

How Can I Start A Relationship With God?

Relationship is at the center of all human experiences. Life does not seem to fit without them. Even in middle school and high school, we begin to think about connecting to a group of people, getting married, and starting a family. We have so many different types of relationships. Friends, neighbors, rivals, and even strangers make up our relational experience of life. Our relationship with God is the most crucial of them all.

So the obvious question is “What do I need to do to start this relationship?” However, starting a relationship with the creator of the universe is not as easy as with that new kid at school. By nature, entering into a relationship means giving up the freedom of going it alone. Instead of calling all the shots, we are forced to revise our plans to include the desires of others, which is an on going struggle.

The same is true with God. On one hand, we want a meaningful connection with our Creator because that was the way we were designed to live. He is the giver of life. But on the other hand, we’d like to do things our own way. Which leads us to attempt to establish good terms with God. We’ll follow the rules, attend church, and give some money, whatever it takes to be good enough. Unfortunately, our true motive is simply to live our lives our way...as much as possible...without forfeiting the relationship we need so desperately. We want it both ways.

The problem is twofold. First, if we’re not careful, we take what could have been a beautiful relationship and reduced it down to contractual terms. In lieu of sincerely putting God first in our lives, we began to “work” the list of dos and don’ts, looking for ways to get by without really knowing him. As a result, we exchange the very thing we want-relationship-for what we don’t need more of- rules. But the second issue is even bigger: the nature of sin.

The apostle Paul says that we’re all sinful (Romans 3:23), which comes as no new revelation. But, the problem with our wrongdoing is that we just don’t see it the way God does. After all, humankind didn’t think sin was that big a deal. Doubting God’s wisdom was apparently worth the risk. Even today, we tend to be more concerned about inconveniences in our lives than with sin. We’ve become used to it. But if we could see sin through God’s eyes, it would be quite sobering. Just like in any other relationship, our wrong doings leads to a separation. And a separation from the giver of life, equals a loss of life, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Our instinctive reaction to sin is to handle it the same as any other problem: solve it. When something catches on fire, you douse it with water. When something spills, you wipe it up. We have countermeasures for everything in life. So it’s no surprise that our initial response when confronted with our sin is to counteract it with a corresponding quantity of good. We believe that’s how we should reconnect with God. It seems to make sense. That is how we handle conflict with those around us.

In fact, the religious people of Jesus' time thought the same way. And who can blame them? The practice of blood sacrifice seemed to reinforce this problem/solution approach to sin. Every time a sin was committed, a sacrifice needed to be made. But as the Bible clearly teaches, there's more to dealing with sin than simply covering it over. Sin produces death. Whether it's just a little anger toward your brother, or full-blown murder. "After desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15, TNIV)

So, if the nature and consequences of our sinfulness are so severe, and if trying to keep a list of rules flies in the face of a genuine relationship, then what are we to do? The answer lies not in what we ourselves should *do*, but what has been *done* for us. God sent his son Jesus Christ to suffer the consequences of our sin and death. So that we might experience life and a relationship with God as we were meant to. Paul summarizes this good news:

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8, TNIV).

Why would God do this? God did this for you because He loves you and wants you to know Him. Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us." Through Jesus, the gap between God and us has been closed. God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him by allowing Jesus to remove the sin barrier through His death on the cross.

This amazing gift of grace is extended to everyone. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, TNIV). That means that Jesus has a special place in his heart for those who have burned themselves out trying to work their way into God's favor. When we finally surrender our stubbornness and place our faith in Christ, we receive his forgiveness of our sins and enter into a new relationship with our heavenly Father.

So how do we start this relationship with God? Inviting Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the director of your life (John 1:12-13), acknowledging that you believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that He rose again, conquering death and sins hold on you (Romans 10:9), admitting that God has not been first place in your life and asking Him to forgive you your sins through Jesus (1 John 1:9), and accepting God's free gift of salvation. Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us (Ephesians 2:8-9). Then unite with Christ through baptism in demonstration this saving faith (Romans 6:4). (See questions on baptism)