



PART 1: Connecting with God

CHAPTER 9

Fit Where You Belong

Connecting with Christ means fitting in where He invites us. Jesus designed us to embrace the full passion of His infinite love. Anywhere else misses the mark of our intended call. God’s greatest command exalts love with paramount priority.¹ It challenges us to indulge in His divine nature—for God is love. Conceived in His image, our heart longs for His deliberate affection; we crave His intentional desire.

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.
(I John 4:8 ESV)

This message does not resonate with those wanting to fit God into their carnal frame of reference. God is far too big to comprehend let alone contain in a human paradigm. Mortal finitude cannot accommodate divine perfection. Adding some religion to the daily grind will not compensate for a lopsided agenda. Jesus will not confine His divine nature to a stunted religious program. Relegating Him to any single part of our life will prove unsatisfactory. Reducing Him to a few chosen categories will never work. Jesus will not be content occupying a sliver of our pie chart.

Like the most devout disciples before us, we underestimate Jesus’ passion for us. Despite the sincerity of our religious devotion, redundant repertoires trivialize His affection. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit offer infinitely more ardency than we realize. As Three-in-One, they want

¹ Matthew 22:36-40

to connect with us beyond prescribed prayers, prearranged hymns, and preapproved sound bites.

At some point, we should recognize the truth about Jesus in all His glory. Connecting with Him involves more than understanding His doctrine and agreeing with His theology. Accepting Jesus Christ invites His Spirit to fill us with more than information.

Jesus invites His followers to go deeper—much deeper. He said, “*Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you*”.² Jesus welcomes us with an extraordinary offer—not for a brief visit but for a perpetual habitation. Jesus said, “*Abide in Me, and I in you...*” and, “*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.***”³

When we embrace Jesus, we connect with His Spirit and with our Heavenly Father as well.

And He [Jesus] is the radiance of His [Father’s] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.... (Hebrews 1:3 NAS)

*God has sent forth the **Spirit** of His **Son** into our hearts, crying, “Abba! **Father!**”* (Gal 4:6 NAS)

All or Nothing

Connecting with Jesus unlocks all that we are to all that He is. As we thrust the substance of our being into Christ, He establishes a permanent residence in us. Terminology for being “*in Christ*” occurs over 90 times in the New Testament. The concept of Christ in us appears less than 10 times. As we plunge all that we are into all that God offers, He penetrates the core of our being from every conceivable angle. As we respond to Christ’s inseparable love, He saturates every facet of our soul with His endless presence.

² John 15:4 MSG

³ John 15:4 NKJ and John 14:23 NAS respectively

A Faith Connection

Jesus accomplished His mission on earth with flawless precision. He lived as a perfect man demonstrating the mystery of God’s passionate love and grace. For the time being, we cannot see His physical features, which demonstrate divine fullness, *“For in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”*⁴ Though ever-present, Jesus remains invisible to our eyes. Except for rare exceptions, His audible voice remains silent to our ears. According to Jesus, the absence of His substance and the silence of His voice provide a unique advantage.⁵ This veiled arrangement constrains us to rely on His Spirit who focuses our attention where it belongs—on the invisible attributes of His divine nature.

Our Heavenly Father is not playing hide and seek to befuddle His followers. The status of our connection does not depend on sights, sounds, or feelings. No matter how much our emotions change, our standing with God remains the same. Feelings may influence our relationship but they do not define our connection. How close or how far we feel from God does not alter the fact that an indelible bond joins us together.

Perceiving God’s presence may seem difficult at first, but He offers an authentic real-time connection nonetheless. Though we cannot use a ruler to measure the distance between God and us, He always remains present and continuously active.

Herein lays the advantage of faith over feelings. Our bond with Jesus lies on a foundation secured by absolute truth. Jesus personifies this truth with historic and theological certitude. He supports and sustains our connection with credible evidence. Besides being intellectually persuasive, Jesus conveys a sense of vital relevance to our experience. He forgives sins, assuages guilt, and eradicates shame. His accomplishments match with reality so perfectly because He embodies the truth

⁴ Colossians 2:9 NAS

⁵ John 16:7

so completely. Long after the molecules in this universe pass away, Jesus will remain unchanged—His divine nature is transcendent and forever immutable.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Mat 24:35, Luk 21:31, Mar 13:31 ESV)

Origin, Meaning, Morality, and Destiny

During *The Veritas Forum* at Ohio State University, Ravi Zaccarias described how the life of Jesus Christ remains historically sound and logically consistent with His message.⁶ Jesus stands out among the numerous imposters pretending to possess godhood. According to Zaccarias, only Jesus answers the four quintessential life questions with coherent certainty:

- Where did we come from?
- What are we doing here?
- How should we live?
- What is our future?

Elegant Clues Point to an Incomparable Creator

Omnipresence means that God is always present everywhere. Being ever-present distinguishes Him as God. No one else has this capacity—not angels, not demons, and not Satan. Connecting with a spiritual person who always occupies everywhere requires more than eyes and ears. It requires an entirely new frame of reference—a spiritual reference sustained by faith.

Our relationship with God is spiritual (by faith) not spatial (by sight). That means we cannot measure how closely we are situated. Perceiving and then embracing the presence of God requires that we venture into a faith dimension.

⁶ Ravi Zaccarias, "Constructing A Coherent Worldview" & "In Search of Meaning", The Veritas Forum, Ohio State University, 1993

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”. (Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

A spiritual connection with Jesus does not imply blind faith. Unwavering faith bonds us to Jesus with a substance rooted in factual support. Lee Stroble asserts that faith does not believe in spite of the evidence. Instead, “faith is a reasonable step in the direction that the evidence is pointing.”⁷ What we see now, as limited as it may be, provides compelling evidence for what we will see in the future. According to Hugh Ross, the “extraordinary complexity and sophisticated elegance” of the universe provides evidence of an intelligent designer.⁸ Additional confirmation exists behind the scenes, beneath the surface, and beyond what meets the eye. The connection that links us with our Creator is a bond of faith supported by fact.

As sincere as our faith may be however, the perception of our union vacillates. While the nearness of our Creator remains constant (He is always everywhere), our sensitivity to Him fades in-and-out of consciousness. Sometimes when we experience a heightened sense of awareness, we become conscious of God’s presence. At other times, our spiritual acuity seems to go on the blink and He seems impossibly out of reach. At moments like this, we rely on faith, hope, and love.

Though unable to wrap our senses around God, we can experience the world that He made. Our senses provide a natural connecting point with divine reality. What we know about Him is clear because a universe of evidence points to the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:19 ESV)

*“For since the creation of the world **God's invisible qualities**—his **eternal power** and **divine nature**—have been **clearly seen**, being*

⁷ Lee Stroble, *The Case for a Creator*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2004.

⁸ Hugh Ross, PhD Astronomy and Astrophysics, The Veritas Forum, Ohio State University, 1993

understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20 NIV)

While our glimpse of the universe is limited, telescopes and microscopes notwithstanding, the quality of the finished product speaks for itself. Everything we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell conveys a credible message relevant to God’s nature. As intelligent beings, we recognize complex life-sustaining features that He designed and made. With precision and beauty, the created realm highlights God’s supernatural expertise. It sets Him apart in a place of infinite distinction.

A Love Connection

Connecting with God involves so much more than a belief system from which we hang our trust. The life Jesus offers extends beyond information. Connecting with Him involves a relational intimacy that surpasses reason. Jesus holds our relationship together by a bond of truth cemented in Love.

Emotions do not make up the foundation of our connection but they are extremely important nonetheless. Our faith evokes very strong feelings. Peter said:

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him [faith] and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy [emotions]”. (1 Peter 1:8 NIV)

While our faith connection with God is most prominent, we should not trivialize our emotional connection. The ruling passion of our relationship with Jesus is not doctrinal accuracy or theological precision. It is love. Jesus did not come here to help us say and do religion better. He came because *“God so loved the world”*.⁹ Love dominates our core craving. *“God is love”* and He made us in His image.¹⁰

⁹ John 3:16 NKJ

¹⁰ | John 4:8, 16 NKJ

Reducing God to an academic teaching leaves us short-changed. Jesus will not abandon us to a cerebral relationship bound by academic constraints within our mind. A strictly intellectual connection prevents us from embracing the comprehensive bond that He offers. Human reason enfeebled by sin and compromised with incomplete knowledge, imposes serious limitations on our spiritual relationship.

Any separation from the One who loves us so passionately is difficult to bear. Our heart longs to feel close to the One who loves us so perfectly; so immensely and intensely. We naturally respond to Jesus' love by desiring a more consistent awareness of His presence. Sensations of separation are unpleasant (and at times, unbearable) if only in the drift of our imagination. Discontentment characterizes the meager sense of divine notice that most of us feel. All too often, God seems hard to find. In practical everyday life, Jesus is simply too far away. This distant and more often than not, distracted awareness generates a precarious sense of frustration and anxiety.



A telescope may help us see the stars better but it does not bring them any closer. Likewise, a state-of-the-art doctrinal lens may help us understand God better but it does not in fact bring Him any closer. Despite academic explanations, intellectual viewpoints merely give the illusion of relational intimacy. Information alone falls short of the emotional heart-to-heart connection that we crave. We do not want to connect with just another interesting idea or religious concept. Our broken soul aches for more than knowledge about a faraway deity. We crave for more than factual explanations to satisfy our rational curiosity.

We Need More Than Answers

Contemplating God is not good enough. Besides knowing interesting details about His divine nature, we want God Himself to come clos-

er—to rend the heavens of our perception. We long to connect with Him beyond abstract reasoning. Our frail human heart contends for an intimate union with Jesus. We yearn for a lucid rapport with our Heavenly Father—a relational rapport that transcends occasional subjective manifestations. The foundation of our faith-connection cries out for spiritual validation. We long to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit more often—a presence rooted in the core of our reality.

Knowing that God’s silence does not confirm His absence, we focus on the revelation that He offers. Sights and sounds represent only a fraction of reality. Optical illusions prove how unreliable eyes can be. Dogs and bats hear sounds that we cannot hear even though they exist. Our senses are fallible and our emotions are capricious. To connect with God we do not need to see, hear, touch, taste, or smell Him. God is always present despite this world’s sensory propaganda, which says He is not.

Someday we will extend beyond our mortal limitations. New eyeballs and new eardrums will offer resurrection-quality perception. For now however, we connect in ways that surpass the natural senses. With the Holy Spirit’s help, we commune with God as He makes Himself known on His terms. God is Spirit and He deliberately reveals Himself from the inside out. He restores our soul and renews our mind in spiritual realms that are more reliable than our natural senses.

Wishful thinking is not the solution to our separation problem. Neither is positive thinking. The remedy does not exist in our brain but in our heart. By waiting on the Lord, we engage our faith to connect directly with Jesus and His unquenchable love. By connecting on His terms, we renew our strength for the here-and-now and for the future.

