

I. The Fullness of the New Birth

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you.”² For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him.³ And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.⁴ I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.⁵ Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

⁶ “I have revealed you^{1d} to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word.”⁷ Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you,⁸ for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me. (Jn 17:1-8)

A. In the New Birth God has opened up to every believer the intimate places of His heart. Through the blood of Jesus we have been invited into relationship with the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. By being born again we are called not to vain, repetitious prayer, but instead are being beckoned to know God. Many people make this sound very mysterious and almost intimidating. When Jesus came as the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person, He revealed that the Father in Heaven doesn’t want to just remain veiled, but instead intensely DESIRES to be known by His creation.

- 1. Being Born Again gives us access to come before the Father’s throne with boldness in our hearts.**
- 2. Being Born Again frees every believer from the condemnation that we lived under prior to being in right relationship to God.**
- 3. Being Born Again allows us to have freedom over sin and gives us the grace to choose righteousness.**
- 4. Being Born again gives us unlimited communication with God and the ability to make sense of what He is saying back to us. Every person can talk to God but Through The Spirit we can rightly interpret what He is saying.**

B. The New Birth in essence is about RELATIONSHIP.

¹⁵ “If you love me, obey^{1d} my commandments.”¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^{1d} who will never leave you.”¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.”¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live.”²⁰ When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you

are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”(John 14:15-21)

C. God desires so intently to be known that He did not leave the story to end at the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. God could have finished the redemption story anyway He so desired. It pleased the Father to not leave us alone as orphans. He didn't leave our salvation in the hands of ordinary men and women but instead went beyond any religious claims that have been uttered by a major world leader. God promised that He would send His Spirit so that He would always be with His children. He would never leave them alone. He would guide them, teach them, comfort them, and even raise them from the dead through and by His Spirit.

- 1. Many world religious leaders have died promising grandiose things. Many have taught various things that did not come to pass. Not only were there eyewitness accounts to Jesus' resurrection, we find the truth of His statements in our very hearts...God sustains us day by day through a variety of ways.**
- 2. God doesn't leave us to strive on our own. He dwells in our hearts by The Spirit. He practically helps us to pray, love others, hate sin, love righteousness, etc.**
- 3. The Spirit guides us into knowing who Jesus is. We don't have any human relationship that promises anything even close to these claims!**

² We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.^[a] Because of the joy^[b] awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. (Heb 12:2)

D. God's desire for us beckons us to come closer. Think about it. Who likes spending time with people who are unenjoyable? When Jesus was going to the cross it wasn't for ambiguous reasons. John 17 reveals the thoughts of His heart as He lifted up those who knew Him and would come to Him. Hebrews 12 says that He went through everything for the joy that was set before Him.

II. How Do We Practically Connect?

A. Connecting with God Defined:

1. Talking to God
2. Being Quiet and asking Him to speak to you
3. Reading the Word

B. It is important to remember that the chief ways we can connect with God is through prayer and Reading the Word. Are these the only ways? No! God speaks to people in many, many ways. While we can connect with Him in various ways we must never forget that He is always connected to us. For those who have come into His kingdom we have been imprinted with His Spirit. We will never be alone again. We need never to try to wrestle Him to be with us. He abides with us always. Some of the major struggles people have in connecting with God seem to be due to the fact that they don't understand these simple truths. God is always with us. "connecting with God" we should really mean our attempt to get into the flow of relationship that is already happening.

1. Parents with young children: children are born into the world with various limitations and over time begin to interact with their parents in ever increasing communication and understanding.
2. Owners of Pets: many owners are smarter than their pets (: but the pet is usually not clued into the complexity of their owners' behavior or heart intent. The relationship is enjoyed by both parties, but one has greater understanding, clarity, and wisdom.

C. Hearing God's voice:

1. After becoming a Christian I started to hear the phrase "I heard God say..."
2. I wondered if every person had a full dialogue with the Lord daily. By the way people through around the phrase, I assumed that everyone was on the level of the Old Testament Prophets. This was doubly confusing when I noted the severe lack of wisdom in people's lives. How could God speak so clearly to people yet there was little transformation?

3. I began to realize that when people said they heard God they meant a variety of things. I began to understand that He is not limited by time or space. He may speak through Nature (Romans 1:20), other people, circumstances, financial blessings, etc. Many people are looking for God to thunder from heaven and the biggest thing I would advise people is to learn how God speaks to YOU.

- i. When trying to learn how God speaks to you try and remember that God isn't the author of confusion. He doesn't try and confuse His people
- ii. Ask God questions when you are confused.
- iii. Remember that God will never speak anything that contradicts His Word because of 2 Timothy 3:16-17. See also, John 10. I have seen people do a whole lot of weird things in the name of "God told me." God will never lead us in a way that contradicts His character, nature, Word, etc.

III. To connect with God...UNPLUG.

- IV. A. We live in a very disturbing time in our world where we have more access at our fingertips than many rulers have had throughout human history.
- B. Social media, text messages, emails all beckon us daily.
- C. When many people wake up in the morning what is the first thing they do?
 - 1. Even though we are so connected technologically it is ironic and sad that we deal with some of the most staggering rates of suicide, depression, etc. Many people feel an abiding loneliness that seems to stick to them at all times. Face to face social interaction seems to be low as well as emotional awareness. Many live disconnected from their emotions.
 - 2. When trying to connect with God I find it helpful to just turn off my phone or place it somewhere completely out of eye view.
 - 3. As I have experimented with unplugging I have actually encountered a disturbing reality...an almost overwhelming NEED to be on my phone or connected to people.

II. Some More Practical Ways to Connect with God

- B. Setting aside a time each day to pray and Read the Bible. I recommend making it something that is easy to attain length wise. I recommend that people make a habit of 10 minutes a day. If you read the Bible for 5 minutes and pray for 5 minutes you will find it easier to accomplish. Grandiose goals KILL our prayer lives.
- C. Journaling- I have found it not only helpful but beneficial to journal throughout my quiet times over the past 11 years. I know that journals and diaries are usually considered a woman's thing but journaling honestly is one of the greatest discoveries I've made. I will usually write the date, what passages I read, and any revelation I obtained as well as any questions. Also I will write down any struggles I have and process openly with The Lord in my journal. It is inspiring to look back at my life over the past 11 years with God and see how far I have come or how much revelation I have had.

D. Singing-I think that every person should try to sing daily. It doesn't matter how tone deaf you are. I recommend getting some worship music you enjoy and I have found that singing makes you vulnerable before God. No matter how awesome or not awesome you are at it, singing Worship music or sitting down and singing The Bible has a dynamic effect on your soul.

E. Question Asking-I ask God questions all the time. He answers them in some very funny ways.

F. Lastly, whatever way works for You and GOD. Whether it is running, painting, writing, etc. find a way to do something that you enjoy and just speak to Him every few minutes and ask Him what He thinks.

