

## To know God and to make God known : Part 2

### ***What is the difference between religion and relationship ?***

Religion is living by a set of rules. The problem with trying to live by a set of rules without relationships is that it leads to rebellion. Parents know this - trying to get children to live by a set of rules without building a relationship with them, results in rebellious children.

Religion without relationship will result sooner or later in rebellion. If you try to live as a Christian according to a set of rules, you will eventually get tired or fed up and walk away.

### **Components of a relationship**

*Before reading further, list some components of a good relationship.*

*What needs to be in place for you to have a meaningful relationship with someone ?*

1. Need to learn about that person, including discovering what they like and what they want for themselves in life

*Imagine if you plan to marry someone and you discover that he dreams of travelling around the world, doing short term contract work in order to live in as many countries as possible before he retires. But all you desire is to settle down, to buy a small home, and have 2 dogs and 3 kids. You will need to align your desires if this relationship is to work, not so ?*

2. Need to connect with people who are important to that person

To have a healthy relationship with someone we need to also connect with those people who are important to him or her, even if it is difficult.

*Imagine that you discover that your wife's extended family is really weird (which happens quite often ...). You really don't enjoy spending time with them so you tell your wife that she can go and visit her family on her own – you would prefer to stay at home. Whenever her extended family visits your house, you disappear.*

*What would that do to your relationship with your wife ?*

3. Need to talk regularly

People get to know each other better and connect through talking often. There are other ways to communicate of course, but they shouldn't take the place of heart-to-heart eyeball-to-eyeball talking.

4. Need to trust

A relationship without trust isn't a relationship at all. If you think you have a relationship with someone but do not trust that person, then the relationship is in your mind only. Its not real.

How do we build a “yada” relationship with God ?

The components are very similar to the components of a meaningful relationship between people.

### Developing a relationship with God

1. Learn about Him and discover His character, including His likes, dislikes and will

#### Romans 16 : 25.

- The way to know God is through the Bible / the prophetic writings
- A good discipline is to always ask ourselves: “What does this passage of scripture tell me about God ?”

Learning about God also requires us to discover His will.

#### Colossians 1 : 9-10

- Paul here prays that we will know God’s will so that we can understand and know Him
- Many people are out there trying to serve God without knowing His will
- We can’t follow God’s will without knowing His will and we discover His will in the Bible

*Imagine your wife asks you to help clean the house and you are eager to serve her. You go off and come back an hour later and report to her that you have watered the garden and bathed the dog. Do you think she will feel served by you ?*

- We need to serve God in accordance with His will. Not according to what we desire or what is good for us, but what God desires. That will help us to know Him – to develop a “yada” relationship with Him

2. We need to connect with people who are important to God

#### Philemon vs 6-7

- “Sharing your faith” in this passage does not refer to evangelism
- It means partnering in the faith / sharing lives
- To fully understand what we have in Christ (a relationship with God), we need to know His people / we need to share in the lives of other believers
- This goes way beyond just attending church and other meetings of the body – it requires treating each other as closest family members in how we love, serve, share with and submit to one another

*Throughout the Bible God makes it clear that how we treat His children indicates how we treat Him.*

*If you want to know how close you are to God, then look at how close you are to your brothers and sisters.*

*We need to invest in relationships with God’s people to develop a relationship with God.*

*Imagine if you had friends who you said you loved very much, but at every opportunity you slapped their kids. They wouldn’t believe you really loved them, would they ?  
How we connect with and treat the people who are dear to our friends is indicative of how we think about them. How we build relationships with God’s people is indicative of our relationship with God.*

**God's plan is not to have relationships with a bunch of individuals living in isolation from other Christians – He develops a relationship with us in community, as His sons and daughters in relationship with His other sons and daughters.**

**John 14 : 6-7**

- Jesus tells his disciples that they do know God because they know him (Jesus)
- We connect with God and can know Him by connecting with and knowing Jesus
- That links up with the previous point about God's family, since the church / God's family is the body of Christ and does not exist separate from Christ

3. We need to talk to God

**Philippians 4 : 6-7**

- We talk to God through prayer
- Having the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds is a good description of having a "yada" relationship with Him
- We should pray to God honestly, realising that he knows what is on our hearts even before we speak

***Do you sometimes struggle to pray ? Try the following :***

1. *Be completely honest with God – tell him if you don't feel like praying, that you feel angry, distracted, etc. He in any event knows it already. Very often you will find that prayers that start off with such honesty improve and end as great prayers.*
2. *Pray with someone who you admire for their prayer life. Learn from them and be inspired by how they speak with God.*
3. *Read and pray through Psalms – the writers are some of the Biblical characters who were closest to God. Note how they express themselves and show a range of emotions including gratitude, regret, sorrow, etc.*

4. We need to trust Him

**Acts 12 : 5 - 31**

- Peter's experience led him to say "Now I know ..."
- Peter knew with absolute certainty that God had been with him as he stepped out in faith. He knew God better through experiencing his trustworthiness.
- We grow in our relationship with God when we step out in faith and trust Him.

5. It takes time

- This is the fifth aspect to developing a "yada" relationship with God that cuts across all of the above
- This is true of all relationships – they require an investment of time to develop
- The saying "what you put in you get out" is very true. If we spend 10 minutes a day with God, we will get very little out. If we spend an hour and a half a day with God we will get 10 x more benefit.

## Conclusion

### 2 Timothy 1 : 12

- Paul could say “I am willing to suffer for the gospel because I know God”.
- He knows God and that is at the core of his obedience and willingness to do God’s will

**When we spend only a little bit of time with God, when it suits us, it is as though we are treating him like a mistress rather than like a covenant relationship spouse. It’s like sneaking off once in a while to get what we can from Him, without being committed to Him for the long haul.**

### ***Self assessment : How is your relationship with God ?***

#### *Bible study*

*How much time do you spend in the Bible each day ?*

*Do you think it is enough to improve your knowledge of God - His likes, dislikes and will ?*

*Is your main motivation for reading the Bible to learn about God ? Or is to find out what is in it for you ?*

*Have the people closest to you seen you grow and mature in your knowledge of the Word ?*

#### *Connecting with God’s people*

*Do you have close honest relationships with brothers and sisters ?*

*Do you have the view that you are your “brother’s or sister’s keeper” ?*

*Do you honestly identify with the body of Christ more strongly than you do with your physical family or any other group that you are associated with ?*

*Do you enjoy meeting with the body and find yourself energised and encouraged when you do ?*

#### *Prayer*

*How long do you spend speaking to God each day ?*

*Can you speak easily to Him about anything that is on your heart ?*

*Do you feel encouraged and at peace after praying ?*

#### *Trust*

*Do you absolutely believe that God is faithful to all of His promises and that He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow ?*

*How readily do you “step out in faith” to do God’s will ?*

*Think of a time when you did step out of your comfort zone to do something that pleased God – how did you feel afterwards ?*

***What do you think you can do to strengthen your relationship with God, based on this self assessment ?***