

For Our Neighbors: What We All Need
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Intro:

- Josh Fakhoury – Lead Pastor
- Part 2 of Series: ***For Our Neighbors***

Last Week:

- **Why are we here and what do we want to be known for?**
- **If CCWC disappeared tomorrow, who would notice and would we be missed?**
- **We don't just want to simply create a church that our neighbors want to attend. We also want to be a church that attends to our neighbors!**
- **The way we LOVE PEOPLE should show that we are FOR THEM and that God is FOR THEM!**

Today: Our neighbors needs (a lot...) – Their BIGGEST NEED... Relationship with GOD!

God not only likes you, He LOVES you! He wants a relationship with you in which you can relate to Him as your Heavenly Father.

- When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He could have used many different names to address God at the start of the prayer.... He chose, "Our Heavenly Father"...
- In fact the Lord's Prayer was known in early church tradition as the "Our Father"
- Shift in way they addressed God... FORMAL → FAMILY (Lord, King, Almighty, Creator)

Early Christians did their best to try to describe what this relationship can look like...

The Apostle Paul – wrote to the church in Ephesus...

- A small church in a big city... Ephesus: port city... in what is now modern day Turkey...
- In this huge city, a small church is beginning to form...
- Paul writes to them, "this is what a relationship with God looks like..."

Ephesians 3:16-19 I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

This is the offer that God has for each of us, and all of us!

The goal is clear: The Fullness of God

- Not **familiarity** with God...
- Not, "I know He exists, I just don't know how to connect with Him..."
- Paul: I pray that you will know the unknown – the depth of Christ's love, so that you can have relationship with God to the fullest!
- ***The depths of His love is unknowable, and yet, through Christ it is made known!***

Truth: **You can believe in someone and not know them.**

You can rely on someone and not know them.

You cannot relate to someone you don't know.

- And we are told, clearly throughout Scripture, ***we are offered relationship with our Heavenly Father!***

So how do we get to know God?

The first thing we have to know and understand: **It is possible to know God!**

- This may be a new category for some of us...
- We know what it is to ***know religion...***
- We know what it is to ***know ritual...***
- We know what it is to ***hope...***
- But what does it look like to actually KNOW GOD?

It is possible! And as a matter of fact, **it is the very purpose for which you were created!**

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Genesis 1, 2, & 3 → an unfolding story of a relationship that ***God has with humanity*** and that ***humanity has with each other!***

God created mankind in a unique and special way – gave us an ability that the rest of creation didn't have.... The ability to ***connect with God***, to ***know him***, to ***have relationship with Him!***

- God is the one who moves first – He comes after us!
- Because He created us with a specific purpose: **To know God and live with God!**
 - THIS is our purpose! For ALL of us! Every person!

Here's the problem: As we continue to move through the Scriptures, we find out that ***the wonderful heart and mind God gives us***, for the ***purpose of relationship with Him***, is ***also capable of turning on God.***

- The ***same mind*** that was ***created to connect*** with Him, was also ***capable of disconnecting*** with Him...

Genesis 3 – Adam & EVE: The ONE RULE they had, was the one rule they decided to break...

- Wanted to be like God; believed He was holding back on them; thought they could be better Gods for themselves than God was for them...
- They broke the rule – sin entered the world – created ***distance between man and God***

Genesis 3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

- Adam and Eve knew God so well, they knew what it sounded like when He was walking through the garden... THEY KNEW THE SOUND OF HIS WALK!
- But this time, because of their sin, **instead of joy** at the sound of God approaching, **they had fear...**
- WHY????? Because of a word/feeling, that has become familiar to all of us... **GUILT**
- We all know what guilt feels like, don't we??? → human nature...
 - Think of it this way: how many of you had to have your parents sit you down and say, "listen to what we tell you and then do the opposite!"
 - None of us needed to be **trained in disobedience**! It comes naturally to us!
 - And it all comes back to this moment...
 - We are experts and breaking the rules! (**Authorities**, but even **our own** rules!)
 - I'm going to save money, start dieting, working out, stop this habit... etc.
 - GUILT is a universal problem for us!

If you were writing the story, what do you think the next words out of God's mouth would be??? (If it were me, I would expect the next words out of God's mouth to be, **"How Dare You!"**)

- It's what Adam and Eve probably expected! → they were hiding for a reason!
- But that's not the heart of God!
- God's heart is revealed in the next words He says:

Genesis 3:9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

- God's not saying, "There you are! I see you! I know what you did! How dare you!"
- Instead He extends an invitation, for Adam to reveal himself to Him!
- **"Where Are You?"**
 - Suddenly there is this distance between God and man – this gap...
 - **This is God's disposition toward humanity!** – we see it in Genesis 3, first sin!

Reality: There were some consequences to the decision that Adam and Eve made...

Genesis 3:21-24 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (This is the 1st sacrifice we see in Scripture, God slaying an animal to put clothes on human beings... a sacrifice that covered their guilt & shame... keep that imagery in mind! → again!) And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. (both) He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

- We may look at that and say, "Wow! God's **punishing** them!"
- We should look at this and say, "Wow! God's **protecting** them!"

HOW? WHY?

We were not created to live separated from our Heavenly Father!

- The VERY LAST THING God would want is for that to happen for all of eternity!!!
- He loves us too much to allow that to happen!
- By separating Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, God takes that possibility away...
- What we see happening here: This is ***the start of God's redemptive plan*** to ***restore the relationship*** between ***God and Man!***

It's a narrative that we see repeated throughout the Scriptures:

- *2 Samuel 14:14 All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not just sweep life away; instead, he devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from him.*
 - God heart toward sinful humanity → devising ways to bring us back...
- *2 Corinthians 5:14-17 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; The old has gone, the new is here!* > (RE-creation!) "make right"
 - Greek: "if anyone is in Christ... NEW CREATION! (God → "this is what I intended!)"
- *2 Corinthians 5:18-21 All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. I don't make anyone right with God, He does! I'm messenger! We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (be restored, be re-created!) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

We are Reconciled to Reconcile! Be His "reconciliation messengers!"

- God is still in the business of restoring relationship today! Re-creation! New life!

For humanity:

Our greatest purpose becomes our greatest need! To know God and live in restored relationship with Him! And To help others do the same!

- God's extending YOU an invitation... NOT: "How dare you!" ... → ***"Where are you?"***
- Salvation Prayer??? (*feel it out...*)

In Christ, we see how God is FOR us. In you, your neighbors have the opportunity to see how God is FOR them! HOW??? → **Show them Jesus!**

Prayer