

Your relationship with God

The best relationship you can have in life is with God.

What is your relationship with God like?

- A non-relationship
- A bad relationship
- A good relationship



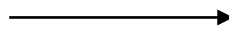
God designed you for a relationship with him. So what is stopping you from having a good relationship with him?

There's a gap between us and God that is both relational and moral.

- *Relational*: because we have offended him again and again
- *Moral*: because we can't even live up to our own standards, let alone God's

Religion

Most of us try to 'fix' our relationship with God by trying to be 'good enough' or by doing things to impress him.



This is called
RELIGION!

Much of what is called 'Christianity' reflects this approach, but the real Christian message is not about you trying to be good enough for God. It's about a good *relationship* with God!

Jesus told this story

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee [a religious leader] and the other a tax collector [considered the scum of society who gouged their own people on behalf of the hated Romans]. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his chest and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

[Jesus then said] *"I tell you that this man [the tax collector], rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 18:10-14)

The Pharisee in this story was relying on his religious activity. Religion appeals to your ego and makes you feel that you have earned the right for God to accept you.

That tax collector understood that the first step to a good relationship with God is to be humble enough to admit that you have no way to be right with God unless God himself makes that way because of his mercy.

Real Christians are not people who think they are good. Real Christians are people who know that we are so far from good enough for God, but that God has reached down to us when we couldn't reach up to him.

To get a good relationship with God...

1. **Admit my need** – The Bible says *“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:22-23)

- The past leaves me with guilt.
- The present is scarred by my fallenness.
- The future is uncertain. What will happen when I die? How will I face the judgment of God?

2. **Understand what God did about my problem** – Jesus took my place at God’s judgment.

But why was that necessary? Couldn’t God just forgive us?

Someone always pays the price for forgiveness. The one who pays is the one who forgives. God pays the price for our forgiveness. That’s what the cross of Jesus is all about!

3. **Put my trust in Jesus and what he did for me**

The Bible says, *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* (John 1:12)

Faith is not...

- Great feelings
- Believing what you know is not true
- The absence of doubt

When a couple decides to get married, it’s impossible for them to know everything about each other. They don’t know how they will react to the problems that life will bring. They don’t know how the other will be as a parent. There are countless things they can’t know. So there will be some

doubts. But there comes a point when they say to themselves: I know enough about the other person to say, ‘I choose to trust him/her.’

I’m sure you still have many questions about God. You know something? I do too. Faith is not about coming to the place where no questions remain. I hope that you are coming to the place I did, where you can say, ‘Every week I am understanding more about God. And I can see what he is doing in the lives of Christians around me. I still have questions, but I am ready to trust.’

Faith is...

- A choice to trust
- A choice to follow

To get right with God, talk with him! You might pray something like: *“God, the more I come to know about you, the more I realise how much I need you in my life. I freely admit that I have not measured up to your moral standard. I am unable to change myself*

and I don’t have the power to make things right between us. Thank you so much for loving me unconditionally. Thank you for Jesus’ death on the cross for me. Right now, I choose to trust you. I accept your gift of forgiveness. Please start to restore your image in me. Thank you for welcoming me into your family. I look forward to building a great personal relationship with you. Amen.”

Discussion questions (pick some to discuss)

- Think about a close friend. What does trust look like in that relationship?
- How do you feel about the idea that your relationship with God is not good until you find forgiveness through what Jesus did at the cross?
- What do you think of the statement that faith is not the absence of doubt, but a choice to trust?
- Do you think it is possible for people to change?