

WEEK 2
03.12.17

BENEFITS OF A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD



FOCUS VERSE

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

LESSON TEXT

I Timothy 4:13–16

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

I John 1:3–7

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.



FOCUS THOUGHT

The Lord desires to have a loving relationship with humanity.



CULTURE CONNECTION

God Pilots My Ship

Ronnie Hinson wrote an old gospel song titled “He Pilots My Ship” in which he compared the soul of a person to a ship needing guidance through the storms of life and around the devastating obstacles that would threaten to destroy it. He makes the point that we need God to pilot our ship, our life on earth. He alone is capable of safely guiding us through the troubled seas of life.

In her article titled “The Benefits of Building a Strong Relationship with God,” Karen T. Hluchan wrote, “When you build a close relationship with God, you begin to see things through his eyes. . . . As your relationship deepens, you begin to see how God truly

does oversee your growth as a soul and how he steers your course” (www.patch.com, Hatboro-Horsham, PA Patch, accessed November 9, 2015).

There are many benefits to developing a deep spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. Not the least of these benefits is that He can best provide guidance to our human lives. Without a personal relationship with Christ, we lack His guidance and live in danger of “shipwreck.” Jesus Christ, however, knows how to guide us safely through life’s troubles. He may not allow us to avoid life’s troubles, but He will empower us to “escape” from them. (See I Corinthians 10:13.)

OUTLINE

I. BENEFIT OF HIS WORD

- A. Read the Word
- B. Study the Word
- C. Share the Word

II. BENEFIT OF HIS WISDOM

- A. Wisdom (Earthly Versus Heavenly)
- B. Wisdom and Knowledge through Christ

III. BENEFIT OF HIS GUIDANCE

- A. Guide with Counsel
- B. Guide into All Truth

IV. BENEFIT OF HIS PRESENCE

- A. Lasting Presence
- B. Fullness of Joy
- C. Pleasures for Evermore

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

God desires relationship with His supreme creation—human beings. The Scriptures reveal that from the earliest days of the Creation, God desired to interact with them. For example, in Genesis the Bible indicates God “walked” regularly with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8), as well as with Enoch (Genesis 5:22, 24). The word used in these verses of Scripture is the Hebrew *halak*, which means “to

walk (in a great variety of applications, literally and figuratively)” (*Strong’s Concordance*).

Halak is translated many ways in the Old Testament, and it can have both literal and figurative interpretations, depending on the context. We do not know for certain whether God physically walked with Adam, Eve, Enoch, and others, but Genesis 3:8 certainly gives that impression. Regardless, the conclusion is the same: We can have an intimate relationship with God, for He desires such.

God met with His people Israel in the Old Testament through a variety of means and venues. He inhabited the Tabernacle and later the Temple. He manifested Himself through theophanies, and He used prophets to convey His words. He even spoke to Moses from the midst of a fire and used a donkey to speak to Balaam. Ultimately, however, God had a better plan in mind for His people under the New Covenant.

In the New Testament, God was manifested in flesh—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God came to His creation personally—not only to literally walk with His people but also to establish His church and to provide the supreme sacrifice for their sins. Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, placed in a tomb, and resurrected after three days and nights. He

continued to physically appear to His disciples in a resurrected body for about forty days until He was caught up into the heavens.

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:49–51).

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).

Jesus made it clear why the Comforter would not come until after His departure: He and the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, were one and the same (John 14:16–18). Further, the entire chapter of John 14 lucidly delineates the truth of the oneness of God in Christ Jesus.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:16–18).

Believers today have the glorious opportunity to have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through His indwelling Spirit. It is the greatest experience one can have on earth. However, life on earth is not the end. He also has prepared a place where we can have a loving relationship with Him for eternity.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. BENEFIT OF HIS WORD

One of the first benefits of relationship with God afforded to believers today is that we have the Word of God. The Word introduces us to God that we may have relationship with Him, but it does not stop there. The Word of

God goes on to establish us and lead us into a growing relationship with Him. Through daily reading, studying, and sharing the Word of God, we will grow in relationship with Jesus Christ and enjoy the many benefits of that relationship. Many great individuals through the years have recognized the value of and need for the Word of God.



“That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests” (Andrew Jackson).

“The N.T. is the very best book that was or ever will be known in the world” (Charles Dickens).

“It is impossible to righteously govern the world without God and the Bible” (George Washington).

“Within the covers of one single book, the Bible, are all the answers to all the problems that face us today—if only we would read and believe” (Ronald Reagan).

—www.sermonillustrations.com

A. Read the Word

“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (I Timothy 4:13).

While we cannot say with certainty that in this verse Paul spoke only of reading the Scriptures, he surely included the Scriptures in his urging young Timothy to faithfully give himself to reading. The other two aspects of Paul’s urging—for Timothy to give himself to exhortation and doctrine—would depend upon his reading and knowing the Scriptures, so certainly Paul intended for Timothy to read the Scriptures faithfully. Likewise, we also should read the Scriptures.

Admittedly, not many verses in Scripture command us to read the Word of God. However, there are many verses that address the necessity of obeying the Lord’s words. How can we obey that which we do not know? And how can we know that which we do not read (or hear) or study? Consequently, reading (or

hearing) and studying the Word of God are essential to fulfilling the commands of God.

Under the Law, God gave many complex and detailed commandments to His people. He expected them to diligently learn and follow them, which would necessitate faithful and regular reading of the books of the Law. In Deuteronomy 17:18–19, the Lord made it clear that the kings who would rule over the people of God should have in their possession “a copy of this law. . . . and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God.” Further, God commanded Joshua to meditate upon the law (the Pentateuch) day and night so he could “observe to do according to all that is written therein” (Joshua 1:8). The Lord indicated it would be the source of his “prosperity” and “success.” In the New Testament, Jesus urged the disciples to search the Scriptures, and the only way to search them is to read them. (See John 5:39.)

If we love Jesus Christ, we should also love His Word for it testifies of Him. It provides the pathway to a growing relationship with Him by our coming to better know and understand Him and His ways. Surely reading the Word of God faithfully and regularly is a benefit to us for it opens to us the ways of intimate relationship with our Savior. But we must not stop with only reading the Scriptures; we also must study the Word of God that we may establish His principles in our hearts.

B. Study the Word

In II Timothy 2:15, Paul exhorted Timothy to apply himself to the study of God’s Word. The best way to faithfully observe the Scriptures is through systematic study. All believers should observe Paul’s admonition and diligently study that they might rightly discern and interpret the Bible and avoid ultimate shame.

Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, highly complimented the Bereans when he praised their nobility in their ready reception and study of God’s Word. Apparently that was not the case with the believers in Thessalonica. The Bereans “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

In one instance, Jesus told the Sadducees, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). It is vital to study God’s Word because it is essential to obey the Word, which will keep our relationship with the Lord advancing and growing and powerful.

Meditating upon the Scriptures is an often-overlooked discipline of both reading and studying the Word of God. Meditating upon and pondering the Word of God empowers us to graft its principles and teachings into the very core and heart of our thinking and actions, and it is spiritually profitable. (See I Timothy 4:15–16.) We must “heed” the doctrines of Scripture for our own good and salvation.

As noble and good as reading and studying the Word of God may be, they are insufficient in and of themselves. If Christians are to be happy, free of self-deception, and ultimately saved, they also must obey the Scriptures.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). (See also James 1:23–25.)

Jesus plainly told His disciples that obedience to the Scriptures was associated with a person’s love for Him. (See John 14:15; 15:10.) If we love Jesus, we will desire to grow in relationship with Him—reading, studying, and obeying His Word. Further, we will experience the benefit of a joyful relationship with Him. Upon experiencing such joy, we will also want others to know and experience the same joy by sharing the Word of God with them.

C. Share the Word

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15).

“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

Christian believers live their lives as open books, revealing the grace and goodness of God to others. Perhaps the greatest testimony we offer to others is the unspoken evidence of the lives we live—humble, sanctified, joyful, and diligent as we go about our business. Still, living holy lives of testimony before others does not excuse us from sharing the Scriptures with them. We have an obligation to share the gospel as ambassadors for Jesus Christ to this world. (See II Corinthians 5:20.)

As we live our lives among the lost of this world, we are always to be watchful for opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others. We may be the only representatives of Christ positioned to reach certain individuals with the life-changing words of the gospel. May we be sensitive to every opportunity, sharing the joy and benefits of our relationship with Christ and drawing the lost into a redemptive experience with Him. The joy of sharing Jesus Christ with others is a great benefit of our relationship with Him.

“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 22–23).

II. BENEFIT OF HIS WISDOM

A. Wisdom (Earthly Versus Heavenly)

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:15–17).

There certainly is value to be gained in obtaining the wisdom of this world through education and real-world experience. However, when we contrast worldly wisdom with heavenly wisdom, which comes from God alone, the difference is stark. James went so far as to describe worldly wisdom as “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15), but upon

closer examination, it probably is not the earthly wisdom that is evil, but that it is easily controlled and corrupted by sinful human nature. However, human beings cannot corrupt heavenly wisdom because God gives it only to the redeemed in their sanctified state. They may turn from it and lose it through rebellion, but they cannot corrupt it.

There are many wonderful practices and disciplines in life to which individuals may apply themselves in order to learn and receive benefits. However, if they never embrace the gospel or experience the life-changing power of the new-birth experience, all their acquired earthly wisdom benefits them but little and ultimately will come to nothing. As noted by James, the earthly wisdom of such people will prove to be flawed, imperfect, and subject to fleshly corruption. The true essence of earthly wisdom without the addition of heavenly wisdom is really no wisdom at all.

“The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?” (Jeremiah 8:9).

B. Wisdom and Knowledge through Christ

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). How great is that wisdom that comes from above—heavenly wisdom! It is pure, peaceable, gentle, and merciful. It is approachable, impartial, and completely devoid of hypocrisy. Heavenly wisdom is a treasure for which believers should earnestly seek.

Paul indicated that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:3). True, heavenly wisdom is attainable only through Jesus Christ. However, if we will seek to receive wisdom from God and will humbly ask Him, James assured us He gives liberally to all (James 1:5). The only prerequisite James indicated was that we ask “in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6).

This heavenly wisdom is not a commodity we can receive through higher education. It does not accompany the educational degrees, achievements, or commendations of this world,

for it is not earthly; it is not of this earthly realm. Education and experiential achievements will not provide heavenly wisdom, but they may better prepare the individual to seek heavenly wisdom and to value it when God provides it. However, individuals must always remember and acknowledge the source of heavenly wisdom, for they will surely lose it if they credit earthly achievements with providing it.

Heavenly wisdom empowers believers to receive the Word of God in the most profitable measure possible, and it provides a fertile place for God's Word to take root and grow within us. Paul wrote to the believers in Colossae, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). Heavenly wisdom is a priceless benefit and a treasure beyond measure.

III. BENEFIT OF HIS GUIDANCE

A. Guide with Counsel

The psalmist Asaph recognized the value of God's guidance and counsel. He wrote, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24). Any hunter or wilderness explorer can testify of the importance and value of having an accompanying guide who knows the territory. It can be a matter of life or death. The Lord certainly knows the territory of our lives, but He provides something more than only guidance. The Lord also is our counselor, or advisor.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Jesus will keep us company and provide companionship, but His abiding presence offers much more than that; He also will guide us in the ways we should go and be our abiding Counselor.

The benefit of having Jesus Christ as our Counselor may be more than what readily meets the eye. Clearly, He can guide us

through life because He knows what we need far better than we do. Beyond the benefit of having His guidance, however, He also is our Counselor. A counselor is one who gives advice, which certainly is invaluable when coming from Jesus.

B. Guide into All Truth

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

Not only will Jesus Christ guide us through life, but He will guide us "into all truth." The Holy Spirit will teach us and remind us of those principles when needed (John 14:26). Further, He will reveal spiritual truths and mysteries to us, enabling us to understand them. (See I Corinthians 2:9–10.)

IV. BENEFIT OF HIS PRESENCE

The highest benefit of having a relationship with Jesus Christ surely must be His abiding presence within. All the benefits of our relationship with Christ are wonderful, but the reality of His abiding presence adds depth and meaning to each of the other benefits.

A. Lasting Presence

The writer of Hebrews pointed out the lasting nature of God's abiding presence, for the Lord has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Our relationship with Jesus is not a roller coaster of ups and downs with the presence of the Savior ebbing and flowing. Rather, through all the ups and downs of life, Jesus is right there with us—constant, abiding, unchanging, steady, and dependable. Our lives may ebb and flow, but His presence does not; His presence is lasting and unchanging.

B. Fullness of Joy

"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The abiding presence of the Lord in our lives is the source of true joy. The joy Jesus gives us is not shallow or fleeting. Rather, it is joy in its fullest, most substantial state. In other words, the greatest measure of joy possible in this life exists only through an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

Many verses in the New Testament speak of the fullness of joy available through the various aspects of our relationship with Jesus Christ. He fills us with joy that is “unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). The joy Jesus gives is beyond description and is an invaluable benefit of our relationship with Him. Jesus came to us that we might receive the fullness of abundant life, which is available only through and in Him.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

C. Pleasures for Evermore

Not only is the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives both lasting and invigorating with full joy, but His presence also opens to us eternal pleasures. (See Psalm 16:11.) The pleasures Jesus brings into our lives are real, lasting, and completely satisfying.

The contemporary culture of our world today is one that seeks instant gratification with continual sources of human pleasure. The desire for pleasure is not new; mankind has always sought sources of pleasure to satisfy his fleshly cravings. However, it seems the culture today is obsessed with

the idea of seeking pleasure constantly. Perhaps the reason is that none of the sources of worldly pleasure are lasting. Pleasure is so fleeting in our shallow, self-absorbed, and self-centered world.

With Jesus Christ and His church, however, the pleasures He gives are lasting and satisfying beyond anything the world has to offer. Believers discover unending pleasure in church services, in service projects through which they minister to others, at home, and even at work. They discover that true pleasure is not dependent on circumstances, location, or activities in which they must involve themselves. Rather, they are able to derive pleasure from every aspect of their lives because of the abiding love and presence of Jesus Christ within.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Loving God’s Word and His presence, wisdom, and guidance will keep one in a right relationship with the Lord and prepared for His soon return. These things are real and tangible benefits of serving Jesus Christ; however, they also are performing unseen and invaluable spiritual works within us.

The more we read (or hear), study, and ingest the Word of God, the more its life-changing principles live and abide in us. Those principles change our lives for the better and establish a foundation to support the abiding presence, wisdom, and guidance of God that works within us. All these things are contributing to the sense of abiding love, presence, and joy of the Spirit. What benefits! What value! It is all indescribable and amazing. As many have observed over the years, “There is no life like serving the Lord.” It is the best life, the most enduring and fulfilling life. And one day it will transition into eternal pleasures in Heaven. ■

REFLECTIONS

- When did God first reveal His desire for relationship with human beings? Discuss.
- Discuss how reading, studying, and sharing the Word of God are benefits of our relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Discuss the differences between worldly and heavenly wisdom.
- What are some of the pursuits individuals follow in their search for constant pleasure? Discuss the fleeting and shallow nature of these sources of pleasure.