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Connecting with God

Connecting with Truth

An Audacious Future

CHAPTER 7

Deliverance from Evil

Adam and Eve expected to ingest good food and gain supplemental wisdom when they adopted Satan's self-improvement scheme. Yet, God had explicitly warned them, "*you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.*"¹ Nonetheless,

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Gen 3:6 NIV)

Adam and Eve strayed from where God had aimed them. They missed their mark; sin literally means, "missing the mark". Focusing on where they did not belong, Adam and Eve found themselves stuck headlong in Satan's target.

God and Satan are diametrically opposed to each other. They offer mutually exclusive connecting points. We cannot choose life and pursue death at the same time. Our heart cannot participate in righteousness while embracing unrighteousness. Good and evil have opposing standards with conflicting agendas; they impose a moral dichotomy.

Sin pretends to offer benefits and advantages but it delivers death. Missing the mark compromises our potential for life because it generates an adversarial tension with God. Sin comes disguised behind deviant assumptions with fallacious promises. It offers attractive looking

¹ Gen 2:17 NIV

alternatives for God and His source of supply. Renouncing sin emancipates us to embrace the truth about God. The word ‘renounce’ means to resign by formal declaration or to refuse to follow, obey, or recognize any further.² Applying wisdom from above, we officially renounce sin’s options and we decisively embrace God’s best gifts.

More than a Choice

Connecting with Jesus involves an informed decision; it also involves a deliverance session with our Heavenly Father. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “... *do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*”³ Some manuscripts say, “*from evil*” (NAS). However, the Greek word for evil appears in the nominative case, which denotes a title. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for deliverance from “The Evil”, which may refer to Satan.⁴

According to Jesus’ prayer, severance from Satan requires the application of supernatural power. It’s beyond our own capacity to separate ourselves from Satan’s stronghold. We need help from our Heavenly Father to disengage from the evil that Satan commands. The prayer Jesus taught His disciples goes beyond making a decision. It’s an urgent plea for divine intervention. When we pray “The Lord’s Prayer”, we entreat our Heavenly Father to liberate us from a horrific bondage fraught with demonic evil. As we disavow every accord with Satan, God releases us from a rebellious disposition that wars against His authority.

Connecting with Jesus establishes a sacred trust with supernatural endowments. This trust disrupts our association with evil. It annuls our agreement with selfishness. It diffuses inordinate desires, which promotes pride and pursues lust. Jesus empowers us to renounce agreements with Satan’s character, temperament, and attributes. He em-

² Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, tenth addition, 1994

³ Mat 6:13 NKJ (also NIV and ESV)

⁴ <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/> (accessed 10-20-07)

powers us to reject any admiration that we may hold for Satan's conduct, methods, influences, or provisions.

Deliverance from the evil one permits us to establish a clear line of devotion to our Heavenly Father. When Jesus captivates our attention, we are better able to concentrate on His desires and provisions. However when evil lures our fascination, we pursue inferior substitutes. By focusing on the truth, we are more likely to refrain from ill-advised deception. Truth neutralizes greed and immorality since they lose their appeal in the light. As we disengage from the evil one, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying lose their sway.

Connecting with Jesus enables us to concentrate on thoughts that are pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.⁵ A Christ-centered focus stimulates kindness, compassion, humility, gentleness, patience, and meekness. It establishes love as the bond of perfection—a perfect connecting point. In this state of unified agreement, peace and joy govern the sentiments of our soul.

...seek [as a point of focus] those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set [focus] your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ...put to death [renounce] ...fornication, uncleanness, passion [pathos], evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ...put off [renounce] all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.... put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another.... But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. (Col 3:1-14 NKJ)

⁵ Philippians 4:8

Deliverance from Evil

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to ask for deliverance. We need God's help because willpower alone is not strong enough to cut our tie with demonic evil.

Heavenly Father, we admit our need for deliverance from the evil one. We renounce our ties with Satan. Sever the ancient affiliations that bind us with demonic knowledge concerning good and evil. Deliver us from intellectual arrogance, which seeks an advantage unbefitting of our humanity. Break our agreement with generations of demonic persuasion. Disassociate us from evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds.

Heavenly Father, we accept the way you made us. Deliver us from notions that contradict our redeemed human identity. We embrace our design as men and women created in your image. We reject the schemes of Satan that promise to transform us into more than you created us to be. We are human and we renounce aspirations to be more like God than you made us to be. Fully restore our stature as Spirit-filled human beings partaking of your divine nature.

Heavenly Father, "*lead us not in to temptation*"⁶ but deliver us from "*the power of the evil one*". *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power [sway (NKJ); control (NIV)] of the evil one.* (1 John 5:19 ESV)

Please deliver us from all forms of idolatry. Strengthen us to reject inducements that entice us to pursue substitutes for you. Empower us to resist Satan's campaign to worship and serve the dragon, the beast, and images of the beast. Fortify our courage to resist threats that pressure us to venerate "the evil".

⁶ Matthew 6:13 ESV, NIV

Heavenly Father, please ignite our passion to connect more fully with you—on your terms. Reveal the truth about yourself that we might worship you for all you’re worth. Strengthen our response to your glorious presence that we might finish strong as true worshipers.

We declare that, “*the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect [us] from the evil one.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:3 NAS)

A Unique Bond

- To connect literally means to bond, unite, join, fasten, link, or tie together
- To connect relationally means to establish a personal rapport with a heightened degree of awareness
- To connect in a material sense involves either an electrical contact or wireless interface. For example, plugging into a power outlet or connecting by mobile phone or through Wi-Fi.

Connecting with God Means Disconnecting from Sin

If we are going to embrace the truth about God, we must deal with the truth about our sin. God’s invitation to connect involves a two-fold response. First, we must agree to disconnect from sin through repentance. Repentance unplugs our heart from Satan’s deadly interface. Second, we must agree to embrace Jesus as Lord and Christ.

*In the same way, count yourselves [1st] **dead to sin** but [2nd] **alive to God in Christ Jesus.** (Rom 6:11 NIV)*

Forcing the light of Christ and Satan’s darkness to occupy one human heart at the same time presents an irreconcilable dilemma. We must disconnect completely from one to connect fully with the other.

After responding agreeably to these two choices, God formally revokes the penalty of sin that separated us. Being dead to sin, we break our agreement with Satan and activate our communion with God. This new union fastens us together through an invincible bond of faith and an inseparable bond of love. Henceforth, our connection becomes a

settled fact. By severing our union with sin, our propinquity (i.e., nearness or relational kinship) with God begins to thrive.

The Holy Spirit personally seals our connection by filling the lonely void in our soul with His presence. This seal makes our association with God official. He justifies us through the blood of Christ and saves us from the power of sin and death.

Embracing Jesus

Ravi Zacharias points out that Christianity, like every other religion, maintains a point of exclusion. Jesus Christ embodies that point. Apart from Jesus, no other way exists to establish a divine connection. Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".*⁷ Being God incarnate, Jesus alone grants access to divine reality. No other provision allows us to reconnect with God. Without exception, all other claims are counterfeits. Despite pious sounding labels, imposters and pretenders do not even come close to connecting us with our Heavenly Father.

The Lord is One

*Jesus answered, "The most important [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, **the Lord is one**. And you shall love the Lord your God **with all** your heart and **with all** your soul and **with all** your mind and **with all** your strength.'* (Mark 12:29-30 ESV, from Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Because God is neither a philosophical concept nor a mathematical amount, we cannot abbreviate His attributes. As God, He insists on being a cohesive whole. Picking and choosing to abridge any trait, would disqualify Him from divinity. Subtract any feature by any degree and He no longer fulfills the sacred benchmark. Without exception, God is always omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, transcendent, and holy.

⁷ John 14:6 NIV

While many have tried, hacking God apart is not possible. Propaganda experts attempt to assassinate His image with divisive lies, politicians attempt to limit His influence with legislation, and religious superiors seek to regulate His behavior with edicts. Nonetheless, God will not slice apart. He remains intact and undiminished. Dicing Jesus into culturally acceptable pieces and rearranging the fractions to fit our preference always yields an inferior deity.

Despite many divesting interests and diverging doctrines, God continues to be all that He is; He always has been; He always will be. With flawless integrity, God never changes.

All or Nothing

Human ingenuity did not put together a clever theology and label it as God. Jesus is neither an academic contrivance nor a sophisticated convenience. His profile extends far beyond the collective insight of creative minds. Being inseparable from the truth, God is bigger, stronger, and more complex than anyone can describe. Having been compromised by sin, finite human brains cannot possibly understand all there is to know about Him.

No matter how clueless or discerning we may be, God comes as a complete package. He brings Himself wherever He goes. Our perception of God's presence does not affect His performance. When we connect with God, He chooses the terms. God defines us—we do not define Him.

Opening our heart to one part of God will not exclude other parts from participating. He comes fully integrated as one complete package. God holds Himself together at all times. We do not have the option of customizing His assets independently from one another. Try as we might to partition His divine attributes, when we embrace one aspect, we cannot expect Him to withhold another.

God does not offer Himself as a multiple-choice menu with flavors of divinity. When we embrace Jesus Christ, we embrace Him entirely

without substitutions. We cannot regulate His influence at any given connecting point. Connecting with one part of God opens the door for all of Him to enter. Jesus connects all that we are to all that He is. This union exposes us to the full scope of His authority and the full advantage of His influence.

Exposing all that we are to all that He is

Connecting with God involves more than barely touching index fingers as Michelangelo's fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel depicts. It means opening the portals of our soul and letting God flood every crevice of our being with His fullness. It means striding across the threshold of time and space and diving completely into His reality. By plunging into God's domain, we encounter the truth in full detail.

Herein lays our fundamental problem: we do not have enough room in our life for God. It is not that we are just too busy that we cannot squeeze more Jesus into our schedule. Appointments with Jesus do not fit into anyone's schedule. He immerses Himself in every facet of our lives. He approaches our future comprehensively with passionate dedication.

Jesus does not want to move to the top of our priority list. He wants to permeate every aspect of our list. He expects to influence every preference and inspire every desire. As our heart expands Godward, we fit into His schedule and follow His agenda. Eventually, our Heavenly Father aims to infuse every part of our life with the full significance of His eternal purpose.

Introducing the prophets of the Bible, Eugene Peterson asserts the following:

For a people who are accustomed to “fitting God” into their lives, or, as we like to say, “making room for God,” the prophets are hard to take and easy to dismiss. The God of which the prophets speak is

far too large to fit into our lives. If we want anything to do with God, we have to fit into him.⁸

God has room for us but we will never have enough room for His ubiquitous presence. He always lives everywhere absorbed with an eternal purpose. Ultimately, we must accommodate God's reality because there is not enough room in our reality. We are too finite to contain the infinite one who never changes. For us to connect with His transcendent profile, we must fit into Him. We will never be content until we find our place submitting to His authority. Under God's reign, He leads and we follow.

Peterson explains "one of the bad habits" prevalent in the human race:

We assume that the secular is what we are more or less in charge of: our jobs, our time, our entertainment, our government, our social relations. The sacred is what God has charge of: worship and the Bible, heaven and hell, church and prayers. We then contrive to set aside a sacred place for God, designed, we say, to honor God but really intended to keep God in his place, leaving us free to have the final say about everything else that goes on.⁹

The priority of God is more pervasive than we could ever imagine. Jesus is Lord of all. In His mind, sacred and secular distinctions do not exist. Natural and spiritual boundaries are irrelevant because everything captivates His concern. Almighty God refuses to behave as a good luck charm dangling from a predictable religious system.

Our connection problem is so much more extensive than time management. Jesus designed us to immerse all that we are and all that we have, do, think, and feel in Him. He does not simply want more quiet

⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 1197-1199

⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 1197-1199

times from us. He wants all our time—quiet, loud, conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. That adds up to 100 percent of us all the time. According to Peterson, “God has something to say about every aspect of our lives” because, “Nothing is hidden from the scrutiny of God, nothing is exempt from the rule of God, nothing escapes the purposes of God.”¹⁰

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¹⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 1197-1199