

01

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships defined

We can have a relationship with God

How do we talk to God?

How do we hear God talking to us?

01 : RELATIONSHIPS

Human beings are designed to live in relationship with others, and so ideally, we flourish best in relationship with other human beings.

There are some who, of their own choice, live in isolation but sadly, there are also many who have to live with very little or no relationship or contact with others. Nevertheless, it is still the case that we function better when we have association with other humans.

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

*What do
relationships mean
to you?*

*How would it affect
you if you didn't
have other people
to relate to?*

RELATIONSHIP DEFINED

The Cambridge English dictionary definition of relationship says *‘the way in which two or more people, groups, countries, etc., talk to, behave toward, and deal with each other’*

It may seem strange that these studies in Christianity begin with looking at relationships, but this aspect of Christianity receives very little focus, yet it is of paramount importance.

We are told in the bible that God loves us – this is not just an abstract love but an **active** love – a love that compels Him to act and we vividly see this in the sending of Jesus to earth to restore the broken relationship between mankind and God.

The online Dictionary.com defines relationships as *‘the way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected.’* So, what does this all mean when we talk or think about God and Jesus?

To be connected shows that we have been brought together or into contact with someone so that a real or supposed link is established.

Whichever way you relate to others this is fulfilling one of our basic needs. A psychologist, Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation", created a classification system which reflected the universal needs of society as its base. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as it became known is used to study how humans intrinsically partake in behavioural motivation.

*“In Him (that
is Jesus) and
through faith
in Him we
may approach
God with
freedom and
confidence.”*

EPHESIANS 3:12

So then, the need for relationship has been identified as a basic need for human beings. Christianity in essence is about a relationship – primarily a relationship with Jesus Christ. But before we go further with this aspect let's talk about relationship with God.

WE CAN HAVE A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Before we look at *our* relationship with God, I want to direct your focus to the other end - from God's perspective. He just longs for and loves to have relationship with people.

We see the greatest example of relationship in what we know as the Trinity of God - that is Father, Son and Holy Spirit (we'll deal more with this subject in later studies.) Suffice to say for now is that the relationship between these three persons is so complete and honouring that they have no need for anyone else to make their lives complete.

However, as we have just said God so wants to have relationship with us that He has provided a way that we can know Him, have a personal relationship with Him, get to know Him and love Him.

In chapter 2 and verse 18 in the book of Genesis in the bible we are told, "The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him". God knew we work better when we are in relationship with other human beings.

Man and woman originally had a great relationship with God when He first created them. God used to speak with them and them with Him. There wasn't anything that got in the way.

However, that relationship became broken and humankind became separated from God. As we shall see later God was grieved by this broken relationship and did all He could to show us we could still have a deep and significant bond with Him. In the end there was only one way for God to

Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly"

JOHN 10:10
(KING JAMES
VERSION)

This sending of the man - God's Son Jesus is the greatest demonstration of God's immense desire for this two— way relationship between Him and us.

In order for us to come into a relationship with anyone we have to meet them, spend time with them, enter into conversation, and probably, engage in activities with them. Relationships take time to grow and develop. It often takes effort and determination of some kind to make a relationship work.

This relationship with God may never have been mentioned to you, so it may be a surprise to learn of it but this is one important thing that marks Christianity out from other religions and faiths. This relationship is about the coming together of two people to develop a living, talking, uniting partnership.

Yes, we can actually talk to God, and He will listen and will talk to us! This may be something new to you but it is true, and you can start to develop this relationship with God right now. He knows all about you and longs to have relationship with you. It stems from His great love for men and women.

HOW DO WE SPEAK TO GOD?

For most people the whole concept of speaking to God apart from formal prayers is one which is foreign to them. Yet, for those who know Him personally, speaking and talking to Him is a most natural part of their lives.

As we experience in natural relationships, speaking together is the basic building block of any relationship. And so it is with God: Speaking to Him becomes an everyday part of our relationship with God. We speak naturally with Him – yes, with respect, because of who He is but we don't need formal, written prayers to converse with God.

This is the life we have seen and heard. We are reporting about it to you also so that you, too, can have a relationship with us. Our relationship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 JOHN 1:3
(GOD'S WORD
TRANSLATION)

The bible tells us that He already knows everything about us and what we are going through, yet He wants us to tell Him about it.

It doesn't matter if you don't know God personally (we'll explain more about this in Study 6 – *What does it mean to be a Christian?*) but you can still talk to God and as we'll explain below you'll be surprised at what He says and how He says it!

HOW DO WE HEAR GOD SPEAKING TO US?

God speaks to us in a variety of ways – through our thoughts, through our inner self, through a picture in our minds, sometimes it's through dreams, it might be through our conscience – that is we get a sense that something isn't right or is Ok (we get a feeling of peace in a situation). Conversations with other Christians are another way God speaks to us. Occasionally He speaks in an audible voice

It takes time and experience to learn when He is speaking to us but one thing we can be sure of, is that God just loves to hear us talking to Him and He enjoys talking to us.

The main thing is to keep it simple and use everyday language (He understands even today's street language!) He wants us to discover Him and get to know Him personally.

God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.

PSALM 66:19

Because He (God) bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!

PSALM 116:2

(NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

NOTES: