

A Relationship with God

God does not want us to be religious, He wants a relationship with us

1) Luke 15:11-31

- A. The father is God, we are the sons
- B. Where does the father want his sons?
- C. Both sons find themselves 'outside' in this story
- D. Why are they outside of the home?
- E. Sin separated them from their father

Q – What were the sins of the younger son?

- i) Outward sins, sinful actions
- ii) Pride, Rebellion
- iii) Wild living
- iv) Sexual sins

Q – What were the sins of the older son?

- i) Inward sins, sins of the heart
- ii) Bitterness
- iii) Lack of forgiveness
- iv) Selfishness, self pity
- v) Ingratitude

- F. The father welcomed the first son back into the house
- G. The father pleaded with the second son to come back into the house

Both sons (and us) 'outside of the house'

2) Isaiah 59:1-2

- A. In the same way – Sin separates us from God
- B. We are 'outside of the house' due to our sins
- C. More on this later

God wants them (and us) 'inside the house'

2) 2 Thes 2:13-17

- A. God – 'chose you to be saved'
- B. God – 'called you to share in the glory of Jesus'
- C. God – 'loved you and gave you eternal encouragement hope'
- D. God reaches out to us, not the other way around
- E. He wants us to come back 'inside the house'

Challenge:

- A. Where do you see yourself in this story?
- B. Do you see yourself in either son (or both)?
- C. Be REALLY grateful for God's mercy and love
- D. Pray, Read, and start reaching out to God

The Word of God

1) 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- A. All Scripture is inspired by God
- B. The Word is '*useful*' for:
 - i) Teaching
 - ii) Correcting
 - iii) Rebuking
 - iv) Training
 - v) Equipping
- C. The Word is to be applied to our lives

2) Hebrews 4:12-13

- A. The Word is relevant
- B. The Word cuts (hurts). It can cut sin out of our lives (scalpel)
- C. We cannot hide from God
- D. We will give an account to God

3) 2 Peter 1: 20-21

- A. The Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the books of the Bible
- B. Men wrote it down, but God was guiding them through the process

4) John 8:31-32

- A. Intellectual belief is not enough-nor can we go by our feelings
- B. Everyone must hold on to and follow the teachings of Jesus to be a '*true disciple*'
- C. Sincerity does not equal truth
- D. Religious people can be wrong

5) Mark 7:5-8

- A. Do not go by traditions or creeds
- B. Worship by traditions (which supersede the Word of God) is worship '*in vain*'

6) 1 Timothy 4:16

- A. Watch your life and doctrine '*closely*'
- B. Which is more important, life or doctrine? Both are essential
- C. Why is it important? To save yourself and those who hear you.

7) Acts 17:10-12

- A. Must check what religious leaders say
- B. Your challenge: Read and study the Bible every day!

8) James 1:22-25

- A. The Word of God is a mirror
- B. We can easily deceive ourselves
- C. '*Do what it says*'

9) John 12:48

- A. Why is the Bible so important? The Word will judge us
- B. The Bible is our final exam. We have it in advance. If we fail, whose fault is it?

Challenge:

- A. Start reading the bible daily
- B. Accept the Bible as the standard for you life (above Church traditions and your own feelings)
- C. Continue studying the Bible together at least once a week

Discipleship

Matthew 28:18-20

- A. What does Jesus want everybody to become?
- B. In your reading of the New Testament which how often have you seen the word “Christian”?
- C. The word “Christian” only appears three times in the New Testament.
- D. The word commonly used by Jesus is “Disciple”, which occurs over 270 times
- E. What does the word “disciple” mean?
 - i) Believer
 - ii) Follower
 - iii) Supporter
 - iv) Devotee
 - v) Student

Let’s look at what it means to be a “Disciple”

1) Mark 1:14-18

- A. Calling of the first disciples
- B. ‘Come follow me’ (Jesus)
- C. They left everything.
- D. They followed immediately
- E. ‘Fishers of men’. Sharing the ‘good news’ with others

2) Luke 9:23-26

- A. If any man...
- B. Deny self. Like Jesus in the garden (**Matthew 26:36-39**, “Not my will, but your will.”)
- C. Do not give in to moods, feelings, emotions
- D. Carry the cross - daily
- E. Gain world ... forfeit soul. Lose your life for Jesus ... save it

3) Luke 14:25-33

- A. If any man...
- B. Love Jesus more than any person (v. 26)
- C. Count the cost (v. 28-30)
- D. Consider the alternatives (v. 31-32)
- E. Everything, not just anything (v. 33)

4) John 13:34-35

- A. Love one another
- B. Be an active part of the fellowship

5) Matthew 28:18-20

- A. The ‘Great Commission’
- B. Command - Make disciples, baptize them, teach them
- C. Who should be baptized? People who make the decision to be a disciple
- D. ‘Teach them to obey everything’ – An ongoing lifelong process

Challenges:

- A. Is this new? Are you living the life of a Disciple?
- B. Have you ever made these decisions?
- C. Have you ever lived this way?
- D. Make a decision to be a disciple of Jesus
- E. Start living as a disciple of Jesus

Light & Darkness

1 Peter 2:9-10

- A. Contrast: Darkness – Light; Not a people – people of God; No mercy – received mercy
- B. Every person is either in the darkness or the light. There is no “grey area”

Darkness

1) Isaiah 59:1-2

- A. Sin separates us from God. There is a wall of sin between God and us
- B. In order for a man to have a relationship with God the wall of sin must be broken down
- C. When sin is forgiven; the wall is removed & God’s light shines through
- D. Therefore we are saved when our sins are forgiven

2) Romans 3:23-24

- A. Who has sinned? Everyone!
- B. Who is further away from God, a person who sins a little or a person who sins a lot?
- C. All are equal, all are lost. A good moral life can not save you.
- D. We cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us

3) Galatians 5:19-21

- A. Sins of commission
- B. Review list of sins

4) James 4:17

- A. Sins of omission
- B. What is ‘the good we ought to do’? What are some examples?

5) James 1:13-15

- A. We are responsible for our own sin. We cannot blame God or anyone else
- B. Sin can start small and get BIG. Our lives can descend deeper and deeper into sin
- C. Sin leads to death

6) Romans 6:23

- A. Sin leads to death
- B. What is a ‘wage’? Do we deserve a ‘wage’?
- C. What is a ‘gift’? Do we deserve a ‘gift’?

Light

1) Romans 3:24 – *‘We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus’*

2) Romans 6:23 – *‘The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’*

3) Romans 7:24-25

- A. *‘Who will rescue me from this body of sin?’*

4) Eph 2:1-9

- A. We were dead in our sins
- B. God has great love for us & is rich in mercy (vs. 4)
- C. We are forgiven our sins and saved by God’s grace **through Christ Jesus**

Challenges:

- A. Reflect on your sins and rejoice in God’s love for you
- B. Our next two studies (‘The Cost of Grace’ & ‘Entering God’s Grace’) will expand this further

The Cost of Grace

From the last study:

- i) Our sins separate us from God
- ii) Our sins leave us in darkness
- iii) Our sins lead to death
- iv) Only Jesus can save us

How does Jesus save us?

1) Col 1:19-23

- A. We are reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross
- B. Jesus made peace through His own blood, shed on the cross
- C. We were alienated & enemies because of our own evil behaviour (sin)
- D. We are now '*blameless*', without '*blemish or accusation*' through the cross

2) Matthew 26-27 – The Cross

- 26:31-46 – Disciples great intentions, Jesus overwhelmed, disciples can't stay awake
- 26:47-56 – Betrayed by a friend, arrested by his countrymen, abandoned by the disciples
- 26:57-68 – On trial before religious leaders, falsely accused, beaten and abused
- 26:69-75 – Denied three times by his closest disciple (& best friend)
- 27:11-26 – Trial before Pilate, the crowd chooses a murderer over Jesus and insists He be crucified
- 27:27-31 – Jesus mocked, beaten, and abused by the Roman soldiers
- 27:32-44 – Jesus crucified, insulted, alone
- 27:45-47 – Jesus forsaken & abandoned by God (2 Cor 5:21)
- 27:48-56 – Jesus dies on the cross
- 27:57-61 – Jesus buried in the tomb

- A. At the cross that we see the physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering of Jesus
- B. At the cross we can understand how much our sins hurt Jesus and hurt God
- C. The cross meant death for Jesus even though He was innocent
- D. The cross means life for us even though we are guilty

3) 1 Peter 2:23-25

- A. Why did Jesus die on the cross?
- B. Why was he wounded?
- C. We are restored to God through Jesus

4) Acts 2:29-41

- A. "Whom you crucified"
- B. Who killed Jesus? The soldiers? Pilate? The Jewish leaders?
- C. We did. Our sin did. We are personally responsible
- D. "They were cut to the heart." Are you?
- E. "Brothers, what shall we do?" Have the same attitude

Challenges:

- A. Read the medical account of the crucifixion or watch a video of the crucifixion
- B. Our next study (Entering God's Grace) will show us the proper response to the cross

Entering God's Grace

From the last 2 studied:

- i) Our sins separate us from God
- ii) Our sins leave us in darkness
- iii) Our sins lead to death
- iv) Only Jesus can save us
- v) Jesus saved us through His suffering and death on the cross

How should we respond to the cross? How can we enter God's grace?

1) John 3:1-7

- A. What does Jesus tell Nicodemus?
- B. What does he mean by water & spirit?
- C. More on this in a minute
- D. Personal decision as an adult

2) Acts 2:22-24, 36-37

- A. Jesus is from God
- B. God raised Jesus from the dead
- C. "You put him to death" (23)
- D. "Whom **you** crucified" (36)
- E. They (& we) are personally responsible
- F. They were cut to the heart
- G. They had a "what shall we do?" attitude

3) Acts 2:38-42

- A. Repent (Greek = to turn)
- B. Baptize (Greek = to immersed).
- C. Sin forgiven & receive the Holy Spirit
- D. God – removes your sin and gives you the Spirit
- E. The same "water & the spirit" as John 3

What does it mean to "repent"?

4) 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

- A. What is the difference between Godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?
- B. Godly sorrow – brings repentance & leads to salvation
- C. Discuss the attributes of "repentance"

What is "baptism"?

5) Romans 6:1-4

- A. Sharing (participation) in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ
- B. Jesus died, was buried, and was raised from the dead
- C. We die to our old life, are buried in the water, and are raised to a new life
- D. "Live a new life" is the same as "born again" from John 3

Challenges:

- A. Does this describe your conversion?
- B. What does God want you to do?
- C. What are some things you need to repent of? (Reflect & make a list)

The Church

1) Acts 2:41

- A. 3,000 were 'added to their number'
- B. The beginning of the New Testament church
- C. When we are baptized, we are added to the church

2) Colossians 1:15-18

- A. The church is the body of Christ
- B. The body needs the head
- C. Jesus guides the church
- D. To be attached to Christ, where must you be?
- E. To have a relationship with Jesus, you must be in the church
- F. The church is essential to Christianity

3) Ephesians 2:19-21

- A. The church is a family – you are a part of the family
- B. God is the father, we are brothers and sisters
- C. The church is a nation – you are a citizen
- D. The church is a building
- E. Jesus is the cornerstone
- F. Foundation – Apostles & prophets (Teachings of the Bible)

4) 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- A. We are baptized into the church
- B. Every part is essential
- C. We need the body. The body needs us (v. 21)
- D. Be involved on a relationship level in the church (v. 26)

5) Why are there so many denominations? (450 or more exist in the U.S. alone.)

- A. The Bible teaches there is one church.
 - i) **Ephesians 4:4-6** – One Body
 - ii) **Romans 12:4-5** – One Body
 - iii) **1 Corinthians 12:12-13** – One Body
 - iv) One head should be attached to one body

Church Life

6) Hebrews 10:23-25

- A. Attend – Do not miss church.
- B. Be an active part of the fellowship
- C. Encourage one another (v.24)
- D. Try to attend all the meetings of the church

7) 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

- A. Give financially to support the church
- B. Should be from a "cheerful" heart – not under compulsion
- C. God blesses you when you sacrificial

Challenges:

- A. Commit to God and to the church
- B. Commit to one-another relationships in the church
- C. Attend the church consistently
- D. Support the church financially