



FRESH START

You are beginning life's most satisfying adventure – your walk with God! As you start this adventure, here's what God says to you:

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be —you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Psalm 32:11 (MSG)

When you make a commitment of your life to Jesus, not only is your "slate wiped clean", you also get a "fresh start" – a new lease on life. This class is designed to help you have a good start to your fresh start. During these weeks together you'll discover and begin to unwrap ten gifts that God gives you:

F ORGIVENESS	– Accepting God's Grace
R ELATIONSHIP	– Worshipping
E NCOURAGEMENT	– Handling Failure
S CRIPTURE	– Understanding God's Word
H ELP	– Following God's Guidance
S HAPE	– Being You
T OGETHERNESS	– Living in Community
A UTHORITY	– Serving Others
R ECOGNITION	– Being Baptized
T ESTIMONY	– Telling Your Story

This session: RELATIONSHIP – Worshipping

He is a God who is passionate about His relationship with you. Exodus 34:14 (NLT)

*A person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a **rich relationship with God**. Luke 12:21 (NLT)*

If God wants to have a relationship with me, what is He like?

1. God is personal

The Israelites were being held captive and God asked Moses to go lead His people out of Egypt. Moses was resisting that idea, but finally gave in and said, "Okay, God I'll go to Your people in Egypt. But You know, they just might ask me Your name. I don't know if they will or not, but if they do what am I supposed to tell them?"
How did God respond? Did He get angry? Did He say, "How dare you ask Me my name?"

When Moses asked God His name, here's what happened:

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent Me to you.'" Exodus 3:14 (NIV)

No questions asked, God simply said. "Here's my name, I want my people to know who I am, I want to have a personal relationship with them." God has a name, He's personal. He knows you and He wants you to know Him. God's not a Stephen Spielberg creation that lives only in motion pictures or someone's imagination.

Then God continued, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent Me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation." Exodus 3:15 (NIV)

When you read the Bible you'll discover that God is not a God of **shrines**, God is not a God of **statues**, God is not a God of **temples**, God is not a God of **churches**, God is not a God of **institutions**, God is not a God of **governments**, God is a God of **PEOPLE**, "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He's personal and that means He cares about you.

I heard about a pilot who was obviously in trouble as he cried out for help. He finally was able to make radio contact with the tower. He said, "Pilot to tower. I am 300 miles from land. I am only about 600 feet above the water. I'm about out of gas. Please instruct." The man in the control tower responded: "Tower to pilot. Repeat after me. 'Our Father, who art in heaven—'"

Sometimes life may seem about that hopeless, but God, who has a name cares about you. Time after time in the Bible, God showed His care for people, combined with His name, Jehovah. To those who needed **provision**, God said His name was **Jehovah-jireh** "the Lord will provide." To those who needed **healing**, God said His name was **Jehovah-rapha**, "the Lord who heals." To those who needed **peace**, God said His name was **Jehovah-shalom**, "the Lord our peace." To those who needed **to know they were not alone**, God said His name was **Jehovah-shammah**, "the Lord is there."

God cares about you. He cares about your marriage and He wants to help it be a great marriage. He cares about your job and He wants to help things be good for you there. He cares about your heart that breaks when your children disappoint you. He cares about children who are the bright rays of tomorrow. He cares about the personal struggles and the questions that are filling your mind. He cares about the decisions that you need to make about life, and marriage, and career choices, and colleges. He cares about that emptiness and that deep longing that burns within you for the void in your life to be filled. He cares about the loneliness you feel because you desperately miss someone you loved dearly and death snatched that person away. The God who was willing to tell us His name, His personal name, cares about you.

2. God is present

The story is told about one fine old fellow named Uncle Roy going to church and reading the Bible. Sitting in his seat he read, "For God so loved . . ." and he yelled, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord." Then he read another Scripture, "For by grace are you saved through faith" and he shouted, "Hallelujah." His behavior and shouting was destroying the formality of the church so they took his Bible away from him.

Uncle Roy picked up a hymn book and read, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me," and he shouted, "Hallelujah," and woke everyone up again. So the hymn book was taken away from him and finally, he simply shouted. They said, "Uncle Roy, we took the Bible away and we took the hymn book away. Why are you shouting?" He said, "Just to see the handiwork of God in this place." They said, "We'll fix you. We'll put you in the closet." So they put him in the closet with the brooms and mops and some old magazines.

Everyone was just fine until, through the closed closet door, came, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" They opened the door and asked, "Uncle Roy, how could you shout in the closet?" He replied, "Oh, I was just reading this old National Geographic, and it says that in one place the ocean is 34,000 feet deep, and I thought, "Shucks, God goes deeper than that!"

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast. Psalm 139:7-10 (NIV)

There is no place in life so deep that God can't go deeper, and no place so high that God can go higher. He's always present.

3. God is powerful

Power, O God, belongs to You. Psalm 62:11 (NLT)

One Sunday morning during the Children's Sermon the Pastor was sitting in front with all those precious faces looking up at him. He asked them this question, "What is gray, has a bushy tail, and gathers nuts in the fall?" One little boy raised his hand and said, "I know the answer is probably Jesus, but it sure sounds like a squirrel to me."

The ultimate element in the name of God is power and God showed that to us in the person of Jesus.

In the Gospel of John we meet a man whose name is Jesus. That was a pretty common name among the Hebrews. Jesus was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua. But, this Jesus was different because He was "I AM".

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58 (NIV)

The personal, present, revelation of the God who met Moses on the mountain and said, "Remember my name" came in power in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "I am..."

the bread of life (6:35)

He feeds my hungry heart.

the light of the world (8:12)

He shows me the way in a dark world.

the gate (10:9)

He opens the way to God.

the good shepherd (10:11)

He protects me and meets my needs.

the resurrection and the life (11:25)

He gives me the life I was created to live.

the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)

He is the clear and only path to God.

the vine (15:5)

He is the source of all my strength.

Jesus said, "...All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." Matthew 28:18 (NCV)

How can I have a rich relationship with God?

Answer: by spending time with Him in worship

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness. Psalm 29:2 (NIV)

Worship means: "to attribute worth to". Whatever we value highest is what we worship most.

Let me give you a picture of worship. Have you ever been to a concert or watched one on television? Sure. What are the people in front, near the stage doing with their hands? Are they keeping them in their pockets or holding them calmly at their sides or are they reaching out to try to touch the artist? Right. They are reaching up to touch. And that's what worship is. It's an adoration of the Artist of the Universe and our lives. It's our reaching out to touch God.

...true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship Him that way. John 4:23 (NLT)

What are ways I can worship?

I'm going to give you eight of these, most of them we'll just move right through, because we'll be talking more about them in coming weeks.

1. Singing

Sing songs from your heart to Christ. Sing praises over everything, any excuse for a song to God the Father in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:19-20 (MSG)

*Praise the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with the tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals. **Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.** Praise the Lord. Psalm 150 (NIV)*

Unless you can hold your breath for an entire worship service, you need to join in singing to God.

2. Hearing the Word

Make them pure and holy by teaching them Your words of truth. John 17:17 (NLT)

3. Praying

Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. Psalm 95:6 (NIV)

Prayer is talking to God and listening to God. When we pray we will experience God's presence and power.

Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3 (NIV)

When you pray:

- i. Pray with confidence

Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)

- ii. Pray with your own words from your heart

...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us. Romans 8:26 (NIV)

- iii. Pray the four parts of prayer

Adoration – Acknowledging God and His attributes

Confession – Admitting our sins to God

Thanksgiving – Appreciate what God is doing in your life

Supplication – Ask God for what's on your mind and heart

iv. Pray in the name of Jesus

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. John 16:24 (NIV)

Praying in Jesus' name means that your prayers should reflect Jesus' character and His will.

How can you know if something is in Jesus' will?

God's will never contradicts God's word.

How will God answer your prayers?

God will either say no, slow, go or grow.

Here's a picture. Whenever you approach a traffic signal, it's one of three colors: red – which means what? “stop” or “no”; yellow which means “slow down” proceed with caution; or green which means “go.” That's how God answers our prayers. But then sometimes, God needs us to travel some rural roads, ones without traffic lights, He says “grow. You're not ready for the answer yet. And when God answers, there are three things He could change:

God can change the circumstances, others, or you.

4. Commitment

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Romans 12:1 (MSG)

5. Giving

A tithe of everything from the land...belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. Leviticus 27:30 (NIV)

A tithe means ten percent.

Every Sunday each of you make an offering and put it in safekeeping. Be as generous as you can. 1 Corinthians 16:2 (MSG)

6. Baptism

For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Romans 6:4 (NLT)

7. Lord's Supper

The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NIV)

8. Meditating

Meditating means you have a regular quiet time.

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him. Habakkuk 2:20 (NIV)

Why worship?

Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. James 4:8 (NLT)

When I worship, it helps me have a rich relationship with God.

In our next session:

ENCOURAGEMENT – Handling Failure

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