



Seeking God with My Time

A Time to Reflect

Disconnected and Distant?

- *Imagine what it would be like to be close to God. How would you describe it?*
- *When does it seem like your relationship with God is distant or disconnected from your everyday life? Can you articulate why?*

A Time to Review

Getting Close to God

Relationships are important and there is no relationship more important than the one we have with God. God created Adam and Eve to enjoy a very close relationship with him. In Eden they walked with him in the cool of the day. When Adam and Eve broke that relationship in favor of Satan's counter offer of fulfillment, it was God's love that caused him to seek us and restore the relationship for which we were designed. God traveled the distance to reunite us, when we were still far from him. He sent Christ into our world to "seek and to save what was lost," and by his life and death made it possible to reclaim us. Through the gospel call he now seeks to touch our minds and hearts to work faith in us. Amazingly he calls us his children. We have the outstanding privilege of confidently approaching him just as a child comes and freely spends time with a loving father.

Our relationship with God through Christ is the highest and most precious gift he has entrusted to us. It is therefore the greatest part of stewardship to take care of that relationship and make every effort to remain in it. He doesn't want it lost to misuse or neglect. Look what Jesus says about it:

John 15:5-11 *⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are*

picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain

in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

- *Evaluate the metaphor of the vine and branches that Jesus uses and discuss what it says about your relationship with God.*

John Jeske wrote in *Taking God at His Word*, "God asks—and without apology—to come first in your life . . . although there are many things God will put up with in the human heart, second place is not one of them . . . even the most cherished relationship is to be subordinated to our relationship to God or our discipleship to his Son . . . 'My glory I will not give to another,' the LORD has stated. He wants and will tolerate no competition for your heart."

Look how God explained it to his people through Moses in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 *¹¹Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹²It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" . . . ¹⁴No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. ¹⁵See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction . . . Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

- *Comment on how God becomes close to us to bless us.*
- *Relate to your own life the consequences of neglecting that relationship or turning from it.*

One of the hard things for us to remember about life is, "It is not about me." I am not the center. God is. He built this relationship with us from ground up. He redeemed it from ruin through his Son. Now he says, "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind." That is where I come to more fully delight in the richness of this relationship and grow in my relationship with others.

A Time to Repent

Forsaking the First Love?

Too often we witness among Christians a level of disinterest, boredom, apathy, and spiritual stagnation instead of an obvious commitment to the relationship with God. Church leaders become concerned over the symptoms that are more easily seen. John Jeske again says, “The problem is not a lack of passion for worship, fellowship, missions or denominational support, but a passion for God.”

Jesus addressed that problem with some of the early Christian churches.

Revelation 2:1-5 ¹To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: . . . ³You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. ⁴Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. ⁵Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Revelation 3:14-20 ¹⁴To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: . . . ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth . . . ¹⁸I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. ¹⁹Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

- Describe what you understand about that “first love” and about wishing we were “hot.”
- What gets in the way of a close fellowship with God that makes children of God lose the “first love” or become “lukewarm?”

Consider your spiritual life in light of Jesus’ messages in Revelation. Spend a moment of quiet prayer right now to address this with God and clear your conscience where you have failed.

A Time to Renew

It has been said, “If God seems distant, guess who moved.” So you realize something is missing?

Isaiah 55:6-7 *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*

Hebrews 3:12-15 ¹²See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. ¹⁴We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. ¹⁵As has just been said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.

- List reasons why NOW is the time to earnestly seek God.

Perhaps you seek God to fill the emptiness and loneliness of life, or bring direction to the confusion. Perhaps you long for his presence like the Psalmist: *O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water (Psalm 63:1-2)*. Seeking God is not satisfied by following prescribed rituals to become in tune with God but rather found in Christ's love which frees us to enjoy life close to God.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 8:31-36 ³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free . . . I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

- Explain how Jesus is central to getting to know God and becoming close with him.

It has also been said that if we are too busy to get quiet time alone with God each day, we are too busy. It perhaps reveals distractions that come between us and our Lord. What will turn that around?

2 Chronicles 7: 14 *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Psalms 5:2-18 ² Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart . . . ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you . . . ¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Philippians 3:8-9 ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

- Discuss what these passages say about how we should be "seeking the Lord."

Your devotion life starts with a time commitment for Bible study.

A Time to Recommit

This short life is our time of grace to know and serve God. Getting closer to God through our devotional life should become a priority. Personal Bible study and prayer time has eternal benefits but also impacts every aspect of our day in ways you will only know when you are there. Sometimes we need to learn to be disciples all over again—simple learners—and make every effort to run the race he lines up for us.

- *What are the roadblocks that get in the way of your devotional life or other aspects of seeking the Lord in your life?*

Maybe it is time for us to get serious about this—together. Consider what King Asa and the children of Israel did when they realized how much they had slipped from the life with God:

2 Chronicles 15:12,15 ¹² *They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul . . .* ¹⁵ *All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them.*

- *Discuss habits or routines that might prove beneficial for your prayer life and your Bible study/devotional reading time.*
- *Come up with ideas for how we as a congregation can become serious about making the encouragement (and training) that will make personal devotional life a priority.*

Invest in this relationship with God so that it bears the amazing fruit he promises. Don't leave today until you have made a special "date" with your Lord—a daily time to seek him so that you can better grasp Christ's love and your calling.

Prayer