

*you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)*

There is another aspect of a committed faith. We are given entrance into the kingdom of Heaven by faith alone, but by a faith that never remains alone. God has created us to be workers of righteousness that His name might be honored. Paul talks about being saved by grace through faith but immediately follows it up with *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10) That sounds like the one who does the Father’s will. That sounds like one who is committed to Christ.

Are you committed to Christ? Jesus desires far more than friendship from the one whom He saves. Jesus desires commitment. He wants to be more than close. He has obligated Himself to you, and desires for you to do the same. He desires for us to surrender every part of our lives to His care and discipline. He saves us so that we should let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:16) So who is God to you? Which kind of relationship do you have with God? The answer to that question may be the difference between hearing “well done, good and faithful servant,” or “I never knew you, depart from me.”

**For More Information Contact:**

*All Scripture reference are from the English Standard Version.*

## **WHAT IS GOD TO YOU?**

by Howard Sloan

The question I am asking here is not a question of the character of God or who you think He is. It is rather a question of who God is to you. Or to phrase it another way, what is your relationship to God and is it a saving one?

Let me put it in a different context. We all have different kinds of relationships. Basically there are four kinds: contacts, casual, close, and committed. Contacts are the people that you have run into one or two times in your life. You have made contact with them but little else. It could have been an introduction at a social function, or someone you sat next to on a plane. You conversed and exchanged pleasantries, but there was no sustained relationship. Then there are the casual relationships in life. These are people that you see more regularly. They may be extended family members, friends of friends, or co-workers. You know them and they know you, but you have no significant presence or impact in one another’s lives. We also have close relationships. They are our family members and friends. These people have a significant place in our lives. We see them regularly, and we know them well. We have a lot of social interaction with them. But there is one more type of person in our lives, those to which we have a commitment. These are our spouses, children, parents, etc. We have an obligation to their welfare, and often they to ours. But what does this have to do with God?

In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus says some impactful words about who is going to be spared from the wrath of God to come:

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”*

What this passage says among other things is that Jesus' knowledge of us is what matters. *"I never knew you"* from the lips of Jesus could be the harshest words anyone could ever hear. It goes back to the whole relationship idea. What is God to you? Which type of relationship do you have with God?

Is God someone you have had contact with, but little else? Maybe you heard his name mentioned because you went to church when you were young, or a friend took you to hear someone preach. Maybe you even uttered a prayer asking God to save you, but since then you have given little thought to God or His ways. Can it really be said of you that you know Jesus, or that Jesus knows you? If so, what does that say about your eternal state?

Maybe your relationship to God is casual. Maybe you come to church, sometimes. Or attend a Bible study occasionally. But there is little other consideration to God. You like to keep your relationship to God comfortable with no inconvenience. You want Him in your life, but you have other things that are more important, or that keep you from getting any closer. That is not the kind of relationship that God saves people to have with Him. It is exactly however the kind of relationship Jesus describes in Matthew 7. While you like having Jesus around, there is little evidence of having known Him. Could you be risking your eternal state simply because you only want a casual relationship with God rather than true faith?

You can even be "close" to God. You can spend a lot of time in church, and Bible study. Even privately in the Bible and in prayer. The truth is someone can be social with God while having no relationship to Him. You can be engaged in the formalities of religion and the outward expression of it, without ever having true faith. The Pharisees in the New Testament abounded in religious activity and appearance, and by most were considered to be close to God. But Jesus found in them a religion full of activity and rules, with little love for God or knowledge of His grace.

What God desires is commitment. If you really know this God and are known by Him, you will realize that He is not a God who just dispenses salvation like candy, or sells it like it is fire insurance. When God knows you, when Christ Jesus saves you, and when the Spirit of God indwells you it has a profound impact on your life. Faith believes and trusts, but faith also repents. That is why Jesus

equates salvation with obedience to will of the Father in Matthew 7. We are not saved by obedience to the law. The Scripture is clear about that.

*"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ...For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Rom 3:10-12, 20-24, ESV)*

We are justified, in other words made able to enter the kingdom of Heaven, by the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, which we receive by grace through faith.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph 2:8-9; ESV)*

But faith is always coupled with repentance. Jesus' own words show this.

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)*

Repentance consists of turning from sin and turning to righteousness. Jesus is describing someone who has not repented. Repentance produces change. As Paul says.

*As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because*