

Do You Know How Close God is to You (or Have You Forgotten)?

Many Christians today are suffering and miserable. They remember their early days as a believer when God seemed so close and they were overflowing with joy. Yet, now, after many years of diligently seeking God their relationship with Him seems distant instead of improved. They love Jesus with all of their hearts and are doing all they know to please Him, but God seems far away. They know that the Bible says that God is close and that He loves them, but they admit their experience seems to contradict this.

Upon experiencing this, most believers decide to double up on or improve their “spiritual disciplines” in order to fix the problem. Others grow introspective, eager to detect any attitude or fault that might be affecting their relationship with God. Some begin to travel long distances to attend meetings where they have heard that “God is moving” or where they’ve been told there is a “manifest presence of God”. Others, certain they can do no more than they are already doing, grow weary and feel like giving up altogether on “Christianity”. The more “faithful and true” just keep plodding on doing the same things they’ve always done. They accept their experience to be “all there is”, and because they are so dedicated to God, just keep on in the same course of action becoming more disciplined and more effective at being disciplined with NO IDEA what happened to the closeness they once knew nor how to get it back.

If this describes you, we have good news. While what you are going through is common to many believers today, it IS **NOT NORMAL**. That is to say, it’s not what God wants.

If God seems far away, the answer is NOT in figuring out what you are DOING that is wrong, but rather in what is wrong about what you are BELIEVING.

◆■ Let’s go back to square one. ■◆

I. OUR PERFECT RELATIONSHIP AND CLOSENESS WITH GOD

Our relationship with God was purchased for us through the death of God’s Son. God sought us out and redeemed us with the blood of Jesus. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” the curtain which separated man from the presence of God was torn from top to bottom by God in order to permanently remove any barrier between man and God so that we may know God personally and be in His presence forever. This relationship is a gift to us by His grace through faith in His Son and is not contingent on any work of ours¹.

A. We are joined to the Lord.

If we only accepted this one truth, the rest of the lesson would only be additional evidence to the fact that at new birth we are as close to God as we will ever be.

1 Corinthians 6:17

But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.



¹ Our relationship with God is apart from works, but good works always flow from this perfect relationship.

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B. We have been brought close to God through the blood of His Son.

It was the **blood of Jesus** that caused God to rent the curtain in the temple which separated man from the presence of God, **not any effort of ours**. God made a way for us to be as close as possible to God, to enter the holiest place, not via formulas, but through faith in Jesus, in HIS blood, not our efforts.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

But by **His** doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the **Lord**."

1. We have been brought near to God by the blood of Jesus.

Ephesians 2:11-13

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were **without Christ**, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having **no hope** and **without God** in the world. 13 But **now** in Christ Jesus you who once were far off **have been brought near by the blood of Christ**.

2. We are within the veil in God's very presence (permanently).

Hebrews 6:19-20

This **hope** we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and **which enters the Presence behind the veil**, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest **by the blood of Jesus**, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the **veil**, that is, **His flesh**, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us **draw near**² with a true heart in **full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

This entering into the Holy of Holies which the Messiah inaugurated for sinners was by way of a freshly-slain and living road, and this road went "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." The inner veil of the tabernacle separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. It barred man's access to God. When the high priest in Israel went into the Holy of Holies, he brushed aside that veil. The writer speaks of Messiah's humanity, as the veil through which the entrance into the heavenly Holy of Holies was made... When the Messiah died on the Cross, the veil of the temple was rent by the unseen hand of God, showing Israel two things, that the Messiah had now provided the actual entrance for the sinner into the presence of God, and that the symbolic sacrifices were to be discontinued, for the Reality to whom they pointed had come (9:7-10).-Wuest

² The book of Hebrews was written to Jews, some of whom had not yet been born again.

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C. God is in us.

God's presence continually is with us.

1. The Father abides in us.

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

2. The Son is in us.

Colossians 1:27

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Ephesians 3:17

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

3. The Holy Spirit abides with us forever.

John 14:16-17

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

4. He is among us as we gather in His name.

Matthew 18:19-20

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

5. He will NEVER leave us!

Hebrews 13:5 Amplified

For He [God] Himself has said, I will not in any way fail you nor give you up nor leave you without support. [I will] not, [I will] not, [I will] not in any degree leave you helpless nor forsake nor let [you] down (relax My hold on you)! [Assuredly not!]

D. We are with God in heaven.

1. We are seated with Christ in heaven.

Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

E. Under the New Covenant our sins do NOT separate us from God.

1. Jesus paid the total penalty for all of our sins (past, present, and future).

Hebrews 10:12-14

But this Man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever³ those who are being sanctified.

³ In context “perfected” is primarily referring to forgiveness. We are forgiven forever.

2. God is no longer imputing our sins against us.

Hebrews 8:12

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

Romans 4:5-8

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

And whose sins are covered;

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

3. We are continually forgiven of sin.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light (in other words, if we are born again)⁴, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us (is cleansing us) from all sin.

1 John 2:1, 12

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 12 I write to you, little children because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.

Ephesians 1:7

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

a. God does not turn His back on us when we sin.

b. God doesn’t fold His arms and pout when we sin.

c. God doesn’t turn in His supposed swivel throne and look away when we sin.

So, why does God seem far away?

II. PROGRESSION OF ESTRANGEMENT FROM CHRIST

1◆ “Spiritual disciplines” are often taught as a means to get close, stay close, or get closer to God.

2◆ Instead of challenging these teachings, many believers embrace them, trusting those who teach them.

3◆ There is an initial benefit from discipline. Many people see these disciplines as a way to learn more about God, not to get closer. Usually, those who start out with clear motives get sidetracked and end up thinking their disciplines make them closer to God.

⁴ Text within parenthesis is the author’s amplification based on the word’s meaning

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4♦As we begin to see “spiritual disciplines” as *why* we are close to God, then, of course, they become a mandatory practice; for if we do them, we think, we will be close to God, and if we don’t, we won’t.

5♦We start to see Jesus as the One who saved us, but ourselves as the ones who maintain or improve our relationship through these “disciplines”.

6♦We are believing two “truths” which are not compatible. One, we believe God has given us a close relationship with Him through the blood of Jesus. Two, we believe we need to maintain or improve the relationship through our actions (doing or don’ting).

6♦The problem is, when we add requirements/laws to grace, we fall from grace and become estranged from Christ.

**You have become estranged from Christ,
you who attempt to be justified by law;
you have fallen from grace.-Galatians 5:4**

III. FINDING YOUR WAY BACK

Returning to the closeness you first knew with God isn’t complicated at all. Simply recognize that Jesus purchased your close relationship with God with His own blood and put your faith in His grace. Reject the idea that you can get closer to God through your own effort.

*“Just as I am
without one plea
but that YOUR BLOOD
WAS SHED FOR ME,
and that you biddest me come to Thee
Oh, Lamb of God, I come.”*

IV. REMAINING FREE

A. Receive the Truth

1. Realize that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. This not only includes rejecting false prophets, but the rejection of METHODS which claim to bring us close.

1 Timothy 2:4-6

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one

Mediator between God and men, the Man **Christ Jesus**, 6 who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Ephesians 2:18 For through **Him** we both⁵ **have** access by one Spirit to the Father.

2. Remind yourself that you are as close to God as you will ever be and that He has promised to NEVER EVER leave you or forsake you.
3. Know and enjoy that nothing can separate you from His love.
4. Allow His grace to teach you (Titus 2:11-14).
5. Know that His Spirit is leading you (Rom. 8:14).
6. Let HIM finish the work in you.

Philippians 1:3-6

*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will **complete** it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

7. Begin to recognize what Jesus has done for you that you could never do for yourself.

2 Peter 1:1-4

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power **has** given to us **all** things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which **have** been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, **having** escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

8. Allow yourself to rest in Him.

Romans 14:17

The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 11:38-30

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

B. Reject Religious Laws

1. Forsake formula to be close to God and return back to when you first came to Jesus, empty-handed, with nothing to offer him but your faith, totally dependent on His grace to save you. Lay aside all of the do's and don'ts that you have accumulated over the years and approach Him solely on the basis of His shed blood for you. Don't put your faith in your "spiritual disciplines". Put your faith in HIM.

Galatians 2:19-21

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live

⁵ Both Jew and Gentile

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in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

- 2. Recognize the foolishness of thinking you could ever improve upon what God did by your own religious efforts.**

Galatians 3:2-3

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

- 3. Don't be cheated by teachings that focus on laws. Walk each day as the first day you received Him: by grace through faith.**

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage,” (Gal. 5:1). The “yoke of bondage” is laws.

Colossians 2:6-10

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete⁶ in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

⁶ The word in this verse for “complete” is not the same word as in Philippians 1:6. In Colossians 2:10, the Greek word for “complete” is pleroo and means to make replete, that is, (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy. The word for “complete” in Philippians 1:6 is epiteleo and means to fulfill further (or completely), that is, execute; by implication to terminate, undergo: - accomplish, do, finish, (make) (perfect), perform (X -ance). We are complete/replete in Him and the work which HE started HE will finish.