

HEB 11:5-6—WALKING WITH GOD

INTRO: We all live in a web of relationships—parents & kids; boss, employees, & co-workers; friends; neighbors; boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse. In any relationship, probably the best way to strengthen the relationship is to do things that the other person in the relationship likes and appreciates. For example, your friend likes a particular kind of chocolate; you get him or her that kind of chocolate. It pleases the other person, it shows that you value the other person and the relationship, and knowing that the other person is pleased also makes you happy.

The more important the relationship and the other person are in your life, the more we try to please them. We try to please a close friend more than a casual acquaintance. Little kids try to please their parents (BTW, that changes for about 10 years during the teens and early 20s). The most important relationship we typically have is with our spouse. So spending time with him or her, going for walks, doing little things they like, hopefully becomes a natural way of interacting. That pleases the spouse (and if momma ain't happy, ain't no one happy), but it also gives *you* pleasure and strengthens the relationship.

If there is a God, and if he is a personal God (as opposed to an impersonal force), wouldn't it stand to reason that God would be the most important person of all? And if it's possible to be in an actual relationship with such a God—sort of like a parent-child or husband-wife relationship—wouldn't we want to be pleasing to God? If that is possible, shouldn't we want to know *how* we can be in such a relationship and be pleasing to God?

Today's passage—**Heb 11:5-6**—points us to the answers to these questions (**READ**).

PROP: We please God by living a life of faith.

O/S: We will see this as we consider: (1) the example of Enoch; (2) what is necessary if we are thinking about entering into a relationship with God; (3) what does a relationship that pleases God involve; and (4) we'll consider some suggestions to strengthen our relationship with God.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF ENOCH

Enoch first appears in **Gen 5:21-24**. **Gen 5:22** and **24** say that Enoch “walked with God” and “God took him.” Both parts of that equation are repeated in v. 5 of today's passage which says “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.” IOW, Enoch pleased God because, as Genesis says, he “walked with God.” So, instead of Enoch dying, God translated him directly to heaven.

What's going on with Enoch? We need to understand that the OT is full of what the NT calls “types” and “shadows.” A type or shadow is a physical person, thing, or event that points forward to a deeper spiritual truth that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and/or the church. For example, the OT sacrificial system pointed forward to Jesus who made one sacrifice sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. The OT temple likewise was a “type” of Christ who said in **John 2** that he is the true temple and, since believers are said to be “in Christ,” on multiple occasions the NT says that the church itself is the true temple.

So, what is Enoch's being translated to heaven a “type” of? I believe he typifies the resurrection and eternal life. Enoch's example is demonstrating that there is, in fact, a heaven and a life that exists after this life is over. He is a type or shadow of what Jesus said in **John 11:25-26**: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

Why did God do this for Enoch? The answer is because, as Hebrews and Genesis say, Enoch pleased God because he “walked with God.” In the Bible, one's “walk” speaks of one's life. Enoch's “walking with God” was particularly significant given the time in which he lived. Remember, **Genesis 5** is the time just before the flood of Noah. The book of Jude says that Enoch prophesied the coming judgment because of the world's ungodliness. Enoch was the father of Methuselah who, in turn, was the father of Noah. In fact, Methuselah means “his death shall bring it”—“it” being the coming judgment. And in the year Methuselah died, the flood came. Enoch walked counter-culturally—he lived righteously in an unrighteous world.

It's to be the same with us. We are to live righteously in an unrighteous world. God tells us this in **Micah 6:8** where it says, **“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”** All this suggests that if we want life after this life is over, if we want to fulfill what Enoch pointed to, if we want to please God, we need to **“walk with God.”** Note that both **Genesis 5** (regarding Enoch) and **Micah 6** (regarding us) both say **“walk WITH God.”** We only walk “with” someone if we are in some kind of relationship with them. So that leads to the question:

II. WHAT IS NECESSARY IF WE ARE THINKING ABOUT ENTERING INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

v.6 answers that question. It says that **“without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”** We'll get back to the first part of the verse in a bit, but the word “for” in the middle of the verse begins the part of the verse that tells us what is necessary if we are thinking about entering into a relationship with God. It tells us 2 things: first, we must believe that he exists and, second, that he rewards those who seek him. So let's talk about this:

(1) We must believe that God exists. It might seem obvious that, if you are thinking about entering into a relationship with someone you must believe that they exist. Yet today, at least when it comes to God, many people think they can sidestep this foundational requirement by saying something like, **“I don't know if God really exists, or that Jesus really is the Son of God, but in my heart he is real for me. He may not be true for you, but I find the thought of God a great comfort.”**

If you think about it, statements like that and that whole approach to God make no sense. Statements like that assume in advance either that there is no God or, if there is, he cannot be objectively known. But that's the very point: to be in relationship with anyone—including God—you have to believe that he exists. The “He's true for me” position is basically the person making up his or her own “God” regardless of whether there is an actual, real God who can be known.

Also, because the “He's true for me God” is just the individual's personal made-up God, such a God can never be of any real help in time of trouble and great hardship. When God does not deal with you the way you think he should, then you'll no longer think he's true. How many times do people say, **“How could God allow this to happen to me or my loved one?”** or **“I could not believe in a God who would do this or allow that.”** And they cease to believe.

That simply amounts to saying, “Because this happened to me or my loved one, therefore, God does not exist.” That is a complete *non sequitur* and makes *you* and what *you* want the supreme determiner of truth in the universe—which is pretty silly, not to say arrogant, for a finite, mortal creature to think. Your made up God may well have let you down, but that has nothing to do with the existence or non-existence of a real, factual God.

(2) Which is why the second point—we must “believe that he rewards those who seek him”—is so important. Why? Because this shows that God—the real God—is a *personal* God, not just an impersonal force. You can believe in an impersonal force—gravity, magnetism, or even the Star Wars “force”—but you cannot “know” or be in a relationship with an impersonal force. An impersonal force does not “reward people who seek him (or it)”; it's just a force.

God is different. He is a person. A person can be known. You can be in relationship with a person. Moreover, the real God was not content to just remain an invisible Spirit and wait for people to try to seek him. Instead, he sought us. The real God came to earth and became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. As **John 1:14** says, **“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** And does he reward us? Absolutely. Jesus said in **John 6:37**, **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”** And more. He gives eternal life to all who know him. As he said in **John 17:3**, **“This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”**

When the Bible talks about “knowing” God, it means more than just head knowledge or “knowing about” him. Biblically, to “know” God means to be in an intimate, personal relationship with him. And eternal life is more than just living a long, long time. It is that—but it is also a new kind, or type, or quality of life. It is the life of Jesus himself. You see, all of these things are related—objective truth, knowledge, belief, relationship.

How can we know that Jesus Christ is who he said he is, the true God come to earth? Jesus essentially said, **“I will prove who I am by doing something that is impossible for anyone to do who is only a man; namely, they will kill me (I will be really dead), they will bury me, but on the third day I will rise bodily from the dead.”** Either he did or he didn’t. If he didn’t, then believe in any made up god you want. But if he did, then that validates who Jesus is and everything he said. And he did.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is, in my opinion, the most important and significant fact of history. And it’s not just **“he rose for me in my heart.”** No. The resurrection is a verifiable fact of history just as Jesus intended. It is the bottom line. I summarize the historical data that demonstrate the fact of the resurrection in my ECLEA book, *Christianity & Islam: Theological Essentials*, which is on the “ECLEA Courses & Resources” page of the ECLEA website (www.eclea.net).

The claim Jesus makes about himself—that he is the one, true God come to earth—is unlike any claim made by anyone else. The unique, historical proof of that claim—the bodily resurrection—it seems to me, should cause any rational person to at least check it out. To come to Christ means you can have a relationship with God himself. But to refuse to even check it out means you are consciously rejecting God and life itself—not a position that anyone should choose. So if you have any doubts about this, please check it out. Which leads us to:

III. WHAT DOES A RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES GOD INVOLVE?

v. 6 says that **“without faith it is impossible to please God.”** Faith is key. So, what is faith? Part of faith is what we have been talking about so far, namely, believing that God exists and believing who he is. So there is certainly an intellectual component to faith. That is necessary but, as we have seen, that is only the beginning. I can believe that Aaron Rodgers is the Packers’ quarterback. That is a true belief. But that doesn’t mean I have any kind of personal relationship with him.

v. 6 talks about a faith that “pleases” God. That gets us back to a relationship. It gets us back to Enoch, because Enoch **“was commended as having pleased God”** or, as **Genesis 5** put it, he **“walked with God.”** A person in a relationship that pleases God has a faith that is more than just believing that God exists and that God is a personal God who came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

Let me suggest that real relational faith that is pleasing to God also involves a behavioral component and a devotional component. Jesus summarized both of these in **John 14:21**, **“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”** “Having my commandments and keeping them” speaks to the behavioral component of faith; “Love” speaks to the devotional component of faith. Let’s briefly look at these:

(1) The behavioral component. The apostle James says this in **Jas 2:17-19 (READ)**. I can say the words “Jesus is Lord,” but if that belief simply remains in my head and does not change my life, it is no better than the beliefs of the demons. They believe who Jesus is, but they do not do what he says and are not devoted to him. The words are just lip-service. The belief is empty. It is not *saving faith*.

Jas 2:17-18 explicitly makes clear that our behavior, our works, is the *evidence* of whether or not our faith is real. As James states, **“faith without works is dead”** and we **“show our faith by our works.”** IOW, beliefs in theological propositions that do not change our lives are *not saving faith*—even if the propositions themselves are true, such as believing that Jesus is God come to earth. But if our faith changes how we live and treat people, then what we do becomes the outward and visible sign of true saving faith.

(2) The devotional component. In **John 14:21** Jesus talked about reciprocal love: we love him and his Father and he will love us, and he will manifest himself to us. IOW, a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is not an unrequited love. It’s like any loving relationship: H & W; boyfriend/girlfriend; or close family or friends. If people truly love each other, they want to know more and more about the other person—what makes them tick, what do they like and don’t like. And then, they manifest their love for each other by doing things that build up the relationship and please the beloved. It’s similar in our relationship with God. So, if you are in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, let’s briefly consider:

IV. A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Someone has said that **“communication is the lifeblood of any relationship.”** We communicate verbally with words; we also communicate non-verbally (a look, a silence, a gesture, simply being together); and we communicate by deeds (“actions speak louder than words”). All these forms of communication work together to build the relationship. That is true of human relationships and of our relationship with God. Let me explain.

Verbally, God has spoken to us in his Word, the Bible—and he still speaks to us through the Bible. To know his heart and his mind, one needs to be a student of the Word. Read it; memorize it; study it; meditate on it. The more the Bible gets “into” us, the more God’s own values, priorities, nature become our own.

Verbally, we speak to God in prayer. Heb 4:16 says we can “confidently” or “boldly” approach the throne of grace. Why? Because God knows us; he loves us; he knows our needs; he sought us out and is looking for a loving relationship with us. The apostle Peter tells us to **“cast all our cares upon God because he cares for us” (1 Pet 5:7)**. Verbal communication is one mark of a relationship, and we have the means at our disposal if we want to enhance our relationship with God through the Bible and prayer.

But prayer is a two-way street, and it is non-verbal as well as verbal. What do I mean? Prayer includes *listening* to what God has to say to us in addition to our talking to God. Many years ago, Mary Geegh, a former missionary to India, wrote a booklet called *God Guides*. It details multiple examples of what she calls “listening prayer.” In listening prayer we wait, we’re silent, and we “listen” for what God has to say to us. His answers typically come as thoughts that he puts in our mind. Here is one example. A woman came to Mary (**READ pp. 1-2**). Mary concludes: **“When man listens, God speaks; when man obeys, God acts; when God acts; men change.”**

But she also points out that to expect God to guide us, we need to look deep within ourselves. We need to ask God and ourselves what are called “the Four Absolutes”: **“Am I absolutely honest? Am I absolutely pure? Am I absolutely unselfish? Am I absolutely loving?”** He will let us know, and then it is up to us to make the changes we know we need to make. According to **Rom 8:29**, the whole point of our lives is **“to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ”**—IOW, to be like him, his values, his priorities, his character. We cannot hope to be like that if we are not absolutely honest, pure, unselfish, and loving.

Finally, in addition to verbal and non-verbal communication, we communicate by deeds. Our relationship with God is enhanced by how we act. Henry Blackaby says, **“Once you have an intimate love relationship with God, He will show you what he is doing. Your job as a servant is to follow Jesus’ example: Do what the Father is already doing—watch to see where God is at work and join Him!”** What do you see God doing in your life? Among your friends and family? In the community? Pray, look, expect him to be at work, and join him.

God knows our needs and he wants the best for our lives. He speaks to us in his Word and in the thoughts he puts in our mind. The question is: Do we trust him? He has proven himself worthy of our trust (what Jesus did for us on the cross proves that). What we do when he speaks to us through the Bible or puts thoughts in our mind proves whether we really trust him.

Remember what Jesus said in **John 14:21**, **“If you love me you will do what I say, and I will love you, and I will manifest myself to you.”** In her book *Out of the Saltshaker*, Rebecca Pippert gives an example of the truth of this. A college girl was thinking about entering into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. But she had doubts. She asked Rebecca, **“What should I do?”** Rebecca said, **“Begin to read the Gospels every day. Each day as you read, something will probably hit you and make sense. Whatever that is, do it as soon as you can.”** The girl said, **“That’s radical, but I’ll do it.”** The girl narrates what happened next (**READ pp. 98-100**).

CONCL: Like Enoch, it is possible to **“walk with God.”** God will take us where we are—but he won’t leave us there. As we get to know him through his Word, and hear him in prayer, and see him in our lives, we will be changed as we join him in what he is already doing and do what he says. Our faith will become a living faith, our character will be refined, he will manifest himself to us, and our relationship with God will be strengthened and deepened. In short, we, like Enoch, will “please” God by living a life of full, vibrant, joyful faith.