

Building a relationship that will last forever.

In many countries of the Western world, when couples want to adopt a child, even though perhaps they have a child of their own, they will visit an adoption home after being sifted by an adoption agency to see whether their home is suitable to take in another child, feed it and in every way tend to its needs when the child is sick and will encourage the child to grow at a steady pace towards the fullness of their potential.

If these things are found to be the case, the parents wanting to adopt the child will be taken to a part of the building where there are many children who need adoption, they will talk to the children individually and they will eventually find one where there is a natural bond between the parents and the child.

When this happens the parents will visit the child often so that the child will get to know them and they will get to know the child more and more. If all goes well eventually the child will be ready and happy to leave its current surroundings and take up residence in the family home of the couple who will legally act as the child's parents and guardian.

This is a very close likeness of what happens between God and man. Although God knows us well and knew all about us even before we were born you did not know Him until you responded to the drawing unto Him by The Holy Spirit. Jeremiah chapter 1 verse five reads: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you as a prophet unto the nations."

Though we do not all have the same calling, it tells us that God knew and loved us even before we were conceived and that He ordained what our purpose in Himself would be. Building a relationship with God is similar to the way you build a relationship with another person; you get to know them, spend more and more time with them and eventually fall in love with them and are legally bonded to them for eternity.

The kind of relationship Jesus had with His Father was no different from the kind of intimate fellowship that God longs to have with each one of us. In the first seven verses of Ephesians chapter 1 we read something that is rarely expounded on by teachers yet is of tremendous importance.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the

forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” The passage continues and the whole of the first chapter of Ephesians was actually originally written as one sentence.

The point that is very rarely spoken of by teachers and preachers is the fact that things were very different in the days of Paul, and although they are very different now Paul chose his words carefully so that they would reflect what he meant. In those days if your natural born son rebelled against you there was provision for you to exclude him from your will, completely cut him off from an inheritance and denounce him publicly.

No such provision existed for those who were adopted; they could not be written out of their adopted Father’s will or denounced publicly or privately. This shows you the depth of our security in Christ, He promised that He would never forsake us or desert us and here we have an extra assurance of this.

Towards the end of the book of Ephesians in chapter 5 verses 18 to 21 Paul writes something that gives us a hint of how we can build a relationship with our heavenly father as intimate as the one that Jesus had with God when He was living in the body of a man on earth, subjecting Himself to all the limitations that we have.

The verse in question reads as follows: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God The Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in **the fear of God.**” What is the fear of God? Well that is another subject altogether.

If we follow Paul’s advice and sing and make melody in our hearts unto The Lord then we are indulging in something that has been forgotten by most churches for centuries and that is the gift of silent prayer. This means that you can be praying, praising and worshipping God in your spirit with crowds of people around you and nobody but you and God will know that this is happening.

There is an example of silent prayer as early as Genesis chapter 24 and verse 45 though some translations miss the point of this verse altogether. The full context of this story can be found in verses 37 to 48 inclusive of that chapter The passage reads as follows: My master made me swear, saying, you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: but you shall go unto my father’s house, and to my kindred, to take a wife for my son.

I said unto my master, what if the woman will not follow me? He said unto me, The Lord before whom I walk will send His angel with you, and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred, and of my father’s house: then shall you be clear from this oath, when you come to my kindred; and if they refuse to give you one, you shall be clear from my oath.

I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now you do prosper the way that I go: behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when a virgin comes forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray you, a little water from your pitcher to drink; and she says to me, both drink and I will also draw water for your camels: let the same be the woman whom The Lord has appointed for my master's son.

Before I had done **speaking in mine heart**, behold, Rebecca came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well, and drew water: and I said to her, let me drink, I pray you. She made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, drink, and I will give your camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

I asked her, whose daughter are you? And she said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore unto him: and I put the ear ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. I bowed down my head, and worshipped The Lord, and blessed The Lord God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son."

What is "prayer in my heart"? Without doubt this is silent prayer. Jesus seems to have used it always in His relationship with His Father when He was out and about in the towns that He visited. We see from Mark 10 verses 46 to 52 inclusive that this is overwhelmingly likely to be the case here:

"They came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the side of the road begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, He began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Many told him that he should hold his peace: but he cried out all the more Son of David, have mercy on me.

Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, be of good comfort, rise; He is calling you. Casting away his garment he rose, and came to Jesus. Jesus answered and said unto him, what do you want me to do for you? The blind man said unto him, Lord, I want to receive my sight.

Jesus said unto him, go your way; your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus along the way." If you saw somebody with a coat worn only by a blind man and carrying a white stick calling you over, what would you think his reason might be?

Here Jesus seems to stall for time when He asked the blind man what it is that he wanted Jesus to do for him. Jesus did not really need to be told, it was as close to obvious as anything could get, and it was not just to hear the man's statement of faith either. If you look through the scriptures you will find that Jesus healed blind people in at least three different ways.

What is most likely to have happened here is that whilst the man was on his way over Jesus asked Father what He should do in this case. Jesus would not have done anything without the instruction of His Father as we shall see later, but because of His relationship with His Father Jesus was able to receive instruction from Him at any time.

This is the kind of intimate fellowship God longs to have with us, where we are constantly hearing His voice and constantly obeying His instructions to us. There were no more distractions in Jesus time than there are in life today; it is all a matter of prioritizing. Because Jesus literally walked in fellowship with His Father He was able to hear from Him at any time and when He acted in obedience to Father's instruction Jesus knew that He would be successful as surely as night follows day.

We should be like Jesus in all respects, but particularly in this respect. In John chapter 5 verse 19 Jesus tells His disciples: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do: for those things He does, these also doeth the Son likewise." Since Jesus could do nothing except those things He saw His Father do we can imagine how important it is for us to have this kind of intimate fellowship with God for ourselves today.

Maybe you are wondering what the voice of God sounds like and how you can identify the voice of The Lord from any other voices you might here. In scripture there are something like only 4 times when anyone has tried to describe what the voice of The Lord sounds like, the first time is in Exodus chapter 20 verses 18 and 19 where the people described it as thunder along with the sound of a trumpet.

"All the people saw the thundering and saw the lightning and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. They said unto Moses, Speak you speak with us, and we will listen: but let not God speak with us again lest we die." So why doesn't God speak to us Himself directly? Because we would be afraid, such is our sinful nature.

Another time is at the baptism of Jesus in John 12 verses 20 to 29 which read as follows: "There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: these came therefore to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we want to see Jesus. Philip came and told Andrew: then Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, saying, the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies it brings forth much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify your name. There came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and

will glorify it again. The people who stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, an angel had spoken to him.

Another time is in the first chapter of the book of Revelation where the same Apostle John attempts to describe what he saw and heard. Revelation chapter 1 verses 10 to 15 inclusive read: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches that are in Asia; unto Ephesus, Smyrna, to Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

I turned to see the voice that had spoken to me and I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

Despite all these descriptions probably the best one is that given by Elijah when He had run away into the desert after destroying the so-called prophets of Baal. In 1 Kings chapter 19 verses 9 to 16 inclusive Elisha tells his story of hearing the voice of The Lord. "He came unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of The Lord came to him, and he said unto him, what are you doing here Elijah?

He said I have been very jealous for The Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. God said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before The Lord. and, behold, The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before The Lord.

But The Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but The Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but The Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance to the cave. And behold there came a voice unto him and said, what are you doing here Elijah?

Elijah replied; I have been very jealous for The Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. The Lord said unto him, go, and return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you get there anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shall you anoint to be prophet in your stead."

For a description of what the voice of The Lord will sound like to you there is no better scripture. Because The Holy Spirit lives within you (if you are truly a Christian in deed

not just in word) and will speak to you in a way that you can recognize but can only hear and understand through your spiritual ears.

The deeper and more intimate our relationship with our creator the easier we will find it to identify that still small voice when it speaks to you. One of the quickest ways of growing in your ability to identify that still small voice is to obey it immediately and do what ever God is telling you to do. No relationship can grow whilst one is doing the things that are hateful to the other.

Another important way is to spend quality time with God usually in the morning when you rise from your bed. This is what Jesus did and it caused Him to grow in His relationship with The Father. The early morning is the best time of day to have quality time listening to what God wants to say to you, worshipping Him and reading His word before the problems and distractions of the day begin in earnest. God wants to have a two way relationship with you just like King David did in Psalm 142.

Verses 1 and 2 read: “I cried unto The Lord with my voice; with my voice unto The Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.” Isn’t this what people in a close relationship do? You share something of your heart with God and He will share something of His heart with you.

Any relationship takes time to develop and has its ups and downs yet The Lord is worth pursuing just “like a deer that is searching for cold water in a drought” as a well-known chorus would say. Relationships have to be worked at, never give up, always keep searching and remember God’s promise in Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 13 which reads as follows: “When you seek me, you shall find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”