

Relating to God, part 1
January 20, 2013

We start a new series this morning and my hope is that what I share with you over the next three weeks will benefit you for the rest of your life.

I want to start this morning with a declaration. Who you know shapes you. Who you know shapes you. Who you are right now is a result, to an extent, of who you know, who you have a relationship with, who you spend time with. The people you hang with have rubbed off on you. Your time with them has shaped who you have become up to this point in your life.

The more time you have spent with a specific person, the more that person has influenced who you are today. That means several things, one of which is that those you spend the most time with in the future will have the biggest impact on who you become tomorrow.

So if you want to see a new you tomorrow, you need to decide who you are going to hang out with over the course of the weeks, months, and years to come.

I can think of some significant people I would like to hang out with. If I could become a close personal friend of Warren Buffet, it would have a good impact on my finances in my retirement years. If I could become friends with Colin Powell, it would change me as a leader in the years ahead. If I had a personal relationship with Andy Stanley, Rick Warren, or Bill Hybels, it would change me as a pastor. If I could spend significant time with Bear Grylls, I would be a better camper in the years ahead. If I could become a friend with Bobby Flay, it would help me greatly in my outdoor grilling. You see where I'm going with this. Who YOU choose to spend time with can benefit you greatly.

Now, what if I could determine the person who has the most knowledge, insight, and wisdom when it comes to relationships, leadership, and faith, and hang out with that person, I could become a really special me. If you spent significant time with such an individual, you could become a really special you.

This is exactly what I propose for you. This person, this most knowledgeable, insightful, wise person is Yahweh, creator of the Universe. Did you know that the creator of the universe has a name? His name is not God. God is what He is. His name is Yahweh. We know this because He tells us so in the Bible. Your Bible may not say so because most English translations fail to use God's name. The introduction in your Bible explains what that they substitute the word LORD in all capital letters. But the original writings had the personal name of God, Yahweh. It appears thousands of times in the Bible.

Think about this with me, if you could have a personal relationship with God, and spend time with God, what a positive influence that would be on your life.

That is exactly the point of this series, titled "Relating to God". The simple truth of this series is that **God is inviting you into a personal relationship with Himself.** In fact, this has been God's plan since before He created this planet. God's plan has always been to have such a relationship with you, if you will say yes.

When God first created mankind, man had a personal relationship with God. Look with me at this.

Genesis 3:8-10 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of Yahweh God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from God among the trees of the garden. But Yahweh called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

There are lots of questions you might ask based on this short passage. For instance, God evidently appeared in some visible form to Adam and Eve at this stage in their relationship. We don't know in what form God appeared to them in. That's one question, and there are more. And we can't get into all of them this morning.

The point I want to make is simply this, Adam and Eve were already familiar with the sound of God walking in the garden. They knew it was Him before they saw Him. They knew it was His voice when they heard it from their hiding place. They knew what God sounded like because they were living in a personal relationship with God.

Up until this time, it was a very good relationship. It was only because of their sin that things soured. Sin changed their relationship with God. God did not change. Adam and Eve changed. That change affected their relationship with God. They still had a relationship with God, but it was a very different relationship from before.

The sin of Adam and Eve introduced death into the world and changed the world for the rest of us. We inherited a bent toward sin from Adam. we begin life with a marred relationship with God. **Our relationship with our creator, is distant because of the sin in our hearts.** We tend to run from God instead of to God.

But ever since that day in the garden, God had a plan to overcome this problem in our relationship with Him. God had a solution to the sin problem. And God has been working His plan ever since. As we move up in time in the Bible, we see God set His plan in motion. He approached a particular man about a personal relationship.

Genesis 12:1-3 Yahweh had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Here we see God's plan set into motion. He calls Abram to a personal relationship with Himself and promises to bless all the rest of us through their relationship. This was the start of God's plan. Note Abram's response.

Genesis 12:4, 8 So Abram left, as Yahweh had told him... he built an altar to Yahweh and called on the name of Yahweh.

Note that God made promises to Abram as a part of God's invitation to a relationship. He promised many descendants to this 75 year old man. Abram had no children at this point in his life. His wife, Sarai, was 65 years old. While it is not unheard of for a woman to

bear a child at that age, it is quite rare. Yet, here God promised them a child, more specifically a son through whom Abram would have millions of descendants. And while Sarai later laughs at the possibility of having a baby in her old age, Abram believed God. That belief cemented his relationship to God. **God is looking for faith/trust in our relationship with Himself.** He is looking for us to trust His promises to us.

God gave Abram and Sarai a son, but not for a few more years. Abram was 100 and Sarai was 90 when God fulfilled that promise. There is nothing God can't do. There is nothing God can't do. Giving an old couple a son at extreme age is nothing harder for God than me picking up this piece of paper.

Moving along in history, we see God continuing to invite people into a relationship with Himself. We jump more than 400 years later. Abram is long dead, but has several million descendants. Unfortunately they had become slaves in Egypt. But God rescued them from slavery and then offered to settle them in the land of Canaan, if they would enter a special relationship with God.

Exodus 19:1-8 In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt... they came to the Desert of Sinai...

Then Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to... the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words Yahweh had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything Yahweh has said."

Here we see the next step in God's plan to invite YOU into a personal relationship with Himself. After leaving Egypt as slaves, this large group of people is just a mass of people. They are no nation. God invites them into a personal, special relationship with Himself and will make of them a nation. They will be a special nation. They will have a special relationship to Him that none of the rest of the nations of the world will have. And they say, yes.

As we move up in history, a very long way, we see God set in motion the next step of His plan to call us all into a personal relationship with Himself. We recently celebrated this step of God's plan.

Matthew 1:18-21 (NIV) This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Why this name? The name Jesus means "Yah saves". Yah is a shortened form of Yahweh. The name Jesus means Yahweh saves. They gave Him the name of Jesus because He would save us from our sins. God's plan dealt with our sin so that we could have a personal relationship with God. Through Jesus, God invites each of us to a personal relationship with Himself.

In the next two parts of this series, I'll talk about how to grow in your relationship with God. Just like any relationship, this one grows through spending time with God. But it is the kind of things we do with God that will make the most difference. That will be the focus for the next two parts.

Today's point is to make sure you are in a personal relationship with God. God is inviting you today into a personal relationship with Himself. Won't you say yes to Him

Invitation

Our relationship with God starts with Jesus. **We must acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior God sent us, and the Lord of all the world.**

God sent Jesus to die for our sins, making a relationship with God possible. We must choose to believe in Jesus. We must believe who He said He is and believe what He said He came to do. He said He is the Savior. He said He came to die for our sins. And as proof of this God raised Him from the dead and made Him Lord of the earth.

So you must choose to believe that Jesus is the Savior you need and turn your life over to Him as Lord.

Then God will forgive your sin, adopt you as His child, and draw you near to Himself.

Today, won't you choose Jesus?