

Created for Intimate Friendship with God

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Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness comes through a process. That process is one of living in relationship to God.

Hearing God is simply a short way of talking about a conversational relationship with God.

Genesis 3:8 *Adam and Eve heard the sound of God walking in the garden.* What does that tell you about God?

- God, as he shows up in the first chapters of Genesis, turns out to be a very chatty God!
- What emerges here is not only God's interest in our lives, but the space that he gives us! He gives us opportunity to work and be on our own.
- Genesis 3:9 "Adam, where are you?" By his choice, God didn't know where Adam was. He gave Adam the distance that allowed him to respond.

Intimate fellowship, friendship with God, is one where God is both available but gives us the option of turning away.

Numbers 6:24-26 *The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you...and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you...(the Lord look right at you)...and give you his peace.*

- God seeks fellowship with you.
- The basic nature of God is loving community.
- What is our response? Psalms 27:8 "Thy face, Lord will I seek."

Our relationship to God is not a consumerist relationship.

- We don't consume the merits of Christ or the services of the church, we are participants.
- We are not spectators; we are in the game!
- The game is producing the greatest creative goodness possible under the power and character of God in which we share.
- God creates creators – you and me!

We are meant to live in a fellowship that is to be described as a conversational relationship with God.

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it, yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive. It is not pleasure that we ought to seek in this exercise but let us do it from a principle of love and because God would have us do it. " – Brother Lawrence

- Our response is to speak to God and listen to God in a conversational relationship.
- We seek God's face to interact. That interaction is primarily one of speaking and of hearing.

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2 Chronicles 7:14 *"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves..."*

- That's how you come before God.
- We don't seek it just for fun and pleasure; because it isn't for our use to get what we want.
- Humbling ourselves means to see ourselves realistically before God, as dependent upon his goodness and as an expression of his goodness.
- We are invited to live before the shining face of God and in that place to live out a conversation where we speak and we hear.

That is the place of a friend. Psalm 23 *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.* Why? God is with me.

That *with-God* is the key to understanding who we are, why we are here, and the nature of the relationship that we have with God.

- *Practice the Presence of God* - Brother Lawrence
- *The Way of the Pilgrim* - the Jesus Prayer.
- Learn how to keep a conversation running. Talking to God, listening to God.
- *The Game with Minutes* - Frank Laubach

John 15: Jesus calls us friends if we simply do what he commands, but it isn't slavishly. It is doing it as one who understands what's going on. **The intimate relationship with Christ that we live in is one where we know what he's doing and we are his friends by cooperative activity** not just because we get something that blots out our personality, pushes away our wants and our desires, but rather we live in that relationship where our desires are as important to God as his desires are important to us.

God's intent for each of us is that we should grow to the point to where he can empower us to do what we want.

- Genesis 1:26 *"Let us make human beings in our likeness." "Let them have dominion."*
 - We are created to have dominion under God.
 - Dominion is a scary word because it has been pulled away from God's rule.
 - When human dominion is on its own it is bound to be destructive but under God it is bound to be creative and good.
- Psalm 8
 - What remains the same is the responsibility for good.
- Humanity is to be a dwelling place for God.
- Exodus 29:43-46 -a tabernacle; temporary dwelling; so that God could dwell in their midst.
- Ephesians 2:22 – the church is to be a dwelling place of God.
- Rev. 22:5 – *They shall live and reign with God forever and ever.*

What are you going to be doing 2000 years from now? What is your future? Your future is reigning with God in his universe. **I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.**

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Communicating with God is not always or primarily a matter of being told what to do! Many people can't progress in their relationship with God because they're thinking in terms of being told what to do. Being in the will of God requires that you go beyond that.

Luke 17:7-10: The Unprofitable Servant... If your servant does only what you tell him to do, you don't thank him. Who is a profitable servant? **Someone who knows what needs to be done and does it without being told.** This goes with Jesus' statement about being his friends because you understand what's going on. That's a picture of a **co-worker**, not a servant who stands around being told what to do. Your wants and your desires are important in God's plan for you. Things are as they ought to be if you have people who don't need to be told.

We are of course talking, listening, and there are times when we are told what to do and that's perfectly alright. That's a good thing. We should expect it when it's appropriate and God will provide it. But we are not in the relationship of simply a master and slave.

Romans 1:1: A Different Kind of Slavery... Paul (and other apostles) called themselves slaves of Jesus Christ. That slavery *is on the other side* of friendship. **You've already gone through friendship to get to that kind of slavery.** That is the kind of service that makes God's will and his purposes, what Christ is doing in the world, makes that primary, but it's not something you are driven to, **it's something you are drawn to.**

The only real individuals are saints. When you get to know them, there are no two alike. Sinners are boringly similar! There's nothing of uniqueness in what they're living for. Saints are unique because God has shaped their wants and wills (Psalm 37). **God's intent for us is to come to the place where he can empower us to do what we want.**

God is trying to create the greatest possible good! Genesis 1:26 is built into us.

The conversational relationship with God is something we carry on with God as we go about leading our unique life.

We are people who live in community; we delight in other people. The friendship spreads. The Trinity turns out to be the model of life as it is intended to be in human existence.

The resolution of the problems of the world as we know it does begin now. We can bring that wherever we are, as we learn to live the life of intimate friendship with God. That spreads to those around us.

The 23rd Psalm is a reflection of the life that we lead as friends of God.

- That friendship with God is what we carry forward in the intimacy of our conversational relationship now, in a communal setting, offering the answer to all the problems of humanity.
- Those problems come from the rupture of the relationship of man to God.
- **They are restored in Jesus Christ by those who become his students in Kingdom living and learn how to live with their minds constantly interacting with him, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father.**