



# *discover intimacy*

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*Uncover the secret to growing a relationship with God  
and to finding joy through our daily interaction with Him*

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His name is Paro, and he's a cute little white seal. But he is a robot - one that functions as a companion for elderly people. Indeed, Paro the robot is made for one purpose - to be a lovable and cute friend, like a pet, but without the problem of live ones.

The amazing thing about Paro, this cuddly and little furry robot, is that it can, indeed, cheer you up. That's why models are being used more and more as companions for the elderly. There are more advanced versions on the assembly line for Paro, which has been called by the Guinness Book of World Records - *The World's Most Therapeutic Robot*.

## THE GRAND EPIC

But God did not make us as robots. And God is not a robot. As we have been studying, we are all real victims, casualties to one degree or another, in this grand epic - the great controversy. It's real, it's here, and none of us can escape the battle. Yes, through Jesus we have been assured - even guaranteed - of final victory. But until then, we, daily, are players in this literal cosmic drama.

Through these lessons we have been pulling back the veil that has covered so much of what is going on. And we have, through the teaching of the Bible, learned a lot about why so many things have happened and how it is all ultimately going to end.

Most importantly, of course, we have learned about Jesus - about His love, about His death, and about the grace and forgiveness and healing He offers us. And we have learned about the great promise of His second coming, and about the new heavens and the new earth that await the redeemed when He does come.

We have seen the progression of kingdoms in conflict (Daniel 2:36-45) that bring us down to today. We have seen that every time the great prophecies climax with ... *the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.* Daniel 7:18

In other words - Sure, this world is a tumultuous and tough place but, in the end, God's people will live in a kingdom of peace that will last forever.

And the good news is that, through Jesus, we all have the opportunity to be there.

## THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE

Until then, however, we have to contend with the harshness, the struggles, the battles, and the disappointments in our own story, in our own personal epic. And yet, we have not been left alone. On the contrary, we can have a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus, a sense of His presence, and the comfort from not only knowing Him but knowing that He loves us and is with us in our trials and struggles right to the end.



***Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.***

*Matthew 28:20*

As humans, we can have a lot of experiences - good ones too. But, as those who have known can testify, nothing comes close to experiencing the reality that not only does God exist but He loves you - personally. To know that love for yourself, to experience that love, is the most life-changing experience anyone can have.

We're not talking here of a relationship with Paro. We are talking about a sinful, fallen human being having a personal one-to-one relationship with God - as close and as intimate as if we were the only person on the earth!



***And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***

*John 17:3*

What is eternal life? He said eternal life was to know Him and to know the Father - that is, to come into a relationship with Him, and to know Him for ourselves and what He is like.

Bible teachings can give us an objective foundation to help us know God. To know that God is so loving, and that He died on the cross for us, tells us a lot about His character. To know that He isn't going to burn people in hell for eternity tells us a lot about what He is like. All these teachings, and the others, have their role in helping us know God.

But, as in any relationship, the key is to spend time with the person you want to come to know. And, thus, to come to know God, to know for ourselves what He is like, to know for ourselves His love, we need time with Him. And one of the greatest and most fruitful ways to do that is through personal prayer.

## THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

*Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. Steps to Christ, p.93*

How often, when simply talking to a person, do you come to know and appreciate that person better? Imagine, then, what it's like when you talk to God and come to experience what He is like?

For starters, Jesus prayed a lot.



***Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.***

*Luke 11:1*



***... in those days ... He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.***

*Luke 6:12*



***And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.***

*Matthew 14:23*

If the spotless and sinless Son of God thought it so necessary to pray, how much more important would prayer be for sinners like us?

## WHAT PRAYER DOES

Prayer is like quantum physics - we don't know how it works, only that it does. Our mobile phones, for instance, use quantum physics - yet no physicist alive can explain why things in the quantum realm do what they do.

Somewhat similar, in ways that we don't fully understand, when we pray, earnestly and fervently pray, our hearts are drawn upward toward God. The very act of praying is how we, as fallen beings, reach upward toward Him. Prayer takes our mind off this world and focuses it on a higher one - something that we need to be doing all the time!



***Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.***

*Colossians 3:2*

Also, when we pray, we are acknowledging our utter dependence upon a power greater than ourselves; a power that can do for us what we can never do for ourselves. Prayer constantly reminds us that we are but dust - fleeting, weak, and at the mercy of forces in the great controversy that we are powerless to stop. Thus with prayer, we - by default - become more dependent upon God and less upon ourselves.



***Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.***

*Mark 14:38*

When we pray, we tend to empty ourselves of self - of selfishness and self-centeredness - so that more of Christ can come into our lives. Prayer is a means of self-surrender, a means of helping us realise our need of grace, of forgiveness, of a change that helps us be more focused and caring about others and less about ourselves. Only those who have been there and have done it, know the reality of how prayer deadens us to self and helps make us more alive to God.



***For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.***

*Colossians 3:3*



When we pray, we acknowledge the reality of God's presence, of His grace, and of the fact that there is a God to whom we will have to answer. In short, with all the distractions, with all the things of the world that can bring us down, that can separate us from God and make us forget what matters - prayer helps not only to keep us connected with the Lord, but is a constant reminder of our need of that connection, which is why we are told to continue *steadfastly in prayer* (Romans 12:12), and *in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*. Philippians 4:6

Prayer, too, offers us great power against sin. When we are pouring out our heart to God in prayer, all the powers of Satan and His minions cannot overcome us. When praying, whatever else we might be doing, we will not be sinning. Through prayer, we become connected with God, who has promised:



***No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.***

*1 Corinthians 10:13*

And prayer is, perhaps, the only way to make that promise a reality.

## THE POWER

Because of these things, there is necessity for diligence in prayer. We should make every effort to keep the line of communication open. What's great, too, is that you can pretty much pray anytime, anywhere - you can

be in a crowded boardroom of business executives making a billion-dollar decision, but you can pray. You can be walking down a crowded street, but you can pray. If you can think; you can pray. And our own lives have surely shown us in the great controversy, we need a constant connection with God.

We are not talking about formal prayer here, but a personal conversation with God - not prayer books or reciting memorised words. You don't talk to a friend that way. It's not natural or spontaneous. So too, prayer is just talking to God as to a friend.

Another point is that though we are told, in numerous places, to pray for things that we want, prayer is not so much to get God to do what we want, but to get us in a frame of mind so that we are open to do what God wants. Prayer changes us. After all, how can we be connected with the God of the universe and not be changed? An attitude of prayer, which by default brings us into an attitude of surrender, will open us to God's will for our lives. How often do we hear it said that God answered my prayer; meaning God did what I wanted! Who now is playing the role of servant?

No question, the greatest example of this was Jesus in Gethsemane. Three times He prayed:



***... saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.***

*Matthew 26:39*

Those who have made prayer a habit know exactly how this crucial principle works. In many ways, it's the ultimate reason for prayer.

## GOD SPEAKS – THE BIBLE

As central as prayer is to our life with God, Bible study, devotional time in the Word of God, is central too. Prayer is the way we talk to God; reading the Word is the way God talks to us.



***Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.***

*Psalm 119:11*

When tempted by Satan in the wilderness, time and again what did Jesus do? He quoted the Bible:



***But Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.***

*Luke 4:4*

Paul told Timothy that from *childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* 2 Timothy 3:15

All through the Bible, especially the New Testament, the Scriptures play a central role. In his gospel, after he wrote about the miraculous birth of Jesus, Matthew immediately linked it to the Scriptures:



***So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.***

*Matthew 1:22-23*

Even with something as miraculous as this, which itself could have convinced many people that this event was of God - that wasn't good enough. The virgin birth had to be linked to the Scriptures; it had to be confirmed by the Word of God - a principle seen all through the Bible.

## BIBLE STUDY

Of course, there are things in the Bible that are hard to understand. Peter even warns about this in 2 Peter 3:16, and if we come to the Bible with an attitude of criticism, doubt, and scepticism, we will come away only more deeply entrenched in that attitude. Unfortunately, many do just that. Only in the millennium will we learn for ourselves the sad cases of those who made a shipwreck of faith because, instead of making their views and morals and ideas subject to the Word of God, they made the Word of God subject to their own views, morals and ideas. That's like an illiterate telling Shakespeare how to write!

Instead, we must come to the Bible as humble supplicants, as sinners in need of grace, humbly seeking in faith to know what the Word of God has to say to us. The Bible itself points to its own great authority. How crucial then, that as believers we take the Scripture at its own word.



***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.***

*2 Timothy 3:16*

There are always going to be things we don't understand in the Bible. God has revealed what we need for salvation, and what is secret belongs to

God. See Deuteronomy 29:29. Should we be surprised, then, when there are aspects of God's Word we don't fully grasp?

When we come across things we don't understand, we should just prayerfully accept that, at least for now, we will not grasp these things, and then move on to what we can understand. Many times, later on, these things will be opened to us. Every Christian has had that experience. At other times, we might never understand them this side of eternity. So what? Our relationship with God is based on trust - not proof.

There are many different ways of studying the Bible, including the way we have done so far with this course. Some like to go deep, using other resources like concordances and commentaries.

At a minimum, however, everyone should read their Bible devotionally. That means reading it with the purpose of knowing God and His will for your life. For many, early in the morning, before their day begins, they read and study. Again, opening the Word in an attitude of submission, in an attitude of a sinner in need of grace, is so crucial. We must come in submission to it; never, never vice versa.

The Bible is essentially a story book - about God and people. We learn of God by watching Him in action; and we get caught up in the action and emotion as he deals with people just like you and me. We can see many great things about God in nature, but nothing in nature can teach us, for instance, about the cross, about the resurrection, about the promise of the Second Coming.

Someone once said it would be good to spend a thoughtful hour every day thinking about the life of Christ. In the end, however much time one spends and whatever aspect of the Bible they study, the principle is crucial - time

in the Bible, reading, praying, studying with an attitude of humility, of gratefulness, and of praise, is an essential part of what it means to live the Christian life. It is an essential way of getting to know the Lord for yourself - to know His love, His goodness, His compassion and, yes, His justice and His wrath against evil.

And when you have experienced Him - you just want to tell others. Like the disciples, *we say we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Acts 4:20

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

During World War II, a Swedish businessman named Eric Ericson spied on the Nazis. He was, arguably, the Allies most valuable asset. One time, in a restaurant in Sweden, a Jewish friend came up to him. Knowing that he had to assume the role of a fervent Nazi, Ericson just berated the man, yelling before other patrons, *Stay away from me. I don't have dealings with Jews!* He had no choice; anything less would have jeopardised his mission, even his life.

As Ericson was leaving the restaurant, the Jewish man walked up to him, slipped a note in his coat and walked out. Ericson quickly pulled it out and read: *I don't know why you are doing this but I will never believe that this is really how you feel. If I can do anything for you, please let me know.*

Ericson immediately burned the note.

The point? The Jewish man knew Ericson well enough to know that, no matter what happened, he could trust him.

It's the same with God. When we are told that this is eternal life, *that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent* (John 17:3), how much more so should we know the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we too can trust Him - no matter the circumstances?

Our personal epic story is written just one day at a time. Who am I living for? Whose side am I on today? As the final cosmic crisis comes upon planet earth, and the whole world has to stand for the beast power or for Jesus - where will you stand? It will be too late then to get to know God personally, by experience. Too late then to learn from God's word the meaning of what is happening on the earth.

Trust comes only by experience - talking together, listening to each other, and doing things together. Just think of that! God wants to be intimate with us.



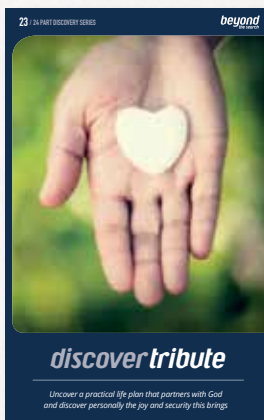








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