



READ: ROMANS 5:6-8

What does this passage mean for your life? In what ways are you powerless? In what ways has sin shown up in your life? Above all, in what ways has God demonstrated the fullness of love for you?

The ego wants to see oneself as being self-made. But if grace is true, you didn't do anything to deserve it. God always takes the initiative. God loves you, not because of the ways you make yourself worthy, but because it's who God is. *You are fully loved, fully accepted. There's nothing you can do to earn or deserve this love.*

The foundation of a relationship with God is grace. On our spiritual journey, the more we realize we are fully accepted, the more we are able to live the same way toward others.



READ: EPHESIANS 2:8-10

Write out the idea of this passage in your own words. What does it mean to you?

ALL AROUND YOU

At times it may feel like too much to believe that an invisible God wants a relationship with us. How can we see it? Love is visible all around you and within you. Whenever you want to love someone, not for something they can do for you... Whenever you forgive someone for a wrong... Whenever you give away something to help others... this shows the Holy Spirit and grace at work. Even if you don't see and don't feel, you can believe. When you do these things, others see God in you. **Your life becomes evidence of God's goodness.**

When it feels dark and we don't know the way, the words of Jesus to Thomas are for us too.

READ: JOHN 20:29

What did Jesus say to Thomas (and to us)?

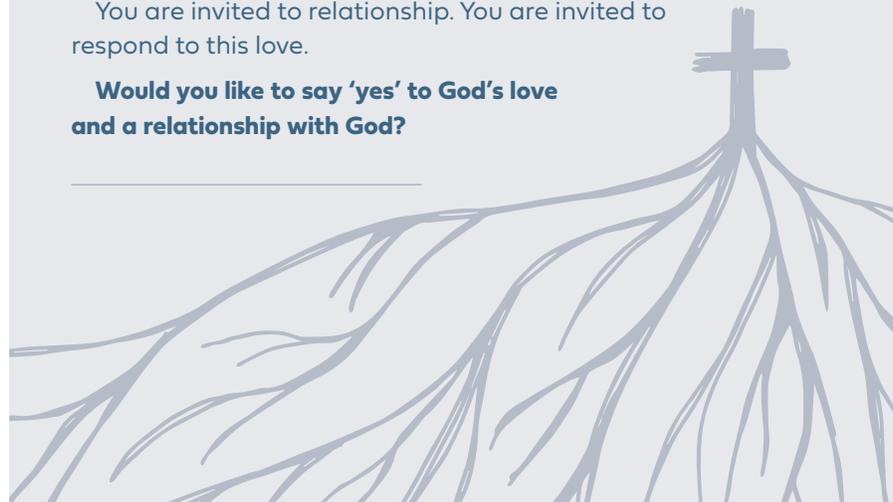
It's dark, friend. We are not in control. We don't have all the answers. A relationship with God does not take away the uncertainty. But just like the little boy in our opening story, in that darkness, we can ask, "God, is your face turned towards me?" God's answer is: "Yes, my eyes are always on you." God reminds us of this promise in the Word of God, "Never will I leave you, nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Jesus' self-sacrifice in death is evidence of this love that refuses to let chaos, pain, or even death itself have the last word. Jesus was willing to go through it all so that we could understand the true cost of sin and see that God can be trusted. We can be led into a new life, walking with Jesus in freedom, joy, and purpose.

Adventists believe that all life change starts with responding to this God who loves us first.

You are invited to relationship. You are invited to respond to this love.

Would you like to say 'yes' to God's love and a relationship with God?



DEEP ROOTS

A BAPTISM **BIBLE STUDY** GUIDE

Relationship



Relationship

1

SALVATION

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DALLAS WILLARD WRITES of a little boy whose mom had died and he was lonely at night. He would come into his father's room to sleep, but he could not rest until he asked this question: "Father, is your face turned toward me now?"

"Yes," his father would say. "You are not alone. I'm with you. My face is turned toward you." When the boy was finally assured of this, he could rest.¹



READ: PSALM 63:1

What does the psalmist desire? What is it that you long for in your relationship with God?

¹ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 186.

Knowledge vs. Experience

READ: JOHN 8:32

What did Jesus say would provide true freedom to his disciples?

The word "know" here isn't the word for simply intellectual knowledge (though that matters too). But this "know" means to intimately experience.

God desires us to know this truth – in our heads, in our hearts, and in our experience. The invitation is to understand truth, to experience it deeply and then to live it out. *God wants the Word of God to become living and active in us every day.*

There is a danger in "knowing" so much that we miss the truth – that we focus too much on head knowledge and not enough on a living experience with God.

These 10 lessons will be a journey together to experience more of God. Think of it as exploring God, like exploring a new country. Let's survey the landscape. Look up at the towering mountains, wade in the lakes, sit on the grassy banks, and picnic in the fullness of this beauty.



This Changes Everything

Disharmony, suffering, and loss. We all experience hurt and witness it in our world. This is called the Great Controversy – the struggle between good and evil. Adventists believe harmony is coming. Love and unity, renewal and wholeness are our birthright. God comes to show the way to a new story. Adventists believe that living in relationship with God is what changes our lives in the here and now.

READ: JOHN 3:14-17

What kind of relationship does God have with the world (with you and me) and what is the outcome?

The decisions that we and others make have a tremendous impact on every aspect of our lives. God comes to show us how to make decisions that lead to life in the midst of the destruction, despair, and death around us. This is the first step in knowing if a decision is from God. *Does it lead to more life or less?* God came to shine light into the darkness, to show us the way of the future while we are still caught up in the present.

God has decided to love the whole world, not just the "religious" or "good" people. God's love, however, does not coerce us into a relationship. Instead, we are invited to choose how we will respond to God's love.

What is Grace?

Here's the thing, though: you cannot create your union with God. It's already given to you. It's not that some have a relationship with God, and some do not. Awareness makes such a difference. What a gift it is to decide to love and relate back.