

# Nearer to

CLOSING

THE

DISTANCE

BETWEEN

YOU

AND

# GOD

YOUR  
CREATOR

WAYMAN MING JR.

FOREWORD BY **JOHN BEVERE**

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**CLOSING THE DISTANCE  
BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CREATOR**

**WAYMAN MING JR.**



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For my wife, Kimberly,  
who is a godly woman and my biggest encourager.

For my sons—Spencer and Garrett,  
who are even now making an impact as godly men,  
seeking to make a worldwide difference.

For my daughter, Grace,  
who is God's special gift to her dad,  
and a light in the midst of the darkness.

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# Foreword

All of us have friends or people we admire and desire to be closer with. They hold a special place in our hearts, and spending time with them is a treat, especially when it comes at their invitation. If needed, we will clear our calendars and reschedule other appointments to make time for them. Such a request to be in their company fills us with joy and excitement.

God is no different. He is passionate about His relationship with you, and He has made a way for you to draw close to Him. In fact, He went to great lengths to restore what was lost from the beginning. And because of the finished work of Christ Jesus, we can come boldly into His presence, without guilt, shame or condemnation.

Within the pages of Scripture, we find numerous invitations to draw closer to God and to seek Him while He may be found. The incredible invitation from the Creator of the universe is not just to worship Him from afar with words and rituals, but to enter a relationship so meaningful and intimate that you know His heart and He knows yours.

*Foreword*

In *Nearer to God*, my friend Wayman Ming provides a road map that will guide you into the God chaser's greatest desire—the presence of God! This journey is not a matter of miles, but a matter of experience. And as you seek His nearness, you will find yourself treading on sacred ground. If you have been longing for a deeper relationship with God, then I am so excited that you're holding this book in your hands. Intimacy with God awaits you; now it is time to draw near.

John Bevere, bestselling author and minister;  
co-founder, Messenger International

# Acknowledgments

When authors write books, they sometimes feel like free-throw shooters at the end of a big basketball game. They step up to the line on the assumption that they will make the shot, but they are not quite sure. Somehow, we authors believe our book will make a difference, but there is always a question mark at the end of the sentence. If *Nearer to God—Closing the Distance between You and Your Creator* somehow impacts you, it certainly will have been enhanced by the following:

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations.

Ephesians 3:20–21

At the end of a movie, there is always a list of credits given to the behind-the-scenes people who helped in the production process. Big thank-yous to the following people who have helped me make the free-throw at the end of the big game:

## *Acknowledgments*

To my wife, Kimberly, who encourages me all the time to live for an audience of One. (You have always inspired me to stand up and be counted whatever the cost.)

To my son Spencer, who is wise beyond his years. (You have the potential to shake nations with your words and pen. Simply hear God's voice and obey God's voice. Thank you for believing in your lifelong Coach.)

To my son Garrett, who has more talent in his little finger than I have in my entire body. (Always serve the Lord with humility and maintain a teachable spirit. God gives grace and blesses the humble. I love you, Vazu.)

To my daughter, Grace, who is the apple of her dad's eye. (You are my favorite girl. Thank you for inspiring me.)

To my mother, Karen Ming Kliewer, who lives vicariously through her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. (You will never understand how much of an inspiration you are to all of us. You have modeled prayer in our family and inspired us to become just like you when we grow up.)

To my brothers, Jared and Brian Ming, who are always there for me. (Thank you for inspiring me to enjoy the journey.)

To my father- and mother-in-law, Doyle and Shirley Thomlison. (You have always been a cup of cold water in a dry and weary land. Thank you for loving me as your son.)

# 1

## Interrupting Life as Usual

Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means “God is with us.”

Matthew 1:23 NLT

In early 2020, the horrific consequences of COVID-19 impacted *everything!* Very few of us ever anticipated a global lockdown. Certainly even as business offices were closed and shelter-in-place orders were given, no one in the community of faith expected the closure of church gatherings. Yet, that is what happened. For months, we remained sequestered in our homes with no way to engage in church activities.

When the world came to a standstill, Christians of all ages and stages of spiritual life were confronted with how they had compartmentalized their faith. The “sometimes-show-up Christians” took their spiritual temperature and realized that

attending church on Sunday while living for self on Monday could never sustain them in the midst of crisis. Opening the Bible sometimes and leaving it closed the rest of the time was only adding to their spiritual angst. Even the “always-show-up Christians” recognized that to engage in church activities was not the same as daily devotion to God. In fact for many of them, their attempt to be faithful by maintaining a full calendar of church events had only impeded their full pursuit of God.

Since God cares compassionately for the hurting, I certainly do not wish to minimize the tragedy of the circumstances surrounding COVID-19. However, I cannot help but wonder: What if God occasionally allows disasters in order to interrupt life as usual and begin a process of reforming His people? What if He uses tribulation in the world to remind us that the Church is not a building or a place but a *people* who pursue the person and presence of God? Stated simply, what if God allows divine interruptions to help close the distance between Him and His people?

My purpose in writing this book is not necessarily to offer a comprehensive discussion of the “why” behind disaster—why a gracious God would allow a pandemic like the coronavirus, or why a good God would allow pain and suffering. In fact, this book is not really about disaster at all. Instead, birthed out of a passion for drawing nearer to God, it is about how to *respond* in times of disaster.

Throughout history, God has interrupted life as usual with wakeup calls, beginning with Adam and Eve, when God interrupted their game of “hide-and-seek” in the bushes. During the time of Noah, “God took one look and saw how bad it was, everyone corrupt and corrupting—life itself corrupt to the core” (Genesis 6:12 MESSAGE) and decided to interrupt it with a flood. For Moses, divine interruption came through a burning bush. Abraham’s effort to sacrifice his son was interrupted by a ram

in the thicket. Throughout the era of the kings and prophets, culture and conquest were interrupted through supernatural signs and miraculous wonders. Then after four hundred years of silence during the intertestamental years, the ultimate interruption took place:

Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means “God is with us.”

Matthew 1:23 NLT (See also Galatians 4:4–5)

Humankind witnessed the most extravagant example of how God closed the distance—the coming of Immanuel, which means “God is with us.”

From that moment on, the invitation for a personal relationship with God has remained at the forefront of God’s mission on earth. For some, such as the disciples, Jesus simply shows up and invites them to leave everything behind and follow Him. Others, like Saul who would later become Paul, He abruptly knocks off their high horse into the dirt and calls for a radical change of purpose. Though Paul is an example of one who responded to God with a yes, many others, such as the rich young ruler, choose to walk away from Him. Regardless, in every case God has a reason for His divine interruption of life as usual.

As we look at the 21st century, I believe God is using chaotic circumstances, whether human-made (like 9/11) or naturally induced (such as the coronavirus or Hurricane Katrina), as opportunities for anyone and everyone to come closer to Him. To close the distance between ourselves and God, we must traverse a two-way street: The initial interruption belongs to Him, while the lifelong response belongs to us. As the Scripture declares, those who do not know God can seek and find Him if they search for Him with all their hearts (see Jeremiah 29:13).

Even those who already know Him must engage in the search. Pastors and church leaders must diligently seek Him. Christian organizations and denominations must intentionally embark on a pursuit of Him. God is eager and willing to close the distance with us if we are willing to close the distance with Him.

My family once had a garage sale, and one of the items we sold was my children's LEGO set. As preschoolers, my sons would construct grand creations that had no recognizable form. Only after Dad sat down and began to take the pieces apart and put them back together again did a purposeful piece of architecture take shape. As you read through the pages of *Nearer to God: Closing the Distance between You and Your Creator*, may our Dad in heaven begin to take the pieces of your life apart and put them back together again in a way that will help you understand both why life as usual has been interrupted and how to begin a sacred cooperation that will close the distance between yourself and Him.

## Personal REFLECTION

Throughout history, God has interrupted life as usual with wakeup calls to close the distance with humankind. Often, the worst of times can serve as inspirational moments and become the best of times, especially when our attention is turned toward God. Allow this premise to launch you toward a brand-new journey of closing the distance between you and your Creator. Reflect on the following questions.

1. As you look back on your life, can you think of some specific events that seem to have been God's interruptions of your life as usual, designed to get your attention?

2. How did these past events attract you to God—or distract you from drawing nearer to Him?
3. How are current events attracting or distracting you as far as drawing nearer to God is concerned?
4. Reflect on the notion that closing the distance with God is really a two-way street: The initial interruption belongs to Him, while the lasting response belongs to you.
5. Are you willing to pursue God and to respond to Him?

## Personal PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, today I want to begin a journey to come nearer to You. I no longer want to settle for where I have been or even where I am right now. I want to go somewhere I have never been in my relationship with You. I want You to interrupt my “life as usual” and to close the distance between us. I want the circumstances of life to attract me toward You and not distract me away from You. Thank You for initiating the relationship. Now help me to engage in a lasting response. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, Amen.*

## Group CHALLENGE

Even though our journey toward God is extremely personal, we often find inspiration from those who travel on the same path. Allow your reflections concerning your own pursuit to encourage others in their pursuit. Here are some prompts:

1. As you reflect on your own decision to come nearer to God, what would you say to those who are considering the same decision?

2. At some point, people will decide to allow their chaotic circumstances, whether human-made or naturally induced, either to attract them toward God or to distract them away from God. Discuss this notion as a group.
3. Reflect on the idea that closing the distance with God is really a two-way street: The initial interruption belongs to Him, while the lasting response belongs to us.
4. Discuss the specific events in the past that you can now see have pointed to God interrupting “life as usual” to get your attention.
5. At the end of this chapter, you read the following statement: “Only after Dad sat down and began to take the pieces apart and put them back together again did a purposeful piece of architecture take shape.” As a group, discuss the significance of this.