

A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP *with God*

A REVISED FOUR LESSON DEVOTIONAL



THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL COMMENTARY SERIES

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1

RESPONDING TO GOD AS A PERSON

The question of how to have a relationship with God is one that many people ponder sincerely. But the answer cannot be found in a mere list of steps or rituals. Growing a genuine relationship with God requires understanding and acknowledgment that He is a Person, with thoughts, emotions, and a will of His own. This chapter explores the essence of a true relationship with God and the barriers that often hinder it.

Breaking Down Barriers

Throughout history, various ideologies and beliefs have created barriers that hinder the development of a true relationship with God. By recognizing God as a person with emotions and a plan, we can break down these barriers and enter a relationship that reflects reality and experience with Him.

Recognizing God as a Person

Jesus was a person, who displayed personality and had personal relationships with several people. When considering a relationship with God, it is crucial to understand that God is not an abstract concept, theology, or a mere philosophy. He is a person with a mind, emotions, and a will. Just as we desire to be heard, known, and understood, God too desires a genuine relationship with us. When we approach Him as a person, acknowledging His thoughts, emotions, and choices, we enter the door to an authentic relationship with Him.

1. His Mind: *“who has known the mind of the LORD that He may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”*
(1 Corinthians 2:16)

God thinks, has opinions, and has ideas about pretty much every subject. His communication with us is often a reflection of what’s on His mind. When entering a relationship with Him, it’s essential to consider what God thinks and values.

God is not a distant or impersonal being, a theology, a religion, a denomination, a formula, or a philosophy. He genuinely thinks and has strong opinions on many issues. His thoughts matter more than anyone else who ever lived on the planet, and He reveals them to us through various means, primarily Scripture. It is important to value what He thinks, just as we want others to value our thoughts and opinions in our relationships. The Bible is God’s autobiography in one sense. It includes what He has done, how we all got here, and where we go when we die. He tells us why the world is the way that it is. It’s all in the Bible, God’s “Autobiography.” When I want to know about a famous person’s life, I read their autobiography to better understand what they think about life and their values, views and accomplishments in this world. This is one way of looking at the Scripture. I truly believe that when God sees us interested in the Bible, as we read it, He comes to us, the Author, and speaks to us. It’s His way of encouraging a relationship with us.

Yet, many of us have Bibles sitting in our homes and rarely read them. This is telling God that we either don’t understand or don’t care what He has to say or what He thinks about life.

Imagine trying to have a relationship with a person who doesn’t care what you think or what you say! This is why He is not interested in relationships with certain people, simply because they don’t care about knowing Him, they do not care what He thinks, or what He says.

To have a genuine relationship with God, we need to respect His thoughts and opinions. Even though He will not tell us everything He knows about a subject, what He does tell us, we should take to

heart. Obviously, God will not be very impressed with our thoughts, but He respects them and takes them into consideration for the purpose of having an open and honest relationship with us.

2. His Emotions: *“When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” (John 11:33)*

“And do not grieve (sadden) the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were marked for the day of salvation.” (Ephesians 4:30)

Some may find it challenging to accept that God has emotion, fearing it diminishes His sovereignty. The faulty thinking behind that idea is that if I can get God angry, I am in a way, able to control Him. I can intentionally do things to get Him angry and thus have a form of control over Him. This, of course, is nonsense because He already knows why a person would try that. I’m sure He gets a chuckle out of our feeble attempts. These theological ideas are generally told by people who really do not know Him, although they might be seminary professors.

Despite these objections, the Scriptures describe God as having emotions. He can express anger (Jesus filled tables in the temple, and chased the money changers out), God says He is jealous over His people, we see him express joy, love, and kindness in scripture. Having emotions is an integral part of any genuine relationship, and it is no different when it comes to a relationship with God. Can you imagine having a relationship with a person with no emotion? It would be very limiting, to say the least. Understanding and acknowledging God’s emotions, opens the door to a beautiful love relationship with Him.

“The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

For a relationship to thrive, there must be mutual communication and emotional connection. Just as we long to be heard and understood by those we love; God desires the same from us. Through prayer, praise, worship, and scripture reading, we can

open ourselves to receive His guidance and communicate our deepest desires and feelings to Him.

- 3. His Will:** *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*
(Romans 12:2)

As a person, God make choices and decisions. He initiates communication and activity with people, and He also responds to their initiatives. To have a meaningful relationship with Him, it must be a mutual experience, based on both parties’ choices and decisions.

God is a supernatural Person with a will—He initiates contact with us, reaching out to communicate and interact with His creation by His Holy Spirit. In return, we can also make a conscious choice to respond to Him, expressing our willingness to engage in a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

God initiates with people and will often respond to their needs, as a way of expressing His care for them. You might call it God’s way of introducing Himself, and asking if we would believe Him and allow Him to live His life in us. Engaging in a relationship with Him must be a choice based on conviction that He is God. We must see what God is offering and what type of relationship He is offering, instead of the relationship we think He should have with us. People are often asking God for things He is not offering and rejecting what He is offering, mainly His mercy and forgiveness through the death of His only Son.

Approaching God with Respect

Having a relationship with God requires mutual communication, emotional connection, and voluntary engagement. It is not a forced relationship, nor can it be obtained through following rigid procedures or studying theology alone. Instead, we must approach God as a person with respect for His thoughts, emotions, and decisions.

A Voluntary Relationship

A relationship with God is not forced upon anyone. It is a voluntary experience. A choice we make to first respond to Him, then engage with Him, just as He chooses to engage with us. This mutual willingness to participate is free from coercion or obligation.

Reflect and answer these questions, regarding recognizing God as a Person.

His Mind:

1. What are some ways that you can consider what God thinks and values? _____

2. How can you value what God thinks, in your relationship with Him? _____

His Emotions:

1. How can you recognize and respond to God's emotions, in your relationship with Him? _____

2. What are some ways that you can enter His joy? _____

His Will:

1. How can you discern God's will for your life? _____

2. Is God at the center of your life? _____

Conclusion

In seeking a relationship with God, it is crucial to understand that Jesus is a Person with thoughts, emotion, and a will.

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power; when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”
(Hebrews 1:1-4)

By recognizing and respecting these aspects of God’s person, we experience reality of who He is in truth. He is not a special building, a theology, or a denomination, but the living God who is a Person. Very rarely does a human relationship not require commitment to work. Why would we think it different with the Lord? Do we expect Him to do all the work, make all the sacrifices while we kick back? Would I appreciate being in a relationship with a person like that? Absolutely not!

To have a personal interactive relationship with God, we must go beyond rigid procedures, and theological study, and approach Him as a Person whom we desire to know, with whom we desire a genuine relationship.

By acknowledging God as a person with a mind, emotion, and a will, we engage in a more meaningful and authentic relationship with the living God.

2

THE QUALITIES OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

In this chapter, we will continue talking about a relationship with God by delving into four essential qualities of a relationship with God. Many individuals, whether believers or non-believers, struggle to perceive God as a genuine person. However, it is crucial to understand that recognizing God's personhood lays the foundation for establishing a relationship with Him. Throughout this chapter, we will focus on four key qualities – Communication, Participation, Presence, and Intimacy – that are fundamental in cultivating a flourishing relationship with God.

1. Communication: Hearing God's Voice in Prayer

Communication is vital for any relationship and God is the originator of communication. He invented communication, and He obviously does not have a communication problem or any difficulty in expressing Himself. He created languages and can confuse language as He did at the Tower of Babel. Today, there are thousands of languages spoken on the earth. He also made different kinds of animals that communicate with each other, some with a symbiotic relationship with us. God is a Master of Communication, and He knows how to speak to us, perhaps through this devotional. The challenge is often in our ability to recognize His voice.

John 10:3 says, "The gatekeeper opens the gate for Him, and the sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out."

If you feel that God never speaks to you, you should pause all the unnecessary activities in your life and ask Him why. You should ask, “God, why don’t you speak to me? Are you ignoring me? Is there anything I am doing or not doing that displeases you?” You should spend some time in the Bible tonight and sincerely ask Him from your heart. You should tell Him that you would love for Him to be the center of your life and ask Him what He wants you to know or to do. Then wait and don’t say anything else. Keep seeking Him daily until He speaks to you, in His time and His way. Humans love to communicate and create different means of communication. For example, the telegraph, telephone, text messaging, emails, faxing, social media, television, and radio. The list goes on and on. These are different ways we communicate. So, as we wait for God to answer us, know that He too communicates in many different ways. When He speaks, it is crystal clear, if you are not sure, ask Him again to confirm it.

It is essential to know that God is always communicating with His children. Silence is also a form of communication. If God is silent, make sure it’s not because you are offending Him in some way. God wants to communicate with us, just like any person, and as we grow closer to Him, He will make His communication clear, and confirm it. Either through Scripture, in our spirit, or through other natural or supernatural means.

When we are not sure what God is saying to us, we need to be patient, allowing His voice to become clear. There will be no doubt when He communicates. As our relationship with God develops, we will discover that He communicates with us in various ways, whether through His Word, inner promptings in our spirit, or external circumstances. This communication strengthens the relationship between Him and us.

If I am not sure if God has spoken to me, I always take the position that He has not spoken. In other words, God knows how to communicate clearly, crystal clear. If there is any doubt

about His communications to me, I always wait and ask Him again to confirm it, as I do want to serve and please Him.

2. Participation: Engaging in God's Plans

A thriving relationship involves actively participating in each other's lives. We should be open to joining God in His life and plans, as He has prepared good works for us and invites us to participate with Him. *Ephesians 2:10* states, "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" Just as Adam and Eve had good works to do, such as naming the animals, filling the earth, and ruling over it, we also have good works that God has made for us. We should understand that God is the Creator and He does what only He can do, like creating the garden and the animals. However, He gives us the opportunity to participate with Him in making the world a beautiful place.

As we find and do the good works that God has planned for us to partner with Him, we should be grateful for these amazing opportunities and enjoy the closeness and uniqueness that they bring. We should value these moments that God has given us to serve Him, such as helping a person, talking with a person, serving in our fellowship, or reaching out to people. We have special moments with God when He allows us to participate with Him, just like we do with other people. These moments help us know God's love and life better. God also wants to be part of our lives, where He will join us in the things that we care about or need. Often, He will offer His help in situations that we cannot handle by ourselves.

3. Presence: Being Attentive to God's Presence

"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." (Psalms 46:10)

God's presence, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, is always with us. Similar to how we cannot feel the blood in our veins, but our life-giving blood is always in us. However, being truly present requires attentiveness and mindfulness of each other. Despite God's constant presence with us, there are times when we are not fully aware or attentive to His closeness. For example, several years ago I was on a dinner date with my wife Lynda where I was distracted by my phone's emails, even though they were not urgent. She gently asked me, "Dan, can you please be present with me?" I was there with her physically, but not mentally or emotionally. We can do the same thing with the Lord, almost ignore Him. He is in our hearts, but we are not in His. So, we need to develop a deeper awareness of His presence. When we are fully conscious of His presence, we experience His will, a deeper joy, peace, and understanding of God's eternal life and plan for us. We experience His genuine desire for a wonderful love relationship.

It is important to note that God not only wants us to be part of His life, but desires to be part of our lives.

4. Intimacy: Embracing Exclusive Closeness

Intimacy in a relationship means sharing exclusive and personal moments with each other. In *Genesis 28:10–15*, the Lord appeared to Jacob in a dream, giving him the promises of Abraham, a vow to be with Jacob wherever he goes, and to bring him back to the land of promise. Jacob was surprised that the Lord was in that place. Modern Christians don't tend to associate God's holiness with physical locations. We think of God as being everywhere. However, ancient people believed that certain spots were set aside by God as places to connect with Him, like the Tabernacle or Temple. God honored that idea back then, instructing Israel to treat places that His presence dwelt, as special and holy. In the new covenant, God desires to connect with us everywhere, He also shares intimate

times with us through personal revelation. He shows us something in our lives, speaks to us directly, answers a specific prayer, or meets us in different ways. These are special moments that we cherish with our Creator. To have an eternal relationship with God, we must approach our relationship with humility and openness, letting Him shape and define it. These intimate moments, revealed by His Word, Spirit, and divine encounters, bring us closer to Him. Deepening our knowledge of His life and love for us. Much like the exclusive closeness between two people in their own intimate moments.

The Bible: A Unique Window to God's Person

Our relationship with God is founded on His self-revelation through the Bible and Spirit. Just as an autobiography offers insights into an individual's life and character, the Bible reveals God's thoughts, emotions, decisions, and work throughout history. Digging into Scripture allows us to know Him more deeply and fosters a greater understanding of our God.

Removing Obstacles to a Fulfilling Relationship

In our desire to have a relationship with God, we must be mindful that we often hold beliefs about what a relationship with God should be like, but they may not align with reality. It is crucial to approach our relationship with God with humility, fully aware that He is God, allowing Him to shape and define the relationship we will have.

May we embrace communication, participation, presence, and intimacy as we grow closer to Him each day.

**As we conclude this chapter, spend some time
answering these questions.**

Communication:

1. When was the last time God spoke to you personally, and what did He tell you? _____

2. How can you discern God's voice from other voices? _____

Participation:

1. When was the last time God led you to do something with Him? _____

2. How can you remain grateful for the opportunities that God provides? _____

Being Attentive to God's Presence:

1. When are you more aware of God's presence; church, surrounded by nature, in your living room? Is this the place you enjoy the most? _____

2. How can you cultivate a deeper awareness of God's presence in your life? _____

Intimacy:

1. Has there ever been a time in your life when you had an encounter with God that was so intimate that you can still remember the very place, time, and situation you were in? _____

Conclusion

Our desire for a meaningful relationship with God, revolves around acknowledging Him as a genuine Person. God is eager to connect with us in love and intimacy. While we may not fully comprehend His ways, trusting in Him and seeking Him with genuine hearts, guides us in a relationship of revelation. As we explore attitudes that can hinder our relationship with God in the next chapter, let's remember that a relationship with our God requires removing obstacles and embracing the privilege of knowing Him as a Person. May you treasure the moments you spend with God this week.

3

EMBRACING MUTUAL PARTICIPATION WITH GOD

The “Utility Mindset,” is where people view God as a provider who exists solely to fulfill their needs and desires. This attitude is likened to treating God as a cosmic vending machine, which limits the depth of the relationship He desires with us.

Mutual Participation and Co-Workers

To actively participate in a growing relationship with God, we should think on terms of moving away from the utility mindset and embrace mutual participation and co-creation. This means recognizing the unique gifts and abilities that God has bestowed upon us and actively using them to contribute positively to the world in alignment with God’s plan.

Prayer as an Open Dialogue

Prayer is a two-way conversation with God, not a one-sided request list. We should communicate honestly and listen to His voice. We should also discuss the new covenant and what He has done for us, instead of presenting God with a wish list every day of what we want Him to give us or do for us. I do not mean that we should not ask for the things we need, but we should not view God as a Cosmic Santa Claus who exists to give us everything we want. We should ask Him and then wait for His answer, to see if we should even have what we ask for. Often, we ask God for things He will not give us, such as changing people we think need changing, the way we think they should change. God may hear our prayer and

send people to them; to show us He is answering our request. But they will not change unless they choose to embrace Jesus. God has given them free will and He will not violate it. We cannot try to turn God into a weapon for us, to zap people and change them the way we want. God usually will not answer those prayers. He will answer our prayers to change us and guide us to know Him in difficult situations with people, but it will require faith.

Surrendering to God's Will

We should bring our desires to God, but also surrender to His greater plan. His purposes are more important than ours, and He wants us to walk in alignment with His will for our lives. His will is that we first receive what He is offering humanity: mercy from the Father, forgiveness from the Son, and an inheritance from the Holy Spirit. God is offering us everything we need for life and godliness. *1 Peter 1:3 says, "as His divine power has given (Past tense) to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue."* God is offering eternal life through our Lord Jesus and a life in a new covenant with Him. We are then to live our lives with these things. We should live our lives with these gifts. Once we surrender to His will (receiving His Spirit and these things from Him), we then engage the world with what He has given us. We serve God with what He has already given us: His love, His forgiveness, His peace, His joy, His rest, His kindness, His meaning, His purpose, His security, His salvation, His gentleness, His goodness, and His respect, etc. These are the things we must first discover and embrace. We are to live our lives with these things, then we serve Him in this world with what we have received.

Cultivating Gratitude

Being preoccupied with self, will always produce a lack of gratitude. God desires for His people to be thankful. To express gratitude from the heart, we must first receive His Spirit and the

new birth. This is possible if we embrace the forgiveness we have through Jesus' death on the cross. Many people say they believe in Jesus' death for their sin, but they act like they are only partly forgiven, and must work out the rest. This is why they never enter rest with God. To enter rest with God, we must believe and receive the full and complete forgiveness of our sin and stop trying to earn it or pay God back. Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* (Matthew 11:28-29)

The only way to enter, "the rest," Jesus offers is to believe who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Believe that God no longer holds our sins against us. People do sin and may face consequences in this world. But God is not human, and He does not hold our sins against us, because Jesus paid for them on the cross. God started the New Testament (Covenant) with these words: *"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."* (Luke 22:20) The writer of Hebrews said: *"He (Jesus) then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."* (Hebrews 9:26)

John the Baptist said: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29) When Jesus died on the cross, He said: *"It is finished! And He gave up His Spirit."* (John 19:30) The apostle John wrote: *"He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."* (1 John 2:2)

God no longer remembers our sin, that is full and complete forgiveness. ¹⁰*"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people..."* ¹²*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."* (Hebrews 8:10 & 12)

Why doesn't He remember our sins? Because Jesus already paid for them and forgave us. Many people believe in partial forgiveness. We must believe that when Jesus died long ago, He died for the sins of the world. Experiencing Jesus' forgiveness explodes our hearts with gratitude, which fosters contentment and a generous spirit, allowing us to share them with others. We need to first receive, not a new car or house from God, but His mercy and forgiveness. When we experience His Spirit entering our hearts, He fills them with His love, peace, joy, and gratitude.

Overcoming the Utility Mindset

To overcome the utility mindset, we must grow spiritually. At birth we all have a utility mindset towards our parents, which is natural. But the child must grow and mature and begin to work with the parents and other siblings. I see a spiritual parallel. We all start as babes in Christ, who need everything done for us, which is normal. The church is built by God and is running fine. As baby Christians we are not expected to participate in the work, we only attend, receive, learn, and testify of what Jesus has done for us to others. Over time, as we grow and mature, we begin to develop the ability to give our lives to God. By yielding to Him, we work with the Lord and others in life to bring more spiritual life to others. We should actively participate with the Lord and be open to change. Without this, we will remain baby Christians, infantile in our knowledge of God, even after one hundred years of attending a church.

Embracing Mutuality

In conclusion, a fulfilling relationship with God is rooted in active involvement in God's plan. By embracing our role as co-workers with God, we can help create a more loving, compassionate, and purposeful world in Christ.

The overall message of the chapter is to let go of self-centered expectations and approach God. Have an attitude of partnership and mutual participation, instead of viewing God like a utility. By

doing so, we will experience a deeper and more meaningful relationship with our God, filled with joy, purpose, and spiritual growth.

As we conclude this chapter, spend some time answering these questions.

1. How can genuine love and care strengthen your family?

2. How can serving others in the community lead to personal purpose for your life? _____

3. How can you cultivate a heart of gratitude to your daily life? _____

Conclusion

A relationship with God should not be one-sided, where people only expect to receive from Him. Instead, it should be a mutual partnership where individuals actively contribute to the relationship, utilizing the gifts and abilities given them to further God’s kingdom and spread the gospel to others.

Mutual participation is the key to cultivating a genuine and fulfilling relationship with God. It is required to move beyond a consumerist approach and actively engaging with God as sons or daughters. Discover what He is wanting to do. Get on His side and participate in doing what He desires. That is one of the secrets of

success in life. Take some time alone to ask Him, “Lord what would you have me to do? How can I contribute my life, my individual gifts and abilities, to help redeem Your world for Your glory?” Through open communication, and active participation, we will deepen our relationship with God. Embracing mutual participation with God, allows us to discover the true richness and fulfillment, in God’s purpose for saving us.

4

EMBRACING OUR UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

In this chapter, we will explore the individualistic nature of the personal relationships people have had with God throughout history, as depicted in the Scriptures. We will focus on the fact that each person's relationship with God is unique and personal, tailored by God to their specific calling and purpose. While there are no fixed formulas on how to have a relationship with God, we will examine various examples to gain insights into how God interacts with individuals, and we will see the profound diversity of these relationships.

God as A Relational God

Our God is relational, and He establishes unique relationships with each person. Unlike a standardized religious approach, God's interactions with us are diverse to anyone's personal life.

Lessons from Historical Examples

Adam and Eve: A Partnership in Caring for Creation

Adam was the first man created by God. Adam's relationship with God is a central theme in the Bible's account of his human life on Earth. In the Book of Genesis chapters 1-3, the story unfolds in several key phases: First, God personally and uniquely crafted Adam in His own image and likeness from the earth's dust, breathing His very Spirit into him to bring him to existence. Adam and his wife, Eve, were then placed in the lush Garden of Eden, a paradise fashioned by God Himself. Here they enjoyed a perfect

environment and lived in harmony with their Creator. God bestowed upon Adam a unique responsibility. Adam was tasked with naming the animals and overseeing them, establishing his authority as God's steward and mediator between God and the animals. His relationship with God was marked by direct communion and access to God's presence, emphasizing the distinctive nature of his creation and purpose. However, a test of faith came when God instructed Adam and Eve not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," in the garden. Would Adam trust and obey God's command? Sadly, they disbelieved and disobeyed this command. Which lead to their spiritual death and expulsion from Eden, ushering in suffering, toil, and mortality for humanity. Despite this disobedience, God made a promise to Adam and Eve, offering hope for redemption through a descendant of Eve—a promise that laid the foundation for Jesus our Redeemer to restore man back to God.

God's Dwelling

In the Garden of Eden, God's Spirit was not just present, but dwelling in them, walking with them in the cool of the day. Can you imagine being the first person created by God on the planet? Adam and Eve's relationship with God was unique and personal. They were given tasks and responsibilities designed specifically for them.

Life Lesson

If we asked Adam for his testimony today, he might answer something like this:

"I remember the day I came into existence vividly, as if it were just yesterday. If you met me that day, you might guess I was in my twenties or thirties, but I was only one day old! God makes things fully functional from day one, so I looked older than I was. That is why people today think the earth is much older than it really is. God created it all in six days fully functional on the first week! I found myself standing there in the lush, vibrant Garden of Eden.

The colors were so vivid, and the air was filled with the sweet scent of flowers and fruit. It was a paradise unlike anything I could have ever imagined. At first, I was overwhelmed by the beauty and wonder of it all. I had the entire garden to explore, and I was the first human to walk upon the Earth. I felt a deep sense of awe and gratitude for being created by God, the one who breathed His own life into me. I had a unique relationship with Him and His creation. I was made in His image and likeness, to reflect His glory and to have a special relationship with Him. He gave me direct access to His presence and His voice, without any mediator or barrier. He also gave me a unique role and responsibility, to name the animals and to have dominion over them. I was His representative on earth. I had a purpose and a mission to steward God's creation. God was close, so close that I could feel His presence all around me and inside me.

Then came the day when God created Eve, my wife. It was a moment of incredible joy and wonder. We were perfectly suited for each other, and our love grew stronger with each passing day. We were partners in this paradise, and it was a privilege to share this existence with her. But then, the unthinkable happened. I did not believe God's warning not to eat of the tree. We ate from the forbidden tree of knowledge, and our eyes were opened to the reality of good and evil. The moment that fruit entered my mouth, I felt a profound sense of shame and guilt wash over me. It was as if the innocence and purity we once had were suddenly stripped away. I felt Him leave me. God's response was swift and just. He cast us out of the Garden of Eden, and as we left, I looked back at the paradise we had lost. The gates closed behind us, and we were left to face a world that was now harsh and unforgiving. It was no longer a place of abundance, but one where we had to toil and sweat to grow our own food. The ground was hard, and thorns and thistles seemed to mock our every effort. Our relationship with God had drastically changed that day. He no longer walked with us in the cool of the evening, and His voice was gone. It seems almost nonexistent compared to before. He told me that I would now labor

and sweat to grow my food. The food here is not plentiful like it was in His garden. I am trying to make my own garden now; I understand that I disrespected His garden. It is frustrating and hard work. It is not the same as before. Yet, deep down, I know God still loves us, from the life we shared in the garden. I know He still cares for me, because He killed an animal to cloth us before we left. I had never seen death until that moment. His grace and mercy are evident even in our fallen state. We are not abandoned, but we must learn faith and to trust Him.”

Unique Work and Relationship

Adam and Eve had a unique life with the Lord, different than any other human in the world, this is what we must realize. In reading about their life with God, we understand that God is a Person, who thinks, has emotion, and a plan. That God desires relationship with us. He communicates, in a way that we can still have freedom to choose. Although He is perfectly loving and holy, He can be disobeyed. God has given us a testimony about His relationship with Adam and Eve, to help us learn about Him. To have a growing relationship with God, we understand that it is personal and unique, from all other relationships He has with others. For example, I have 5 Children, but there is a different nuance with each child. I love them all, but we have slightly different relationships. Some attended college, some did not, some are musical, some are not. God has millions of children, and His relationship with each child is personal and unique. Each one of God’s children is an individual and although our relationship has a lot in common, they are also unique. We must seek Him personally to know Him personally. God is not a distant force but a personal friend. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He loves us with an everlasting love. He invites us to share in His life, and to discover the unique purpose He has for each of us.

Noah: The Man Who Walked with God in A Wicked World

Noah's relationship with God is highlighted in Genesis 6:9, emphasizing that he, "walked with God," and was a just and righteous man. Noah was a righteous man who walked faithfully with God in a time when the earth was filled with violence and corruption, and God was grieved by the wickedness of fallen humanity. He was the only person who found favor with God among his generation. God chose him and his family to be saved from the great flood that He was going to send to destroy the demon infested and perverted world. God spoke to Noah and revealed His plan to him. He commanded him to build a large boat, an ark, to save himself, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, along with a pair of every kind of animal. He gave him specific instructions on how to build the ark, and how to bring the animals into it. He also made a covenant with him and promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood. Noah obeyed God and did everything He told him to do. He built the ark and preached to the people. Warning them of God's judgment and urging them to repent. But they did not listen to him and mocked him and his family. They continued in their evil and demonic ways and did not fear God.

Noah had a unique relationship with God because he was the only one who trusted and followed God in a faithless society. He was the only one who had a unique role and responsibility, to save the animals and preserve life. He and his family were the only ones with this role to preserve humanity.

Life Lesson

His unwavering faith and patience remind us, that trust in God's promises and obedience, can lead to salvation and deliverance of our families. Even in the face of seemingly impossible challenges. If Noah could talk to us today, he might say something like:

“Building the ark was not an easy task. It took me about 100 years to complete it, with only the help of my sons and our wives. We had to gather and cut the wood, make the pitch, and assemble the structure according to God’s specifications. I had to face many challenges and difficulties, such as the weather, the terrain, the materials, and the animals. But the hardest part was the people. They did not believe me or God. They mocked me and my family and called us fools and fanatics, they were demonized. They tried to stop us, and even threatened us with violence. They did not care about God’s warning or His grace. They were wicked and rebellious, and they provoked God’s wrath. I often felt frustrated and discouraged, and wondered why God chose me for this enormous mission. I sometimes doubted His plan and His promise. We sometimes wished He would help us more directly or show us a sign of His approval. I sometimes felt alone, misunderstood, and longed for His presence and His voice. But I trusted God and obeyed Him. I knew He was faithful and true, and that He had a purpose for me and my family. I knew He was sovereign and righteous, gracious, and loving. And that He would remember His covenant and bless us. When the judgment started, it was slow with just a sprinkle. Something I had never seen before. But then the rain poured from heaven, day after day, for 40 days of torrential rain. We were floating on top of the water. We stayed on that boat for an entire year, until the ark landed on Mt. Ararat. I prayed to God, and He gave me strength and courage. I listened to God, and He gave me wisdom and guidance. I worshiped God, and He gave me peace and joy. I followed God, and He saved my life and gave me hope for my family.”

Individual Work and Relationship

Can you imagine yourself as the only person on the planet that was righteous and believed God? That God would choose you to preserve humanity? Noah’s relationship with God was unique and personal, with tasks and responsibilities designed specifically for him.

Abraham: The Man Who Trusted God Against All Odds

Abraham is a central figure in the scriptures, he is revered for his faith and obedience to God's call. His story is found primarily in the Book of Genesis, spanning chapters 11 through 25. Abraham's journey of faith began when God called him to leave his homeland and embark on a journey to the land of Canaan, as recorded in Genesis 12. In response to this divine call, Abram stepped out in faith, trusting God's promises. The most remarkable moment in Abraham's life is when God promised him, in Genesis 15, that he would be the father of many nations and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. This promise was fulfilled when Abraham and his wife Sarah miraculously had a son, Isaac, in their old age, as recounted in Genesis 21. Perhaps the most challenging test of Abraham's faith came when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac as a test of obedience, detailed in Genesis 22. Abraham's willingness to obey God, even in the face of such a heart-wrenching command, demonstrated his unwavering faith. In the New Testament, Abraham is cited as an example of faith in the book of Romans. The Apostle Paul emphasizes that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. This concept of faith and righteousness, through trust in God's promises, is foundational to Christianity. Thus, Abraham's life serves as a profound example of faith, obedience, and the enduring covenant relationship between God and His people. It echoes themes that are central to us today.

Life Lesson

If Abraham could talk to us today, he might say something like:

“My life's journey has taught me invaluable lessons about trust in God's promises and obedience, even when uncertainty clouds our path. It has shown me that when we place our unwavering trust in God's divine plan and act on faith, even in moments of doubt, He is more than capable of fulfilling His promises in our lives.

Reflecting on my relationship with my beloved wife, Sarah, I must admit it was a mix of highs and lows. Our union was often overshadowed by a profound and enduring desire to have children. For years, the inability to conceive was a source of immense pain and discord within our marriage. Sarah's barrenness weighed heavily on us, testing our faith, and straining our bond. Our disagreements and heated arguments over this issue were frequent and emotionally charged, casting shadows over our happiness. But God's mercy shone upon us when, against all odds, He miraculously allowed Sarah to conceive. This brought unimaginable joy and reinforced our belief in His promises. Yet, the complexities of my relationship with God and Sarah became even more evident when I faced the most daunting test of my faith – God's command to sacrifice our beloved son, Isaac. In obedience to God, I left the camp early, withholding the purpose of my journey from Sarah. Deep down, I knew that she would vehemently oppose the idea of sacrificing our dear son. This act of faith tested the core of my relationship with both God and my cherished wife. I felt God was bringing me to absolute surrender to Him. My life's journey has taught me that faith and obedience sometimes require navigating challenging decisions and conversations, while holding steadfast to our belief in God's grand plan and His ability to fulfill His promises. It underscores the intricate balance between one's relationship with God and the earthly relationships we hold dear, particularly within the confines of marriage."

Individual Work and Relationship

Can you imagine yourself in a position that God would ask something like offering up your only son? Or that He'd promise, you would be the father to many nations? Abraham's relationship with God was unique and personal, with tasks and responsibilities designed specifically for him.

Moses: Embracing Uncertainty and Divine Guidance

Moses' incredible journey is documented throughout the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses' relationship with God was shaped by encounters filled with uncertainty and divine guidance, especially when God called him from the burning bush in Exodus 3-4. Moses, the great lawgiver, serves as a profound example that God can use us even when we grapple with doubts and limitations. Moses' life teaches crucial lessons about the significance of faith, trust, and obedience in our relationship with God, especially when we confront formidable challenges and uncertainties. His role in leading the Israelites out of Egypt, as detailed in the book of Exodus, and receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, found in Exodus 19-20, exemplifies the importance of unwavering faith.

Life Lesson

If we were to engage in a conversation with Moses today, delving into his feelings about being the leader of God's people, he might reveal the complexity of his emotions like this:

"I love the Lord our God more than anything in this world. From childhood, when He revealed Himself to me. I always knew He had a special plan for my life. My mother and older siblings, Myriam and Aaron, taught me as a very young boy who I really was, and that God had a calling on my life.

But leading God's people was not always easy. On one hand, I witnessed truly astonishing and divine interventions that few people could ever imagine. My relationship with God was unlike any other. I had the privilege of experiencing His presence in profound ways. But it was an arduous journey, marked by hardships and trials forming this nation.

God humbled me during my exile in the wilderness for 40 years. I spent time tending sheep and reflecting on my past actions, particularly the incident where I killed an Egyptian, as recounted in

Exodus 2. But only later would I understand that even during the 40 years of my exile, God used it to teach me the cultures of people groups and the topography of the land, in preparation to lead his people through those wildernesses. Something I never could have imagined at the time. When I returned to lead His people out of Egypt, I embarked on another 40-year journey through the wilderness toward the promised land, chronicled in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The weight of leadership, the endless challenges, and the relentless demands wore me down. There were times when I felt exhausted and overwhelmed by the tremendous pressure, I bore for 40 long years. I must admit that there were moments when I became frustrated and angry with God's people, as documented in Numbers 20. In one instance, my anger boiled over, leading to a regrettable outburst. Instead of calmly speaking to a rock for water, I lashed out in anger and struck it, an action that disappointed the Lord greatly. Consequently, He forbade me from entering the promised land alongside the rest of His people, as mentioned in Numbers 20:12. My journey as a leader was marked by incredible highs and daunting lows, revealing the complexities of human emotions and the enduring importance of trust, obedience, and humility in our relationship with God. It underscores that even the most revered figures can falter, but God's grace and guidance remain steadfast on our journey of faith. I can testify to you, the one thing that really pleases God is faith. Faith to the place where you will trust and follow through with what He says. Our faith pleases Him, and when we have strong faith in Him, it rejoices His heart."

Individual Work and Relationship

Can you imagine yourself in a position that God would ask you to lead millions of people and start a nation? Moses' relationship with God was unique and personal, with tasks and responsibilities designed specifically for him.

From Darkness to Light: The Story of Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and one of several women who traveled with Him and His disciples, providing material support. She was healed by Jesus and released of seven demons. Mary was present at Jesus' crucifixion and was one of the first people to discover His empty tomb. She was the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection and told the disciples about it. Mary Magdalene is mentioned fourteen times in the New Testament and is the eighth most mentioned woman in the entire Bible.

Life Lesson

If Mary could talk to us today, she might give her testimony with Jesus like this:

“I was a broken woman, tormented by demons that filled my mind with darkness and despair. I had opened a spiritual door thinking it would give me power and what I wanted, instead the demons deceived me. They entered me. One by one over time, they took more and more control over my life. I had no hope, no peace, no joy. I wandered the streets, looking for relief, but finding none. I was an outcast, shunned by everyone, even my own family. But then I met Him. Jesus of Nazareth, the one they called the Messiah. He looked at me with compassion, not with disgust. He spoke to me with kindness, not with contempt. He touched me with power, not with violence. He cast out the demons that plagued me and set me free. He gave me a new life, a new purpose, a new identity. He called me by name, and I became His follower. I followed Him everywhere, along with His other disciples. I saw Him heal the sick, feed the hungry, raise the dead. I heard Him teach the truth, challenge the authorities, and proclaim the kingdom of God. I loved Him with all my heart, and He loved me as His own. He was my teacher, my friend, my Lord. But then they took Him away. They arrested Him, falsely accused Him, and condemned Him.

They beat Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him. They killed Him, and my world fell apart. I wept at the foot of the cross, watching Him breathe His last. I followed them as they buried Him in a tomb, sealing it with a stone. I lost Him, I lost everything. But then He came back. He rose from the dead, just as He said He would. He appeared to me first, on the morning of the third day. He called me by name, and I recognized Him. He was alive, and my joy was complete. He sent me to tell the others, and I ran to share the good news. He was my Savior, my hope, my life. I was the first person He appeared to and asked to tell His apostles He is alive. Truly Jesus fulfills what the Psalm declared in *Psalm 113:7-8, which says: "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of His people."*

Individual Work and Relationship

Can you imagine yourself being delivered from seven demons? Can you imagine going from the bottom of despair in this world to the exalted privilege of being the only person to personally witness the three greatest events in history: the crucifixion, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus? On top of that, being the first women commissioned by the Lord Himself, to tell His apostles that He has risen? Mary's relationship with God was unique and personal. He gave her tasks and responsibilities that were designed specifically for her.

God is not a respecter of persons. We will not have the identical relationship as any other human, but their recorded testimonies greatly help us to know Him. Our testimonies of our personal relationship with God are important. We testify of the living God. Today you must see your relationship with God as a testimony of who He is, and what He has done. Testimonies are important to help people know how to get to God. The stories of Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Mary show us how God relates to everyone in a unique way, and how we can learn from

their faith and purpose. God is not a respecter of man; He loves you and your personal testimony will be greatly used by God.

**Reflect and answer these questions regarding
embracing the unique nature of our relationship
with God**

1. In what ways can you see God’s relational nature in the historical examples of Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Mary? How does this knowledge impact your understanding of your own relationship with God?

2. Consider the significance of Jesus’ personal interactions with His disciples during His ministry on earth. How can you model your own relationships with others based on Jesus’ approach to relational connection?

Conclusion

I know I can’t tell God who to relate with and how. He is God and He chooses who He relates to and how close. But I can share my testimony with Him. I can share like the people in the Bible, how I know my Lord personally. I can tell you first, it is all real. The Bible is God’s word, His story for this world, you could say His autobiography. So those who want to know Him, can read His story, and see what He did in making the universe, and how He deals with people today. I really believe when someone reads the Bible, He notices. He watches and, in His time, and His way, He talks to us. He sees we want to know Him and want to hear what He says. The author Himself, “God” will manifest Himself to us.

5

WHAT IS LIFE REALLY ABOUT?

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

In the words of Jesus Himself, recorded in *Matthew 11:28-29*, He said, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*”

The Invitation

Jesus invites us to come to Him, promising rest for our weary souls. But what is this rest, and how can we find it? It's essential to understand that the rest Jesus offers is found in believing in Him and what He has accomplished on our behalf.

The Problem

Humanity is burdened by sin and its consequences. We are born separated from God. We've all fallen short and are spiritually dead. But there's hope because God is not like us; He is merciful, forgiving and loving.

The Solution

God established a new covenant through Jesus. As *Matthew 26:28* says, “*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*”

Jesus, “*the Lamb of God*,” came to, “*take away the sins of the world*,” as declared by John the Baptist in *John 1:29*. When Jesus

hung on the cross, He declared, “*It is finished!*” (*John 19:30*) He paid the price for our sins in full.

The Apostle John emphasized Jesus’ sacrifice, stating in *1 John 2:2*, “*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*”

Complete Forgiveness

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, God no longer remembers our sins. *Hebrews 8:10 & 12* says, ¹⁰“*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people...*” ¹²“*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*”

Why doesn’t God remember our sins anymore? Because Jesus has already paid and removed them from between us and God. They were cleansed and cast into the sea of His forgiveness. The price for our redemption was paid in full. This is complete and total forgiveness.

Believe in Full Forgiveness

It’s crucial to believe that when Jesus died on the cross, He died for the sins of the world. We must embrace this truth, for it leads to rest with God. When we understand the depth of God’s forgiveness, it transforms our lives.

Jesus’ death and resurrection offers us the ultimate rest—a rest from the burden of sin and guilt. He invites us to come to Him, believe in His finished work on the cross, and experience the fullness of God’s forgiveness. It’s a message of hope, Spiritual birth, and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Will you come to Him and find rest for your soul today?

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