

# How to Get Closer to God

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**Are you desiring to draw nearer to God?**

**How close do you really want to get to Him?**

**These questions are worthy of your consideration.**

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## PREPARING YOUR HEART

When I speak about drawing nearer to God, about going all the way with Him - understand one thing: a closer walk must begin with a preparation of the heart.

*Jeremiah 4:3*

**For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.**

The Lord is speaking about breaking up the hard ground in your heart, that part where the Word of God isn't finding root and lodging, where it isn't flourishing and growing, where it isn't bearing fruit.

*And sow not among the thorns.* If there is a patch in your heart that is hard or thorny, that area has to be plowed up before planting. Get rid of those things in your heart which are contrary to the Word of God.

Then, when they have been removed, there will be room for a new planting of the Word.

Yes, you can try to sow the seed of God's Word among thorns, but it won't grow - instead, the Word will soon be choked out by the thorns.

Those thorns are the cares of this life, and other things, things which will choke out the Word and cause you to become unfruitful.

*Hosea 10:12*

**Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.**

In the spring the farmer plows up the hard, fallow ground in his fields; then he discs it up, making the soil suitable for planting.

When he finally has the soil prepared, he sows the seed, and expects to bring forth a fruitful crop - all because he first took the time to prepare the soil before planting the seed.

This is the way it is with our hearts. Something has to happen deep within if we are going to draw closer to God.

If we really want God to give us something new, we must realize that it will only happen because we took time to prepare the soil of our heart.

There may be things in our heart which could prevent us from drawing closer to God.

Many times it's that thing which we allow to remain, that thing which we refuse to put away.

That thing stands in the door to hinder us.

## **DRAW NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER**

*James 4:8*

**Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.**

Let this verse sink down into your heart, and apply it to your life. You have the responsibility of taking the first step. When you begin to draw near to God, He will automatically draw near to you.

*Cleanse your hands; and purify your hearts:* single up your mind. Start to seek the Lord. Come out from the world, separating yourself from the things of the world, and fixing your heart and mind on things above.

*James 4:9*

**Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.**

In taking steps to draw nearer to God, instead of having a good time laughing and fooling around, let your laughter be turned to mourning over the fact that you aren't closer to God.

Begin to seek the Lord. Pour out your heart to Him with weeping. Let your joy be turned to heaviness for a season, that you might really give yourself unto seeking Him.

Then He will be able to plow up your heart and plant more of His Word there.

God tells us to humble ourselves. If we do this, He will lift us up. He will come close, and we will find our experience getting richer and fuller each day.

He looks for occasions to reach into our hearts and do a greater work in our lives. One way is for us to draw apart and get alone with Him, putting away some of those things that take so much of our time - and spending more time with Him.

If we spend some of that extra time in our prayer closet, it gives God an opportunity to come near and visit us.

## **STUDY GOD'S WORD**

Now, besides spending time in prayer, we need to also spend time in the Word: If we take time to read the Bible and to study it, we will find that, all at once, it becomes alive unto us. There will be something about it that draws us, something that enriches our heart.

One way to draw closer to God is to enlarge our understanding of Him and of His ways. This is very important - so that we won't try to bring Him to terms with our ways, but will go all out in going His way.

*Isaiah 55:6,7*

**Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let Him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.**

Here God shows you His way: *Seek Him while He may be found.* When you feel His nearness, draw near and call upon Him.

*Let the wicked forsake his way.* Forget your ways, and begin to seek out the Lord's ways.

*Isaiah 55:8*

**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.**

Open up your understanding to see God and His ways. He said His thoughts were not your thoughts: He thinks differently about things than you do.

Realize God is God - and you and I are just human beings who think with a natural mind. We think as creatures - while God thinks as the Creator.

*Neither are your ways My ways. I'm not like you. I don't act like you act. I don't respond to situations in the way you respond to them.*

*In fact, My ways are altogether different from your ways.*

Understand that if our ways were God's ways we wouldn't need to draw near to Him. We wouldn't have to change - But, since His ways are far from being our ways, we must seek His ways out.

*Proverbs 14:12*

**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.**

There is a way which seems right unto a man. Man looks at it and sizes it up, saying, *I believe this way is good for me:* But God is telling us not to look at our ways - for many of those ways are actually the ways of death.

## **LAY ASIDE MEANINGLESS THINGS**

What does God do with His free time? Does He sit in front of the TV hour after hour?

God doesn't waste His time with the ways of death - and neither should you or I. We can't prepare our hearts while watching TV - for it will only rob us of seeking God, rob us of drawing closer to Him.

If you really want to draw nearer unto God, draw away from the TV. Redeem that idle time, giving yourself over to God and earnestly seeking Him.

You'll find yourself enjoying life a lot more if you pull apart from the things of this world, and really give yourself over to God.

*I don't see anything wrong with watching TV! There's nothing wrong with all those stories - after all! they're not true!*

All the more reason to stay away from them. They will only cause lust and greed and foolishness to settle in your heart.

When people say they don't see anything wrong with TV, they're saying exactly what the Bible tells us: *there is a way which seems right . . . but!*

*Romans 8:6*

**For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

When you sit for hours in front of the TV, letting your carnal mind run away with itself, you will only find death.

You won't grow spiritually by spending your time that way. You won't get anywhere with God. No, it will just rob you of getting down to the business of preparing your heart.

Let me ask you another question: What do you read? what kind of books? what kind of magazines?

Just the fact that God gave us the Bible stands to show us our need of reading it, of digging deep into its pages.

*Proverbs 14:12*

**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.**

Yes, there is a way which seems right unto man - and one of those ways is to read everything - but the Bible.

Nothing can take the place of reading the Word of God - not even books about the

Bible.

You need to get into the Bible for yourself - every day! It is food for your soul.

### **HOW'S YOUR CONVERSATION?**

Now, what about your conversation? What do you talk about all the time? Do you talk about the things of God?

When you visit someone, do you center your conversation on the Lord?

Or do you sit around and gossip? tear people down? have roasted preacher for lunch?

If you get involved in such worldly talk, your soul will soon become lean.

*But I only tell those things because I want them to pray for that person.*

Oh, no, you don't! You tell those things because you want to gossip. If you really wanted prayer to go up for those people, you'd seek God for them - yourself. The matter would be taken care of in your own private prayer closet. You wouldn't have to spread it all over town.

If you have anything to say about anybody, say something good. If you take note of someone's life, look at what Jesus has already done for them - not at what He is still working on.

How good it is for Christians to get together and talk about the things of God. It is encouraging to all. After an evening like that, your soul feels refreshed and edified.

### **WRONG BELIEFS**

There is another area that can hinder you from drawing closer to God: your theology could be keeping you back.

Many seem to have patented answers for every question and for every issue. It's almost like having computerized religion, where you push a button, and certain things happen in a certain way.

*I believe that Jesus died on the cross, and rose from the dead. I believe He is*

*the Son of God. Yes, I believe all of those facts about Him . . .*

*. . . BUT, I also believe that's as far as I have to go!*

Is that what you think? Or do you have a hunger to draw as close to the Lord as you can, surrendering your all to Him?

All of that head knowledge doesn't promote action. It doesn't cause you to really come forth and give yourself over to God.

But, if you have a true basic faith in Jesus Christ, to where you personally know Him - and not just know some facts about Him - it will move you to action.

When you believe with your heart, and not just your head, it is going to cause you to draw nearer and closer to the Lord. Down deep inside you want to seek Him because you want to draw closer.

Others say, *It is a finished work, and I don't have to add anything to it.*

In it's proper context that is a true saying: When Christ died on the Cross, the work was finished; the way unto salvation was provided for us; nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken from it.

But, when some say that it is finished, what they are really saying is . . .

*I believe in Jesus, and now I can just settle down and live any way I want to live. After all, it doesn't really matter how I live since it's a finished work.*

They'll settle down all right! They'll sit right there and rot!! Their theology will keep them from having a deeper, closer walk with the Lord.

Did you know that some things aren't finished yet? and they won't be finished for a long time.

Though you may have prayed today, your prayer life isn't finished. It is a daily task. You must continue to pray and seek the face of the Lord day after day.

And it's the same with feeding your soul. You need to feast your soul on the Word of God every day. You need to draw nearer and closer to Him.

He wants to take you on to perfection. He wants to clean you up and perfect

holiness in your life.

*Oh, that's not necessary. God doesn't expect us to go that far. The very attitude tells me how far someone wants to go with God. It tells me how deep they really want to get into spiritual things, or how deep they want to get into worldly things.*

*They say, God doesn't expect me to humble myself - like that! He doesn't expect me to give this up, or to give that up. God doesn't expect me to come out from the world, and separate myself unto Him.*

But God says:

**And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)**

Anything you find written in the Bible is necessary - that's why it's there! That's why God anoints those who preach and minister His Word - so that you will hear and take it to heart, realizing it is necessary.

When you say that something in God's Word isn't necessary, you step out on a limb. Your attitude causes you to react that way. You need to repent, and let the Lord change your heart.

*But God doesn't look on the outward appearance! Doesn't the Bible says that He looks on the heart?*

Yes, that's true - and that's right where your bad attitudes are - in your heart!

Does this mean that God doesn't look on the outward appearance? No, there is much in God's Word that speaks of cleaning up both the inside and the outside.

Many say that it doesn't matter how one dresses. What they are trying to do is to justify themselves, so they can dress the way they want to, without regarding what God's Word has to say to them.

But we ought to be willing to take God's Word to heart - even when it pertains to our outward appearance.

If you want to see for yourself where the Bible shows that God does care about the outward appearance just look in *I Timothy 2, I Peter 3, and Isaiah 3*.

These chapters show that God has much to say about the outward appearance.

*All this preaching about clothes, TV, and this and that, do this and don't do that - it's all negative. There's nothing positive about it. It's not a message that will get anybody saved!*

Listen, when we preach and teach about these things, we're teaching those who already profess salvation - teaching them how to live soberly and godly in this present world.

We are bringing out teaching that will take them further than salvation, teaching that will take them deeper with God.

Such messages are just as positive as the message of salvation. God said that we ought to separate our lives from the world - and we have to preach what God has said.

He also told us to **love not the world, nor the things which are in the world** (*I John 2:15,16*); and He warns that in the last days **men would be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God** (*II Timothy 3:4*).

We've got to emphasize these points as much as anything else that is found in God's Word.

Many of these teachings are neglected because of fear - afraid to speak up because it might cause someone to leave the church.

Believe me, if we're ashamed to speak up now, Jesus will be ashamed of us in the day of His return. We must blow the trumpet now, letting God's children know that He expects them to live holy.

Many are guilty of bringing a burlesque show into God's house - a regular lust fest. This ought not to be, for the house of God is a holy place, and we ought to come before God in holiness - both inward and outward holiness.

## **KEY SCRIPTURE FOR GETTING CLOSER TO GOD**

*Romans 12:1,2*

**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye**

**transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

Give thought to this text. It shows how to prepare your heart. It shows just what God would expect of believers. If you have been expressing that it is not necessary to go that far, take this Scripture and meditate on your reasonable service.

I firmly believe that the Bible has all the answers we need. It has the answers to everything pertaining to life and godliness. If we really want to draw closer to God, all we need do is follow what the Bible has to tell us.

He tells us to present ourselves holy and acceptable unto Him. Now, what is acceptable unto you may be totally unacceptable unto God.

Standards which you might feel are all right might be far from what God approves of.

If you want to draw closer to God, you are going to have to do so on His terms - not on your terms.

Now, you're not going to get holy overnight. You have to be transformed by the Word of God. The Word has to take hold upon you, shaping you and molding you into a holy vessel.

You're not perfect the day you receive salvation. But you are perfect when you are living in what light and knowledge you have at the time.

And, as the Word is ministered to us, you gain more and more light each day. You gain more to live up to, that you might grow in grace.

God has made no unreasonable demands upon you. He expects you to present yourselves unto Him. It is the normal course of duty for the child of God.

He expects you to allow His Word to take its hold in your life, to where it can mold you more and more into the image of His dear Son.

*And be not conformed unto this world:* this is a commandment!

Now, how can you tell if you're conformed?

Just try and break away from doing what the world is doing. See if it is hard for you to keep from doing the very same things.

The Word of God tells you not to allow the world to mold you. Don't be afraid to stand out in the crowd as the odd one, the one whose heart and mind are set on the things of God.

As children of God, we are different. Jesus said that we weren't of this world. Our true citizenship isn't someplace on this earth. It is up in heaven.

So what does it matter if our standards are different than the standards of this present world!

Look at the conformity in this world. Tonight, after supper, almost everybody will do the same thing: They'll go and sit down before the TV and soak up three or four hours of programs.

But what are you going to do tonight? You can either be conformed to this world, and go along with the normal routine of everyone else - or, you can be different.

*Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* This is what takes the place of conformity. Let your mind be renewed by drawing nigh to God and to His Word.