



## CHAPTER 6

# No Short Cuts—No Discounts

## When Connecting with God

Jesus aimed His disciples to squeeze their entire life through a small gate opening to a narrow road. Bonding with Him as Lord and Savior unlocks the only avenue to our Heavenly Father and His invincible Kingdom. He is, *“the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through [Him]”*.<sup>1</sup> Entering this sacred portal secures a permanent connection to God’s inseparable love. No matter how constrained we may feel, confining our entire life-journey to this exclusive pathway is worth the effort. Jesus offers the best-case scenario for an abundant life replete with eternal rewards.

Rejecting God’s itinerary does not end well. It distracts our attention, diverts our energy, and ultimately *“leads to destruction”*.<sup>2</sup> Jesus warned His followers to reject wide-gate alternatives that lead to an anything goes agenda. Perilous hazards complicate this alluring thoroughfare with guilt, shame, fear, and grief.

Eugene Peterson paraphrased this exclusive-gate/restricted-path analogy with an emphasis on rigorous persistence and comprehensive devotion. Jesus essentially said,

*“Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with sure-fire, easygoing formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of*

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:5 NAS

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:13 NAS

*people do. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires total attention.” (Matthew 7:13-14 MSG)*

With immense passion and excruciating pain Jesus sacrificed Himself for our sake because He treasures the value that we possess as His beloved bride. For this joy set before Him, Jesus endured the agony of Roman scourging and crucifixion. When we appraise our self-worth accurately and embrace our stunning potential, pursuing *“His kingdom and His righteousness”* assumes utmost priority.<sup>3</sup>

Connecting with God only occurs on His terms and at His expense. He alone paid for our redemption through Jesus’ sinless sacrifice—a massive price. Jesus offers us the only legitimate option for restoring our relationship with our Heavenly Father. We now have a privileged opportunity to invest all we have, all we are, and all we do in His eternal purpose. Embracing our relationship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit activates abundant life with astonishing benefits in both heaven and earth.

The quality of our future depends on one select gateway leading to one approved road that we travel. As we choose the route offered by Jesus our Savior, the Holy Spirit escorts us into the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Without exception, no one offers a better bargain.

Our desire to know the truth about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit triggers a desperate yearning for clarity and certainty. The prospect of finding true love and divine approval awakens a sacred longing for spiritual reality. Our mind, will, and emotions will never be satisfied unless we navigate life where the Spirit of truth leads. This journey, to connect with God for all He’s worth, compels us to pursue His presence at all costs. It enlightens us with revelatory insight to abide in that presence with heightened awareness. Our Creator has fortified us with patience and perseverance for this vital objective.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:33 NAS

As we realize God's attributes, perceive His accomplishments, and recognize His promises, our focus becomes clear. Whole-hearted devotion replaces status quo religion-by-convenience. God created us to experience the full intensity of His love and to reciprocate with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Navigating this narrow way concentrates our attention where we are best suited to thrive—consciously immersed in His affection for us. Interruptions may interfere with our progress and disappointments may intrude on our determination, but God never deviates from His commitment to ensure that our journey succeeds. Along the way, He strengthens our resolve, ignites our imagination, and sustains our faith. God leads us by His Spirit with steadfast love and guides us with almighty strength.<sup>4</sup>

### **Untapped Opportunities**

Most of us meander through life isolated from spiritual reality. Engrossed in frivolous affairs and superfluous musings, we tolerate long seasons of seclusion sheltered from our Heavenly Father and insulated from Jesus. Encounters with the Holy Spirit are rare since we typically ignore His presence and seldom engage in actual conversation. Our superficial interest and reserved effort reflect a classic misconception—we underestimate God's passion for us and misjudge His availability.

When our Heavenly Father sent the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised a surge in divine access. He said, "... you know Him [the Spirit of Truth] because He abides with you and will be in you."<sup>5</sup> Jesus stressed a reciprocal relationship where God's abiding love takes the initiative; He comes to us, and He lives within us. Jesus said, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.*"<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 15:13

<sup>5</sup> John 14:17 NAS

<sup>6</sup> John 14:23 NAS

We have yet to comprehend the profound advantage that the Holy Spirit affords us today. Most of us hardly know God. When was the last time you referred to Him by name? Are you on a first name basis with Him? Do you even know God's proper name? The name He announced to Moses.

*God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD [substituted by translators for **Yahweh** in Hebrew, latinized as Jehovah], the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' "This is **my name forever, the name you shall call me** from generation to generation. (Exodus 3:15 NIV)*

With immense love, Jesus initiated a new season of connecting with God. Too often we settle for vague approximations and hazy abbreviations without realizing how much more Yahweh offers. Entering His gate with deliberate faith activates a radical life-transforming adventure. It extends singing songs, saying prayers, and reading Scripture beyond theological concepts and religious ideals. The Spirit of truth heightens our perception so we can detect God's presence and actively participate in His divine nature.

### **Creation Reveals God**

All creation points toward its Creator—with conclusive evidence. Visible sights and audible sounds propel us toward spiritual reality. A closer connection with our Heavenly Father is possible because Jesus made it possible. When God reveals Himself, no one can improve upon His timing or methods. He articulates His eternal power and divine nature through the things that He made. Creation brings God into focus with unmistakable clarity and distinction. Paul put it this way:

*...that which is **known about God is evident** within them [us]; for **God made it evident** to them [us]. For **since the creation** of the world **His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they [we] are without excuse.** (Rom 1:19-20 NAS)*

Let's stop going through the motions and start connecting with a focus that is more deliberate. We can end this charade of pretending that we know God better than we do. Look intently at the awesome possibilities that Jesus activated when He ascended into heaven and sent His Spirit to dwell within us. Now is the time to rend the heavens and plunge more fully into His transforming love. Tutored by the Spirit of truth, this season offers more opportunities for divine encounters than any of us realize.

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