

**A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS**  
**The Secret of a deep meaningful personal relationship with God & Christ**  
**Timothy Williams 05-17-2015**

**Ephesians 3:14-21**

*14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to **grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ**, 19 and to know this **love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be **filled to the measure of all the fullness of God**.*

The passage just read lets us know that there is something very special and beyond knowledge about understanding Christ's love.

**Ephesians 5:29-32 ESV**

*29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.***

In Ephesians 5 it compares the special and mysterious relationship of husband and wife becoming one and uses it as an analogy for our relationship with Christ. There is something hard to define and communicate about this relationship. It must be experienced.

How many times have you heard that phrase, "a personal relationship with God" and/or Jesus? These words are thrown around freely but what do they really mean? Is such a thing really possible or is it just "religious speak?"

Many consider the idea of a loving committed deep relationship with God, but, I fear, most struggle to grasp its true meaning, and I can't blame them. People believe, study, pray, attend services, try to live right, but struggle to get to what Ephesians 3 and 5 are talking about.

Long distance relationships are difficult and for most people this is as long distance as it gets! But it really isn't. It doesn't have to be... Long distance I mean!

**John 14:23 ESV**

*Jesus answered 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.***

Wow. Doesn't sound long distance at all!

This deeper relationship is something very special, mysterious, beyond knowledge, but it is real and attainable. Read the Psalms; David found it and did so while he was young. So did many others. It is as real as oneness in marriage. I cannot easily explain to you what oneness in marriage means, but some of us have experienced it. So it is with each of us and our personal relationship with God. It is up to you to build your relationship with Him and experience it for yourselves.

### **Why even try to tackle this difficult subject?**

If it is so mysterious and difficult, why try? Why bother to be close to your parents? Why bother to get close to your wife or husband? Why bother to get close to your children? Your friends?

Love! That's why. Real, personal, profound love. Love deserves a response and is worth the effort. This is true of all our valuable & deep relationships, including our relationship with God.

It is the difference between all the faithful believers who stood with the army of Saul, and David who strode out to face Goliath. It is the difference between roommates and a real marriage. It is the difference between faith that helps you get by and faith that gives you deep peace and abundant joy.

It is what God wants because he loves you deeply.

### **Hosea 6:6 ESV**

*For I desire **steadfast love** and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

A writer Jim Elliot once said, "O, the fullness, the pleasure, the sheer excitement of knowing God here on earth."

And Paul the Apostle himself said:

### **Philippians 3:8**

*"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."*

So if this deep mysterious personal relationship with God is worth the effort and desired by God...

### **How do we achieve it? How do we get from one place to the other? From belief to a deep personal daily relationship with Christ?**

There are so many things we could talk about that will help you grow closer to Christ and closer to God. I don't have time to cover them all. In fact it is a matter of a lifelong effort to study, meditate on these things, and live them.

I want to focus on what I think are a few key things that are sometimes missed.

First, are the obvious things I won't spend time on because we cover them in depth and often: Belief, faith, studying God's Word, obeying God, etc. Trust is a big one that is needed.

**Proverbs 3:5**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.*

**Many scriptures contain relationship helps.**

**Colossians 3:12**

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,*

**Grasping & Groping for God**

We need to want a deeper relationship.

**Acts 17:26-28** Paul Before the Areopagus in Athens

*26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27that they would seek God, **if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; 28for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children'*

So many people are happy with religion. With an insurance policy that will get them into heaven and do not feel the need for a deeper relationship with God. You have to want more than to get your ticket punched, avoid hell, and achieve heaven. You have to want a relationship with God & Jesus. You have to accept their love and give your love back.

**James 4:7** ESV

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.***

Very simply put, we must put in the effort, which is not much different than any other relationship we wish to invest in. You must want it and you must try.

**Continual Thankfulness, Prayer, & Positive thinking in tune with God & Christ**

I think the biggest key to a deep relationship with Christ and God is be in his presence though a constant attitude of gratefulness, constant giving of thanks, and by considering the good positive things God has done for you, and is doing for you all day long. Meditatively. Prayerfully. Constantly. Positively.

It is a scientifically proven fact that the human mind is amazingly powerful and can affect the human body's ability to heal and do many amazing things.

We have all heard or experienced stories, seen on the news or in other places, tales of how a strong willed person chose to be positive and uplifting and it affected their illness or situation.

The following is from the book, *"A Better Way to Think: Using Positive Thoughts to Change Your Life"* (Revell, 2011) by Christian author, H. Norman Wright.

*"Think about this: You can't evoke thoughts by feeling a certain way. But you can evoke and, to some degree, control feelings by directing your thoughts.*

*So having control over our own thoughts gives us power to direct our feelings. But our feelings aren't directed solely by will. We can't just choose our feelings. Still, we can guide them with our thoughts.*

*That's important because our thoughts are the origin of our behaviors. Each behavior begins this way: A thought stimulates an electrochemical response, which produces emotion; emotion results in an attitude; attitude produces behavior. This process affects the way we think and feel physically. So negative or toxic thoughts produce toxic emotions. Those produce toxic attitudes, which result in toxic behavior.*

*Our ability to think and represent things to ourselves also enables us to bring vast ranges of reality—and non-reality—into our lives. Basically, that means that with our thoughts, we can usher good or bad things into our lives, real or imagined, depending on the content of our thoughts."*

This is why the writer in proverbs warns about guarding our heart, the source of our thoughts.

**Proverbs 4:23**

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*

Be careful about what you think.

Yes, there are negative things in life; illness, death, sin that must be dealt with. I am not talking about those negative things. Even they can be dealt with positively. I am talking about negative thoughts and words that go against gratitude and thankfulness and the love and peace of God.

Everyone here either has had children or was a child. (I think that covers everyone.)

Children can sometimes whine and complain and be ungrateful about the silliest things. All the while not paying attention to the blessings in the very things they complain about.

I don't want to go to sleep, I don't want to eat my vegetables, I don't want to go to school, I don't ne-ne-ne-need a coat in the snow, I don't want to come in out of the thunderstorm, I don't want to get a shot, I don't want to take a bath. I don't like this, I don't like that. And on, and on, and on, and on. Often time's children complain about something they do not understand. They think something is bad when it is actually good. They complain and expose their lack of wisdom and understanding. But they are just kids.

Sometimes it gets rather irritating. We realize that the 4 year old doesn't understand, but the ungrateful 13 year old begins to make us frustrated. Negativity and ungratefulness becomes very grating when it is from someone that should know better.

We can be exactly the same way with God and each other.

I don't like winter, I don't want to get older, I don't like gray hair, I don't like Monday's, I don't want to go to work, I don't want to do my part. I hate this traffic. I don't like my hair. I want my way! And on, and on, and on, and on.

The best of us end up being a lot like those ungrateful kids! We realize that the 4 year old doesn't understand, maybe even the 13 year old, but what about ourselves! What about our own lack of understanding and wisdom, our own negativity? If it is hard to excuse in a teen, what about us? The negativity and ungratefulness when I whine and am ungrateful, is actually an insult to God.

For example: Let's talk about aging.

Why do many people, even Christians, want to live longer but don't want to get older? That doesn't make any sense. But we get influenced by our culture which constantly jokes and whines and belittles the aging process and the elderly. When we whine and complain about growing older, about aches and pains, gray hair or loss of hair, about our changing bodies and less energy. When we don't want to admit our age and joke about still being 29 or 39, what are we really saying to God? He made us. He invented the aging process. To complain about getting older is like the child complaining about going to sleep. Enough already! You can't stop it! Grow up!

Don't like your gray hair?

### **Proverbs 20:29**

*The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendor of the old.*

Aging is inevitable. Aging is part of God's design for how the world works. Aging is part of mortality. Aging helps us get ready for the transition of death to a better spiritual life that awaits. Aging is part of the process so we aren't stuck in this place forever! Aging is positive and a gift from God.

How ungrateful and unwise when we whine and complain about the inevitable in life. How un-positive. How un-encouraging. How negative! And negativity has an effect on ourselves and others.

When we think something negative. It affects our very being. When we speak something negative, we affect ourselves and others. And some of those others may be at a weaker place than we are. It may seem insignificant, typical, or just humorous, but it may not be encouraging and helpful. It possibly discourages others and is being negative and ungrateful to God.

### **Ephesians 4:29**

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

What purpose does it serve to be negative or complain about something you cannot change? Something that is natural, inevitable, designed by God, and actually positive! How is it benefitting those who listen? It isn't.

And most of all – directly to the point of this lesson – it hinders our relationship with God and Christ. It stops us from being as thankful and grateful as we could be. Instead, we need to be thankful and positive and grateful. Full of appreciation and joy for what God has done, is doing, and for what he has promised!

### **I Thessalonians 5:16-18**

*16Rejoice always, 17pray without ceasing, 18give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

How can we do this if we are complaining about something?

### **Ephesians 5:15-21**

*15Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Always and for everything!?! Where does that leave those things we like to complain about? Where does that leave Monday mornings, gray hair, and getting older?

### **Philippians 4:8**

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

**Acts 14:17**

*Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."*

**James 1:17**

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

Positive thinking – when focused on God and His love for us through thankfulness, praise, and appreciation of all good things – changes us. It helps you to see God's presence in every day. It helps you to see him beside you, with you, in you.

That is the secret to a deep true relationship with Christ and with God. Daily, constantly, giving thanks and being grateful trains us as the weeks, months, and years go by. The more we thank God for, the more we find to thank God for! The more we see God. As time goes by we truly grow to understand the deep abiding Love of God in all parts of our life.

As we learn about His love in every aspect of our daily life it deepens our understanding of what he did for us in his life and death. We come to understand how long and deep and wide is this love. It changes everything because it changes us.

I am not talking about a prayer before a meal, I am talking about savoring every bite with the realization that it is the gift of God and saying so with your mind and your voice.

I am not talking about praying once a day to say thank you for your spouse, I am talking about every moment together, every touch, being keenly aware that she, or he, and your relationship, and every moment enjoyed is a gift from God to make your life better.

I am not talking about a prayer list for all the good things, although that is a good start. I am talking about thinking about God throughout every day and praising him and thanking him for every single good thing that you experience as you experience it!

That is the secret! That is what will change you and change your relationship!

**Romans 8:38-39**

*31What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*37No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Don't be separated from God's love. Get closer to it. Seek it out. Learn to be close to God. And let us encourage each other positively in this path. Let us walk it together hand-in-hand. Let us together enjoy the peace that passes understanding and the love that has no limits. Let us help each other to see how deep, long, and wide is God's love. You can. I can. We can together. And as we grow closer to God, our joy is that the walk will be never ending but will go on forever beyond this life into eternity! We can enjoy this mysterious deep relationship with Christ and God! Let's go!

**Psalm 100** A psalm. For giving grateful praise.

*1Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

**Colossians 3:15-17**

*15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Praise be to God in heaven and his son who loves us and died for us and reigns from his throne in heaven where we will get to be with him forever!

God is good! If you have any needs or want to have a real relationship with Christ, please come to the back where an elder will meet with you.

Let us all stand and sing praises to God!