



Get a Grip on Your Faith – Draw Near to God

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Introduction:

A young man was desperately seeking God. He sought out a wise old man who lived in a nearby beach house and posed the question: “Old man, how can I see God?” The old man who obviously knew God at a depth few of us experience, pondered the question for a very long time. At last he responded quietly: “Young man, I am not sure that I can help you, for you see, I have a very different problem. I cannot *not* see him.”

Hebrews 10:22 – Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

I. Drawing near to God involves seeking

Let me briefly discuss the method by which we can draw nearer to God. The primary method of drawing near to God is seeking. This implies that we become disciples of Jesus Christ. Seeking will draw us consistently closer to the Kingdom of God and its operation. True seeking of truth will bring us closer to that truth, which is Christ. So the first thing that we have to do in order to draw near to God is to seek him.

II. Drawing near to God involves faith, honesty

Another way of drawing near to God is to learn of Him. This implies reading and studying your Bible to obtain the truth about God and his Kingdom, and developing a relationship with Him.

James 2:23 – And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God's friend.

Abraham was a friend of God. What does that mean? It means He spent time with God. How else can we know God unless we spend time with Him and become familiar with Him like a friend? He has revealed Himself to us through the living Word – His

only Son, Jesus Christ. We develop a friendship with God, just like we develop a friendship with another person. This friendship is developed through spending time with Him in prayer, meditation, fellowship and worship.

II. Drawing near to God involves obedience

In drawing near to God, we must surrender and submit to His Lordship in our lives. We have to put into practice what we have learned. We become doers of the word and not just listen to it. Drawing near to God means that the truth of His word impacts the actions, direction, thoughts, and attitudes of our heart. We respond to the truth of His word. Obedience as a believer is so important to the development of our relationship. We find His will and then we obey it.

III. Drawing near to God includes identifying with Christ through communion and baptism

One of the greatest privileges extended to us as human beings is that we can draw near to God. In one sense, God is near all. This does not have to do with geographical location, but with relationship. Everyone has the ability to be close to God or to be separated from Him. Of course, the great separators are *sin* and *self*.

We draw near to God through identifying with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We do that by identifying with Him in communion and baptism.

In participating in communion we acknowledge our need of Christ's forgiveness and recognize that it is through the sacrifice of Christ we can draw near to God. Jesus took bread, broke it and wine and drank it, and gave it to His disciples. He told them to eat and drink it. He said "this is my body and blood." There is no clearer way for Christ to describe the union between Him and His followers than through communion. What we eat and drink, literally sustains, nourishes and becomes a part of us. So it is with communion. His body and blood, is that which nourishes, sustains and make us one with Him.

By being baptized, our body which is His temple is washed with water. After we have come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, baptism is an outward expression of our faith. Through this ordinance we testify that Christ now lives within us. It draws us close to God through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Baptism says that we have acknowledged our sin, we have repented of it and being baptized is acting on what has happened within our heart. This is another way of drawing close to God.

IV. Drawing near to God involves prayer

Psalms 145:18 – The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.

Prayer, being interactive conversation with God, brings us close to Him. What happens to communication when you are close to someone? It should get better. We don't communicate with those we don't know, or are not close to. So prayer is another way we draw near to God.

V. Drawing near to God involves worshipping Him

Isaiah 29:13 – The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Another way to draw close to God is through true worship. The Lord seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is easy to come near God with your mouth and honor Him with your lips and yet have a heart that is far from God. This scripture should cause us to be careful when approaching God that our heart is engaged in worship. Remember,

worship is not a particular style or done in a particular place. Worship is not by a set of man's rules.

VII. Drawing near to God involves Godly living

I John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His son, purifies us from all sin.

We don't just say we want to draw near to God. As we do so, things that are not God-like, or would displease God, fall off. There are life controlling problems that you may struggle with. As you draw near to God, the battle may get stronger, but eventually the power or control of those things will weaken and die as we surrender to God. We are purified from all sin through Jesus blood and that means we live a godly life.

Nearness to God rests with us. We can distance or alienate ourselves from being near God because of sin, pride, unforgiveness, hardness of heart, disobedience, rebelliousness etc.

Drawing near to God involves submission of ourselves to His will. Submission to the will of God is evidence of true humility. The humble person acknowledges God's right to command and order our lives. It also acknowledges our readiness to submit our lives to His perfect will. James commands, "Submit therefore to God." When we submit ourselves to God we make a decision or choice of our will to be directed by God's sovereign authority.

The first voluntary act of submission is when we ask Jesus Christ to be our Savior. We cannot be saved without first submitting ourselves to Christ. We make a decision to come under His sovereign rule in our lives.

When that moment of new birth takes place, we come under new management. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:1-3 that we were slaves under the lordship of Satan and through saving faith we came under the lordship of Jesus Christ. This is a free choice that we choose to make now.

VIII. Blessings for drawing near (From NT)

- Will not allow us to be over tempted, 1 Cor. 10:13
- Will aid us when we are tempted, Heb. 2:18

- Will give grace to help in time of need, Heb. 4:16
- Will never leave or forsake us, Heb. 13:5
- Will provide and care for us, 1 Pet. 5:7
- Will give peace of mind, Phil. 4:6-7
- Will love us and make His abode with us, John 14:23
- Will guide and strengthen us, 1 Pet. 5:10
- Will present us faultless before His throne with exceeding joy, Jude 24-25

There is *safety* in drawing near to God. God is a 'strong tower,' Proverbs 18:10. It is good in times of danger to draw near to a fort or castle, God is an impregnable stronghold. Indeed there is no safety, but in drawing nigh to God.

Conclusion:

Drawing near to God implies that we start at a point of separation from God. Sin and self are the very things we have to deal with that keep us at a distance from God. As we choose to draw close to God, we have to deal honestly with those barriers, and submit ourselves to His lordship. God's word is clear that He is willing and eager for us to draw near to Him. We just have to do it.

The words of an old hymn written by Cleland B. McAfee are appropriate as we conclude this morning.

*There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God;
 A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God.
 Chorus: O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God,
 Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.
 There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God;
 A place where we our Savior meet, Near to the heart of God.
 There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God;
 A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God.*

There is *peace* in drawing near to God. The only thing which breaks our peace is when we do not keep close to God. There is great harmony and rest for the soul that draws near to God! Psalm 119:165. "Great peace have they which love thy law." Psalm 4:8. "I will lay me down in peace."

There is *richness* in drawing near to God. It is good drawing near to a gold mine. If we draw near to God, he will enrich us with promises, and divine consolations. He will reward us as a king.

Psalm 145:18 – **The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.**