

LESSON ESSENTIALS

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

God is not some impersonal power or detached observer. He has a distinct personality, He cares, and He gets involved in people's lives. Read on to see how you can get to know more about God through a relationship with Him.

It's really comforting and thrilling to know that God wants to have a personal relationship with us. But how do you build this relationship? This lesson hopes to give you insights on how to do your part to connect with God each day.

It might seem as though God is very far away and our inability to see Him face to face may cause you to wonder about the strength of your relationship. This lesson points out how His desire to have a personal relationship with you is very real.

God called David “a man after my heart, who will do all my will.” (Acts 13:22) The reason David understood God and could do His will was because he shared a personal relationship with God.

What first attracted you to your best friends? Sometimes it is shared interests or common ideals – but what often draws us to another person is their personality! Consider the personality traits you value in a friend. What greater things can be said of God? He is all powerful and all knowing, yet loving, caring, and loyal. He is just, and jealous enough not to want to share you with anyone else. God is giving and tender-hearted. He is able to produce joy in you, and to comfort you like no one else. God is willing to be with you every moment of the day and won't leave when things get tough. The best part is that He is waiting to share a relationship with you!

God is so happy to be in a relationship with us that He even acknowledges some of His dearest human friends in His word, the Bible. God called David “a man after my heart, who will do all my will.” (Acts 13:22) The reason David understood God and could do His will was because he shared a strong personal relationship with God. What do we mean by a ‘personal’ relationship? A personal relationship isn't based on your going to church, or your belonging to a family that believes in God. Someone who has a personal relationship with God spends time with God themselves, talks with God throughout the day, and develops a close friendship with God that is unique to them. Just as David had this friendship, so can we. The closer our relationship with God, the better we understand Him and discern His will.

The secret to a strong relationship with God starts with a deep longing for God and for His presence. People in love long to be with one another and once they are together, they forget the world around them. What David says in Psalm 68 could easily be mistaken for a love song:

“God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63:1-8)

David wrote this when he was hiding in the desert. He is pouring out His heart to God, expressing all his longing for, and joy in, the Lord. David seems to be oblivious to the hardships of the desert, except to use them as sources of inspiration for His song. Like a true lover, David's longing for God overshadowed the pain and hardship to his body.

The desire for God's presence is one aspect of a personal relationship with Him; actually spending time with Him is the other aspect to strengthening that relationship with Him. David had a really close

relationship with God because he wanted to spend more time with God than with anyone else. This holds true for any kind of relationship. We know that spouses, friends, and team-mates who spend a lot of time together are likely to know more about each other and have a deeper relationship. Yet many of us are too frugal with the time that we give to God.

With busy schedules, time with God is often overlooked. It helps to work into our everyday schedule a regular time to be with God. It could be in the morning, the evening, or both, but that time must be set aside exclusively for God. Sometimes we are not motivated to keep up this time with God because we don't know what to do during the time or we get too rigid about what should be done.

Spending time with God needn't be drudgery at all. It isn't about reciting formal prayers or only being sombre and serious. When good friends meet their conversation is purposeful, but spontaneous too. Praying is talking to God and you can tell Him anything. You could tell him about your experiences, what you're looking forward to, what is troubling you. You could praise Him, thank Him, say how much you love Him. You don't have to restrict yourself to talking to Him; you could sing to Him, recite a poem to him, or even ask Him questions.

However, if we want to truly relate to God, we can't do all the talking ourselves. It's important to also listen to what God has to say. God reveals Himself and His will to us through His word. It could be in the form of Bible study, devotional reading, or a recorded sermon but our quiet time must include reading and meditation on the Word of God. Many believers, from Enoch and David to those living around you today, will testify that this kind of fellowship with God is what refreshes them each day and gives them the strength and wisdom to face life's challenges.

We are so blessed that God is not just some impersonal force that remains distant and disinterested. We have a God who understands what we think or feel even when we keep quiet, who is waiting to listen to us when no one else has the time or energy, who comes searching for us when we stray, and who welcomes us with open arms when we return all hurt and dirty. That's one relationship that no one should miss for the world!

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IN REVIEW

- Our God is a personal God, who desires to have fellowship with us.
- If we truly want to know the heart of God, we need to develop a personal relationship with Him.
- To develop this personal relationship with God, we need to spend time with Him, talking to Him, listening to Him and having fellowship with Him.
- We should set a time to spend time with God every day. It may be early in the morning or in the evening, but we must both talk to Him and listen to Him from the Word of God.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Does having a personal, loving God make a difference in your life? What would your life be like if God was just an impersonal force?

- What are some of the obstacles you have faced in developing a personal relationship with God?

- Some people find that, instead of sitting in a corner of their room and praying, taking a walk and observing the world around them brings in a whole new dimension to their time with God. Can you think of other ways to revitalize your time with God?

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