

What You Must Know in Order to Grow Closer to God

I grew up in a good, religious household. Church was a weekly activity that Mom and Dad didn't dare allow my brothers and me to miss.

I can remember plopping myself on a hard, wooden pew at the back of the church and staring up at a life-sized statue of Jesus that hung on a cross at the opposite end of the room. Unfortunately, that statue was symbolic of my relationship with the real Jesus—lifeless and distant. I thought surely He had greater cares than anything I was enduring.

My “Aha” Moment

Thankfully, my concept of Christ was radically changed in an aha moment—what I consider my salvation experience—at a more vibrant church, where I realized that *Jesus is alive and personally interested in me*. I came to understand that He is someone to draw close to and confide in.

And because He is interested in my everyday life, I learned to depend upon Him for help in my struggles, and to change what needed to be changed. Suddenly, I was no longer at the back and Jesus at the front, but rather, He and I were together. It was the beginning of a deep relationship with God, unlike anything I had previously known.

Sadly, many Christians, regardless of denomination, experience this distance. Maybe what separates you from God is not rows of pews, but rather, guilt, regret or condemnation. Maybe it's a feeling of unworthiness. Perhaps it's the busyness of life. Whatever the reason, the very purpose God sent Jesus to Earth was to remove those things that stand between us and Him. God desires that we, like the first couple in the Garden, relate to Him, experience His friendship and, with it, His majesty

and power.

“How Do I Get Closer to God?”

A young lady wrote to me via Facebook: “How do I have the deep faith you speak of? How do I get closer to God?” I could almost hear the agony in her voice as she begged: “I just want to be happy and free.” This woman is not alone in her cry. Rather, hers is the plea of most people I come in contact with who crave the genuine joy and freedom that, whether they know it or not, is found in a close connection with the Creator. Thankfully, the answer to how to get closer to God is much simpler than you might expect.

First, you must know that God is madly in love with you. “God loves you” may seem like over-quoted Christian-ese. Yet there is nothing more profound than the revelation that the Creator of this vast universe absolutely cherishes you. God sent Jesus for you—because He *so loves you* (John 3:16).

In any relationship, whether with a friend or a spouse, the level of intimacy is a reflection of how much you perceive that he or she cares for you. The same can be said in relationship with God. As I share in my book, *Silence Satan*, when I misunderstood Jesus as someone ready to zap me dead for any mistake, I obviously held Him at a distance. Why get close to someone who is mad at you and may want to destroy you?

But God is not mad at you. Make no mistake: He despises sin and ungodliness (Rom. 1:18). But He is madly interested in you. Let me convince you: You are created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). God does not despise His own image, does He? No, He loves it! Even when we miss the mark, the Bible declares that God still loves us.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, MEV).

“How do I get closer to God?” *Know that God loves you.* Remind

yourself of this constantly. Make declarations about God's love until it gets into your soul. I promise, you will naturally get closer to God when you take to heart that He is madly, deeply in love with you.

Secondly, it's absolutely essential to spend quality time with God. People in love desire to spend lots of time with each other. They schedule days and evenings when they can go to dinner, watch a movie or otherwise just enjoy each other's company. In this atmosphere, intimacy is built, trust is gained and secrets are shared. A relationship develops.

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8, MEV).

God is in love with you and desires to come close to you, but as in any relationship, you must reciprocate. *"Love" is spelled t-i-m-e.* So if you love God, spend time with Him. And I don't just mean in church! A successful relationship cannot only be lived out publicly, but must include plenty of personal, one-on-one time. Take a seat on your couch, open your Bible and think about the goodness and love of God. Often, I like to open my music app, play my favorite worship song, and sing my heart out to Him.

Just as there are various settings for a date, there are various ways and places to spend time with God. But you must be intentional about it. I promise, in these environments, it won't take long until you discern His still, small voice. Soon you'll be conversing with God even in casual situations like while driving, brushing your teeth, eating lunch and throughout your everyday activities. That's relationship!

Finally, understand that you are in control. *"How to get closer to God?"* It's simple: *Trust that He loves you. Take opportunities to personally experience His love.* Only you control the throttle on the level of intimacy you have with God. As you draw near, so will He. {eoa}

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