

How to Experience God's Love and Forgiveness

In order to experience God's love and forgiveness, we must first get to know God personally and establish a one-on-one relationship with Him. God not only wants a relationship with you, but He also wants our fellowship. (John 4:23)

The difference between our relationship to God and our fellowship with God can be illustrated with a normal father-son relationship. When a boy is born into a family, he is the son of the father because he has the father in him, if he leaves his home and commits a crime, disgracing his father, is he still the father's son? The relationship with the father and the son is permanent. This relationship is still there regardless of the son's behavior. To restore their fellowship, the son must go to the father, admit his wrongdoing, and ask for forgiveness.

When we invite Christ into our life as our personal Savior, we become children of God. (John 1:12) We are His children, and He is our Father. Our relationship with God is permanent. What happens when we sin (do things that are displeasing to God?) Is our relationship broken with God? Of course not! What happens if we continue to do these things and refuse to admit we are wrong? Is our fellowship with God broken? Our fellowship with God is broken. In order for our fellowship to be restored, we must confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. Because we are Christians, our sins are forgiven. Christ paid the sacrificial price for us on Calvary. We accept his forgiveness and cleansing by faith. (John 1:29)

1. Confessions of Sin: 1 John 1:9

- A. We maintain our relationship with God by confessing our sins.
- B. When God brings to our attention the fact that we've sinned, we are to confess or agree with God about that sin specifically and ask for forgiveness.
- C. Confessing our sins makes us appreciate what God has done for us through Christ's death and resurrection.
- D. He cannot fill our soul with his love and forgiveness, nor can he fill us with his power to live the abundant life he wants for us if we do not confess our sins. (Romans 6:1-18)
- E. When we confess our sins:
 - a. We agree with God that what we've done is a sin.
 - b. We thank him for forgiving that sin.
 - c. We change our conduct allowing God's power to flow in us.

2. Cultivating Intimacy: Psalm 19:7-11

The key to having a great relationship with your spouse and children is good communication (particularly listening). That is also true in our relationship with God. Through scripture, we can listen to and know the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). By it, we enter into God's family (1 Peter 1:23), And by it, we can grow to spiritual maturity (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Good communication heightens with intimacy. God's word reveals all that we need to know about him, His plan and our relationship with Him. The Bible is God's way of talking to us. Scripture is like a photo album of other family members, a revealing portrait of God and descriptions of acceptable and unacceptable family behavior.

Without scripture, we would know relatively little about Him. Our level of intimacy would be extremely limited. To be specific, our praise would be incomplete (Psalm 119:164), Our lives lacking the Holy Spirit's power (Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:16-17), Our prayers aimless (1 John 5:14-15), Our love for God is empty since it is manifested by obeying scripture (John 14:15; 2 John 6), Our fellowship God is shallow (1 John 1:3), Our worship of Him is misdirected since it is based on walking in the light of his word (John 4:24)

Mankind's original intimacy with God collapses because Adam and Eve listened to another's word and disobeyed God's word (Genesis 3:1-19). Spiritual intimacy returns only when our attitudes and actions are based on scripture.

The Bible clearly illustrates the connective between knowing God and knowing scripture. God looks with favor on humble individuals who tremble at his word (Isaiah 66:2-5). Just like God spoke to Moses as a friend in Exodus 33:11, so will God speak to Christians through His word as a special friend.

The thought of personal Bible study intimidates many Christians. It seems so formidable when you have little or no formal training. Yet, Psalm 119 beckons every true worshipper to feed on the spiritual nourishment provided by the holy scriptures and thereby grow in spiritual intimacy with God.

There are a few steps to help you achieve a deep satisfaction of knowing that the living God has spoken to you through His Word, that you understand the message and that you have drawn closer to God's side.

Step 1: Affirmation

Prayerfully acknowledge before God that you recognize the Bible to be the only written expression of His will that was given to mankind. Thus, it is the absolute authority for both our belief and behavior. (Matthew 5:18, Matthew 24:35, 2 Timothy 3:16)

Step 2: Preparation

Prayerfully ask God to open your eyes (Psalm 119:18), to teach you his statutes (Psalm 119:12), and to establish your ways by his Word (Psalm 119:5).

Step 3: Observation

Carefully read your Bible to discover what it says. Study it systematically. Good Christian books and magazines that supplement your Bible reading are also helpful, but there is no substitute for reading the Scripture itself.

Step 4: Interpretation

Seek the Holy Spirit's help to discover what God meant by what he said (1 John 2:27)

Step 5: Correlation

Use the cross reference in your Bible to discover the totality of what God has said about a particular theme or idea that you're interested in. You will understand the whole only when you've taken time to assemble all the parts.

Step 6: Application

Your Bible study is never complete until you apply what you have learned to your own life. Transfer the fruit of your laborers from your head and heart to your hands and feet. James 4: 17 says, "to him who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

Step 7: Proclamation

Ask God to bring someone into your life daily with whom you can share your exciting discoveries in God's word. Don't be silent about the most precious book ever written, someone's life might depend on it.

3. Fueling God's Spirit

The Bible promises tremendous spiritual blessings to those who devote their time to it

Joshua 1:8 says: "This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth; But thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do accordingly to all that is written therein: for them thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shall have good success."

Psalms 1:2-3 says: "but his delight is in the law of the Lord; And in his law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth fruit in his season; His leaf shall also not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Revelation 1:3 says: "blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."

Few people seem to experience what God wants to deliver. As believers, we all have the Holy Spirit, but we do not have equal experiences with the Word of God. It's a believer's life. If you have an engine without fuel, you can turn the ignition key all you want, but the car will not start. Without the word, the power of the Holy Spirit will go unignited. Also, you can have the best engine and a tank of the best fuel, but until the ignition is turned, there will be no energy. So, the Holy Spirit and the Word without the cooperation of human will, are essentially dormant. However, with a perfect engine, the best fuel and timely ignition, you have all the power needed to live. Likewise, the Holy Spirit, rich portions of the word and your will desiring God's will, you will have all the spiritual energy and blessings you could ever want. All three elements need to be In Sync before anything significant happens.

4. A Daily Pursuit

intimacy with God is not limited to ancient history. God's word remains fresh and powerful. According to recent statistics, only a small percentage of American Christians spend time daily in God's word. Intimacy with God is not reserved for the select group of believers. There's no magic formula, no shortcuts, only one path dash the word of God. Read it, study it, and make it your truth. It's the only way to your growing intimately with God.

The grace of God is nothing less than the unlimited love of God expressed in the gift of his son.