

A CLOSE AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A Bible Teaching by Jack Hartman

February, 2017

This month we will study Scripture references where God gives you specific *instructions telling you what to do if you truly desire a close and intimate relationship with Him*. Many people who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior do not know these specific instructions. If you truly desire a close and intimate relationship with God, make the quality decision to meditate consistently on the Scripture references in this month's teaching. (All of the following Scripture references are from *The Amplified Bible*.)

IF YOU COME CLOSE TO GOD, GOD WILL COME CLOSE TO YOU.

"Come close to God and He will come close to you...." (James 4:8)

Think of the enormity of this statement. *God Himself* promises that He will come close to *you*. Your Father requires you to consistently initiate this relationship. *If you come close to God, your Father promises that He will come close to you.*

JESUS CHRIST SHED HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD ON THE CROSS AT CALVARY SO THAT YOU CAN GROW CLOSE TO GOD. Our Father wants to have a close and intimate relationship with each of His children. "...in Christ Jesus, you who once were [so] far away, through (by, in) the blood of Christ have been brought near." (Ephesians 2:13)

All of us were separated from God when we were born. Every person is born as a descendent of Adam. Every person is born with a sin nature derived from Adam and Eve's disobedience to God. People, who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, receive a new life. Their inherited sin nature is gone. They receive the tremendous opportunity to continually draw closer to God.

Even though you once were far away from God before you received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you do not have to stay far away. Jesus Christ has made it possible for you to have a magnificent supernatural intimate relationship with your loving Father.

MAKE A DEFINITE AND SPECIFIC COMMITMENT THAT YOU WILL FOCUS ON DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD. Some Christians live a religious lifestyle. They go to church one or two times each week. They pray for a few minutes each day. However, the remainder of their lives revolve primarily around themselves and their personal goals and desires instead of revolving around God Who created them. These Christians do not have an intimate relationship with God. "...God is great, and we know Him not!..." (Job 36:26).

Our Father does not want us to go through the motions of acting like Christians without having a deep, specific, and constant desire to draw closer to Him. God said, "...My people have forgotten Me, days without number." (Jeremiah 2:32)

IF JESUS CHRIST IS YOUR SAVIOR, GOD IS YOUR LOVING FATHER. (If you want to see specific scripture references about God Himself being your Father, see John 1:11-12, Romans 8:15, II Corinthians 6:18, Galatians 3:26 and I John 3:1.) God becomes your Father and you become a member of His family when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. Make the commitment now that you will do exactly what your Father instructs you to do so that you can have a close and intimate relationship with Him.

MAKE A SPECIFIC COMMITMENT TO CONSISTENTLY DRAW CLOSE TO GOD. Jesus Christ said, "...These people [constantly] honor Me with their lips, but their hearts hold off and are far distant from Me." (Mark 7:6)

When Jesus spoke these words, He was referring to Pharisees who were religious, but did not know God personally. Please note the words, "Their hearts hold off and are far distant from Me" in this verse. The key to intimacy with God is in your *heart*. Your Father does not want you to just talk about having a close relationship with Him. He wants you to do exactly what He instructs you to do so that you will come close to Him.

There is an old saying that actions speak louder than words. The Bible teaches that you can only show how close you truly are to the Lord by the way you live your life.

CENTER YOUR LIFE AROUND YOUR DESIRE FOR A CLOSE AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. The apostle Paul explained to his friend Titus the importance of the relationship that exists between actually

having a close relationship with God and the way we live our lives. Paul said, “They profess to know God [to recognize, perceive, and be acquainted with Him], but deny and disown and renounce Him by what they do...” (Titus 1:16)

CENTER YOUR LIFE AROUND THE INTIMACY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

Some people look at God as being far away from them. They know that the Bible teaches that God is in heaven. However, God is *omnipresent*. He is able to sit on His throne in heaven and, at the same time, to live in the heart of every person on earth who has received Jesus Christ as his or her Savior (see Jeremiah 23:24 and Galatians 4:6). God is able to be in an infinite number of places at the same time. If you are absolutely certain that God lives in your heart, this certainty will go a long way toward knowing your Father more intimately. Christians who know God intimately have a constant awareness of His indwelling presence. “...He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being...” (Acts 17:27–28)

The words “live and move and have our being” in this verse refer to a Christian who is constantly aware of the presence of God and consistently lives his or her life based upon absolute certainty that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit live in their hearts (see Zephaniah 3:17, II Corinthians 3:16, II Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 3:17, and Colossians 2:10.)

DO YOU YEARN FOR AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? The Bible teaches that the same God Who created the universe and everyone and everything in the universe, lives in your *heart* if Jesus Christ is your Savior. God could not be closer. He is with you throughout every minute of every hour of every day of your life. Focus your life around His magnificent supernatural indwelling presence. Be like the psalmist who said, “My inner self thirsts for God, for the living God...” (Psalm 42:2)

MAKE A DEEP AND SINCERE DECISION TO CONSISTENTLY DRAW CLOSER TO GOD. “...pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

When this verse of Scripture speaks of “pursuing consecration, it refers to setting aside time to seek holiness. Turn away from being preoccupied with

anything in the world. Make the commitment each day of your life that you will draw closer to God.

You can only experience holiness to the degree that you turn away from focusing primarily on people, places, things and events. Continue to draw closer to the same God Who created you. "...let us be zealous to know the Lord [to appreciate, give heed to, and cherish Him]..." (Hosea 6:3)

If you understand the vital importance of staying close to the Lord, you will have a "zealous" desire to know Him intimately. People who are zealous about anything are completely devoted to their cause. Can you say that you "appreciate, give heed to, and cherish" your relationship with the Lord? Is a close and intimate relationship with the Lord vitally important to you?

IS YOUR ATTITUDE SIMILAR TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL? Paul said, "...I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One)." (Philippians 3:8)

Paul was completely committed to knowing Jesus Christ more intimately. He did not allow anything to come ahead of this commitment.

SHORTLY AFTER MAKING THIS STATEMENT, PAUL EXPOUNDED EVEN MORE ON HIS FERVENT DESIRE TO DRAW CLOSER TO JESUS CHRIST. He said, "[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope]" (Philippians 3:10)

Paul was "determined" to know the Lord more intimately. He spoke of "progressively" becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him.

Do these words spoken by the apostle Paul reflect your desire for an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ?

INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON EXTERNAL THINGS, GOD INSTRUCTS US TO FOCUS ON KNOWING HIM PERSONALLY. He said, "...let him who glories glory in this: that he understands and knows Me [personally and practically, directly discerning and recognizing My character]." (Jeremiah 9:24)

Do you know God personally? Do you know Him so intimately that you receive His character?

DO YOU KNOW THE SECRET OF HAVING A CLOSE AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD? "The secret [of the sweet, satisfying companionship] of the Lord have they who fear (revere and worship) Him..." (Psalm 25:14)

If you fear the Lord, you revere Him. You hold Him in absolute awe. You worship Him consistently. Your life revolves around your absolute certainty of His indwelling presence and your desire to know Him more intimately.

IF YOU TRULY WANT TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY, MAKE THE QUALITY DECISION THAT YOU WILL CONSISTENTLY LEARN AND OBEY THE SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS HE HAS GIVEN TO YOU IN HIS BOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS, THE BIBLE. "...this is how we may discern [daily, by experience] that we are coming to know Him [to perceive, recognize, understand, and become better acquainted with Him]: if we keep (bear in mind, observe, practice) His teachings (precepts, commandments)." (I John 2:3)

You decide whether or not you will obey God's instructions to study and meditate on His Word each day (see Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2-3 and II Corinthians 4:16) and to *do* what He instructs you to do. As we saw at the beginning of this teaching, God *will* come close to you *if* you consistently do what His Word instructs you to do to come close to Him.

A close and intimate relationship with God is a tremendous privilege. God makes this privilege available to *every one* of His children who are willing to learn and obey the specific instructions we have given in this month's

teaching. I pray that this teaching will help *you* to have a close and intimate relationship with God.