

Lord, I Want To Know You - Studies in the Attributes of God

Psalm 63:8; Mark 12:30

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, May 5th 2024

For our Scripture readings this morning, I will just read you two verses. The first is Psalm 63:8, and I will quote from the King James Bible.

“My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.” Following hard after God is translated as “My soul follows close behind You” in the New King James Version.

The second verse is Mark 12:30: “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

I. Introduction

In July, Kathy and I will have been married 42 years. And I can honestly say that our relationship today is deeper and richer than when we said “I do.” And it is largely because we keep developing our relationship. As important as the wedding day was, marriage is not merely a ceremony; it is an ongoing relationship between two people who keep growing in their love and in their devotion to each other.

And that is precisely the picture that Jesus uses to describe His *ideal* relationship to His people - a healthy marriage relationship where we can be called His friends (James 2:23). I find it amazing that we can be called friends. The *less-than-ideal* relationship is described as our love for Him growing cold (Matthew 24:12), falling away from our first love (Revelation 2:4), having hearts that drift from Him (Isa. 29:13 and Hebrews 2:1). Relationships must be nurtured to grow.

How many people have experienced a glorious introduction to the Lord at the time of their conversion, and then go on from there to learn a lot *about* God but fail to develop their *relationship* with God. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not downplaying knowledge at all. We need to have knowledge of God just as we need to have knowledge of our spouses. In fact, *without knowledge, we cannot grow in relationship*. But it is certainly possible to have knowledge without a meaningful relationship with God. Satan has a great deal of knowledge about God, but no relationship. I have had many periods of time as a Christian where I have substituted knowledge for relationship. And I don't want that to happen to you. 1 Corinthians 13:2 says that even if I had all knowledge, but don't have love, the relationship is poor. Hebrews 10:26 says that we can have a knowledge of the truth and still sin against that truth. The Corinthians had a great deal of knowledge and were even puffed up over their knowledge; they had a great measure of spiritual gifts and bragged about their gifts, but Paul pointed out some of the ways in which their relationship with God was shallow - super shallow. So they had substituted gifts for a relationship with the Giver.

But others substitute knowledge of God for a relationship with the Giver of that knowledge. I have a book in my library by a noted Reformed scholar who seems to advocate the idea that a relationship to God is nothing more than a propositional understanding of doctrine. He is the ultimate left-brained theologian. He calls anything beyond that “mysticism.” Yet, though we find Christ praising the church of Ephesus their doctrine and their ministry (they had that), he says, “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” It is possible to have right gifts, right doctrine, and right ministry without experiencing a solid relationship.

In J. I. Packer’s classic book, *Knowing God* (which I highly recommend) he makes the point that you can know a great deal *about* God without knowing *Him*. You can master Christian theology and become a Biblical scholar and still not know God. Alan Redpath in his series on King David said,

We fail to see the tremendous difference between knowing the Word of God and knowing the God of the Word. Conferences, rallies, missionary conventions, and church services come and go, and we remain unchanged. We are often just a group of unbelieving believers, perhaps never so well equipped, but never so poorly endued.

But I was especially struck with his first statement: “We fail to see the tremendous difference between knowing the Word of God and knowing the God of the Word.” Francis Schaeffer used to call this condition a dead orthodoxy. And we are going to be seeing that even genuine believers can substitute very good things for a meaningful relationship with the Lord. I have been challenged once again by the Lord in this past week of the importance of having a passion for Him. So this is the first in a handful of sermons that the Lord has led me to interrupt my Joshua series with. This mini-series will focus on how to know God and how to walk with Him through a practical application of His attributes.

II. What Is The Greatest Sin? (Matt 22:37)

But the first point in your outline speaks of the problem. What is the greatest sin we could possibly commit against God as believers? Matthew 22:37 gives us the answer. Christ here defines the two greatest laws and by implication when we don’t have these things, we have the two greatest sins:

Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

I want you to notice two things about this verse. First of all, the greatest sin is failing to have a loving relationship with God. It’s not enough to have great doctrine in our heads, we must also make sure that our minds *love* God. The second thing I want you to notice is that this love embraces *more* than just the mind. In addition to loving God with our mind, we are to love God with our heart and soul and in the parallel passage in Mark, it adds that we are to love God with our strength as well.

But all of this means that the greatest command in the bible is that we have a meaningful relationship with God and by implication the greatest sin is neglecting our relationship. Consider the points under Roman numeral II - the call to relationship with God.

III. The Call To Relationship With God

A. Lostness includes lost relationship (Gen. 3; John 8:19,44; 10:16,26; 16:8; 6:44)

The first point shows that lostness includes lost relationship. Now, there were a lot of other things that were lost as well, but this is a big one. Adam and Eve's *relationship* was broken and they immediately hid from God. They no longer had the comfort of His presence. Colossians 1:21 describes unbelievers as being alienated from God.

Interestingly, people can have right doctrine and still remain alienated from God. Judas had right doctrine. Demons know the truth according to James. Lostness is described as *alienation* from God - or holding the truth in unrighteousness. As Reformed people we stress doctrine, and doctrine *is* essential. But Jesus told the Pharisees that a lifetime of Bible study will not help if people are not brought into relationship with Him through that study. He said in John 5:39-40:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

They were willing to study the Bible, but they were not willing to come to Christ. Part of their problem was relationship. Christ said, "If God were your Father, you would love me" (John 8:42). "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also." (John 8:19) The people Jesus was talking about knew lots *about* God, but they did not know God Himself. So lostness includes lost relationship.

B. Salvation includes restored relationship (Col. 1:21; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:13; Matt 16:17; John 10:7-21,27-30; 17:3; 15:5; 1 John 3:1; 5:12)

What about the Gospel of salvation? Certainly the Gospel saves us from hell, but it was also intended to reverse the alienation. Romans 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18 describes the Gospel as reconciling us to God. And when people are saved, they are immediately drawn *near* to God. I'll just give one sample verse: Ephesians 2:13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." The words alienation, reconciliation, being brought near, and many other Gospel words show that (in addition to other aspects of salvation) there is a restored relationship. Even the Great Commission promises that Jesus will be *with* us always, even to the end of the age.

Christ told Peter, "flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." God touches our spirits and opens our eyes. And He continues to do that

throughout our lives. In John 10 Christ says, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own... And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” (vv. 14, 16) These and other verses in your outline (that I’m not going to get into) show that salvation has as one of its purposes to restore relationship with God.

C. Holiness is relational (Matt. 22:37-40; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; Matt. 23

But what should happen once we are restored to relationship? The rest of our Christianity was intended to *grow* in that relationship. Holiness is not just *doing* certain things or *keeping* a law code. In the passage we read earlier, Christ told the Pharisees that holiness was not merely keeping the law. It involved loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind. That implies that you can follow a law code without loving God. But it also implies that you can’t love God without following His laws. So it’s not either/or; it’s both/and. Christ said, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 6. This passage is one of hundreds of passages that discuss holiness in the context of relationship. 2 Corinthians 6, beginning to read at verse 16. Paul said,

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. [What an incredible image of closeness to God. He goes on:] As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.” [Being sons and daughters is another remarkable relational image. Going on:] Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

If your pursuit of holiness is only to please your husband or wife, your parents or pastor, your neighbors or relatives, then you are missing out on one of the central purposes of holiness - a closer walk with God - who *is* the Holy One. The law shows us how to relate to God and how to relate to each other, yet we often follow the law without relating. We are missing out on one of the purposes of the law.

D. The whole of Christianity is relational (Numb. 14:24; 1 Sam. 12:20; etc. Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; etc.; Heb. 8:11)

The verses in the next sub-point show that the *whole* Christian walk *in its entirety* can be described as following the Lord or knowing the Lord or walking with the Lord or (as Psalm 63 words it) following hard after God. Those are just different ways of saying that we relate to a *Person*, not just to a doctrine.

IV. Substitutes For Relationship

But all of this implies that it is possible for Christians to drift away from the fullness of relationship that they once had. Here are some diagnostic questions: In John 7:37-39 Jesus promised that when we come to Him, He will pour out the Holy Spirit into our hearts like rivers of living water, and we will be so full of everything that we need that we will overflow with rivers of living waters into the lives of others. Do we have that? Philippians 4:7 promises us a peace that passes all understanding. Do we have that? 1 Peter 1:8 promises us joy inexpressible and full of glory. Do we have that? All of those promises and many others are conditioned on drawing near to Him.

A. Substituting knowledge about God for personal knowledge of God

Let me describe in point III some substitutes for relationship that I have sadly had from time to time. (I'm not preaching this sermon as an expert. Far from it. I am preaching it as a fellow-traveler who *wants* to draw closer to God.) And I give these substitutes in the hopes that you can avoid the sterility of life that those substitutes have produced in me when I have been satisfied with the substitutes. The first substitute has already been discussed: substituting a knowledge *about* God for a personal knowledge *of* God. Here is how one author compared it to eating. He said,

“You don't have to be a nutritionist to enjoy a good steak. You don't grill a steak for the purpose of analyzing its ingredients. You don't grill a steak in order to have a lesson on proteins. But that is what we're doing with God. We are analyzing, but we are not relating.” (p. 38)

Yesterday Rod and I were talking about left hemisphere and right hemisphere of the brain. I tend to be a left-hemisphere guy. But God wants us to love Him with all of our mind and brain. Do you relate to God throughout the day or do you merely go back to certain doctrines about God?

B. Substituting Definitions For Reality

Here's another possible substitute. Many times we substitute *definitions* for reality. What on earth do I mean by that? Perhaps another way of saying it is that we have settled for knowing the recipe instead of eating the cake, or marking off a checklist rather than letting the checklist help us to relate to God. And most of this series is going to be looking at eating the cake. For example, next week we will be looking at the definition of God's omnipresence (at least Lord willing, that is what I hope to do). It's an important doctrine, but if it remains a doctrine; if it remains only a recipe, we will miss out on the comfort and boldness that *experiencing* God's presence can bring. There is a huge difference between *knowing* the doctrine and *experiencing* the reality. I have great doctrine, but I have not always entered into the *experience* of what my doctrine is pointing me to. We must not substitute definitions for reality.

Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 4:18-21 where Paul challenges the Corinthians on this very problem. Some of them had plenty of knowledge, but no power. 1 Corinthians 4, beginning at verse 18.

Now some of you are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

What would Paul discover if he came and examined you? Would he say that your Christianity was mainly in words, or would he see both word and power were tied tightly together? All of us should long for the power of kingdom life to be experienced every day. And by that I don't mean the flamboyant gifts that the Corinthians liked to brag about. I'm talking about God's power helping you to conquer your anxieties, lusts, physical weakness, giving wisdom on how to counsel your child through issues that you are pulling your hair out on, and giving you a spirit of prayer and supplication, etc. We are talking about everyday living.

C. Substituting a knowledge about godliness for a knowledge of God

Thirdly, we often substitute a knowledge about godliness for a knowledge of God. There is no shortage of "how to" books in the bookstore showing us HOW TO PRAY, HOW TO READ THE BIBLE, HOW TO WORSHIP, HOW TO WITNESS, HOW TO TITHE, HOW TO BE A HAPPY CHRISTIAN, HOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN WIFE, HOW TO BE A CONSECRATED CHRISTIAN, etc. etc. But you can have all those techniques down cold and still not know God in a deeply relational way. That's why J. I. Packer says you can know a great deal about godliness without knowing God. Are you held captive to a rule-keeping Christianity that is dry and dusty? Or has the Holy Spirit enabled you to say, "Oh how I love your love. The Holy Spirit has enabled me to see the beauties of holiness!" The relational Christianity completely transforms how we see holiness and how we see the other attributes of God. We see them in a whole new light.

D. Substituting success for servanthood

The fourth substitute is success instead of servanthood. Steven Meeks says,

"In trying to be a success by growing a church, engaging in some ministry endeavor, or living for God, we live under the pressure to perform. Not only must we perform, we must achieve certain results. After all, that is the measurement of success. Our Christianity takes on an atmosphere of drivenness, leading only to disappointment, frustration, and a loss of self-worth if we fail to 'succeed.' Those who 'succeed' face a worse fate: they substitute the feelings of success for the peace and joy of knowing the living God." (p. 11)

There are some Christian politicians who won't vote for an abortion-abolition bill because they think it would fail (and they are probably right). It seems that they don't want to take on failing causes since it would mar their success record. But there are times when being faithful to God means bringing a prophetic rebuke. The Nebraska Family Alliance sent out a newsletter yesterday that boasted that every bill they supported passed. They were

successful. OK, I am glad for some of those successes, but we should encourage them to take on an abolition bill rather than a fifteen week bill. They say that not doing so has to do with being strategic - taking on things that will be successful. But if measured by that standard, the prophets of old were not successful. But they were faithful to stand strong on God's Word, and they received God's "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Meeks describes the difference between success orientation and servant orientation. He says, "The person who seeks to be a success is offering to God his work. The one who seeks to be a servant is offering to God himself." (p. 12) "Use me Lord, however You want to use me." And he comes to realize how good and kind God is and what a privilege it is to be a servant. That may seem like a subtle distinction, but it is a relational distinction. And more and more we realize that God is transferring us from servants into sons and daughters who *love* to serve *Him*. We are not just serving for serving sake. We are not serving for success. We are serving to please Him.

E. Substituting construction for transformation

One author describes another substitute that we have set up in place of relationship. He says,

"American evangelicals are constantly pushing to do something. We are very much like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration when he wanted to build three tabernacles. It may have been a great project, but it was not the will of God.... We are project oriented. We have developed thousands of programs and methods by which we can build the church....Much of our activity, however, actually hinders God's true plan. We may end up building our church, but not his." (pp. 12-13)

Now I will hasten to say that if we are related to God, we *will* be constructive, but that diligence and service will flow out of the security and joy of our relationship. Peter's desire to build three tabernacles was because he didn't know what else to do - and he needed to do something. He was uncomfortable with just basking in God's presence. He felt he had to *do* something. Christ focused Him on relationship. When we are rightly related, the rest will follow. Again, it is not either/or. Instead, it is a *relational* service.

F. Substituting busyness for nearness

Steve Meeks again describes how we substitute busyness for nearness. He says,

"We have substituted busyness for beauty and hurry for holiness.... We have also substituted busyness for nearness. Our society lives in a galvanized hurry. Christians are no different. The busyness of life, even the Christian life, is robbing us of the precious gift of knowing the nearness of God." (pp. 13,14)

Another way of saying it is that Scripture calls us to *first* wait upon the Lord. That doesn't rule out activity. Isaiah does not say, "They that wait upon the Lord shall roost like chickens." They *will* be active; very active. But it is only in waiting upon the Lord that we are *able* to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not grow weary to walk and not

faint. The relationship keeps our activities from being wearying and actually energizes our activities. But when activity substitutes for relationship, we can easily burn out.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13. Many times people confuse the actions of verses 1-3 with love. But verse 1 says you can pray, worship, witness, speak in tongues, prophecy, and still not have love. Why? Because those things don't always have to flow from relationship. Even unbelievers like Balaam prophesied.

1 Corinthians 13:1 says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." Verse 2 says, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." That verse should be a stunning corrective to people who find busyness for God more fulfilling than relationship with God. He is saying that it is possible to prophecy and have great insight, and have mountain moving faith, but lack this God-given relational love. God wants more than service; He wants relationship; He wants more than your giftedness. Did you know that Judas did miracles? The other disciples had no idea that he wasn't a true believer.

Verse 3 describes great sacrifice. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." There are Christians who have burned out for the Lord in busyness and service who will come to the end of their lives with a big fat zero - at least when it comes to meaningful relationship. Are they saved? Yes. Of course. Does God use them? Yes, He does. But God wants *more* than your busyness. He wants *you*.

And by the way, marriages have the same problem. One of the spouses is so busy serving that he or she misses out on the closeness of relationship.

I used to take busyness as a badge of honor. It's not. David said, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4). His one thing was a deeper relationship. Everything else flowed from that. Martha was upset with her sister Mary for not working her tail off like Martha was doing. Instead, Mary was sitting at Jesus's feet. And what did Jesus say to Martha? "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Are you beginning to see the difference between these good things and relationship? If the relationship is right, we will still be busy, but we will be busy when God wants us to be busy and we will be still when God wants us to be still. Busyness must flow out of relationship.

G. Seeking an experience instead of God

I threw in the next point because though we are talking about the importance of *experiencing* a relationship with God here, *experience itself* can sometimes subtly become a substitute for relationship. We may get emotional highs through music or other things and yet still not be relating to God. In my Bible reading program that I have been going through, I was reading in Numbers this past week, and I was surprised that even a godly person like

Aaron and his sister Miriam *thought* they had a great relationship with God because of all their awesome experiences. And wow, they did indeed have some awesome experiences. Yet they were judged by God for depending upon their experiences, and interestingly their awesome experiences made them prideful against Moses. Pride is one of the telltale signs that something is off in our relationship with God. And God struck Miriam with leprosy. She was a child of God who thought she was as close to God as Moses was, and she relied on the wonderful experiences of her past more than she relied on God.

V. Other Side-Benefits Of Our Relationship With God

Let me give you some additional motivations to pursue a relational Christianity. When you see the other side-benefits of having a deep relationship with God, it *may* motivate you more.

A. We will be people oriented rather than program oriented (Eph. 2:21-22; Heb. 10:19-25 - see “one-anothering” passages)

One benefit of developing a deeper relationship with God is that it will become easier to develop a deeper relationship with others. I have found this to be true of myself. Scripture says that if you love God, you will love others in the same way, and if you don't love others, then you can't claim to love God. A successful pastor in Texas, said,

“I have pushed and prodded people in almost every way imaginable in order to build the church. I have tried to motivate them with goals, fascinate them with gimmicks, and stimulate them with slogans. I have tried to move people with guilt. I have chastised them for failure and tempted them with rewards, all for the purpose of building the church. Somehow, I believed that the end justified the means. I now realize that the end must determine the means. The end is not production, it is reproduction. My methods have often been attempts at ‘force-feeding’ the sheep and driving them like work animals to perform their duty. I have since learned that healthy sheep reproduce naturally. As I have learned to lead people to the Chief Shepherd, to his ‘green pastures’ and ‘still waters,’ I have watched their love for him reproduce itself in others.” (pp. 13-14)

B. It will produce action & power (Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 4:20) because we will desire to implement learning rather than merely acquiring learning

A second side benefit is that it will produce action and power in our lives. Daniel 11:32 says, “the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.” *The people who know their God will do that.* A non-relational Christianity is a powerless Christianity because it is not *doctrine* that empowers, but the *Person* of God who empowers. Doctrine is intended to lead us *to* that Person. And when we are walking in the Spirit, the Spirit enables us to do things we would not otherwise be able to do.

One of the biggest blessings of having gotten encephalitis a year and a half ago was that it forced me to depend upon God every minute of every day to do my ministry. I have

experienced more of God's presence and power in my weakness than I have in my healthier days. So I have come to praise God for my weakness. Jesus told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's conclusion was, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." That's 2 Corinthians 12:9.

C. Your education of others will desire to equip and not just inform (Luke 6:40; John 14:12; etc.)

A third benefit is that our discipleship of others will lead others to depend upon Jesus. Jesus said, "Follow me." And as they followed Him they became more and more like Him. And those who had hands-on discipleship with Jesus were equipped to be able to equip others. Christ said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing." God wants us to imitate His method of teaching. He said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." The more a teacher is in God's presence, the more He will help those he leads to be in God's presence. As you parents press into a relational Christianity, you will be in a much better place to usher your children into a relational Christianity.

D. It will make you more confident in God's power and less confident in your own (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 2:4-5)

Fourthly, it will make you more confident in God's power and less confident in your own power. When we are not relationship oriented, we will automatically put our trust in some other substitute. The power we depend upon may be our own giftedness, or it may be the giftedness of some expert. But Paul said of his preaching, "my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." In John 15:5 Jesus said. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Do you know the reality of abiding in Him and He in you so that His sap is flowing through your branches? It is the heritage of all believers.

VI. The Way To Know God Better

But let me end by giving some of the concrete ways of getting to know God better. And I will continue giving you more tips in the next sermons in this mini-series.

A. Salvation: you must receive Christ as your personal Savior (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20)

First, you must come to Christ, receive Him and follow Him in salvation. Some of you here may never have taken that first personal step of repenting of your sins and trusting in Christ. Salvation is not a only doctrine. It is knowing God as personal Savior. John 17:3 says,

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Have you come to know Him?

**B. Passion: you must want to know Him more than anything else
(Deut. 4:29; Jer. 29:13; 2 Chron. 15:12; Ps. 27:8; 42; 119:2,10; REv. 3:20)**

Second, you must *maintain* your passion for God. You must *want to know Him* more than anything else. One book wrote this,

“Are you on fire for God, or are you an ice cube? If we took a survey, I believe the average evangelical Christian would answer, ‘Well, I’m not exactly on fire for God. But I’m not an ice cube either!’ Where does that leave us? About lukewarm? ‘So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth’ (Rev. 3:16).”

What was it that Laodicea needed to repent of? It was a loss of passion. They were neither hot nor cold. Passion is essential if this personal relationship is to be developed. Moses longed to see God’s glory. Psalm 42 speaks of longing for God as a thirsty deer pants for the waterbrooks. Revelation 3:20 pictures Christ standing outside the church door knocking. It implies that *true* churches can exist without experiencing a close relationship with Jesus. Though He was speaking to a true church, He wasn’t inside the church. What a sad state of affairs! That was a church that had good programs, good preaching, fellowship, evangelism, and other church ministries, but Jesus was standing outside the door of the church knocking and desiring to come in. Christ says, “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” If we want Jesus to dine with us in this meal, we need to take some initiative.

Four verses earlier he explained why He was not relating to them and why he was outside the church. He says that they were lukewarm. They had no passion, and God felt like spitting them out. Jeremiah 29:13 says, “And you will seek Me and find Me, *when you search for Me with all your heart.*” Let me re-quote that: “And you will seek Me and find Me, *when you search for Me with all your heart.*” Again, God expects there to be some passion, even as a spouse desires passion.

C. Obedience: you must want to please Him (John 14:21,23; 1 John 2:3; 3:24)

Thirdly, there must be obedience. Obedience is part of *maintaining* a relationship with God. John 14:21 says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” We want Jesus to manifest Himself to us, but that can only happen through a loving obedience, not just a formal obedience. It’s in desiring to relate to Him that He *manifests* Himself to us. Verse 23 says, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’” That’s what we are talking about in this sermon - having such a close relationship with God that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home with us.

If you have been deliberately disobeying God, it grieves the Spirit, and there can be no relational Christianity. That's why 1 John 3:24 says,

Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. [Note the word "abides." It's not talking about how to get saved. The person is already saved. Instead, it is talking about abiding in Him. He goes on] And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

When we grieve the Spirit, the relationship is dulled. Now you may think that this rules out relationship for *any* of us, because we *all* sin. Right? But it is our *attitude* to the law that is key. Christ said, "If anyone *wants* to do His will, he shall know..."

D. Repentance: you must seek restored fellowship by continually coming back to the cross for cleansing (Heb. 10:19-22)

And that leads us to the last point. David was a man after God's own heart *not* because he was perfect but because he *wanted* to do right, and because he quickly got right with the lord when he sinned. He couldn't stand it when the relationship was gone. So he constantly went back to God, asking God to forgive him and cleanse him and to once again draw near to him. And that's what Hebrews 10:19-22 calls us to do as well. No one need be without fellowship with God. Hebrews tells us,

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

That's the most important daily step that we must take - repent and come to Him with the faith that He will sprinkle our hearts from a defiled conscience and He will draw us into His arms.

Now, today's sermon is *barely* introducing us to the concept of knowing the Triune God relationally. What I want to do in the next few weeks is to interrupt our Joshua series and look at a few of the attributes of God, making practical application of those attributes to our day-to-day lives. And I hope those sermons will be encouraging and helpful in developing a deeper relationship with God. May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.