



A Personal Relationship With Jesus (on-line version)

Can I have a personal relationship with Jesus – the Son of the God of the universe?

I have claimed Him as Savior and Lord – but does He really want to have a personal relationship with me? What kind of a relationship could it be anyway: as a friend or as an older and definitely wiser brother? More likely, it would be like the relationship between a King on His throne and a puny ant trying hopelessly to carry away a crumb before the King moves His foot unwittingly and oops - ant-dust!

God created us to love Him. That's right. He's all about relationships – personal ones. He created man in His own image – we were perfect and going to live forever! But with that Godly image came the freedom to choose – because love must be a choice to be love. Instead, we chose disobedience and betrayal.

CSI – Crime Scene Investigation is one of the most watched network TV shows. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden – our human existence has been one big “crime scene.” The “investigation” results prove we are all guilty – no longer acceptable to God. Yet He still wants a personal relationship with us, and so He provides a way for us by revealing what love is – through His Son Jesus. He is the most important choice we will ever make. Our personal relationship with Jesus begins when we are personally convicted of our sin, repent and claim Him as Lord and Savior, are baptized into His death and raised to walk in new life, and receive His gift of the Holy Spirit.

God's relationship with us encompasses His whole infinite and triune being.

God the Father **Commits** Himself to us – Jeremiah 31:33, *"I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*

God the Son **Sacrificed** Himself for us – 1 John 4:10, *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*

God the Holy Spirit **Invests** in us and indwells us – Ephesians 1:13, *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."*

God's relationship with us is indeed personal – He committed to, sacrificed for, and invested in each of us as individuals.

How must we respond?

Can a real relationship be One-sided?

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself." Mark 12:29-30

First, how do we love God with our "all?"

Commit to knowing Him personally – talk with Him in prayer and learn about Him in His Word.

Luke 11:10, *"For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."*

Colossians 1:10, *"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."*

1. Set aside some “alone-time” with God each day – read a chapter from your Bible. Pray you will hear His voice and direction all day.
2. Practice acting on the “God-thoughts” that come to mind – that is the Holy Spirit whispering to you! When you think – “I ought to speak to my co-worker about the illness in their family,” or “I should help that lady get her groceries to her car” – do it!!
3. Pray first, when any question or problem comes to you throughout the day. If you are with another Christian – ask them to pray with you. Paul's model is to pray continually – as though the God of the Universe were actually walking beside us each step of the way... And indeed He is!

Sacrifice yourself in praise and worship – both alone and with other believers. Practice giving yourself to Him daily for His pleasure and purpose.

John 4:23, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.”

Hebrews 12:28, “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”

- **Practice** sacrificing your pleasures and comforts for others: this means money, time, and energy!! Serve weekly at church.
- **Participate** whole-heartedly in worship.
- **Plan** a family worship service when you are out-of-town on Sunday.

Invest in doing His will – empty yourself. True humility comes from a heart changed by the truth of who we are, who He is, and why He loves us so.

Luke 9:23, “Then He said to them all: ‘If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”

Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

1. Submit yourself to serving others without their knowing it. Give and work in secret – resist the desire to be praised by others.
2. As God reveals your faults and “growth areas,” repent readily and receive His forgiveness. View God’s cutting and shaping as His perfecting us to better serve Him.

Does this relationship with Jesus happen overnight? No! It grows just like the one we have with a best friend. As we feed on God’s Word, our love for Jesus deepens more and more. We want to talk with Him as much as possible. In fact, it becomes natural. Our desire to serve Him grows, too. Our thoughts start to include Jesus and our words will also.

Along with loving us, Jesus gave another gift to us called “free choice.” We choose or limit the depth of our relationship with Him. Like any friendship, we can invest ourselves in it and have it grow and deepen, or we can put little effort into it and miss the many blessings He has for us.

A personal relationship with Jesus is life-changing here on earth, and is only a preview of what an eternal relationship with Him will be like.

Second, how do we love our neighbor as ourselves?

We should use God’s pattern for His personal relationship with us -- as we pursue relationships with others.

Commit yourself to loving them. Demonstrate the love in your heart and head through words and actions.

Sacrifice yourself: your time, your resources, and your energy – on their behalf. Let your sacrifice be transparent to others. Battle the prevailing “it’s all about me” attitude of our consumer-minded culture.

Invest yourself in their future. Put them first. Strive to see others through God’s eyes with a mind focused on the personal relationship He wants to have with them. Pray for others first, respond to their hurts before expressing your own, forgive their sins against you even when they don’t acknowledge them.

Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than you.”



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