

Greetings. Welcome to session 3 on this series of “Abounding in the Good Works of God.” In the last session we learned about God's true nature, which is a nature of Love. 1st John 4:9 tells us that this love was revealed to us when God sent his only begotten son into the world so that we could live through him.

Today we are going to look at God's desire for you and I to have an intimate relationship with him. Isn't that exciting? We begin by taking a close look at Jesus Christ's last recorded prayer before he would be arrested and crucified, in the book of John, chapter 17. It's a very intimate prayer. It involved the disciples that Jesus Christ was with at the time. But he's also praying for those beyond those disciples. His prayer includes you and I.

Jesus is requesting from God the Father that you and I would have the same unified intimate fellowship with the father that he was experiencing and enjoying. That is absolutely remarkable. If it wasn't recorded in scripture, I doubt if I would consider such a thing as being possible. However, it is not only achievable, it is what Jesus passionately desired to take place.

John 17:20-23

20 *“I am not asking for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,*

21 *so that they can all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I in union with you, that they also can be in union with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.*

22 *And the glory that you have given me, I have given to them, so that they can be one, just as we are one;*

23 *I in union with them, and you in union with me, so that they can be perfected into one so that the world can know that you sent me, and loved them just as you loved me.*

Now you may have noticed that the word “one” is used in verse 21, verse 22 and in verse 23. The three places where that word “one” is used, along with where it is translated as “in union with” in verse 21, are all translations from the Greek word “*heis*.” What this word means is “one in purpose, unified, in intimate relationship with each other.” That this word is used five times in a string of three verses is very highly significant!

Also notice that there is a Greek word that is translated into “just as” in verses 21, 22 and 23 and this is a translation from the Greek word “*kathos*” and it means “in the same manner” or “in the same way.” This is remarkable! Jesus had a very close, intimate relationship with God his Father and now Jesus is requesting that we have that same bond with his Father.

In relationships between human beings, we understand the expression of love by way of intimate interactions. We build a unique bond with other people when we choose to express our confidential thoughts and desires with them. In turn, they open up their heart to us and we develop a connection through that interaction. We share things with them that we probably wouldn't tell other people. We are only telling them because they are a special person in our life. Through this relationship we establish a wonderful bond. You all know what I'm talking about, right? There is great comfort in having an intimate relationship such as this. That Jesus Christ prayed for us to have an intimate relationship with the creator of the heavens and the earth, and with him, is mind-boggling!

1 John 1:3

that which we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The word “fellowship” that is used in these two verses is a translation from the Greek word “*koinonia*” and it refers to “a close association involving mutual interests and sharing; a close relationship characterized by involvement and communion with someone.”

This verse signifies the answered prayer from John, chapter 17. One of the great benefits we received when we got saved by confessing Jesus as our Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead, is the ability to have a close intimate fellowship with God our Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:1-2

1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are! On account of this, the world does not know us because it did not know him.

2 Beloved, we are children of God now, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. We know that when it is revealed, we will be like him because we will see him just as he is.

You and I are children of God. The relationship that I have with my children involves full sharing. I share things with them, and they share things with me. It isn't just a one-way street. Neither should our relationship with God be one way. If we are truly children of God then we can expect to have an intimate relationship with the one who is our father, should we not?

Galatians 4:6-7

6 Now, because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba" (Father).

7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

We are much more than servants of God, we are children. We are sons. A servant simply receives commands and then chooses to obey. He doesn't dispute what the master says. He just listens, and he does. But a son has a much different relationship than a servant. A son may choose to obey the voice of his father, but he also will probably have interaction back and forth such as asking, "Why do you want me to do this?" And it's more of an intimate type of relationship than what a servant would normally have with his master.

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is working in you both to want to do, and to do, his good pleasure.

Do you understand this verse? Do you believe this verse? Right now, at this very moment, God is at work within you. How exciting is that?

John 16:13

But when it, the spirit of truth, comes, it will guide you in all truth, for it will not speak on its own, but whatever it hears, it will speak, and it will declare to you the things that are to come.

We received the spirit of truth when we got saved. Through this spirit, God promises to guide us into all truth.

2 Timothy 2:7

Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all this.

Our Lord Jesus Christ promises to give us understanding. How many times have you read something, heard something or seen something and didn't understand what it meant? Through our intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ, we can obtain understanding on matters regarding the scriptures.

Now that we have established this truth, let's go to the book of Acts in chapter 9 to see a practical example of it.

Acts 9:10

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and in a vision the Lord said to him, "Ananias." And he said, "See, I am here, Lord."

Ananias's response indicates that he already had a talking relationship with his Lord Jesus Christ. He didn't appear shocked when his name was called. He simply responded like you and I would respond when our name is called by someone.

Acts 9:11-12

*11 And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus, for Look!, he is praying,
12 and he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he would receive his sight."*

Now some people think that God only speaks to church leadership. But Ananias was a simple disciple. God desires to have an intimate fellowship with every person in the body of Christ, including you and I.

1 John 1:6-9

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him but continue to walk in the darkness, we are lying and are not obeying the truth.

7 But if we continue to walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In the last session we learned that love is a requirement to fellowship with God. In contrast, sin will keep us from fellowshiping with God. I have a little dog. His name is Ace. When Ace sees that I'm mad at him, he runs off and goes into hiding. Once I show him that I still love him, he comes out of hiding and goes back to cuddling next to me again. God is always ready and willing to forgive us when we confess to him our sins. When we do that, our fellowship with him is restored.

John 14:26

And the helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, it will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Do you see this? He's going to bring to your remembrance those things that he said to you. In 1st John chapter 1, verse 3 we learned that we can have an intimate fellowship with God our Father and with Jesus Christ our Lord. Fellowship is a two-way street that involves our sharing our heart to them and in turn, them talking to us. God talking to us is an important part of the equation. When I am alone praying to God, I am anticipating a two-way conversation. My ears are open in anticipation of him providing me with feedback. That is true fellowship.

There are two ways that God will talk to us. And I'm going to give you a definition of these two words.

1. Inspiration- Calling to our remembrance something that we already knew.
2. Revelation- Teaching us something that we did not already know.

An example of inspiration would be a situation where God chose to bring a scripture to the forefront of your mind that you had previously memorized.

It would be a scripture that you had previously known. By bringing it to your remembrance, he's telling you that you need to share it or apply it in the situation that you are in.

Neither revelation or inspiration from God need to come by way of dreams, visions, an audible voice or other miraculous means. Although receiving information from God can come this way, it is likely that the majority of our conversation from God and our Lord Jesus Christ will be normal, in the same way that we convers with other people. It can be a quiet, simple thought from him to you.

How do we recognize the voice of God? How do we know when he is putting a thought in our mind and it isn't a thought we already had on our own?

Proverbs 3:5-6

5 Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not lean upon your own understanding;

6 be mindful of Him in all your ways, and He will make your paths straight.

If we want to receive guidance from God, we mustn't allow our own understanding to get in the way. There will be times when we recognize a clear voice inside our head, and we don't know what it means. We don't understand why it's there. It may very well be coming from God. God's wisdom is much greater than ours. Sometimes we need to move our own logic out of the way and allow his voice to have a say in the matter.

The thoughts that God puts in our mind are those that we would not have put there ourselves. For instance, an idea to do something that we wouldn't have chosen to do on our own. When we receive a thought that doesn't mesh with our normal thought patterns, we should consider the possibility that it may very well be God attempting to tell us something.

Keep in mind that those thoughts we're getting aren't going to disagree with scripture. For instance, God isn't going to tell you to steal something from somebody. But he may tell you to go up and talk to a stranger. And you might think, "Why would I want to talk to that person? I don't know them." Well, maybe God put the thought there because that person has a need to

hear a comforting message from God and he is directing you to share it with them.

James 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God for it, who gives to everyone generously and without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Here is another key. When we want wisdom from God, we should ask him. Be aware of God's constant presence at all times and be ready to listen for him to tell you something wherever you're at. Especially when you're in public and there's other people around that God may want you to minister to. Now let's get back to Ananias in Acts chapter 9.

Acts 9:13-14

*13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your holy ones at Jerusalem,
14 and he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name here."*

I love this. Ananias had a problem with what Jesus Christ had told him to do. So, what does Ananias do? He asks for confirmation. Think about that. If you are a parent and you ask your child to do something and your child isn't convinced that they should be doing that. Are you going to get upset if your child comes to you and says, "Dad or mom, why are you asking me to do this? Isn't it possible that if I do it, something bad could happen?"

When your child asks you a question like that, how are you going to respond? You're not going to get upset with them. You're going to lovingly explain to them why it is you desire them to do that particular thing. That is the relationship of a parent with a child.

When God directs us to do something, it's okay to ask questions. That's what Ananias did. Jesus Christ didn't get upset. He simply gave him more information.

Acts 9:15-16

*15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to me, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel,
16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake."*

Do you see how the Lord responded to Ananias? He is likely to respond in the same way to you.

Now we've seen from the scriptures that God desires to have an intimate fellowship with you and with me. Here are some occasions that provide great opportunities for us to seek his presence.

1. When we read the scriptures.
2. When we are alone in prayer.
3. When something is important to us.
4. When we are feeling lonely.

Number 1. When you read the scriptures, ask God for an understanding as to what you are reading. Allow him to explain to you what it is that is being said. When I am alone by myself and about to read a passage, I humbly pray to God that he will enlighten me as to the truth I am about to read. I'm not so much interested in a technical understanding. It is the application that is so important. I might say to him, "God, teach me from these verses that I'm reading how I can apply them in my life."

Number 2. When we're alone in prayer with God, remember that prayer is a heart-to-heart conversation. While we are talking to him, we should also be anticipating a response.

Number 3. Maybe you are struggling with something in your life right now. Allow God to work with you and guide you in that situation. Maybe you have a loved one who is troubled. You don't know what's wrong with them and they don't want to open up to you. Did you know that God can help reveal to you what it is that you can say to them, to minister to them? He certainly can.

Number 4. When we are feeling lonely. There are times when it seems like nobody else is around or that no one cares about us. During those times it can be extremely comforting to recognize that we are never alone because God is always with us. He can bring us comfort when we are in those situations.

One final word of advice on this subject. We cannot force God to talk to us. What we can and should do is to perk up and be willing to listen to what he

has to say. But we can never force him to respond. Whether or not he chooses to reply, and when he chooses to respond, is always up to him. We cannot squeeze information from God. It's just not possible.

The ball is now in your court! As you humbly seek God's presence with a pure heart, he promises to guide and direct your steps. Not just through sources such as a pastor and through the Bible. He promises to have an intimate fellowship directly between him and you. He is your father and you are his child. Take the plunge and get to know him as your father.

In the next session we are going to get into the absolutely fabulous word of God. This is one session you will not want to miss. Until then remember that God loves you and so do I.

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