

The church of Christ

At Granby, MO

Do You Have a Right Relationship With God?

Many have been the times I have heard people say that obedience to God is not as important as our relationship with Him. People believe that God knows their heart and that if they have love for God in their hearts then His grace will somehow make up the difference between obedience and disobedience. I have spoken with people who say they have their own relationship with God and that they do not have to attend the assemblies of the saints or seek God's will through His word and live in obedience to that will. The purpose of this lesson is to examine the various characteristics of our relationship with God and to determine what the word of God teaches about our relationship to God.

According to Paul in Timothy 3:16-17, the scriptures are inspired, meaning they are given under the direct supervision of God. They are profitable for a number of things such as doctrine, reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness. Taken as a whole they are able to thoroughly equip mankind for all good works. So with that in mind, we are going to examine what the word of God says about having a right relationship with God.

There are several characteristics of a relationship with God mentioned in scripture.

1) We have the relationship of love. We are commanded to Love God in Matthew 22:37, "*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*" And God is said to love us in John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

Now does this mean an emotional type of love that we have in our hearts, or does this mean a love which manifests itself in action?

Let's consider the words of Jesus as recorded in John 14:15, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" Jesus went on in this very chapter to expound greatly on the concept of an obedient love. John records this for us in John 14:21, "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*" Then Jesus went on to say this in verses 23-24, "*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*"

So we see here that our love for God must be accompanied with obedience to His will. Lack of obedience indicates a lack of love on our part. So from the words of Jesus as recorded by John, our relationship of love for God is built on the foundation of our obedience to Him. according to the words of Jesus as recorded in scripture, when there is no obedience, then there is no love.

2) We have the relationship of friendship with God: In John 15:15 we have the words of Jesus recorded as teaching, "*Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*" Jesus considers us His friends. Backing up one verse to 14, Jesus teaches us what we must do in order to be considered His friend, "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" So we see here that our relationship of friendship, like our loving relationship with God is dependent upon obedience to His commands.

Abraham was called the friend of God. We can learn about that in James 2:21-23, "*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God*". Abraham's friendship was built on his obedience to God.

Where there is no obedience, there is no love. Likewise where there is no obedience, there is no friendship with God.

3) We have a family relationship with God: One occasion while teaching, Jesus mother and His brothers had come to see Him. When Jesus was told they were there waiting to see Him, He replied with these words, "

Matthew 12:46-50

"While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!"

Jesus went on to say, "*For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" Jesus taught that those who are obedient to God are more His family than His own flesh and blood relatives.

4) We have a relationship with God as His children: Paul wrote in Galatians 3:26, "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*". John wrote in 1:12, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*". And of course, this makes God our Father. Jesus affirms this relationship in Matthew 23:9, "*And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*"

Obedience to God is just as vital an element of this relationship as any of the others. Let us consider the words of John in 1 John 3:10, "*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*" Those who are not obedient do not get any benefit from the family relationship we have as the children of our spiritual father. Paul pronounced the wrath of God upon children of disobedience in Ephesians 5:6, "*Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*"

Those who are obedient and do righteousness are the children of God. John taught this in 1 John 3:7, "Little children, let no man

deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Those who are not obedient to the will of God are therefore not the children of God, rather, they are the children of the devil, being children of disobedience.

5) Christians have a Fellowship relationship with God: 1 John 1:3, *"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."*

But, John wrote in 1 John 1:6, *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"*. Walking in darkness is the opposite of walking in the light. Jesus had this to say about walking in darkness and light, *" I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

Those who claim to be in fellowship with God, but are not following after Jesus, walking in the light and living obediently, are not telling the truth. They do not have the fellowship with God they claim to have. Therefore the Christians fellowship relationship with God is dependent completely upon their obedience to His will.

6) Christians have a bondservant relationship with God: Several Christians in the first century affirmed this in writing. Paul referred to himself as a bondservant in Romans 1:1, Galatians 1:10, Philippians 1:1 and Titus 1:1. Paul referred to Epaphras as a bondservant in Colossians 4:12 and Timothy as a bondservant in Philippians 1:1. Peter referred to himself as a bondservant in 2 Peter 1:1. Jude and James both did this in the first verses of the epistles written by them as well.

Concerning the bondservant relationship we have with God, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:15-17, *"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God."* Peter taught his readership to conduct themselves like bondservants of God.

Paul, while giving instruction to earthly bondservants, had this to say concerning this relationship we are to have with God, *"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart"* (Ephesians 6:5-6). Our bondservice must come from our hearts, meaning it is our desire to have this relationship with God, and as such, we are obligated to conduct ourselves in the same manner towards God as an earthly bondservant is obligated to his master here on earth.

The word "*bondservant*" comes from the Greek word "doulos" which literally means either a slave or a bondservant. A bondservant is a person bound in servitude to another human being as an instrument of labor. Sometimes someone who owed a debt they could not pay would offer themselves as bondservants until such time as the debt was satisfied. This is the relationship which several inspired writers claimed to be in towards Jesus Christ. In every case mentioned, the same Greek word, "doulos" was used.

Scripture teaches us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and as a consequence of that are dead in their trespasses (Colossians 2:12). Paul taught in Ephesians 2:5 that those who are dead are made alive together with Christ. This was accomplished through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross when He shed His blood for the sins of mankind. With His death, Jesus Christ satisfied the death penalty each and ever accountable individual owes for their transgressions. There is a penalty associated with sin. This penalty is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid that penalty at great personal cost and thereby placed us in the position of owing Him our very lives. While Jesus paid this sin debt for all, Christians are not free to live their lives as they see fit.

Because of what Jesus did on the cross for all mankind, a debt which we can never repay has been paid for us. We owe our lives to Jesus Christ. This is a debt we can never repay. Christians are called to offer their bodies a living sacrifice to God in Romans 12:1. Sacrifices are required to be of the free will nature. Therefore Christians are called to offer their lives as bondservants to Christ. Being made free from the sin which enslaves us and kills us, we

willingly offer ourselves as bondservants to Jesus Christ. This relationship of a bondservant to Christ is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:22-23, "*For he that was called in the Lord being a bondservant, is the Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant. Ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men.*"

A bondservant remains in voluntary service until one of two things occurs. Either the debt is paid or the bondservant dies during the period of time required to satisfy the debt owed. Since it is the Christians' very life which is to be offered as a living sacrifice it is understood that the cost of salvation can never be fully repaid to Jesus by mankind. There is simply nothing mankind can do, either collectively or individually that can repay what it cost Jesus to offer us salvation. There is no way we can take Jesus off the cross or make it unnecessary for Him to have been there. We cannot repay what Jesus gave up for us. The only thing we have to offer in return for Jesus' amazing gift is a lifetime of willing, grateful and obedient servitude. Such is the bondservant aspect of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We are literally to be in voluntary bondage to Christ Jesus and as such, we are obligated to conduct ourselves as true bondservants. True bondservants serve their master obediently and faithfully for the duration of their bondage. In the case of a Christian, this term of service is for life.

7) As bondservants of God, naturally we have a Master. Matthew 23:8-10, "*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*" Our Master in the bondservant relationship is Jesus Christ and we see the reference here to God as the Father which speaks to the family relationship we have.

Another term in scripture for "*Master*" is the word "*Lord*". In Luke 6:46, Jesus is recorded as asking, "*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" Jesus is asking why someone would acknowledge Him as their Lord and Master but not obey Him? When we do not obey Jesus, He is not our master. Jesus taught in Matthew 6:24, "*No man can serve two masters: for either*

he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other..." Those who claim Christ as Lord but do not obey Him do not have the right to call Him Lord.

8) The relationship of knowing God. This means knowing His will, His love, His mercy and His nature. John wrote concerning this in 1 John 2:3-6, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him". According to John, anyone who claims to know Christ but is not obedient to Him is a liar and has no truth in Him at all. John goes on to say starting in verse 5, "*But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*".

If we do not know God, then it is reasonable to conclude that He does not know us. Jesus wrote in Matthew 7:21-23, "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*".

How is your relationship with God? Is your relationship with God according to scripture? Are you an active participant in your relationship with God?

- 1) Do you love God, You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**
- 2) Are you a friend of God? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**
- 3) Are you in fellowship with God? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**
- 4) Are you a child of God? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**
- 5) Is God your Father? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**
- 6) Is Jesus your Lord and Master? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.**

7) Do you know God? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.

8) Does God know you? You can answer that by asking whether or not you are obedient to Him.

Is your relationship built on obedience or is it built on an emotional state? Do you love God the way God says He wants to be loved in scripture, or do you love God the way you want to love Him? Are you an obedient friend of God, or is your friendship with God a one way friendship? Is your fellowship with God based on obedient service to Him? Are you an obedient child of God or are you a disobedient and rebellious child? Are you a faithful and obedient bondservant of Christ or do you serve God your way? Do you know God, does God know you?

Romans 6:16-18

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

We all yearn for and seek a relationship with God. We love Him so much for what He did for us. We recognize that nothing we can ever do could earn us a relationship with Him. This relationship is offered because of God's favor, because of His grace. God loved us enough to send His Son to die for our sins. Jesus loved us enough to willingly offer Himself as a sacrifice for us. He died at our hands so that we may be saved. We can't repay that debt. We don't deserve what He did for us. We can't do anything to merit such love and sacrifice in any way. But what we can do, is honor the sacrifice and love that God demonstrated on our behalf with the love and sacrifice of ourselves back to him. Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."*

Christ died for us, let's live for Him. He is our Lord and master, let us be obedient bondservants.

God is our Father, let us be His obedient children.

God loves us so very dearly, let us love Him both in heart and in service.

**Jesus wants to be our friend, let us be obedient friends to Him.
Jesus wants to know us, let us seek His will and obey Him so that we can know Him.**

Do you have a relationship with God? This is a question every accountable person must ask. A one way relationship with God is not good enough. You may have a relationship with God in your own mind, but if you are not obedient to His will, your relationship with God is not right. Matthew 7:21-23, "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*" If your relationship with God does not include obedience, Jesus says not only do you not have a relationship with me, I don't even know you.

Do you have a relationship with God? The bottom line is, if you are not obedient to God, then you do not have the relationship God says you need. If you are not obedient to God, you do not have the relationship God wants. There are many facets of our relationship with God and every single one of them is dependant upon obedience to His will. If we take obedience out of our lives, then we do not have a relationship with Him. Our obedience to God is the foundation for every characteristic of our relationship with God.

Do you have a relationship with God? Have you heard and believed the gospel? 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, "*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*"

Do you have a relationship with God? Have you obeyed the gospel? 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, "*...when the Lord Jesus is*

revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power". Those who do not obey the gospel do not have the right relationship with God.

How does one obey the Gospel? The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the gospel, therefore when we obey Jesus, we obey the gospel.

Do you have a right relationship with God? John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" Have you obeyed the command to believe in Jesus Christ? If you have then you are one step closer to having the relationship God wants. If you have not obeyed that command, you are "*condemned already*" (John 3:18).

Do you have a right relationship with God? Have you repented? have you turned from your sinful life and committed yourself to living a life of righteousness? Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, "*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". And in Luke 13:3, Jesus taught, "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" If you have not repented, then you do not have the relationship with God that he expects. According to God's word, you are not His friend, you do not love Him, neither do you know Him and you are not His child and He is not your father.

Do you have a right relationship with God? Have you obeyed the command to confess Jesus as the Son of God before men? Jesus taught in Matthew 10:32-33, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*" If you have not confessed Jesus as the Son of God before men then you have not obeyed Jesus Christ. You do not have a right relationship with God. You are not Jesus' friend, you do not love Him, neither do you know Him and you are not His servant and He is not your Master.

Do you have a right relationship with God? Have you obeyed the command to be baptized? Mark 16:16, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" Jesus told Nicodemus that "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). If you have not obeyed the command to be baptized, then you have not been born of water and of the Spirit. You are not in the kingdom of God and you therefore do not have the relationship with God that he expects.

Do you have a right relationship with God? Are you living the life of a Christian in faithful obedience to God? Are you abiding in Jesus Christ? Jesus taught in John 15:4-6, "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*" Jesus went on later in the same context to teach how to abide in His love, John 15:10-11, "*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*" If you are not keeping Jesus' commandments, then you are not abiding in His love. You therefore do not love Him, you are not His friend, he does not know you, you are not His servant, He is not your Master, you are not His child and He is not your Father.

Do you have a right relationship with God? If you realize that you do not, you should know that you can. A relationship with God is offered to "*whosoever will*" Revelation 22:17 teaches, "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*". Peter taught in 1 Peter 1:22-23, "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*"

God wants to have a relationship with you. He wants you to love Him, he wants you to be in fellowship with Him, he wants you to be His child, He wants to be your Father. God made the first step towards the relationship He wants when He offered us a means of reconciliation and salvation through the cross of Christ. We have a role to serve if we want to have a relationship with God that is good and right.

A right relationship with God starts with obedience from the heart. Your right relationship with God is maintained by obedience from the heart. And your relationship with God depends on obedience from the heart.

Hebrews 10:22-23

"let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."