

As you know, the coronavirus has resulted in people getting sick and even dying. It has caused quarantines, social distancing, slowdowns, shutdowns, shortages, markets falling, job losses and financial losses. I am amazed and astounded how this one little virus has spread all over the world and affected so many lives. But is not God sovereign? Yes. Is not God in charge? Yes. And has not God not ordained this? Yes, He has, and one of His reasons for this virus is that He wants us Christians to wake up and not be so fleshly and worldly, and not be like the Christians in Corinth. 1 Cor. 3:3 – *“Are you not fleshly, are you not walking like mere men.”* I am not saying all Christians are fleshly and worldly, but in this country, many are, and this should not be.

I really believe God is using this coronavirus to get our attention, to get us to slow down, to even stop, so we get our mind off the things of this world and seek Him. As you know, there are so many *“things to do,” “places to go,”* and *“people to see.”* But maybe He wants you, spiritually speaking, to lie down. In Ps, 23:2, we read - *“He makes me lie down in green pastures.”* More than anything or anyone else, you need the Lord, you need to be close to the Lord, you need to depend on the Lord, and trust the Lord, and love the Lord and be satisfied by Him. God needs to be 1st in your life, your most important relationship, the One you love more than anyone or anything else. Here is what David said - *“Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth”* Ps. 73:23-25

My favorite verse on this subject is John 17:3. Jesus said to His Father, *“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”* Jesus defined eternal life as knowing God and Himself, as having a relationship with the one true God. This is incredible, this is wonderful, that we can have a personal and permanent relationship with the living God, that He can talk to us and we can talk to Him, that He can love us and we can love Him, that we can spend time with Him, know Him and be satisfied by Him. Here’s how David said it in Psalm 16:2 - *“I said to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord, I have no good besides You.’”*

What a blessing, what a miracle, that we can know God and have a relationship with Him. What Christ did for us by dying on the cross and rising from the dead resulted in more than just being made righteous but being reconciled to God and having a relationship with Him. God could have saved us and placed us in some far corner of the universe for all eternity. But no, He saved us so we could be His children and have this personal relationship with Him, and then someday, leave this earth so we could literally be with Him in heaven.

Our relationship with God is the single most important thing in our life, and He doesn’t want us to be thinking we’re doing good, that our relationship with Him is doing good if, in fact, we are deceived and are living on the junk food of this world. Sadly, this deception describes the lives of many Christians: As Jeremiah said, *“Thus says the Lord... they went far from Me and walked after emptiness and became empty... My people have committed two evils; they have*

*forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”* Jeremiah 2:5, 13

I hope you realize that worldly and fleshly desires wage war against your soul, and to have a close relationship with God is a struggle, but it's the most important struggle there is, one you need to win (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Paul's personal testimony is motivating - *"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Phil. 3:8). Like Paul, God wants you to have this close relationship with Himself, one in which you are experiencing this eternal life God has given you, which means knowing Him, and being satisfied by Him.

To know God and Jesus means you know who They are. You know Their offices, that God is your Father, your Creator. You know Jesus is your Lord, Savior and coming King. You know Their character, what They are like. You know God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit too, are supreme, holy, just, wise, powerful, good, loving, patient, forgiving, compassionate, faithful, sovereign, etc. But it's not just knowing these things in your head but knowing them in your heart and experiencing them in your life which means knowing Him.

Finally, you know their purposes, that God and Jesus want people to worship Them and glorify Them; and They want to save people so they can experience their life, love and mercy; and They want people to be filled with their joy, their goodness, their peace. In the gospel of John, Jesus describes Himself with what are called the *"I am's."* Jesus said, *"I am the living water, the bread of life, the light of the world, the vine, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and the way, the truth and the life."* And knowing Jesus means knowing Him in these ways, where He is really meeting your needs, satisfying you, filling you up with His life.

One of God's primary desires for you then, whether that's here or in heaven, is that you really get to know Him and know Jesus. And so, let me ask you:

- Are you experiencing God's forgiveness?
- Do you see how He has been so patient with you?
- Do you see how He has been so good to you?
- Do you see how He loves you? I mean, can you say - *"Your love is better than life?"* Ps 63:3
- Do you see how God is sovereign in your life, how He works all things together for good?
- Do you see that He is your shepherd, your bread, the living water, the light of the world?

I can't stress enough the importance of knowing God, who He is and what He is like. And getting to know God shouldn't be something that you feel like you have to do. Getting to know God shouldn't be a burden, but a desire, a delight (Ps. 37:4). Hear what Paul says, *"I want to know Christ"* (Phil. 3:10). Listen to what Jeremiah says, *"Let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth."* Jer. 9:24

But it's more than all this. Your relationship with God is not one-sided. It's not just what God says to you or does for you, it's you relating to Him and responding to Him.

- It's telling Him thanks for saving you, for providing for your needs, for giving you a job, a place to live, a church, friends, and so many spiritual and eternal blessings.
- It's praising Him, exalting Him, loving Him with all your heart. Psalm 118:28 – *"You are my God, and I give thanks to You; You are my God and I extol You."*
- It's loving His word and learning what He wants you to know and do. Psalm 119:97 – *"O, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day."*
- It's believing what He says to you, and meditating (thinking) about it. Psalm 1:2 – *"His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law, he meditates day and night."*
- It's obeying Him, it's keeping His commands, and doing whatever He tells you to do.
- It's praying, it's asking Him for His help for your life and for others. Heb. 11:6 – *"Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, but He who comes to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him."* 1 Th. 5:17 - *"Pray without ceasing."*
- It's getting time alone with Him, where you can pour out your heart and tell Him what you are thinking and feeling. It's taking the best part of your day to be with Him. Mark 1:35
- It's walking with God, going through the day knowing He is with you; it is loving Him and knowing He loves you; it's hearing Him, talking to Him, enjoying Him and obeying Him. Eph. 4:1 - *"I implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you've been called."*

We have the example of believers in the Bible who had good relationships with God:

- We read that Enoch walked with God, which means he had a great relationship with God.
- We read that Abraham was called God's friend. James 2:23
- We read about Moses' relationship with God. In Exodus 33:11 we read, *"Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to His friend."*
- We read about David's relationship with God in the Psalms – and there was no doubt he was close to God, and loved God, and knew God's love for him. Psalm 63:1-4
- We read about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and she too had a close relationship, not just with Jesus as a baby, but with God Himself. *"Mary said, 'My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-slave.'"*

Well, let's go back to this coronavirus. I believe this Coronavirus Pandemic is a loudly ringing alarm clock designed to wake up the Christians in this world. Rom 13:11 says, *"Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed."* You have a Father who loves you so much, a Savior who died for you, lives for you, prays for you, and who can't wait to see you. During this time of social distancing, I want to encourage you to get close to God, and to grow in your relationship with Him, and be looking forward to seeing Him, to going to heaven, whether that's by rapture or by death.

Here's what Jesus said to the lukewarm Laodicean church, *'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will dine with him, and he with Me,'"* Rev. 3:19-20. And learn from what Jesus told Martha, *"... you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, and*

*it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42*

Let me conclude by reading from Job 19:25-27. *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes – How my heart yearns within me.”* I love these vss, for here’s Job and he has this severe skin disease, and he’s greatly suffering, and this is what he is thinking about. He has hope and knows the time will come when the Savior-King, the One we know as Jesus, will return to earth and reign over the world. And Job knew He would see Jesus face to face. This is the hope we need to have, and this is how we need to think, and this is what will help us get thru the hard times of life, will help us keep going until we see Jesus face to face. Might we say like Job said - *“How my heart yearns within me.”*