



GROW

CHRISTIAN LIVING

LESSON 1: KNOWING GOD PERSONALLY



Objectives

- To know the importance of having a personal relationship with God.
- To identify some wrong perspectives that we might have about having a personal relationship with God.
- To identify factors in our lives that might hinder our intimacy with God.
- To apply practical steps to grow in our intimacy with God.

Guidelines to Use This Lesson

- Read through the whole lesson to gain a better understanding of the main points that could be drawn out and linked with the introduction.
- Read through bible verses within the lesson prior to teaching so as to be able to effectively teach your mentee.
- Share about your own experiences where you have shown gentleness and care or taught, rebuked or corrected with your mentee.
- Share relevant testimonies.
- Consider illustrations that you could include in your sharing to help facilitate greater comprehension.
- Ask questions at different points of the lesson.
- Encourage your mentee to start a prayer journal to remind them to pray and also remember the prayers God has answered.

Introduction

What does it mean to have an intimate relationship with God? Does it mean that we are required to have a vast Bible knowledge? Becoming a better person so that God will accept you? You may be surprised that none of these things would work. Knowing God intimately and personally is different from knowing about God. Like every relationship, it takes time. Being a Christian without an intimate relationship with God is like trying to operate a car without petrol. Intimacy is what God desires to have with every believer. God invites all believers to know Him personally throughout the days of our life.

Importance of Intimacy with God

God wants to have a close and intimate relationship with us.

But let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:24

Being a Christian is not only that we will have eternal life after we die. Jesus tells us eternal life is actually about knowing God, and it starts while we are on this earth.

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17:3

What does it really mean to know God? Take a king for example. Many people could say "I know that king", but it is only those who are closest to him who would really know him: his character and his reaction toward different situations.

In a Biblical sense, knowing God personally means to have an intimate and experiential knowledge of God. This relationship is mutual, personal and reflects a loving relation between God and us.

God knows us intimately because ultimately, He is the one who created us and understands everything about us. Besides that, we are also created to have a close and deep relationship with Him.

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Psalm 139:1-3

“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

Isaiah 43:10

However, when sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, mankind lost their intimacy with God. As a result, there was insecurities, emptiness, chaos and pain. Through it all, God never abandoned us. He sent Jesus to die for our sins on the cross, so that we could be reconciled to God.

As we are reconciled back through repentance and begin drawing close to Him, we will discover His purpose for our lives and the depths of His love for us. It is only through our closeness to God that we could demonstrate the love of God to the rest of the watching world.

If we do not grow in our relationship with God, we will draw away from Him. Some of the consequences of that includes a lack of zeal, constant discouragement, doubt, insecurities, etc. Eventually, we would give in to negative thinking and become spiritually insensitive.

Aside from that, we will also lack the guidance needed in making decisions. This will create the tendency to rely on our own limited human judgment and strength. We feel frustrated as we experience more conflicts in our relationships with the people around us. That will lead us to feeling empty and trying to fill this void with other activities (including church activities) or with other relationships.

Reflection Station

Why is it important to grow in our intimacy with God?

Blessings from Having Intimacy with God

As we learn to love and trust God and to develop a closer relationship with God, we will begin to discover the reality of His blessings:

1. Emotionally healthy

As we walk closely with God, we will experience a wholeness in our emotions. We could come to God with complete confidence that He will never fail us because He is completely faithful and trustworthy in nature.

A close and stable relationship with God will help us grow to overcome our feelings of hurt, fear, anger, insecurity, depression and other negative emotions. We will find ourselves at a better position to cope with pressure, challenges and stress. We will also become more resilient and less irritable.

It is a common observation that we tend to take on the characteristics of people whom we are close with. Therefore, as we draw close to God, we will be influenced by His nature and grow to become more like Jesus. As a result of that, we will increase in love, joy, gentleness, self-control and other aspects of his nature and character.

2. Enjoy better relationships with the people around us

When we grow closer in our relationship with God, our ability to relate to others will improve as God teaches and enables us to relate to one another in loving and effective ways such as being encouraging, using our words to lift others up, being sensitive to the needs of those around us and to grow in our patience.

3. Understand and obey God's will

When we first become followers of Christ, it might be difficult for us to understand why we must do things God's way. God's ways are opposite and can be contradictory to what we would deem as natural or good way of doing things.

The Bible explains that our minds are natural opposed to the things of the spirit.

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14

As we know God more intimately, we begin to understand His ways and His will for us. Jesus had an intimate relationship with God the Father even during His time on earth. This intimate relationship enables Jesus to know and discern God's will.

As we understand, know and experience more of God's ways and His love for us, it enables us to respond to Him in obedience. Obedience is a lifestyle of a believer. We can develop the habit of responding to God's love by choosing to live our lives according to His ways.

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

John 14:21

4. Bear much fruit

As we develop an intimate relationship with God, we can expect Him to make our lives fruitful. Fruitfulness is a condition where our lives are filled with Godly character traits such as love, joy, peace and other Godly attributes.

The quality of our personal relationship with God will affect the fruitfulness in our lives and our service unto Him.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

When we are fruitful, we display the character of Jesus in every situation and area of our lives.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22-23

5. Able to diligently watch over our hearts

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

Proverbs 4:23

As we grow in our relationship with God, our character will be transformed to be more like Christ's. We will grow in our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit who will reveal the thoughts and motives of our hearts and prompts us to turn away from sin.

Mentor Chat

Why do you think God wants us to grow in our intimacy with Him?

What are some of the blessings that you can currently observe in your life as a result of growing closer to God?

Common Misunderstandings about Intimacy with God?

Some people think that they could get closer to God by:

1. Having a lot of Bible knowledge

Doing Christian activities or knowing a lot about the Bible could increase our knowledge but does not naturally produce a change in our hearts and draw us closer to God. Our relationship with God will not grow unless we apply what we have learnt into our lives, and allowing God to transform our hearts and our perspectives.

My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

Ezekiel 33:31-32

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

James 1:22-25

Sometimes, despite knowing a lot of Biblical truths, we continue to do things that is not right in the sight of God. This is known as habitual sin. Unless we genuinely allow the Word of God to cleanse us and convict us, we will not be transformed. We must allow God's word to permeate through the deepest levels of our hearts. It is only through this way, that our attitude and motives will begin to change and we can grow to learn to live a life that pleases God.

2. Having a regular quiet time with God

We must learn how to live constantly in God's presence and not depend on sporadic times of relating to God. An intimate relationship with God comes from living a God-centred life where every aspect of our lives are submitted to Him.

Mentor Chat

What draws your affection towards God?

What draws you away from God?

Common Hindrances to Intimacy with God

1. The wrong perspective of God

Sometimes, we are hindered in our relationship with God because we have the wrong concept of God. For example, some people think of God as a genie in a lamp, granting their wishes and get upset when their prayers go unanswered.

We need to view God by who He says He is, and we can obtain that from the Word of God. The Bible tells us that He is our creator, instructor, provider, comforter, redeemer, guide, counsellor, etc. All of God's names reveal His nature and character of love, justice and reliability.

2. Procrastination

Failing to prioritize and spend time with God causes us to become caught up with other activities. We end up neglecting our relationship with Him. At the heart of our procrastination is the fact that maybe, we do not really yearn to know God. We do not prioritize our relationship with Him because we do not see a deep need for that. Instead, we look at having a personal time with him as an option, by having a delayed focus. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we are fine without God.

3. Hurried lifestyle

No relationship could be built in a hurry. It takes time to know a person better, likewise in our relationship with God. We need to take time to savour our relationship with God, to know God better.

4. Laziness

Some people are unwilling to put in the effort to grow in faith. They like others to pray for them instead of doing it themselves. They give in easily to their flesh-spending time lazing around, sleeping or doing other things that are more amusing and not willing to forgo those things to spend time with God.

5. Discouragement

Discouragement occurs when we lack enthusiasm, confidence and a positive outlook about God. When people are in that place, they shift their focus away from God and onto others or the circumstances around them. We should continue to put our hope in God and draw strength from Him.

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Deuteronomy 31:8

6. Unconfessed sin

Sin separates us from God. Instead of continuously drifting farther away from God as a result of our disobedience and foolishness, we should repent from our ways and our sins and seek God's forgiveness. God's grace and mercy is always available for us when we choose to turn back to Him.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

7. Viewing our relationship with God as a set of rules

Some people rigidly measure their time spent with God and feel guilty if the initial planned time was not met. God has no intention for us to relate to Him this way. It is meant to be refreshing, exciting, vibrant and fulfilling. We could relate spontaneously with God side from setting aside blocks of time with Him. God wants us to view this relationship with Him as a loving one, instead one that is out of guilt.

Reflection Station

Are there any areas of your life that might hinder your growth in your relationship with God?

In what ways have you consciously/subconsciously allowed sin to enter into your relationship with God? Decide today to bring it before Him.

Having an Intimate Relationship with God

There are a few attitudes that we can foster that helps us grow in our relationship with God:

1. Thirsting after God

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalm 42:1-2

Do we feel the same longing that David has in **Psalm 42**? We are to earnestly desire to spend time with God as He has designed us to have deep, personal relationships with Him.

2. Trusting God and delighting in His word

We can trust God in every situation of our lives because He is totally dependable. He is in control of every situation. Our part to play is to offer our every situation to Him and trust that He will take care of us.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

A vital part of trusting God is to learn to trust that the Bible is absolutely true because it is God's Word, and apply the principles into our lives. We need to be prepared to trust God and obey His Word even if the people around us or circumstances are imploring us to go against God's principles.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

As we grow to delight in the word of God, we begin to put on the mind of Christ and to think like Him because His Word will convict, encourage and correct us. We will grow closer to God because our our thoughts are constantly on Him and His Word.

3. Being open with God

God wants us to respond to Him with our hearts honestly and openly, not just with words that we think are good to say. God already knows everything, so it is pointless to withhold anything from Him. He knows the words that we will say before it comes out from our mouths. Whether is it in our anger, frustration, fears, joys, we need not be afraid to share what we are really thinking or feeling to God. We should begin talking to God about everything that is upon our hearts.

An aspect that helps us be open with God is humility. God will give us His grace and guide us as we humbly come before Him in dependence.

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

Psalms 25:9

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Being open to God involves listening to Him too and allowing Him to speak into our lives.

4. Thankfulness and worship unto God

No matter what happens in our life, having an attitude of thankfulness and worship unto God can help us focus on God's power and character to deliver us from our present situations.

The book of Psalm shows us how God's people continued to thank and praise God amidst trials and difficulties in life.

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger.

Psalm 55:1-3

5. Treasuring the things of God

If we want to know God more, we must grow to love the things He loves too. God desires everyone to have a personal relationship with Him. As we serve God, we become co-labourers with Christ, partnering with Him to advance His Kingdom here on earth. Therefore, as we begin to identify more with God's heart for the lost, we will be drawn closer to Him. God will gradually reveal more of His heart to us as we serve Him.

6. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is an attitude of our hearts that affects our actions. When we have a faithful heart towards God, we are determined to never give up and to be committed to stay close to God despite the circumstances in life. A person with a faithful heart would want to do everything according to the ways of God.

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Matthew 25:21

Mentor Chat

What are the attitudes that you could foster right now to help you grow in your pursuit of God? Why?

Practical Steps in Developing Intimacy with God

Growing in our intimacy with God is a gradual process. We need to cultivate the habit of consistently and constantly drawing close to Him.

1. Setting daily appointments to meet with God

Find a time and place where you will not be interrupted and distracted and use that time to commune with God intentionally.

2. Pray always

Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

We could come close to God at all times and at any place. By involving Him in every area of our lives, we will learn how to shift and focus our full attention on Him. Besides that, we should also tap into the power of the Holy Spirit by praying in tongues as often as we possibly can.

3. Listen to God's voice

We need to learn to ask God to speak to us even as we spend our time with Him throughout the day. Ask God to search our hearts and to be willing to obey Him as He reveals to us our sins, corrects us and teaches us what to do.

4. Read and Meditate on God's word

But whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Psalm 1:2

Do not rush as you read the word of God. Take time to digest and allow the word of God to challenge or encourage our hearts. And may we ask God the question: *"God, what are you trying to speak to me through this passage/verse? I am ready to listen."*

5. Journaling

If you sensed God speaking to you, write it down, find a place where you could keep a record of everything He spoke. God's voice encouraging, loving, brings correction and gentle. As God reassures us of His promises, help us to examine our motives and gently corrects us of our wrong attitudes, we could journal it down to act as a reminder to us.

Conclusion

God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. Jesus went to the cross so that we could have this experience with God. All that God requires from us is that we believe in Him and to learn to trust Him with our whole hearts. We could not ignore our relationship with God. We need to constantly nurture a deep relationship with Him.



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