

Why Is My Relationship with God Important? Sermon for Nov. 15th

Hebrews 10:11-25 – text

Relationships are at the core of who we are as humans. From Shakespearean dramas to the current top ten music charts, nearly every artistic expression is about relationship: songs of love lost and found, tales of our deepest longings and greatest tragedies. Whether it is an individual broken heart, or whole families and society's devastated by relationships gone bad, relationships reflect our deepest human struggles. They are the source of our most profound joy and pain. Relationships are what we are willing to kill and die for. What we long for most. What keep us up at night. It is in relationship that we find out who we are as humans, and what matters most in life.

Relationship is at the heart of the Christian faith, reflecting the fact that we as humans have been made for relationship.

From love to hate, relationship is at the depths of sin and at the heights of moral virtue. Compassion, sacrifice, forgiveness, trust... betrayal, murder, adultery, revenge. Each is rooted in relationship. It is at the heart of both ethics and worship. All throughout Christianity's history, relationship has been the heart pulse of a vibrant faith.

Martin Luther has said that the Bible is the manger in which Christ is found. Without the manger you will not find Christ, but you dare not confuse Christ with the manger. We love the Bible because in it we find Jesus, but we do not have a relationship with a book, but with the living Word, Jesus Christ. The Bible is the witness to that relational self-disclosure of God in history, with the primary goal not being a collection of intellectual information or doctrinal propositions about God, but in encountering us relationally with Jesus Christ so that we may come into vital salvic transforming relationship with God. Scripture is not an end in itself, but points us to that relationship.

Because of this and before we can answer the question Why Is My relationship With God Important, we have to answer this question:

What does it take to begin a relationship with God? Wait for lightning to strike? Devote yourself to unselfish religious deeds? Become a better person so that God will accept you? NONE of these. God has made it very clear in the Bible how we

can know Him. This will explain how you can personally begin a relationship with God, right now.

Principle One: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.

God created you. Not only that, he loves you so much that he wants you to know him now and spend eternity with him. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

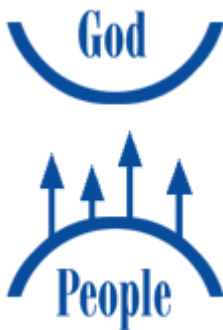
Jesus came so that each of us could know and understand God in a personal way. Jesus alone can bring meaning and purpose to life.

Principle Two: All of us sin and our sin has separated us from God.

We sense that separation, that distance from God because of our sin. The Bible tells us that "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

Deep down, our attitude may be one of active rebellion or passive indifference toward God and his ways, but it's all evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

The result of sin in our lives is death -- spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23). Although we may try to get close to God through our own effort, we inevitably fail.



This diagram shows the great gap that exists between us and God. The arrows illustrate how we might try to reach God through our own efforts. We may try to do good things in life, or earn God's acceptance through a good life or a moral philosophy. But our good efforts are insufficient to cover up our sin.

How can we bridge this gulf?...

Principle Three: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin.

Through him we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life.

We deserve to pay for our own sin. The problem is, the payment is death. So that we would not have to die separated from God, out of his love for us, Jesus Christ died in our place. On the cross, Jesus took all of our sin on himself and completely, fully paid for it. "For Christ also died for sins...the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). "...he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:5). Because of Jesus' death on the cross, our sin doesn't have to separate us from God any longer.



"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus not only died for our sin, he rose from the dead.⁷ When he did, he proved beyond doubt that he can rightfully promise eternal life -- that he is the Son of God and the only means by which we can know God. That is why Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Instead of trying harder to reach God, he tells us how we can begin a relationship with him right now. Jesus says, "Come to me." "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). It was Jesus' love for us that caused him to endure the cross. And he now invites us to come to him, that we might begin a personal relationship with God.

*Just knowing what Jesus has done for us and what he is offering us is not enough.
To have a relationship with God, we need to welcome him into our life...*

Principle Four: We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The Bible says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

We receive Jesus by faith. The Bible says, "God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Receiving Jesus means believing that Jesus is the Son of God, who he claimed to be, then inviting him to guide and direct our lives.¹² Jesus said, "I came that you might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 3:1-8).

And here is Jesus' invitation. He said, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (John 10:10).

How will you respond to God's invitation?

Consider these two circles:



SSelf is on the throne

† Jesus is outside the life

● Decisions and actions are solely directed by self, often resulting in frustration



† Jesus is in the life and on the throne

SSelf is yielding to Jesus

● The person sees Jesus' influence and direction in their life

Which circle best represents your life?

Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

You can receive Christ right now. Remember that Jesus says, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). Would you like to respond to his invitation? Here's how.

The precise words you use to commit yourself to God are not important. He knows the intentions of your heart. If you are unsure of what to pray, this might help you put it into words:

"Jesus, I want to know you. I want you to come into my life. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin so that I could be fully accepted by you. Only you can give me

the power to change and become the person you created me to be. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life with God. I give my life to you. Please do with it as you wish. Amen."

If you sincerely asked Jesus into your life just now, then he has come into your life as he promised. You have begun a personal relationship with God.

What follows is a lifelong journey of change and growth as you get to know God better through Bible reading, prayer and interaction with other Christians.

The next question is our topic question: Why Is My Relationship With God Important?

Without a relationship with God, there is no hope in your life and no hope of life after death except a life of misery and condemnation (Matthew 25:41-46).

God wants you to be in close relationship with Him. This is why He sent Jesus into the world. He wanted to reconcile us to Him (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). He allows us to call him "Abba Father," (Romans 8:15) the most intimate of relationship with God.

Our relationship with God is more important than any other relationship because it is an eternal relationship. Our relationships we have through our family, friends, acquaintances, etc. are important, but not the most important. Without our relationship with God, these other relationships have little meaning. It may seem as if they are most important, but when we compare what these relationships offer us in comparison to what God offers us, they pale in comparison. Yet, God wants us to have these other relationships so we can be enriched by His relationship with us.

God assures you that if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, He has given you eternal life – "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

God promises to never leave you – "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). "I am with you always, even to the end of the earth" (Matthew 28:20).

God has given you His Spirit to enable you to live in a way that pleases Him – "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

The importance of your relationship with God is highlighted by the Spirit's work to call you to faith and keeping you in that one true faith so that you will experience God's reconciliation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for you. His all-encompassing and unconditional love is always present for you to experience. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt 22:36-40).

The joy of God's relationship with you and your relationship with God is expressed in your worship of Him and your service to Him from love in your heart that is offered up to Him. By this you express why your relationship with God is important!

Amen.