

## How to Relate to God

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.rteindent2 { padding: 0 0 0 70px; }
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ul { margin: 14px 0; padding: 0 0 0 35px; }
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ul.rteindent1 { padding: 0 0 0 70px; }
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```

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a:hover { text-decoration: underline; }
```

# THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR

READ ALONG WITH NICKY GUMBEL

March 2 Day 61

In one of his last songs Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the rock group Queen, asked the

question: 'Does anybody know what we are living for?'

In spite of the fact that he had amassed *a huge fortune* and had attracted *thousands of fans*,

Freddie Mercury admitted in an interview shortly before his death in 1991 that he was *desperately*

*lonely*. He said, 'You can have everything in the world and still be the loneliest man, and that is

the most bitter type of loneliness. Success has brought me *world idolisation* and *millions of*

*pounds, but it's prevented me from having the one thing we all need – a loving, ongoing*

*relationship.'*

There is only one relationship that is completely loving and ongoing – for which we were created.

Without that relationship there will always be a deep sense of aloneness and a lack of ultimate



meaning and purpose.

At the heart of the Christian faith is this relationship with God when we find what we are living for.

How can human beings have a relationship with the Creator of the universe? How in practice can

we begin to communicate with God? What is the basis of this relationship?

# 1. Develop a pattern of prayer

Psalm 28:1-9

Prayer is a key way to develop a relationship with God by speaking with him. There is no set way

to do this. There are hundreds of different prayers in the Bible. Sometimes, it is helpful to follow a

pattern (such as the Lord's Prayer). Another pattern that I have found helpful is using the

mnemonic 'ACTS'. These elements are often found in the prayers we see in Scripture.

The context of this psalm is fear – possibly the fear of premature death. The psalmist may be

facing illness or deep despair. He fears that he might die in disgrace and go down ‘to the pit’

(v.1).



His prayer to God includes the following:-

- A – Adoration

*'Praise be to the Lord'* (v.6a); Even in the midst of a difficult situation David still chooses to praise

God. Whatever the circumstances we should try to praise God for who he is and what he has

done. We see an example of this also in the New Testament passage as the people worship Jesus

(Mark 11:9–10).

- C – Confession

'Hear my cry for *mercy*' (Psalm 28:2a); ask God's forgiveness for anything that we have done

wrong. This is also a moment to forgive anyone we need to forgive. As Jesus said, 'When you

stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven

may forgive you your sins' (Mark 11:25).

- T – Thanksgiving



'My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him' (Psalm 28:7c). Thank God for health,

family, friends and so on. The importance of thanksgiving can also be seen in the Old Testament

reading for today (see Leviticus 7:12–15).

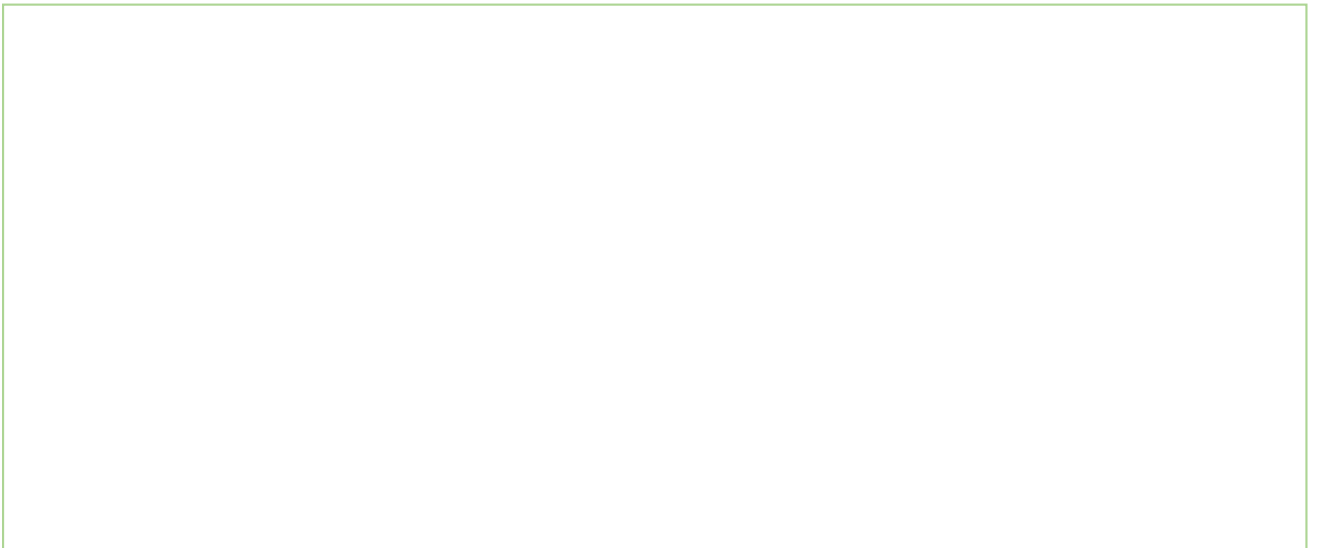
- S – Supplication

'... as I *call* to you *for help*' (Psalm 28:2a); pray for ourselves, for our friends and for others.

Interestingly David says 'I lift up my hands' (v.2b). This seems to be almost synonymous with

prayer. Hands raised in worship is not a modern idea; it is actually one of the most ancient forms of

prayer.





Lord, I *adore you*. I worship you today. Praise be to the Lord ...



I *confess* my sins to you ... Hear my cry for mercy and forgive my sins.

I will give *thanks* to you for you are good. Thank you, Lord, for ...

Hear my *supplication*. Today I call on you for help ...

## **2. Pray in faith**

Mark 11:1-25

The great emphasis of the New Testament is that we relate to God by faith. We cannot earn the

right to a relationship with God; it is a gift to be received by faith. In this passage we see the

importance that Jesus placed on faith. He said, 'Have faith in God' (v.22). He says that by faith

we can move mountains if the person praying does not doubt in their heart but believes (v.23).

Jesus' relationship with God, particularly through prayer, lies at the heart of each of the incidents

we read about today. As Jesus approaches Jerusalem the people worship him. They cry out

'Hosanna' (vv.9–10) which was originally both a cry of happiness and a cry for help, meaning

'save, we *pray*' or 'save now'.



On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus drives out the money-changers because of his passion for the purity

of God's house. He says, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a *house of prayer* for all

nations?" ' (v.17).

The passage ends with Jesus teaching his disciples that *unforgiveness* can be a *barrier to prayer*

and our relationship with God. He says, 'And when you stand *praying*, if you hold *anything* against

*anyone*, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins' (v.25).

Jesus says we are not to hold '*anything against anyone*'. He does not say 'anything (not too

serious) against anyone (who is not a bad person)'. There are no limits to forgiveness.

Unforgiveness destroys relationships.

Forgiveness sometimes takes great courage but it restores relationships and brings great joy. It is

said that, 'The first to apologise is the bravest. The first to forgive is the strongest. The first to

forget is the happiest.'



Intertwined in these events, Jesus demonstrates the power of prayer in the acted parable of the fig-

tree. From this he teaches his disciples about the importance of faith and fruit in our relationship

with God.

The fig tree had leaves but no fruit. Jesus said to it: 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again'

(v.14). I love the way Joyce Meyer applies this parable: 'If our lives revolve around the church but

we have no fruit, we are not living our faith. We can have Christian bumper stickers on our cars,

wear Jesus pins, carry our Bibles around, spend the lunch-break sitting alone reading our Bibles,

have plaques listing the fruit of the Spirit hanging on our walls, and listen to teaching tapes and say

“Praise the Lord! Hallelujah” but if we do not have time to help anyone else or even show

kindness, we are like the fig tree with leaves but no fruit ... if we have leaves, we need to also have

fruit.'

Jesus uses hyperbole to explain that we must be absolutely confident in God's readiness to

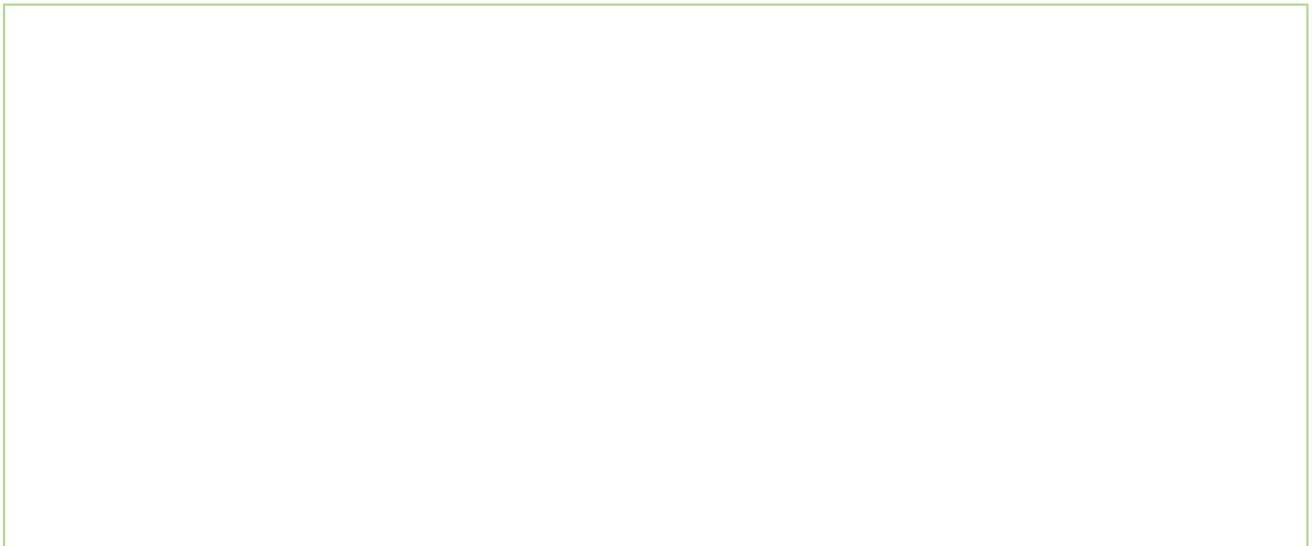
respond to faith. In Rabbinic literature 'mountain' is sometimes used figuratively to denote an

obstacle. Jesus seems to be saying that God will come in response to faith to remove *seemingly*

*impossible obstacles*. He says, 'Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that



you have received it, and it will be yours' (v.24).





Lord, give us that same passion of Jesus; that the house of God may be 'a house of prayer

for all nations' (v.17). Help us never to hold unforgiveness in our hearts but, whenever we

pray, to forgive anyone we need to forgive. In everything, Lord, help us to trust in you.

Thank you for your amazing promise that 'whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you

have received it, and it will be yours' (v.24). Lord, today I ask ...

### **3. Approach God through Jesus**

Leviticus 7:11-8:36

The way to relate to God in the Old Testament was through the priesthood. Sinful human beings

could not relate directly to God. They needed to go through a priest, and in particular they needed

a high priest.



In this passage we see how Aaron was anointed for this task. Moses 'poured some of the

anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him' (8:12). Aaron was a forerunner

of Christ. The word Christ means 'the anointed one'. Aaron's priesthood was fallible; he had to

offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as the people's. Jesus is the great high priest. Through

Jesus we can relate to God with confidence and have a direct relationship with him.

As the writer of Hebrews puts it, 'Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended

into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a

high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been

tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of

grace with *confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need'

(Hebrews 4:14–16).

In fact, because of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, we are in an even better position than the Old

Testament priests (compare Hebrews 10:22 with Leviticus 8:30). Through repentance and

forgiveness our relationship with God is utterly transformed and we can come directly into God's

presence, just as the Old Testament priests did when they entered the Tent of Meeting. 'Let us



draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our

hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience' (Hebrews 10:22).



Lord, thank you that through Jesus we can approach the throne of grace with confidence

and receive mercy and grace. I ask for your mercy and grace today in everything I do and

say. Help me to stay close to you and walk in a *loving, ongoing relationship* with you

throughout the day.



**Pippa Adds**

**SMS**

Southern Mission Society

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**Psalm 28:6–9**

I love the combination of God being our strength and shield, and the gentle shepherd who carries

us forever.

**SMS**

Southern Mission Society

<http://samission.org.za>

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