

Level 1 Lesson 4.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

By Andrew Wommack.

One of the most important things about relationship is to understand the person with whom you're going to have relationship, and that also applies to God. You need to understand the basic nature and character of God in order to have a healthy relationship with Him. Misunderstanding His character and nature is one of the reasons many people don't have a positive relationship with Him. This is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent. They entered into temptation, ultimately disobeyed God, and plunged the whole human race into sin. Their lack of understanding God's nature was actually a part of the temptation.

The story in Genesis 3:1-5 is familiar to most people: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [God], knowing good and evil" (brackets mine).

There is a subtle statement by Satan here that God is really not a good God... that He was trying to withhold something from Adam and Eve...that He didn't want them to reach their full potential...that He didn't want them to be like Himself...and that the reason He made the rule about not eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was to hinder or hurt them. In a sense, Satan came against the very nature and character of God when he maligned Him by saying God did not want the best for them. The same thing is exactly what's happening to people today. Satan tells them, "If you follow God and don't experiment with all these things that are contrary to His Word, you'll never experience true happiness. Life will be boring...dead." The sad fact is that people experience after the fact that the drugs, alcohol, sex, rebellion, indulgence of self, success in jobs, and all the other things they tried didn't satisfy them. By the time they realize it, they've already destroyed their lives, their families, and their health.

The truth is that God is a good God, and His will for us is only good. But Satan uses the same temptations on us today that came against Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, basically implying that God is not a good God. Those who have only a little understanding of the Bible could get that impression because there are instances in the Word where He treated people in harsh, cruel ways. In Numbers 15:32-36, a man picked up sticks on the Sabbath Day and was stoned to death for failing to observe the Sabbath.

That sounds harsh, but there was a purpose behind such punishments, though it's not obvious to most people in a casual reading of Scripture. Careful study reveals that Old Testament Law was given to make the sin that we've committed become exceedingly sinful, as Paul says in Romans 7:13. The purpose was that people didn't realize how deadly their transgressions were and that they were an offense against God. They made the mistake of comparing among themselves and measuring their actions by what other people were doing.

If someone committed a sin and wasn't struck dead, they thought sin must not be so bad, and they lowered their standards. They had lost the true perspective on what right and wrong was. God had to bring mankind back to a plumb line, a proper standard of what right living was, so they would reject the devil and his temptations and recognize what the end result of wrong choices would be. Then when He did that, He had to enforce the Law He gave.

God did not give the Old Testament commandments for the purpose of saying, "Until you do all these things, I can't accept you or love you." That is not His nature or character. Rather, He gave them to make our sense of right and wrong more acute and to bring us back to the fact that we need a Savior. The problem has been that people thought God was demanding perfection before He could love them, which led to the attitude many have that His love for them is directly proportional to their performance. They feel that until they try to do everything exactly right, they will not be accepted by God, and that is not the message of the Bible.

God's heart is to reconcile mankind to Himself not to judge them...not to impute their sins...not to hold their sins against them. That's the heart of God for people in the Bible and also His heart for you today. You need to understand His real heart, that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). He seeks to take away your sins and anything that would separate you from Him. He's already done it through Jesus, and He's offering you relationship today, not based on your performance but on your faith and acceptance of Jesus bearing your sins. You can have relationship with God today regardless of the failures in your life. All He asks is that you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.