

In touch with God



You accept there is a God. Do you have faith in Him?

To recognize the existence of a Superior Being is like having a casual acquaintance. You may have ideas about God, but your views do not change your life.

Faith, on the other hand, is like a close friend. Both faith and friendship are built on understanding and trust. Both require time, effort and giving of self. Both offer a resource of strength.

Communication with God Prayer

Mutual understanding sets a friend apart from an acquaintance. Good friends express themselves honestly and openly to each other and listen to each other with sincere interest.

The key to a lasting friendship is to maintain this communication, to keep in touch.

The same kind of communication is essential in your relationship with the Creator.

How do you presently express your faith? You may pray, go to church, observe holy days and sacraments, give money or perhaps just try to be a good humanitarian.

The language that communicates most effectively to God is your day-to-day behavior. Your actions, attitudes and prayers convey to Him how genuine you are in your faith and how seriously you are trying to respond to Him.

On the other side, how do you “listen” to God? You may go to hear a priest or minister, recognize God’s care and guidance in your life or believe in His presence in a less tangible way. A church building and sacred music— or the beauty of nature— may give you a feeling of closeness to God.

The surest way to receive and benefit from God’s message is to read and study it for yourself. The Bible, in a very real sense, is God’s direct line to humanity. In it He reveals His character and His purpose.

Don’t be satisfied with second-hand listening.

If you put personal effort into understanding your Bible you will more readily see God’s influence in the world and your own life, recognize the outworking of His purpose in world events, and feel the impact of His truth.

You have access to God’s word through the Bible. You also have a channel to express your thoughts to Him— prayer.

Prayer provides a way for you to ask God to guide your life, to thank Him and to express confidence in Him.

Moreover, the Almighty hears and responds to prayer if it is offered in faith. The Creator of the universe is interested and concerned about individual human beings. He wants to help those who put their trust in Him.

This doesn’t mean that God spares the true believer from suffering. Sometimes He presents challenges, opportunities for personal growth and strengthening. But always He provides for basic needs:

“I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”

Psalm 37, verse 25

Like a loving Father, He knows better than His children what they really need in order to develop the right kind of character. His guidance might come in the form of discipline. For example, He may allow the believer to suffer the consequences of wrong acts or attitudes.

The Bible stresses that the prayers of those who have a true and active faith receive His special attention.

“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.”

Psalm 34, verse 15

The book of Psalms, in the middle of the Bible, contains examples of many different kinds of prayers. Each Psalm expresses a mind truly in touch with God— aware of His love, power

and absolute goodness, and at the same time of the human situation.

To anyone who seeks to know God, the Psalms are a must for thoughtful reading.

Communication brings results

David, the king of Israel around 1000 BC, wrote most of the Psalms. His life is described in the Bible books of 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 Chronicles. The Psalms record his thoughts and prayers: his requests, thanksgiving and praise to the Almighty.

You may be familiar with the account of David and Goliath.

Goliath, a giant Philistine warrior, challenged the entire Israelite army. No one was brave enough to accept his challenge to fight except David, a youth who happened to be visiting his brothers in the army camp.

Goliath laughed when he saw the boy. David’s brothers were angry at his “foolishness” in going against such odds.

Nevertheless, David was confident, not in his own prowess but in his God. He knew the Almighty would help him.

Of all the many seasoned soldiers, none had apparently thought to call on the LORD for help. Unarmed, young David went out and killed the giant with nothing more than a slingshot and a stone— with the help of God.

A response from the heart

David succeeded because he was in communication with the Creator through personal prayer and mediation on the Scriptures. He wrote:

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the

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LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

Psalm 19, verses 7 and 8

So stirred was David, so deeply motivated by the beauty and truth he saw in God's word, that he responded by opening his heart in prayer. David's prayer was alive, an outpouring of what was in his heart and mind.

When he addressed the Almighty it was as though he were speaking reverently but intimately to a trusted father or superior. David's prayers were sincere, for he knew that God could look inside his heart and know all his thoughts.

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar."

Psalm 139, verses 1 and 2

Overcoming Goliath

Life isn't always easy. It wasn't easy in David's day and it isn't easy now.

You may not have to deal with the terrifying physical threat of a Goliath, but you have your own emotional, mental or psychological "Goliaths"—personal weaknesses, fears, failings, difficult situations or relationships. You have your own problems to face.

David simply recognized that he could not cope with life alone. He needed help and strength from the Almighty God.

The Psalms are among the world's most beautiful and enduring literature. They are also a moving record of David's prayers during some of the most agonizing times of his life. David had to face the consequences of his own failings and sins—sensuality, lust for power, discouragement and fear when everyone seemed to be against him, and worst of all, violent and vengeful sons.

Like David, you can turn to God for help and not be disappointed.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

Psalm 46, verse 1

Your responsibility

You can rely on God for help and support in your life.

But faith, like friendship, is two-sided. The LORD also has expectations of you. The Old Testament prophet Micah sums up His requirements:

"And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6, verse 8

Quite simply, He wants you to live your faith. In order to do this you have to develop a good understanding of the Bible message and a prayerful relationship to Him.

True worship

Faith differs from friendship in an obvious way: friends usually consider themselves equals, whereas the Almighty is far greater than any human being.

That's where worship comes in. Worship involves acknowledgment and admiration of another's superiority.

What form does your worship of God take?

Do you feel there must be more to true worship than observing traditions and going to a religious service once a week? If so, you're right.

Micah's words in the preceding quotation refer to a way of life and an attitude of mind. God expects the worshipper to recognize His authority and try to imitate His perfect character—every day, wherever you are.

What about ritual?

Ritual is one aspect of worship. In and of itself, however, it does not put you

in touch with God. A person must do more than just go through the motions. God expects faith and understanding.

The ritual aspect of worship described in the New Testament is simple and uncomplicated.

Essentially, there are two important rituals: baptism, and the bread and wine service. However, what is important is not the acts themselves, but the significance behind them. Both link the believer to God through Jesus Christ.

First, the believer must be baptized into Jesus Christ.

This was the message the apostle Peter preached:

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

Acts 2, verse 38

Biblical baptism, by immersion in water, is an act of obedience. It identifies a believer with the death and resurrection of Jesus, washes away that person's sins and brings him or her into the family of God.

The other prescribed ritual is the weekly bread and wine service, a constant reminder of Jesus' death and saving work. Before his crucifixion Jesus introduced this service to his disciples, commanding them to "Do this in remembrance of me." (see Luke 22, verses 14 to 20)

All in all, the form of Christian ritual prescribed in the Bible is far less elaborate and far more meaningful than many have made it.

It's up to you

The Bible urges you to take stock of your relationship with God:

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith."

2 Corinthians 13:5

Accepting someone else's word leads to an unthinking faith. Building your own personal idea of God apart from the Bible amounts to mere speculation.

Faith starts with a humble, recep-

tive attitude. It grows as you open your mind to God's revealed word and learn more about Him and His purpose.

It matures through two-way communication.

David prayed to God for help to stay in touch with Him. Take his prayer and make it yours.

"Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me."

Psalm 25, verses 4 and 5

Recap

You can be in touch with the mind of the Almighty through prayer and an understanding of His message revealed in the Bible.

True worship is based on an informed and active faith.

Recommended Bible Readings

David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17.

Some Psalms of David: Psalms 19, 34, 46 and 139.

Bread and wine: Luke 22, verses 14 to 20; John 6; 1 Corinthians 11, verses 23 to 32.