personal relationship with the Spirit of God. I could not have gotten the satisfaction out of my marriage, family, career, and ministry without being shaped by very real conversations with God. It was a two-way street, as love should be. We all go through periods of feeling its one-sided, or we want to hear God more than He wants to speak, but it couldn't be further from the truth. As you learn to honestly talk with God, you will come to realize over and over that He really did initiate the hunger and desire inside of you and He has been pursuing you far deeper than you have pursued Him.

The encouraging thing is we are never too young or old to start walking this out. One of the first real conversations I remember having with God was when I was 13 years old (yes, I was young). I had been raised by Christian parents and I had borrowed their faith and believed it, but I was really ready for my own connection to God to define what my real faith journey was. I was on a soccer field at practice and there was a new kid everyone didn't like because he was so socially awkward. I remember hearing right past my own thoughts, internally: "Go talk to him; he is not who you think he is. He is just really broken and afraid."

I remember saying, "But if I go talk to him everyone will make fun of me; he is so awkward!" and I didn't go that day. I felt really guilty about it over the weekend and didn't know how to talk to God after the first real thing I felt He was asking I wouldn't do, so finally I said, "What do I *not* see that you want to show me?"

It was a simple question, but it's like I borrowed a glimpse of God's love for this kid in my mind's eye, and I couldn't see the pain and rejection, the awkward behavior, the social issues. I was instead seeing a fighter, a leader, an athlete, and a friend. The next week when practice came, I befriended him, and yes, I was made fun of, but now my reputation didn't matter because I had talked to God about this kid and he wasn't who people thought he was. He ended up being my best friend for years. He was an amazing athlete, a great comedian, and really fun to have adventures with. It ruined me for having real conversations with God. I wanted to know more of what He thought that I wasn't in touch with.

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I love the author of this book, Sarah, and her authenticity. She has provided an incredible series of conversation starters through this book. I have needed tools all through my own spiritual growth journey, but I wish this one was here sooner! I have, though, grabbed tools throughout the years to add to my own conversation with God, and they have accelerated so much for me and have helped me avoid the frustration that so many talk about in their personal prayer pursuit of God. This book is so valuable, and I think of my own need, like sometimes out of deep pain or betrayal I needed someone else to help take the lead through their devotional, book, therapy or expression. Other times, when I was learning to really connect to something about God that I was uncomfortable with (like sharing my faith), I needed other written and media tools to help form my own language between the Spirit and my heart.

Ultimately, many Christians will not have the deep or hard conversations with God unless they are in shutdown mode or need breakthrough because they just lack faith that He is that personal and practical, but He is. And there is this book to help you grow into a place of fulfillment in this relationship with God that He has wired you for. Sarah has made it attainable for you, so grab hold of your seat belt—your life is about to change drastically!

Read this book and dive deep into God's mind, heart, and perceptions that you get to share through our Christian heritage.

Shawn Bolz



CAN WE TALK— I ROYALLY SCREWED UP

“I don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” Since I grew up as a pastor’s kid, I had a massively hard time sharing this statement with my folks. It was even more challenging because when I shared this with them, I was about to finish my senior year in college, and I feared that my parents might cut off their financial support for my schooling.

Furthermore, I feared that my words would be hurtful and cut deeply into my mom’s sense of propriety. I was nervous about how she might react when I unzipped my heart and was completely honest. I scheduled this difficult conversation with my parents in a public restaurant hoping that the neutral location would soften the blow. I was greatly relieved when they responded very well to my difficult news.

“Sarah, we loved you when you were a baby and you didn’t believe anything. This love hasn’t changed, and we continue

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to love you regardless of what you believe." My mom went on to say that she knew I was on a faith journey, and she was confident that God would help me find Jesus again. Needless to say, I was abundantly relieved by her response, and I entered my senior year of college continuing to explore various religious traditions and faiths.

This exploration led me to consider Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. To make a long story short, I read *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis and was very attracted to a faith that was grounded in a loving God. After several months of exploring and wrestling with various spiritual questions, I decided to put my faith in Jesus.

One evening shortly after this journey, I had an intimate encounter with God where I felt His love in a really powerful and tangible way. Feeling God's love in that moment was like wave after wave of warmth, tenderness, gentleness, and compassion washing over me, accepting and soothing my orphan soul. What made this even more special was that I recognized that God's love for me had not changed, even when I had walked away from Him to explore other faith traditions. I melted into a puddle of tears, snuggled under my blanket, and fell asleep with the overwhelming assurance that, even though I had walked away from Him, He still loved me.

I share this experience with you as a starting point to talk about the conversations we can have with God when we mess up, walk away from Him, question our faith, struggle with personal issues, and lots more. This is important because all of us screw up in a wide variety of ways, and no one is exempt from being human or flawed, or from

struggling with weaknesses, questions, mistakes, and failures. And when we royally screw up with God, it can be really difficult to navigate some of the potholes and landmines in our faith journey, let alone have any kind of constructive conversation with Him. But there is lots of hope for us when we blow it with God based on the very first conversations in the Bible that happen between God and man.

If you think about it, Adam screwed up royally. God told him not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but he disobeyed. Prior to this decision, Adam and Eve had lived in paradise! There was abundant food, an ease of living, the absence of shame, a peaceful rhythm to life, and a constructive alignment with God. When Adam and Eve screwed up, everything began to unravel. So, what does a conversation with God look like when we royally screw up?

Let's appreciate that the very first documented conversation between God and man happened after Adam disobeyed God. God did talk with Adam before he messed up, but it was not conversational in the sense of dialogue between God and Adam. God had given Adam instructions about taking care of the Garden of Eden, and He gave him clear boundaries about eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The first time we see any dialogue or discussion between God and man is *after* Adam messed up.

I want to make this point clear to you, my dear reader, because we can often have the mindset that our conversations with God are the deepest and most fruitful when we are walking in proper alignment and when our relationship with God is on the straight and narrow. But the conversation

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between God and Adam does not confirm that line of thinking.

Furthermore, how Adam behaved after he screwed up can also mirror some of our actions and mindsets when we mess up. Consider what Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3:7-8 immediately after they ate the forbidden fruit.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

In these verses, we read that Adam and Eve recognized that they were naked and felt ashamed, so they tried to cover themselves. When they heard God walking through the Garden, they hid because they were afraid of Him. It is noteworthy to think about Adam and Eve hiding from God, because we often behave the same way with God when we screw up. We can feel ashamed, unworthy, scared, uncomfortable, or inadequate, and we want to distance or hide ourselves from Him. We can stop attending a Bible study, conveniently forget to do a daily quiet time, immerse ourselves in the daily demands of a busy life, get slack on going to church, or any number of other behaviors that we might employ to create distance from God. These are some ways that we hide from God in our modern living.

Despite our efforts to create distance from God when we screw up, God seeks us out to converse with us for restoring connection and communication. God's behavior in the Garden of Eden toward Adam and Eve demonstrates this principle. *"Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'"* (Genesis 3:9). Let's take a few moments to consider both what God said and what He did not say in this verse.

God could have said some very truthful and even harsh things like, "I made this whole garden for you, Adam, and I gave you one small instruction that you didn't keep." And God could have asked lots of reasonable questions like:

- "How could you screw this up so massively?"
- "Why couldn't you follow My one instruction?"
- "What have you done?"
- "What's wrong with you?"
- "Who do you think you are, disobeying My one instruction?"

In God's question to Adam, *"Where are you?"* it looks as if God is endeavoring to find Adam even though God knows exactly where Adam is. Indeed, among all the choices of questions God could ask, He asks the most relational question possible. God already knows the answers to all these questions, and it was not God's intent to make Adam defensive, shamed, ostracized, berated, or belittled. The "where" question is neither condemning nor dismissive. The question that God asks Adam is meant to communicate to him

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that God is looking for him and wants him to stop hiding or pulling away from Him.

When we screw up with God, we should remember that God does not want us to hide from Him. Instead, He wants to be present with us and to talk about what happened. Even when we mess up, God wants to reconcile us to Himself. That is who God is—genuine love.

Maybe the best example I have seen of God's genuine love relates to a married couple I have known for decades. When I first got to know this couple, I had no idea that the husband was struggling with sexual addiction. I really enjoyed how practical this couple was, their humor, and their passion for God. Over the course of time, I learned about the husband's addiction, his struggles, and his journey out of this terrible captivity. In the husband's journey to freedom and the wife's process of healing her heart, they both experienced genuine love along each step of their recovery process, including the healing of wounds and identity restoration. Today when I talk with this couple, it is clear to me that they live in God's love. They are aware of their past and present struggles; but more importantly, they soak in God's love for them. God's love oozes out of them, full stop.

In addition to being able to see God's love redeem my friends, Adam's son, Cain, is another great example to study. Cain screwed up royally. It is possible that Cain's failure was even worse than Adam's, because in this instance, God intervened to try to stop Cain from messing up.

For a little backstory, Cain was a farmer. His brother, Abel, was a shepherd. Both brothers brought an offering to God

that reflected their profession. Cain's offering was fruits and vegetables from his harvest. In contrast, Abel's offering was an animal from his flock. We read in Genesis 4:4-5 that God had regard for Abel's offering but was not impressed with what Cain had offered. This made Cain upset.

And this is where God steps into the struggle and tries to prevent Cain from doing something rash by attempting to start a potentially constructive conversation. God speaks to Cain and says,

Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it (Genesis 4:6-7).

Notice that God asks Cain three questions, all of which circle around what is in Cain's heart. God wants to have dialogue with Cain about what is bothering him so intensely, and He attempts to help Cain get to a more constructive and healthier place in his thoughts. God is trying to prevent a royal screwup by asking Cain to sit with what is in his heart and talk about this with God. But Cain never answered God's questions. That is problematic. Cain did not dialogue with God on what was bothering him, so the issues were not resolved constructively.

Have you ever had something troubling in your soul that became worse over time? Each of us has experienced some major difficulties in life that could include employment disasters, marital meltdowns, emotional earthquakes,

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financial catastrophes, relationship debacles, and heaps of other major struggles. I suggest that it is possible we could avoid such major catastrophes if we would step into the difficult conversations with God earlier in the timeline, perhaps dialoguing with God before the critical mass meltdown. I think His questions to Cain are also relevant to us today.

“Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? Why are you upset?”

Instead of giving God the silent treatment and not answering His questions—as Cain did—I would propose that it is more constructive and healthier to actually engage in these difficult conversations with God. Maybe such a conversation would include something like:

- “God, I’m angry because You put me in a dysfunctional home.”
- “God, I’m upset because I didn’t get the promotion I wanted at work.”
- “God, I’m majorly disappointed because my marriage hasn’t turned out the way I thought it would.”

These kinds of conversations require us to be honest with both ourselves and God. Let’s appreciate that honesty is an essential ingredient for any intimate relationship, and it is vital for a constructive conversation.

But alas, Cain let the wound in his soul fester and grow to such intensity that he killed his brother when they were in the field together. He didn’t dialogue with God before he murdered his brother despite God’s attempt to engage and

sit with Cain in his frustration and anger. Cain, therefore, royally screwed up.

And what happens when we royally screw up? God still endeavors to dialogue with us. In Genesis 4:9-15, we see the dialogue between God and Cain. That dialogue begins with, *“Where is Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”* (Genesis 4:9).

Similar to God’s question to Adam, God asks Cain where his brother is, even though He knows exactly what has transpired. Again, we see God endeavoring to draw Cain into a dialogue. Cain continues to resist the conversation by being deceptive, coy, and dismissive.

I am always sad when I read about Cain because I think there could have been several different and better outcomes to this story. I think Cain could have talked with God at the outset and expressed his frustration and disappointment, and I think Cain could have been forthcoming and told God that he had killed his brother.

Cain chose not to dialogue with God, and he chose to remain angry. This resulted in him killing his brother. And Cain was deceptive with God and did not repent from his destructive decision. Consequently, his decisions separated him from God. Cain lived the rest of his days wandering the earth instead of cultivating it, as he had done before.

As we finish this portion of the chapter, it is helpful to think about some lessons we can apply from the conversations that Adam and Cain had with God, particularly when we royally screw up with Him.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Similar to Adam and Eve, are you afraid of God?
2. Where are the places in your life that you might be hiding from God?
3. Similar to Cain being disappointed that his vegetation offering was not well received, when are you disappointed with God? When do you not get the attention from God that you want, and are you willing to ask “why”?
4. Are you willing to let God help you grow?

CONVERSATION STARTER: EXAMEN

When we screw up, having a conversation with God can be problematic. We can have a wide array of feelings that make a conversation very difficult, such as feeling guilty, condemned, unworthy, afraid, anxious, inadequate, soiled, uncomfortable, and even numb. Maybe similar to Adam we try to hide from God, or like Cain we don't step into dialogue with God.

In an effort to start a conversation with God when you have screwed up royally, I would like to propose a daily exercise or platform for talking with God. This exercise comes from the Jesuit or Ignatian tradition, and it is called the *Examen*.

I appreciate that the name does not sound very appealing, particularly when we have really messed up; nevertheless, the name is the shortened form of the formal Ignatian practice, “Examination of Conscience.” The purpose is to train us to recognize God in our daily living, regardless of how much we mess up or the severity of our failures.

Before I describe the steps for the Examen, it is helpful to remember some basic things about who God is from the conversations He had with Adam and Cain. Remember that God initiated conversations with Adam and Cain both before and after they screwed up. Their disobedience did not diminish God’s faithfulness to them. Furthermore, God’s conversations with these men were from a relational position and not a position of condemnation. Maybe it is helpful to remember that because God is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—this means that God is inherently relational by His sheer identity. And probably more important than anything is to remember what God’s Word says in John 3:16-17:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

No matter what you have done, God loves you. That love does not change, because God is love and is unchanging. When you begin this Conversation Starter, it will be helpful to remember that God wants to connect with you regardless of what you have or haven’t done. Let’s get started!

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The Examen is a conversation with God that endeavors to recognize God's presence and participation in our daily lives. To help accomplish this goal, there are five simple steps that can help us converse with God and recognize His presence. You could do these steps in the morning before you leave your home, or you could do them in the middle of the day, possibly over your lunch break. You could also do them at the end of the day before you lay down to sleep for the night.

There is lots of flexibility to this Conversation Starter, and you might find it helpful to experiment with some different times or methods for these steps. For example, you can do these steps by writing in a journal. You could make a note-card for each step and carry them with you to work through during your morning or evening commute. You could find a comfortable chair in your home and say each step aloud. Play around with what environment, timing, or techniques best facilitate conversing with God.

Perhaps what is most important with this exercise is not merely following each step, but also giving space and time at the end of each step for God's participation in this process. When you give God some room for input, it is possible that you will hear some words from God in your heart. It is also possible that you might feel some comfort, warmth, strength, loving-kindness, or grace. Maybe you will have a sense of cozy peace washing over you.

At some point in this journey, you might also sense God correcting you. Or you could also feel God giving you wisdom, encouragement, or direction. Maybe it would be helpful to keep notes on your phone or in a notebook about what you sense from God for each day with this Conversation Starter.

The following are the steps, along with some explanation, to help you apply this as your daily routine.¹

1. Gratitude

In this step, you take an inventory of things that happened during the previous day for which you are grateful. You could start this conversation by saying something like, “God, thank You very much for helping me with the dicey conversation at work. Thank You for helping me get out the door on time. Thank You for helping me to be gracious rather than impatient with my spouse when [he or she] came home from work. Thank You for the creative solution with my schedule when I accidentally double-booked myself. Thank You for helping me cook dinner even when I was tired and didn’t feel like it. Thank You for giving me wisdom to answer the hostile email from an in-law. Thank You for helping me pay my bills this month.”

I sincerely *love* listing out all the things that happened in the previous day for which I am thankful! It is very energizing, and it gives me hope that God will participate in my current day. It also helps align my perspective to watch for God’s participation in my real-time living. Being thankful is a good way to start a conversation with God: “*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name*” (Psalm 100:4).

2. Review

In this step, you will look over the preceding day—or a recent increment of time—and make note of when you

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sensed, heard, or noticed God. This is kind of like watching the recent day play on a movie screen in your imagination and looking for the places, experiences, or events where you notice God being involved. For example, as you think back over the day, maybe you received a text message from someone who was really encouraging and unexpected. Or maybe you had a conversation with someone, and something said resonated with your heart or had an impact on your soul. Perhaps you felt God with you in the car during rush-hour traffic, and God's presence made the commute more bearable or even enjoyable.

Doing this review gives God room to teach you how to pay attention to His participation in your daily living. Since we know that God is ever-present, we would be wise to let God coach and train us to recognize His presence! Again, you could write these observations in a notebook or journal, or you could just take mental notes of these God moments as you reflect on the recent time.

3. Sorrow

After going back through the previous day and looking for God, it is also helpful to look back and sense when you could have caused some pain or sorrow to God. What could have been some of your actions, words, decisions, behaviors, or attitudes for which you are remorseful? Did you say some sharp or hurtful words to your mate? Were you snarky or impatient with the bus driver or a fellow commuter? Did you post something cutting or sarcastic on someone's

Facebook wall? Did you say something that made politics more important than relationships?

As you look back over the previous day or brief span of time, it is important to consider our actions, words, attitudes, and decisions that could be displeasing to God. In this step, we invite Holy Spirit to convict us of behaviors that we might normally justify or ignore. This should be an important part of our conversation with God, particularly if we intend to grow closer to Him. This step has the potential to help us avoid a major screwup in the future by giving Holy Spirit the opportunity to help us with conviction in our daily living. It can help us recognize immediately when we have messed up, rather than letting stuff bloom into major issues.

4. Forgiveness

In this step, after you have identified the actions or situations in which you have caused pain, it is appropriate to ask for God's forgiveness. This process happens not only in the broad strokes and generalities, but also for the specific actions, words, decisions, attitudes, and thoughts that were displeasing to God.

It is one thing to feel sorrow in your heart for something, but when you speak out to God exactly what you did wrong and ask for forgiveness, it facilitates another level of intimacy. When we ask for forgiveness, we can be confident that we receive it: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Receiving forgiveness is a powerful experience that can help us grow in our connection with God.

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The experiences I have had with my friends, kids, and husband prove this true for me. I'll never forget several years ago when I came to understand that my snarky comments to my husband were disrespectful and cutting. He was gracious for a long time, but suddenly it dawned on me how hurtful I had been to him with my disrespectful comments. When the light turned on for me with this revelation, I went to my husband and apologized sincerely for my disrespect. I then made a conscientious effort to honor him better. He forgave me graciously, and his forgiveness was a helpful ingredient in our marriage.

If this is true with our human relationships, how much more does God's forgiveness facilitate connection and intimacy with Him? In this part of your conversation with God, I would encourage you to pause to give yourself the opportunity to hear and experience God's forgiveness in your life—not only for the possible recent events, but also for the big struggles with which you might be wrestling.

5. Grace

In the final step for this conversation, it is helpful to ask both for God's grace that you will need for the next day and the ability to see God's presence more clearly. I really love this step because it faces forward and helps us look with hope to the future. Many people focus on and get stuck in the quagmire of the past. Asking for God's grace for the next day and asking for His help to be able to sense His presence are other ways to express Paul's words:

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and **reaching forward** to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).*

In this step of your conversation with God, let yourself be available and present with God's grace. His grace is powerful, transformational, and present every day with us. Each day is filled with God's fingerprints of grace that are ready and available for our discovery. I encourage you to ask God to prepare you to see and experience His grace in the upcoming hours or during the next day, without letting your focal point get too far into the future.

I have found the Jesuit Examen to be a very helpful Conversation Starter in my daily journey with God. I have used the whole Examen for extended periods of time, and I have used pieces of the Examen throughout my daily routines and in conversations with God. I can appreciate that for some people the Examen might be too regimented, or it could feel possibly heavily religious or legalistic. But perhaps a helpful perspective to the Examen is to think of it in simple and conversational terms, thereby ridding it of religious rigor and legalistic bondage. Try it on for size and give it an honest go with some time and purposeful engagement. You might be pleasantly surprised at the adventure that God has waiting for you.

For further reflection and note-taking see “Examen” on page 226 in the Epilogue.

ENDNOTE

1. James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 92-97.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Bowling is on a mission to connect everyone with the heart of God while living genuine love. Led by the Holy Spirit and anchored in the Word, Sarah seeks to inspire all to know the unconditional and transformational love of God in our daily lives. She is a discerning Bible teacher, an international speaker, and a global humanitarian. Sarah cohosts with her mother, Marilyn Hickey, a daily television program, *Today with Marilyn and Sarah*, reaching a potential daily audience of 2.2 billion households worldwide.

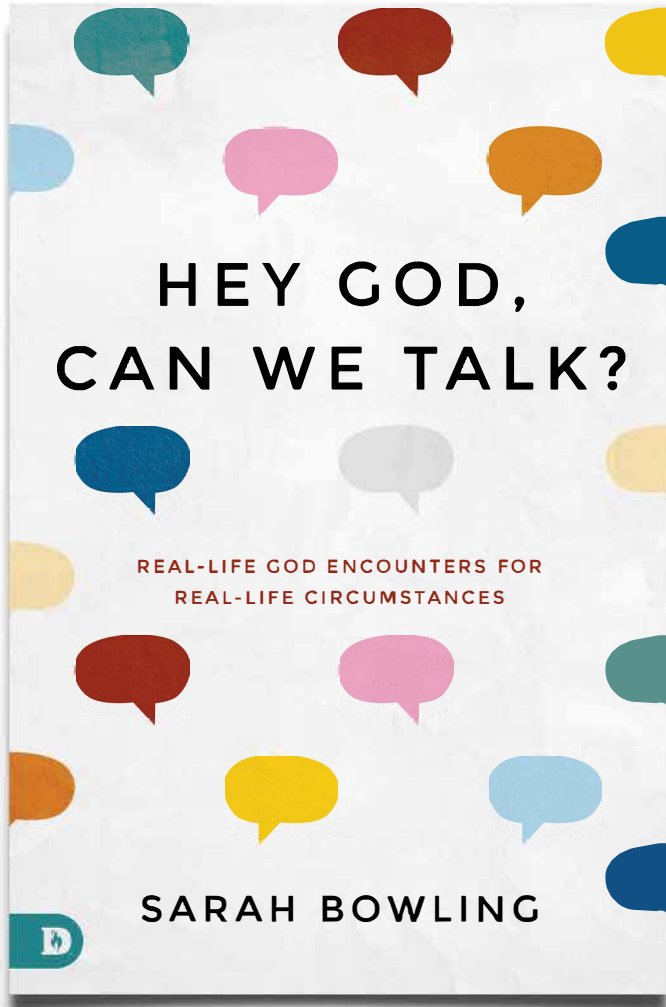
Visit the website: www.livinggenuinelove.org to stay current with her videos, blogs, events, and much more! Sarah has authored numerous books including: *How to Keep Your Faith in an Upside Down World*; *Hanging by a Thread: The Saving Moses Journey*; *Jesus Chicks*; *Heavenly Help*; *In Step*

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Sarah is the founder of Saving Moses, a global humanitarian organization saving babies (five years and under) every day by meeting the most urgent and intense survival needs where help is least available. Saving Moses funds and establishes revolutionary programs in nations of the world that record the highest infant mortality rate and where babies of sex workers are most susceptible to exploitation. Visit the website at www.savingmoses.org.

Sarah and her husband, Reece, have three children and are lead pastors of Encounter Church in Denver, Colorado. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oral Roberts University and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Missouri.



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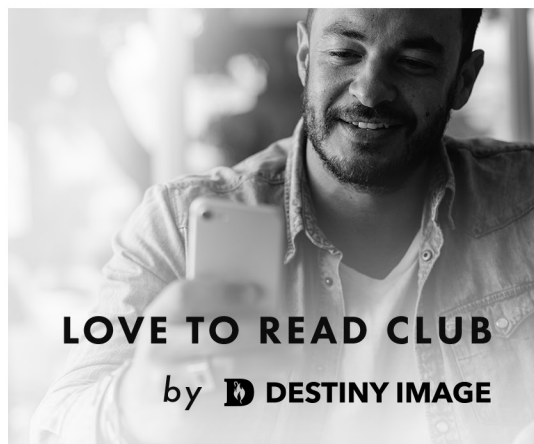
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