

Sunday, June 5, 2022

## Concerning First Principles Do You Have a Personal Relationship with Jesus?

Today, I want to talk about the question in the title. And while the answer of anyone who believes in Jesus, understands His work and desires salvation, would obviously want relationship with Him, the question is something that needs to be clarified.

- I. **The importance of relationship with Jesus.**
  - a. What is relationship?
    - i. Defined<sup>1</sup> as the state of being related. To be related is two or more parts or persons that are of the same kind in one way or another and connected to each other. Typically, when we think of relationship, we think of relatives which means we are connected by common ancestry or marriage (kinship).
    - ii. The word "relationship" is not found in most versions (NKJV, KJV, ESV, NASV, NASB – only once in Matt. 19:10) though certainly the Bible deals with relationships, INCLUDING relationship with God and Jesus. But what does this mean?
  - b. We need relationship with Him.
    - i. Consider our relationship with Jesus in the following terms
      1. Fellowship – means joint participation or sharing. Usually, when we think of fellowship there is a bond of some sort that brings us together. We need that bond with Christ.
        - a. 1 Corinthians 1:9 – God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
        - b. 1 John 1:3 – truly, our fellowship is with the Father.
        - c. Philippians 3:10 – that I may know Him... fellowship of His sufferings
      2. Love – a strong word associated with relationship. It demonstrates one for whom we care. We need to love Jesus just as he loves us.
        - a. John 14:21 – *...He who loves Me will be loved by MY Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*
        - b. John 15:9, *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love."*
        - c. 1 Corinthians 16:22, *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!*
      3. Knowing Him –
        - a. John 10:27 – *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*
        - b. John 17:3, in His prayer, *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*
        - c. Philippians 3:10, *"that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection..."*
        - d. 2 Timothy 1:12 – I know whom I have believed...
        - e. 1 John 2:13-14 – John writes "because you have known Him..."
      4. Abiding in Him – the idea of abiding is to make a permanent place of dwelling
        - a. John 8:31-32 – if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed

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<sup>1</sup> Definition created based on [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

- b. John 15:4 – Abide in My, and I in you – Jesus is the vine, we are the branches.
    - c. 1 John 2:24 – if what you heard abides in you, you will abide in the Son and the Father
    - d. 1 John 4:15-16 – whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him... abiding in love is abiding in God.
  - ii. He died to make relationship possible.
    - 1. He died for us to reconcile us to the Father – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Ephesians 2:16.
    - 2. When we are “born again” we are in Him – John 3:3-5 Jesus declared that we must be born again. 1 Peter 1:22-23
    - 3. How are we “born again”? By obeying the gospel – John 3:5 – born of the water (baptism) and the spirit (the workings of the gospel – Ephesians 5:26, 6:17)
    - 4. When we obey the gospel we are “in Him” - Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27, etc. 2 Corinthians 5:17, If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...
    - 5. 1 John 5:11, life is in His Son
  - iii. Various descriptions of the Christian life describe our relationship with Him
    - 1. Christ is husband, we are His bride – Ephesians 5:21-33, Romans 7:4, etc.
    - 2. He is Lord – Acts 2:36 – God made Him both Lord and Christ. The very idea of being Lord means that He has authority over us. We are subject to Him – Ephesians 5:24 speaks of the church (which we are) is subject to Christ.
    - 3. He is our brother – He is not ashamed to call us brethren.
    - 4. He is head – we are part of His body. Ephesians 1:22-23
    - 5. He is our king – John 18:36-37 – a spiritual kingdom. We are citizens of His kingdom and subject to Him.
    - 6. He is the Good Shepherd – we are His sheep – John 10:11, 14, etc.
    - 7. **ALL of these describe relationship.** BUT notice how in each of these there is interaction and they are based on an objective understanding of Him and what our relationship involves.

## II. How the expression is misunderstood.

- a. First, let it be understood that the expression, “personal relationship with Jesus” (or God or Holy Spirit) is not found in scripture. As previously noted, the word “relationship” is not even in many word for word translations.
- b. Following are some ways that the expression is misunderstood:
  - i. A direct indwelling of Jesus – this is what many mean when they use this expression. A study of the evangelical movement finds the origin of this expression. It was developed in response to various denominations becoming too entrenched in traditionalism to the exclusion of those who did not believe like them. The community church movement and various independent churches (most of the mega churches) were the product of this belief system. It places more emphasis on subjective feelings and experience with Jesus than on conforming to His will.
    - 1. This is erroneous for various reasons, chief of which is understanding HOW Jesus dwells within us today. It is not a direct indwelling where He takes over and controls what we do (i.e. we have no control ourselves).
    - 2. Jesus leads or directs us by that which He has taught us. John 8:31-32 notes, *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

3. Jesus is “in” us, in the same way the word is “in” us – Colossians 3:16, 1 John 2:14 speaks of the word of God abiding in us. The word influences us, as we learn it and obey it.
- ii. Based on feelings – many misunderstand Biblical language because they seek to relate it directly to how we use words today (words like “love”, “heart”, etc.). The problem is such makes the gospel subjective (based upon what you THINK something means). That is NEVER a safe course when it comes to God’s word. Proverbs 14:12, Acts 26:9.
- iii. I can do whatever I want as long as I am sincere. Many reason that as long as Jesus is in their lives, they can do whatever they want.
  1. They may speak of “meaningful” worship, which uses praise bands, “relevant” topics (as opposed to “old fashioned” gospel preaching), etc. For many this statement is used in contrast to “ritualistic worship” or “traditional worship” or “traditional church”.
  2. The scripture teaches that while we MUST be sincere (cf. 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 Peter 1:22, Ephesians 6:24, etc.) sincerity is not enough.
  3. You can be sincere and wrong. Acts 23:1 – Paul was sincere, but he was wrong.
  4. Our sincerity needs to be grounded in truth – John 17:17 – God’s word is truth. 2 John 9-11 also speaks of abiding in the doctrine of Christ and NOT transgressing.
- iv. Once saved, always saved – some reason that because of our relationship with Him, we can never forfeit our salvation. This is clearly rejected in scripture:
  1. Galatians 5:4 – notes we can fall from grace
  2. 2 Peter 2:20-22 speaks of one being worse off after returning to his former ways
  3. Hebrews 3:12 warns to beware lest an evil heart of unbelief results in departing from the living God.
  4. 1 Corinthians 9:27 – even Paul knew he needed to persevere lest he be disqualified.
- v. Each person’s standard is different – Often times, one will reply that “you believe what you believe, and I will believe what I believe.” “We are all going to the same place, but by different routes”. This is based on each one’s “personal relationship with Jesus”. That is NOT what the Bible teaches.
  1. John 14:6 – Jesus is the ONLY way to heaven. He did NOT teach different paths.
  2. Galatians 1:6-9 warned about following a different gospel, one perverted from the true gospel.
  3. 1 Corinthians 1:10 speaks of all speaking the same thing. There is no passage of scripture that says it is ok to “agree to disagree” and go to Jesus by different paths.
- vi. The church is Not important. As long as I have a personal relationship with Jesus, I don’t need the church.
  1. Remember Ephesians 3:10-11 – it was part of God’s eternal plan. As we have continually noted, both the universal and local church are part of God’s plan. That is why following His pattern is so important.
  2. Ephesians 1:22-23 reminds us that the church is His body. Paul was writing to brethren in Ephesus, the church there.
  3. Paul taught the same thing in every church (1 Corinthians 4:17)
  4. I am fully convinced that God wants us to be part of a local church. There are so many things accomplished therein, from proper worship, to collective works, to building each other up (Ephesians 4:16).

5. Relationship with Jesus does NOT dismiss His church. It enhances it when you remember that it is part of His body.

### III. HOW do I have a true, personal relationship with Jesus?

- a. It is based on being IN Him – 2 Corinthians 5:17 – anyone in Christ is a new creation; Ephesians 1:7, *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...”*; Philippians 3:9 speaks of being found “in Him”
- b. Relationship with Christ is based on obeying Him – Hebrews 5:9
  - i. “In Him” – 1 John 2:3-6 – He who abides in Him walks as He walked
  - ii. Fellowship – 1 John 1:6-7 – fellowship with Him is based on walking in the light. We do that by obeying Him.
  - iii. Love – John 14:15, 21, 23-24– loving Him is based on keeping His commandments.
  - iv. Knowing Him – 1 John 2:3-6, 3:6 – whoever abides in sin has neither seen Him nor known Him...
  - v. Abiding – John 8:31 – we must abide in His word. This makes us His disciple. John 15:7 – again we are abiding in His word. Jn 15:10 – both love and abide based on keeping His commandments. 1 John 3:24 – whoever keeps His commandments abides in Him.
  - vi. Matthew 7:21-23, Luke 6:46 – it is not enough to call Him Lord, we have to keep His commandments.
  - vii. Friendship - John 15:13-15 – we are His friend if we do what is commanded of us.
- c. WHAT is the point of all these verses? It is clear, relationship with Him is based upon what we do! We HAVE TO obey Him. That is OBJECTIVE relationship.

And thus, we do need to have relationship with Jesus. AND it needs to be personal, in that it is between you and Him. But we can never forget that this relationship is NOT based upon subjective feelings, but upon our conforming to His will. We need to obey Him and in so doing we will enjoy relationship with Him in this life, AND then in the life to come, we can spend eternity with Him and the Father, and one another as His faithful family. What that relationship will be like remains to be seen, but it is certainly worth striving to attain. What about you? How is your relationship with Jesus?