

Getting Closer To God The Right Way

- I. This sermon is a follow-up to a previous message about making good choices based on knowledge, prudence and prayer for wisdom and understanding, not on subliminal prompts.
- II. It has become popular for professing Christians to emphasize *relationship* over *religion* in connecting with God, and there is some truth in this. But half-truth can also be half-lie.
 - A. Sometimes the concept of *relationship* (kinship) is confused with *fellowship* (mutual intercourse, *esp.* spiritual; intimate personal converse).
 - B. Biblically, God as Creator and Father of His people (by regeneration and adoption) is the sole establisher of relationship. Fathers make children; children do not make fathers.
 - C. Fellowship with God as Father is a matter of God making it possible through a spiritual birth and gospel instruction but the fellowship is up to the child of God. **1JO 1:6-7.**
 - D. Seeking a closer relationship to God is really a matter of improving the spiritual fellowship with Him that is available to us through the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, Who uniquely and especially knows God. **JOH 1:17-18; MAT 11:27; 2PE 1:1-2; 3:18.**
 - E. The perfecting of a child of God's connection with Him is through His revelation in Scripture. **2TI 3:16-17.**
- III. Our emphasis on Scripture in knowing God and making decisions makes God seem impersonal to some. The question may come up, "How do I connect with God intimately?"
 - A. Having inner impressions or voices communicating to one's spirit appeals to many as a very intimate relationship with God.
 - B. Note that devils, who communicate messages to men, are called *familiar spirits* in Scripture. **LEV 19:31; 20:27; 1SAM 28:7-9; 1CH 10:13.**
 - 1. familiar: Of persons and their relations: On a family footing; extremely friendly, intimately associated, intimate.
 - 2. Scripture forbids consulting with familiar spirits. **DEU 18:9-12.**
 - 3. The adjective *familiar* is also used to describe intimate friends.
JOB 19:14; PSA 41:9 (marg. Heb. *the man of my peace*. Recall previous observations about personal peace not determining the rightness of a decision).
 - 4. These devils pose as friends and create an intimate relationship which can be very emotionally satisfying and entangling. **2SAM 15:4-6 c/w GAL 4:17.**
 - C. Some who seek a more intimate relationship with God fall into the snare of *familiar spirits* posing as the *Holy Spirit*. The more one believes in the authenticity of a *seducing spirit* (**1TI 4:1**), the stronger is his bondage to that spirit's lie.
 - D. Friendship with God is to be experienced on God's terms as set forth in His word. To seek it otherwise is to open oneself to satanic delusion.
 - E. **JOH 15:13-15** clearly sets forth how we relate to Christ as our Friend.
 - 1. Christ has *already* shown Himself our Friend by laying down His life for us and by making known to us *all things* that He has heard of His Father.
 - 2. We show ourselves His friends by faith and keeping His commandments.
JAM 2:21-23.
 - 3. Think of what we have in friendship with the Lord.
 - a. He died for us to save us forever.
 - b. His written word assures us of our standing in Him.
 - c. His written word speaks instruction and comfort for all the many and varied circumstances of life.
 - d. He hears our complaints and sends relief.
 - e. He supplies all our needs.

- f. He has revealed to us the whole history of the world from start to finish, exposed all its treachery, and opened a window into the eternal state. How's that for *insider information*?!
 - g. All of the above happen *without* some inner voice speaking to us.
 - h. How could you still ask Christ to be your Friend if you believe all that He says to you in **PSA 23**?
 - i. Considering all that Scripture has to say about Jesus and our relationship to Him, we ought to mightily affirm, "What a Friend we **have** in Jesus!"
- F. Scripture also reveals that God is very much involved in the process of making decisions.
 - 1. God is the One Who gives us a new nature that delights to seek His will as revealed in His word and do it. **EZE 11:19-20; ROM 7:22.**
 - 2. God enables us *to will and to do of His good pleasure*. **PHIL 2:13.**
 - 3. Our obedience proves God's involvement in our lives. **ROM 8:5-8.**
 - 4. God hears our prayers and provides the resources for making good and wise decisions. **JAM 1:5; PHIL 4:19.**
 - 5. God preserves His word for our benefit. **MAT 24:35.**
 - 6. God opens or closes doors of opportunity by permitting or hindering.
 - 7. God prospers us as we follow Biblical principles *whithersoever* we go and in *whatsoever* we do. **JOS 1:7; 2CH 26:5; PSA 1:1-3.**
- G. What some seek in a more intimate relationship with God is an emotional experience.
 - 1. Emotions can either function as initiators or responders.
 - a. When one determines God's presence or guidance by emotions, then emotions are functioning as *initiators*.
 - b. When one determines God's presence or guidance from objective statements in Scripture and finds joy in so doing, then emotions are functioning as *responders*.
 - c. The difference can be seen in the following statements:
 - (1) I feel in my heart that God wants me to sell my house.
 - (2) **(ROM 5:11)** And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.
 - d. In the first of the above statements, emotion is *initiating* the action. In the second statement, emotion is *responding* to revealed truth.
 - 2. "From the perspective of the way of wisdom, the formula for experiencing the fullness of one's relationship to the Lord is succinctly expressed in 2Corinthians 5:7: 'we walk by faith, not by sight.' In the context of this discussion, to walk by sight would be to require perceptible proof of God's presence and ongoing direct communication of His will. But that approach amounts to testing God (Deuteronomy 6:16), which He rejects (Matthew 4:7). On the other hand, to walk by faith is to act on the basis that what God has said is true (Romans 4:20-21). ¶ To spell this out further, there are three specific steps that can be identified in the process of cultivating a personal relationship with God. *Intellectually*, one must *learn* what God has declared to be true and real. *Volitionally*, one must take God at His word and *accept* His pronouncements as being true. Then one can *respond emotionally* in accordance with God's moral will." (Garry Friesen, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, p. 249).
 - 3. Considering the points listed above that set forth what we have in friendship with Christ, how can we not rejoice? **ROM 15:13; 1PE 1:8.**

IV. Through scriptural knowledge, we not only grow closer *unto* Christ Who declares God, but *into* Christ. **EPH 4:13-15.**