

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The mountains are layered, with some in the foreground and others receding into the distance. The sky is a mix of light blue and white, with a bright sun flare in the upper right corner. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

I Want to Draw Closer to God
...But I Don't Know Where to Begin!

by Kerry W. Williams

I Want to Draw Closer to God,

A Guide to Help People Find a Relationship
with God

Kerry W. Williams

West Main Church of Christ

2460 W. Main
Tupelo, MS 38801
(662) 842-9263

Copyright © 2014, 2023
Kerry W. Williams

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, without permission in writing from the author or publisher.

ISBN 978-1-938335-78-5

Special thanks are extended to Randy Simpkins, Julia Bristow, and Reagan Williams. Your advice was invaluable to the production of this material.

Foreword

I talk to people every day about God, Jesus, church, and religion. Some of these sweet people are involved with a church family while others are not. Some have very satisfying lives, while others are struggling every day to survive, either physically, financially, or emotionally. Yet most people share one distinct characteristic which binds them together in the brotherhood of humanity. The common trait most share is, when asked, the desire to draw closer to God.

Why do we share this desire to be more intimate with our Creator? When we look back through history at ancient cultures, they all shared one common trait: worship. Some worshipped the sun, carved stone, or nature itself; yet they all felt the *need* to worship. Why? I suppose the answer is that we all have an innate desire born within us. We need God.

Despite this desire, *wanting* to draw close to God and actually *following through with it* are two very different things. Where does a person begin? Do I go to church? Which church do I go to, and how can I tell if it's the right one for me? Do I read the Bible? If so, should I begin

in the Old Testament or the New? Do I pray? What do I pray about? There are so many questions that often, people simply get frustrated and end up doing nothing at all. They want to build a relationship with God, but have absolutely no idea where to begin.

Although religion and faith can be intimidating, especially when a person is either just getting started or coming back to God, it is actually a very simple process. God wants to be close to you. He desires to have a relationship with you, and has revealed Himself to you in the Bible. All it takes is a willingness to follow His instructions, much like one would follow a map to lead him or her to a specific destination. In this case, the destination is a close and meaningful relationship with God, and the roadmap containing all the instructions needed is the Bible.

The Bible is a big book. Do we start in Genesis or Matthew? The answers we need are found throughout the pages of the Good Book, but finding those instructions can be challenging without help. The Bible is filled with marvelous but often confusing words and images. These images can be difficult to interpret and understand.

Therefore, we come to the purpose of this little book. It does not claim to have the answers you need in order to draw closer to God. It simply directs you to the Bible, so that you might find the answers there. God desires that you draw close to Him, and deep down inside, you desire to do the same.

What a glorious hope. You CAN have a relationship with God. But will you? If you so desire, turn the page and prepare to let God speak to you through His Word.

Step 1

Understanding the Problem

If God longs to have a relationship with man, and the need for God is built within everyone, then where is the problem? Why do so many well-meaning people live out their lives without God’s presence? Why does it seem so very hard and confusing to have a relationship with Him?

The answer has to do with a simple, well-known, but seldom understood religious word: *sin*. If we were to ask, “What is sin?” people would likely respond, “Really bad stuff.” In part, they would be right, but sin is much more than just the really repulsive things like murder and violence. It actually applies to a *principle* as much as it does to specific actions.

“All unrighteousness is sin...”¹

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”²

¹ 1 John 5:17

² 1 John 3:4

These verses show us the very essence of what sin is. It is much more than simply telling a lie or stealing: it is a *concept* of right and wrong. Sin is the breaking of God's divine will. It is the violation of His holy desires. In essence, it is anything which contradicts what God wants!

That is why there are both *sins of commission* and *sins of omission*.

“Commission” refers to those things we do which are wrong, while “omission” describes the *lack* of doing right. Both go against God's desire for our lives. He is our maker, and has a design for our existence. Sin occurs when we alter that supreme design.

Therefore, to live without sin would be to live one's life in complete harmony with God's will. Jesus did so. Everything He did and everything He said while on this earth were pleasing to God. That is why the Bible says He is “without sin,” and why the Father spoke these words:

“And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “ This is My beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased.*”³

Jesus lived a sinless life, in absolute harmony with God's goodness, but how many

³ Matthew 3:17

others do? How many people, besides Jesus, will live their whole lives in complete accord with God's wishes? Romans 3:23 gives us the answer.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

According to this verse, *everyone* that has ever lived, with the exception of Jesus, has sinned. At some point in our lives, we have all either done something God wouldn't desire, or *not* done something He would.

For many of us, this truth is not a shocking revelation. We can look back through our mind's eye and point quickly to grave mistakes in our past: things we wish we had never done, or wonderful opportunities now lost to us forever. These memories fill us with regret, and we long for forgiveness and a fresh start.

For others, the idea of being a sinner seems just a little too harsh. You have all certainly made some mistakes, but consider yourselves to be overall good people, and certainly you are. You pay your taxes, give to charities, and treat people kindly. You have most certainly *never* murdered, committed adultery, or been a thief. It seems illogical and severe to group yourselves with all of the evil people who inhabit our world.

Yet the Holy Bible calls every person a *sinner*.
How can this be?

The answer lies in a clear understanding of how God views *any* infraction of His righteous will. In a very real way, man's sin has presented God with a *conflict of interest*. God loves us all very deeply- so much so that He would even sacrifice His only son for our salvation.⁴ At the same time, God is pulled by an equally strong sense of justice. He is not only the *Father* of mankind, He is also the *Judge*.

“*He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*”⁵

Being the Creator of all things and the very standard of all that is good, God is just in His nature. There is no evil in Him at all. In fact, God is *incapable* of doing wrong, for He is Himself the benchmark that determines what is right.

“...in hope of eternal life which God, *who cannot lie*, promised before time began.”⁶

⁴ John 3:16

⁵ Deuteronomy 32:4

⁶ Titus 1:2

You see, regardless of how deeply God loves mankind, and longs to save everyone, He is bound by justice. God *must* do the just thing, regardless of what His love *desires* to do. His nature is absolutely just and good, and He is *limited* and bound by that nature. Therefore, whatever punishment justice demands of sin is that which God must inflict.

“For the wages of sin *is* death...”⁷

According to Romans 6:23, the just punishment of sin is *death*. When we think of death, we always envision a physical death, that is, losing our physical life. However, *death* can mean something else entirely. The word, as it is used in the Bible, often refers to the idea of *separation from God*.

“But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘ You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, *lest you die.* ’ ”⁸

After Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they did not physically die. In fact, Adam lived on to be 800 years old!⁹ For their

⁷ Romans 6:23

⁸ Genesis 3:3

⁹ Genesis 5:4

transgression they were expelled from the Garden of Eden, and hence, from the presence of God. They were separated from Him because of their sin. In this very first story of sin and wrongdoing, we see the pattern of what sin has done in the life of every subsequent sinner, and what it continues to do today. *Sin separates man from God.*

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.”¹⁰

If God’s nature is absolutely just, and therefore demands that He impose the just punishment for sin, and if the just punishment for sin is separation from God, is it any wonder that we long to be close to Him again? We were made to be in union with God, but sin has come in the way. It has barred our path back to God, and likewise, barred His path to us.

Nevertheless, God desperately wants to be close to us as well. His love for man is so great that it is almost indescribable. He was willing to pay ANY price to be able to reconcile us to Himself.

¹⁰ Isaiah 59:2

Sin has burdened every life. It has alienated us from our God. It has affected my life, and without a doubt, it has affected yours. Read on. The story only gets better as we see the great lengths a loving God will take to win back the children whom He adores!