

Jesus, My Very Best Friend Forever!

A Find-out-for-Yourself Bible Study
On the Astonishing Truth about the Relationship
God Yearns to Have with You!

With Elizabeth Rice Handford

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*What Is Your Concept of God?
And What Do You Think He Feels About You?*

Do you imagine God as lurking over the balcony of Heaven with a 2 X 4 piece of lumber, gleefully hoping you will do something really bad so He can wallop you really hard?

Or do you vision Him as a dodderly old grandpa, kindly, but like an ineffectual juggler at the circus, trying to keep all the things He's tossed up in the air from tumbling down?

Or do you fear God has isolated Himself completely from this world, indifferent and perhaps even bored by the complaints and sufferings of human beings?

Or do you feel, as a woman in my Sunday School class once expressed it, "Oh, I know God loves me. That's why Jesus came down to die on the cross, to pay for my sins. But He sure wishes I'd get my act together!"

As we begin this study of *Jesus, My Very Best Friend Forever*, you are going to discover, from God's own Word, how He yearns over you, how He wants to be your dearest friend, how He waits to meet every deep longing of your heart.

The first step toward His being your friend is to understand He is a holy God. He can't excuse sin, or overlook it. But He could, and



did, pay for your sin completely by dying on the cross in your place, so that you would never be held accountable for it again.

All it takes is for you to admit your guilt, admit you know you can't make yourself clean enough for Heaven, and then simply take Him at His Word and accept His free gift of salvation. We'll talk more about that in these pages.

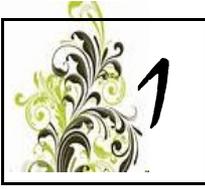
Meanwhile, open your heart to discover exactly who this God is. The Bible portrays Him as a far different kind of God than perhaps what we have constructed in our minds.

He doesn't just tolerate the human beings He has created. He has shaped us, individually and personally, so that we could enjoy being best friends forever with our omnipotent, loving God Himself. He created us so He could shower His love on us and give us all the treasures of Heaven.

And it all begins with a simple Scripture King David wrote:

“My heart has heard You say,
‘Come and talk with me.’
“And my heart responds,
‘LORD, I am coming.’”

Psalm 27:8



The Almighty God Deeply Desires Your Friendship

The eternal, holy, omnipotent God says to you—yes, you!—“Please come and talk with me.” Our response might be, since we are so aware of our humanity in the presence of our holy God, “Why would He want to spend His precious time hanging out with me? He has so many things on His mind—universes to run, important things to do—why would He want to talk to me? But God Himself recorded this request:

My heart has heard You say,
"Come and talk with me."

And my heart responds,
"LORD, I am coming." Psalm 27:8

Our daughter Ruth came to live with us when she was three months old. My mother drove us home from the hospital in Chicago that day, since Walt was in Colorado. That child lay in my arms and talked to me and her new big brother John the whole way home.

Sometimes she talked earnestly, sometimes explaining, sometimes chuckling with glee, but always intent on communicating with me.

When she was about four years old, she came in from



playing one day and said, “Mother, let’s have a ‘commeration.’”

“All right, dear. What shall we ‘commerate’ about?”

She began to tell me what was on her heart. And my mother-heart was so tender toward her as we ‘commerated’ together. That was what I had longed for, that sweet and intimate relationship, those long years that Walt and I prayed so earnestly for a child.

I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when I went to get a bone density test. The radiologist was a pleasant young woman. She asked me about my family—which is a dangerous thing to ask a woman who has seven children and gloats over them! I told her how God had given every one of them to us in answer to our earnest prayers..

“Why did you adopt them?” she asked curiously.

“Walt and I had so much love in our hearts for each other, and God had been so good to us. We wanted to share it with children who might grow up without that kind of love and protection.”

“Did you do it to make you feel better about yourself?”

“I don’t think so,” I answered. “I just remember thinking how wonderful it was to have children we could lavish our love on.”

“I’m adopted,” she said pensively. “But it was for all the wrong reasons. All Mother ever wanted was for me to brag on what a wonderful Mother she was.”

I don’t remember that self-interest was ever a part of my longing for a child. My love was directed toward the

baby, what I could share with the child, not what it could give me.

In a much deeper, more unselfish way, that is how God feels toward us.

One college girl I counseled certainly didn't understand this. She stomped around our living room, crying wildly. She was pregnant, and scheduled for an abortion the next day, and blaming it on God. She said, "God is so mean. He forced Jesus to die on the cross. He just wants us to stand around and brag on Him. He's narcissistic, that's what He is, wanting us to worship Him all the time."

But to think! That great God. Creator of Heaven and earth, the One who inhabits eternity, who is holiness, and goodness, and love, and power, majestic and omnipotent, the One who created those stupendous universes and innumerable galaxies — that God! Can you imagine His creating us just so He can soothe His needy ego with our pitiful praises?

Oh, how little she knew about God and the One who would be her Savior, if only she would let Him!

1. Why would God go to all the trouble of creating us? It certainly was not so He could "feel good about Himself"!

He is the Triune God: He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three and yet only One. We can't understand it, but we know it is true because the Bible says so. How can I find the words to describe this indescribable One? He has no need or lack of comradeship. He has all that, infinitely, within His own personhood. All of the aspects of fellowship and communication exist within

Himself. It has been that way throughout eternity, and will be that throughout all ages to come.

You can glimpse that One-in-Three in the story of Creation, in Genesis 1:26,27:

“And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after our likeness. . . So God created man in *His own image*, in the image of God created *He* him.” He is Plural: *us, our* image, *our* likeness, but also One: *His own image, He*. Can you hear the element of glee as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit planned creation together? Genesis 1:31 says, “And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

Their joy in creation together is so beautifully expressed in Proverbs 8:22-31:

The LORD possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . when He appointed the foundations of the earth.

*Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him:
and I was daily His delight,
rejoicing always before Him;*

*Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth;
and my delights were with the sons of men.*

This passage exudes the delight and joy of fellowship between the Three Persons of the Godhead, long before the creation of angels and human beings. They needed nothing; they were complete. Their joy produced the delight of creation. But then, notice that God’s delights “were with the

sons of men.” That infinite, self-sufficient God finds delight “with the sons of men”!

Job 38:4-7 gives us another glimpse of this. God asks,
*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
. . . .To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?*
Job 38:4-7 nkjv

How did the Lord Jesus describe this three-fold relationship that last evening He spent with His disciples before His crucifixion in John 14:26 and John 17:5?

All that is simply to say that God didn’t create you and me to satisfy some terrible thirst of His for love and worship. Rather, He created us so He could have the holy joy of showering on us His love and tender mercies, giving us His unending treasures. How does Ephesians 2:4-8 describe this?

Remember that the cost of this mercy, this great love, these exceeding riches, this grace in His kindness, was not something He could give us without personal cost. Everything else in the universe was created simply by His speaking a word. But our redemption from our sin could come to pass only through the death of Jesus, God Himself. The price He paid is unfathomable: the torn, shredded body

of the Lord Jesus, God sundered from Himself, made unspeakably filthy by our sins: that was the terrible cost.

There has never been a hint of selfish desire in God's dealings with human beings.

2. And this is what makes the theme of this study so absolutely astonishing. That Triune God, complete in Himself, who needed absolutely nothing, still wants to have fellowship with us!

He is not driven by any need of His own; He is driven by His love for us! Revelation 4:11 gives the reason the Lord created us: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Jesus said, in Luke 12:32: "So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom."

Notice how poor, desolate Job had once treasured his relationship with God before Satan accused him. How did he describe it in Job 29:2-5?

Job said, "The friendship of God was felt in my home." The KJV says, "The secret of His tabernacle was with me." "His tabernacle" is the place where God dwells. What is "the secret"? It's a private, particular, unique and discrete relationship. (*Discrete*: separate and distinct)."

In other words, the relationship God wants with you in this relationship is different from that anyone else in the

universe has with Him. How does Psalm 25:14 tell us this “secret” can be experienced?

According to Psalm 27:5, when will you experience this “secret”?

And according to Psalm 91:1, what is the wonderful result?

How did Jacob describe his relationship with God? (Genesis 32:30).

How did the Lord reveal Himself to Moses? (Exodus 33:11; Numbers 14:14).

And to Abraham? (James 2:23)

3. This is the kind of relationship your Heavenly Father wants to have with you. The Scriptures invite you again and again. And you have every right to come and talk to Him.

How very much did God love you? (John 3:16)

If you come to Him, what will He certainly *not* do? (John 6:37)

To whom is this offer of intimate friendship offered? (John 12:32; John 7:37)

John 1:14 describes this intimacy as “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (*Dwell*: “settle down; make a place your home.”)

What is the blessed result when “Christ dwells in our hearts through faith”? (Ephesians 3:17-19)

4. This is a straight-forward call from God, a call given with utmost sincerity and with a clear promise.

He certainly doesn't tell you to come and talk with Him, and then, when you come, reject you and say, “Go away. I didn't mean you.” What does He explain in Isaiah 45:19?

God's invitation to come and talk with Him could not be more plain: “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent Me” (Isaiah 48:16).

Notice in this verse the clear affirmation of the Triune, three-in-one God that we studied earlier: One: “I” Jesus; two: “The Lord God;” and three: “His Spirit.”

God provided for your salvation, your redemption from sin. But He wants more: He wants intimacy with you, your face-to-face confidences, your dreams, your disappointments, your failures. He wants a friendship with you deeper than any earthly friendship.

When He created you, He gave you a unique personality, different from every other person ever created, and therefore you can have a unique friendship with Him. The song, "I Come to the Garden Alone" expresses this intimacy:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
and He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
none other has ever known.*

Austin Miles © 1912 HallMack Co. Renewed.

5. But God will not force this relationship on you.

Friendship forced by His omnipotence could not be called friendship. He gives you the choice of friendship with Him, but oh, how He longs for you to make the right choice! What did Jesus say to unbelievers in John 5:40?

What did God beg the Israelites to do in Ezekiel 18:31?

And in Ezekiel 33:11?

Jesus, one night shortly before His death, sat on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and looked over Jerusalem with deep yearning. What did He tell them from the bottom of His heart? (Matthew 23:37).

6. He seeks you, but you must also seek Him with all your heart. This cannot be a casual relationship.

Such a precious gift does not come with casual contact. How does 2 Chronicles 15:2,4,12 tell us to pursue this relationship?

Isaiah 55:6?

Proverbs 8:17?

Jeremiah 29:13,14?

Joel 2:12?

Psalm 63:1 says, “O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.” The literal meaning of “early will I seek You” is “earnestly, diligently, will I seek You.”

7. We saw earlier, in Job 29:2-5, that Job had this kind of intimate, deep, trusting relationship with God.

*How I long for the months gone by,
for the days when God watched over me,
When his lamp shone upon my head
and by his light I walked through darkness!
Oh, for the days when I was in my prime,
When God's intimate friendship blessed my house,
when the Almighty was still with me
and my children were around me,*

Job 29:2-5 (NIV)

In those darkest days, under Satan's malevolent attack, when he felt that the Almighty was no longer "still with me," nevertheless he was faithful to that friendship he had treasured. All the way through the book of Job, you can hear echoes of his intimacy with God in the past. Yes, he was broken-hearted. He felt forsaken. But his friendship with God shines through all of his complaints.

And what Job did not know, enduring that terrible time of suffering, was how his Best Friend Forever felt about him.

Imagine the palatial halls of Heaven that lead to the throne room, that long ago day as described in Job chapter one, where the eternal God sits on His lapis lazuli throne among His created beings. There's all kinds of activity going on, because it's the day when the "sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord." Job's arch-enemy and ours, Satan, Our Accuser, is there, mouthing all kinds of foul accusations against God's creatures.

But listen! God, having all humanity within His vision, well aware of all their foibles and weaknesses, is comforted and blessed by one man in that ocean of evil!

"Satan, have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8).

Job's righteousness, his faithfulness, gave the eternal God great joy that long-ago moment in Heaven.

How I wish I could give my Very-Best-Friend-Forever that kind of joy! It's possible. My heart heard Him say, "Come and talk to me," and my heart eagerly answers, "Lord, I am coming."

More:

Job's Intimate Relationship with God

All of Job's conversations with God reveal the intimacy and trust he had experienced with God in the past, and what he knew of God's character. When you have the time to delve further into the friendship of Job with Christ, look for indications of this in Job's conversations with his friends. What can you find in these Scriptures that illustrate this? (Look especially in the chapters where Job himself is speaking, rather than his unreliable friends.)

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Job. 1:21 | Job 14:15-17 |
| Job 2:10 | Job 16:9 |
| Job 6:10 | Job 16:19-22 |
| Job 7:17 | Job 17:3 |
| Job 7:20,21 | Job 19:25 |
| Job 9:9 | Job 23:3-7 |
| Job 9:14 | Job 23:10 |
| Job 9:32 | Job 23:14,15 |
| Job 12:4 | Job 31:35-27 |
| Job 13:3,16 | Job 42:1-6 |
| Job 14:13 | |

But note, too, how tenderly God felt toward Job, even as He let him suffer for a while:

| | |
|----------|--------------|
| Job 1:8, | Job 42:7,8 |
| Job 2:3 | Job 42:10-13 |