

The Key to Enjoying a Close Relationship with God

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[0 : 00] Do you enjoy a close relationship with God? I want you to think, do I really enjoy a close relationship with God?

Now as Christians, all of us can and should, because it's not based on who we are or what we've done, it's based on Jesus, the fact that He has paid the penalty for our sins through His death on the cross, and He lived the perfect life that is credited to us when we trust Him.

So if we're trusting in Jesus, if we're one with Him, God has forgiven us. God considers us His children. And in that kind of context, we can have a close relationship with Him.

But it's not automatic. You see, as Christians trusting in Jesus, God wants us to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

And there's ways we can live that do not please Him. Don't answer out loud, but what is the number one character quality needed for a person to live close to God?

[1 : 26] And then, what is the number one character flaw that prevents a person from enjoying a relationship with God?

Well, there's a verse of Scripture in the New Testament. Actually, there's two verses of Scripture in the New Testament that say the exact same thing that tells us the answer to those two questions.

Look at it on the screen. God opposes the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Both James and Peter say the exact same thing.

The number one character quality for enjoying closeness with God is humility.

The number one character flaw that will prevent us from enjoying closeness with God is pride.

[2 : 26] I want you to look with me at 1 Peter chapter 5. We're going to look at the last part of verse 5 through verse 7.

I want you to think. Doesn't every Christian desire to be close to God?

To be able to talk with Him in prayer? To be able to read the Bible and know that's God's Word and to understand Him better, discover how He wants us to live in a way that will please Him.

Doesn't, don't, let me just put it this way, don't we as Christians, deep down when you think about it, don't we desire to have a close relationship with God every day, but we don't every day.

Do we? We don't every day. And there's a reason why. Our relationship with God is based upon not us, what we do, but our relationship with God is based upon what Christ has done for us and we trust Him.

[3 : 38] And so that's how, why God accepts us. That's what makes us right with God. We don't make ourselves right. We don't make God love us more or love us less. But as His children, there are ways that we can live that will bring a smile to His face.

And there's ways that we can live that will displease Him terribly. And it's the same way in every relationship, but you think about it with children. Your children are yours, good or bad.

There's some things that they can do. It doesn't affect the relationship, but it certainly affects whether it's a good, peaceful, warm, loving relationship.

That's the way it is when it comes to living a Christian life. A lack of humility can make our relationship with God strained.

Let's look at what Peter says. He says, Humility has never been popular.

[5 : 17] It wasn't in the ancient world. When these words were written in the first century, humility was not even considered a virtue. It was not a desired quality.

Well, the biblical writers did everything they could to challenge that and change that by emphasizing that God values humility. And God hates pride.

So, with this in mind, let's look at what Peter is saying from God's, in terms of what He has instructed us, how He responds to us on this basis.

Number one, God commands us to be humble. This is not a suggestion. This is not an elective. God commands us to be humble. Look again, the last part of verse 5.

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. Let's think about what it means to be humble. Some people get it wrong.

[6 : 17] Humility is not weakness, and it's certainly not denying that you have any strengths. It's not denying that you have any abilities.

It's not, excuse me, it's not putting yourself down. Some people think to be humble means, well, you just deny that you can do anything, that you are anything. Think about this.

What if Duke's star basketball player, Zion Williamson, what if he appeared at a news conference today and said, I know that everybody says I'm the greatest thing to come across, come out of college basketball and forever, but deep down I know I'm really nothing.

I can't play basketball. I shouldn't be getting all this credit and glory. Would that be humility if you know who he is, the best college basketball player that's come along in a long time?

He'll be the number one draft pick in the NBA later on this year. For him to say something like that would just be crazy. It would be denying reality.

[7 : 26] Humility does not mean you deny reality about yourself, about your abilities, your accomplishments, your talents. That's not how God wants us to think of ourselves.

I want to give you an example. From Romans chapter 12, it'll be on the screen in verse 3. What we're going to read here, Paul is prefacing what he's going to say about every Christian has a spiritual gift that they need to use.

Look at it in that light. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.

And then he goes on to say, you have these different gifts. Use your gifts. Acknowledge that you have them. And put them into practice. God has given you those.

They're for the well-being of the church. You are used by God, your gifts and talents and abilities, in a very important way. Don't think too highly of yourself.

[8 : 29] But don't think nothing of yourself. Instead, look at it. Think of yourself with sober judgment.

Think of yourselves realistically. Who you are. What you have. How God made you. How he's gifted you.

Humility is more of a putting others first attitude than anything else. Humility is more about putting the other person in your life ahead of you.

Paul expressed it like this by talking about Jesus. Look at this from Philipians 2. Excuse me. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.

But in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[9 : 36] And he goes on to point out how Jesus, who has always existed. Jesus has always been the Son of God, second person of the Trinity.

But when he came into this world as a man born in the stable in Bethlehem, he left the glory of heaven. He laid it aside and came into this world in the form of a man, a servant, it says, to die for sinful people like us.

Jesus modeled real humility. Not by denying who he was. Not by ceasing to be divine.

But by taking on the form of a man, it says, and humbling himself to serve, to give of himself, to put others first.

And for him, ultimately, to die for people who didn't deserve him dying for. So when God commands us to be humble, he says, don't think of yourself as more important than you really are.

[10 : 50] Don't fail to acknowledge the people around you that have needs. Don't not be concerned about people that God's put in your life.

We should seek to serve the people that God has placed in our home. That God's placed in this church with us. Seek to serve those who are there where you work.

We're supposed to look at people, seek to try to discover their needs. Not looking down at them. Not, in our minds, lowering ourselves for them.

But look at people as God's put them in our lives. Discover their needs. Meet their needs. Be a servant to other people.

That's an idea of what it means to be humble. Now he goes on, he actually tells us to clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.

[11 : 52] Clothe yourselves. Peter probably has in mind, being humble, being a servant, a servant's apron that somebody would put on to serve.

Maybe he had in the back of his mind, Jesus put a towel around himself when he washed his disciples' feet. But it's a word picture. You can understand. Peter is saying, make a conscious decision that you're going to clothe yourself with humility.

As you relate to other people. As you relate to your wife. As you relate to your husband. As you relate to your children.

And I wish they were in here and I'd look at them and say, as you relate to your parents. So I'll just hammer home this to teenagers in here. It applies to you as well.

Clothe yourselves. Look at it. All of you. No exception. No exception. With humility toward one another. You know, we're all equal members of the family of God.

[13 : 05] I want you to look around. Literally look around. People around you. There's people around you. No one in this room is lower than you.

Don't look down at anybody. But at the same time, don't look up at anybody. No one in this room is better than you. When it comes to the kingdom of God.

The family of God. The church. There's no high, middle, or low class. There's no pecking order. We're all the same in terms of our worth and value.

Because we're all, number one, created in the image of God. And if we're Christians. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Nobody in this room is your father or your mother or your child. They're your brother or sister. That's how we relate to one another.

[14 : 06] Now, there are differences. A big difference. We have different gifts, talents, abilities. Capabilities.

We come from different walks of life. And we've left different realms of life to come here. We have different responsibilities at work.

Some people make more money than others. Some people have more responsibility than others. We are certainly by no means the same. God doesn't make clones.

We have our differences. And that's real. But we're all members of the same family. We're all children who call Almighty God our Heavenly Father.

And we're supposed to serve one another. As brothers and sisters in Christ. How many of you ever go, whether you like it or not, you go to a big family reunion where there's all kinds of people there.

[15 : 07] Some of them you don't know that well. How many of you go to those things? Most of us go. When you go there, there's a sense that some are sharper than others.

More talented than others. Done better in life than others. But what unites you in that gathering is somehow or another your kin.

You're a family. You're extended brothers and sisters. When we come together, what unites us is our common faith in Jesus Christ.

And through faith in Him, we've become children of God. And so we really are on the same level. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. Now I want you to think with me.

What attitude do you normally clothe yourselves with on a daily basis? Is it pride or humility?

[16 : 11] What do you clothe yourself with every day? Is it pride or humility? Does it matter who you're dealing with? If they're wealthy or if they're poor?

If they're highly educated or if they have minimal education? If they're black, if they're white. What do you clothe yourself with on a daily basis?

And does it matter who you're going to be around that day? God intends for us to be humble before everyone.

I want you to note here. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. We're not talking right now, we will later, about being humble before God.

We're talking about being humble before one another. There's never a place to be condescending. Never a place to be looking down.

[17 : 16] Never a place to be pointing our finger and thinking they're less than us. And of all people, Christians, we should be setting the tone in such humility.

I want you to look at what else he says in verse 5. A good reason for us to listen and heed this. God opposes the proud.

I want to clarify something. Every way we use the word pride is not wrong or sinful. It's not wrong for you to be proud of your children or your grandchildren because they're yours.

You ought to be. It's not wrong to be proud of them because of something they've achieved. That's not sinful pride. Now, it's wrong to worship another person.

It's wrong to think that whoever is perfect, they can do no wrong. That's willful ignorance, you know. It's not wrong to take pride in your work.

[18 : 19] To try to do a good job, do the best that you can be. But it is wrong to do it, to call attention to yourself, to seek your own glory in it.

The pride that God hates and opposes is the opposite of humility. In relation to other people, it's an attitude of superiority. Thinking of yourself is better than someone else based on, you fill in the blank.

Looking down at other people because they've not done, achieved, or something like you have. This kind of pride could be you don't even think of other people.

You just think about yourself. Everything's about you. Now, in relation to God, it's an attitude of self-centeredness and self-sufficiency. It may be that this kind of pride causes you to rebel against God.

But most likely, it can lead us just to ignore Him. Leave Him out of our lives. If you think of what we're talking about.

[19 : 31] If you think of life in terms of it being a game. Do you want to be on God's team or the team that opposes Him? Obviously, no one wants to be on a team that opposes God.

But if you're a prideful person, you are on the opposing team. And I don't know about you, but do you really want to be on a losing team? You know, you hear these things today.

Trying to be positive and all. That, you know, winning's not everything. And winning is not everything for sure. But winning is something. Who wants to lose? Anything that I do.

I really want to win. If I play you in a game of checkers after church, I want to win. If we're both going to go to Easley for lunch, I would like to beat you there. Even if it's not a declared race, I want to win.

I mean, there's just some things in most, I think most people. I mean, who wants to actually be a loser? Who wants to lose? Who wants to be on a losing team? Sometimes you can't help it. You do the best you can, you still lose.

[20 : 34] We're not talking about that. You can help this. Are you on God's team as a result of you're a humble person?

The person that he chooses to bless. Or are you against God because of your arrogance and pride? You're the person that God chooses to oppose.

And he'll do whatever it takes to humble you if necessary. The good news is that God will allow you to switch teams today. If you know you're an arrogant person.

I mean, you're arrogant at home. You think your spouse lives to serve you. A good way to think about if I'm a prideful or humble person is this.

How do the people that know you best, what would they say? And you pretty much know what they say. The people that you live with. People that you work with. People that you're in church with. People you're in school with.

[21 : 40] What do they think? Do they think that you're there thinking you're the center of attention. And that everybody should revolve around you. Everybody should serve you. Or do they think wherever you are, you don't think you're better than anyone.

Wherever you are, you try to relate to people. And wherever you are, when you see a need that you can do something about, you get involved. You roll up your sleeves.

You serve other people. That needs to be what we're known of, known for in our home. With our spouse. Where we work.

Jesus' idea of being a leader is to be a servant leader. Jesus is all about leadership. He's the ultimate leader. Leadership is an important trait in this world. Part of the problems in our country today is the lack of good, moral, integrity, wise leadership across the board.

Leadership matters. But in Jesus' perspective, he talked about the importance of being a servant leader. I want you to think.

[22 : 53] Which side do I want to be on? And if pride is the problem, admit it to God. Confess it to him. Ask his forgiveness now. Humble yourself. Look at the next part.

Verse 6. God commands us to humble ourselves before him. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand. That's what we need to focus on here, under God's mighty hand.

That's like looking at life, understanding that life is under God's control. Under his mighty hand, everything is under his control.

It means God is sovereign. He's in charge. At the time, God's hand can be thought of in sort of different ways.

Think about it. Sometimes God's hand is a hand of deliverance where he rescues us. Sometimes it's a hand of discipline. And sometimes it's a hand of comfort.

[23 : 51] And every one of us in this room, we understand that. We've experienced that from our parents or as a parent. Think about it in terms of a parent.

Sometimes a parent's hand is a rescuing hand. You pick up a child when they fall. Sometimes it's a disciplining hand. You swat them on the rear end when they disobey.

Sometimes it's a comforting hand. Maybe when they're sick, you're with them in the bed. You put your hand on them just to try to comfort them with your presence.

Everything comes into our lives ultimately under God's hand in some way. He either allows it or he directly causes it.

What we need to think of is this. God will not allow anything to ever separate us from his love. That is in Romans chapter 8, verses 31 through 39.

[24 : 52] That is what we're looking at this coming Wednesday night in our Wednesday night Bible study. How nothing can ever, no one, no thing can ever separate us from God, from his comfort, from his love, from his whatever.

And then God will use everything for our good and his good purpose, Romans 8, 28 tells us. We can trust God to take care of us through our difficulties in life.

If we understand really he's in control. And then God promises to rescue those who humbly trust him. He says that he may lift you up in due time. There is an end to the difficulties of life for God's humble people.

Now we don't know when it will be. You know, if you're going through a hard time right now, you humble yourself before the Lord. At some point he's going to relieve you.

He's going to lift you up. It may be next week. It may be next year. But it may not be until heaven. It's all according to God's schedule.

[26 : 01] And we don't know what that is. We don't know how he's going to do it. God may lift you up and reward you with some kind of tangible blessing. Something material.

Something financial even. God could lift you up emotionally. You just need to be relieved about a certain thing.

And he just sort of lifts that burden on the inside. But again, it may be that God doesn't relieve that until you're in heaven. When everything is going to be perfect. But if we truly humble ourselves before God, recognizing he's in control, we'll trust him to work in our lives in the right way.

At the right time. It may not be easy. It may not be what we would choose. But if we really understand that God is our heavenly father and he's in control, we'll trust him.

That he will do what is best for us, his children. One thing quickly we need to look at before we leave. Verse 7. God calms the anxieties of his humble people.

[27 : 04] It says, casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. This is really continuing the thought of verse 6. The idea that is that as we humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, we can cast our anxieties on him.

I want you to think about something that maybe you are anxious, worried about right now. It may be in your life. It may have something to do with your family member. But there's something like a weight around your neck right now.

Peter says, cast them. So I want you to think. Whatever that is that's got you weighted down. You're anxious about it. I want you to take it off in your mind and cast it on God.

Trust him to help you. To give you wisdom. To give you patience. To give you the strength to continue on, to persevere.

But trust him to take care of you. His way and his time. Don't just hang on to it.

[28 : 15] Don't deal with it as if God doesn't exist. Look to him. Depend upon him. Call upon him. Ask him right now.

The question is, do you trust God enough to do this? If we truly humble ourselves under his mighty hand, we'll be able to do it. If we trust that he is powerful enough to take care of our problems, we'll do it.

If we trust that he cares enough about us, we'll do that. You know, one of the major reasons why we don't cast our anxieties on God is pride.

We think we can take care of everything. I want you to think about something maybe that you've been dealing with in the recent past or even today. It's something that's really been a burden to you, weighted you down.

You have thought about it. You've maybe talked to other people about it. But let me ask you, have you really and truly talked to God about it? Have you searched his word to maybe see if there is already an answer given?

[29 : 24] Have you asked other people that you've got confidence in to pray for you? Or have you sought the counsel of other people that you know are biblically wise?

What I'm getting at is, in the past, in the recent past, right now, are you trying to deal with your own issues? Are you anxious? And as you think about it, you've really never sought God, his wisdom, his help, help from his people.

It could be that it's because you're just so arrogant that you think you can take care of it yourself. But what you found is, that doesn't work.

If we'll truly humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, we will cast our anxieties upon him. And we will know that he will take care of us in his way at his time.

We will not fail. He won't allow it. Because he is our loving Heavenly Father who cares for us. We can't conclude this message without looking at what may be the most important part of this verse.

[30 : 37] Humble yourselves. I don't want God to humble me. He will if he must. But it will be so much easier if we humble ourselves.

And not disobey him, run from him, fight him. And he'll have to humble us. We can humble ourselves by focusing on God, on his greatness and his goodness, his love and his mercy, his holiness and his purity.

And then at the same time, we think about ourselves and our sinfulness, our weakness, our ignorance.

And if we'll think about God as he really is and ourselves as we really are, that will help us to understand we need everything God can give us.

We need everything God can do for us. So that's why we can humble ourselves. So that's why we can humble ourselves and do it meaningfully. And in doing so, we will experience his grace, his forgiveness, his help, and his closeness.

[31 : 56] What we're talking about this morning is something we need to do every day. Every day, every day, we need to humble ourselves before the Lord. And we need to look to him and expect him to take care of us.

To enable us to enjoy closeness with him. Because as that last line says, he cares. God cares for us.

Let's pray together. Dear God, help us to see how we should respond. Lord, if we're prideful people, make it clear. Or just help us to be honest because we know it.

Don't let anyone, Lord, be mistaken about whether or not they're relating to you and relating to other people.

On the basis of pride or humility. Make it clear. And show us how we should respond right now. And that's all in an attitude of prayer.

[33 : 03] Just listen to the Lord. And talk to him about that which will help us to draw close to him. And stay close to him. Humility as an attitude.

Humility as a way of life. Not pride. Hum ■■■. Humility as a way. Humility as a way. mustache. Mid-■. Is the heart here. Are the stitches new for the church. You have a person. Shouldifie. We have a person.

Tabitha. Use Zach. Christmas when standing in front of sleep. Before it starts with the royal king. And we can walk aside at this time. Where it happens. Human nature. Hudson road. Holy duty as a montant of the church.