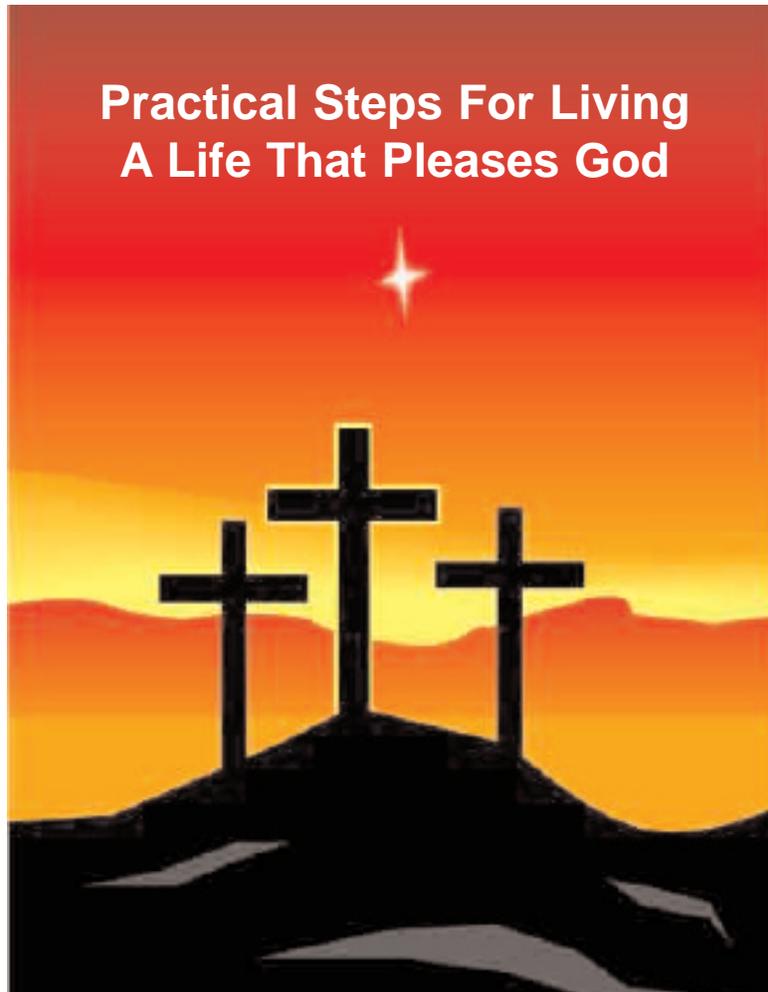


Lifebytes

12. Freedom In Jesus Video Series (Part 1) Certain Of What We Do Not See

Relating To A God Who Is Spirit



[For the video or audio of this series, go to our website or call 888-229-3041]



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Relating To A God Who Is Spirit

In this segment we want to focus on God Himself. We aren't trying to define Him as many attempt to do, but to reaffirm what the Bible tells us about the only and true God of the whole universe.

Please bear with us in this segment. Some of you will be reading things that you think you already know. But as we mentioned in the previous Lifebyte segment, much of your knowledge may be ABOUT God, without you truly KNOWING Him. This may be especially true if you aren't *experiencing* Him on an ongoing basis.

If you walk into any Christian bookstore today, you'll find scores of books that are man's attempt to define God. Again, the impact of Hellenism on our entire educational system has influenced even the church into a harmful and deceptive practice. In essence, if you can define something, then you erroneously feel that you KNOW it. But defining and knowing are NOT the same.

You may not be aware of the profound influence of Hellenism on the church over the centuries. This deceiving demonic power may have convinced you that you KNOW the true God of all the universe because in your mind you've been taught to define Him. You can put a label on Him and place Him in a categorical box in your mind.

Man has done to God what psychology does to people, putting them into tidy definitional boxes. Every time you use a definitional term like, "You're an extrovert", or, "You respond as you do because you're a child of an alcoholic

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parent", you put man-made labels on individuals. While it may help your mind to box people in by labeling them, this practice also keeps you from fully knowing that person in his or her ENTIRETY.

We want to emphasize this point: The widespread influence of Hellenism on the Church over the centuries keeps many from truly KNOWING God, or from WANTING to know Him as He really is according to His Word.

So as you follow along with us, take a good look at how YOU understand God.

- Is He a conglomeration of spiritualized definitions in your mind?
- Or, is He your heavenly Father and beloved Lord, a God whom you *experience daily in your life*?

Anchor this foundational truth for yourself: We exist because the only and

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true God of all the universe took it upon Himself to create us. Our Lord wanted a creation that would relate to Him.

He created us to have a RELATIONSHIP with Himself, not just to know about Him. We're told in Genesis that we're made in His image. Yet, unlike God Who is spirit, we're composed of physical bodies that house both a spirit and a soul.

As we'll see in these series of Lifebytes, this makes it interesting for us with our physical bodies in which abide a spirit and soul to relate to our Creator and Lord, Who is spirit.

Again, please PAUSE, DISCUSS, AND PRAY as often as you need to. Let the Holy Spirit in you be your Guide to, and Confirmer of, all truth.

It's self-evident that you're reading this Lifebyte with your physical eyes. But for spiritual truth to be truly understood by you and be grasped by your spirit, you must do something you may not be use to:

Stop and pray for the Spirit of wisdom to give you His understanding and insight.

If you're reading through this with others, it's critical that you **discuss** the things we share with each other. Discern with others the changes He may be calling you to effect in each of your lives.

An Unseen God In An Unseen World

Let's begin this section by affirming from Scripture that God created both the physical and the intangible things around us.

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him (Colossians 1:16).

God, Whom you can't see, designed all this. Our invisible God is continually aware of what's going on in the physical world. WE may not see HIM, but His eye is always on US!

Our Lord's chief interest is in the condition of our hearts and our motives before Him.

When you PRAY, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is UNSEEN. Then your Father, who sees

what is done in secret, will reward you"(Matthew 6:6).

When you FAST, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is UNSEEN; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:17,18).

We could have included more verses about the interconnectedness of our invisible Lord and His visible creation. But you get the idea that our Father in heaven operates from an unseen world. He not only perceives your heart and your actions, but He responds to those accordingly to draw you in closer to dependent, loving trust in Him.

Keep in mind a very unique quality concerning the unseen world around us: *We "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is UNSEEN. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is ETERNAL" (2 Corinthians 4:18).*

The unseen reality IS eternal. This is such an important truth that's worth repeating: It's the UNSEEN realm that's ETERNAL. And out of our Lord's wonderful grace, those who are in union with Jesus can enjoy a foretaste of that eternal relationship here on earth!

Let's cement the definition of our trust in our unseen Lord, and the reality of His yet-to-be-seen destination for those who love and serve Him:

"Now faith is being SURE of what we hope for and CERTAIN of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).

In light of this passage, we want you to answer three questions:

- On a scale of 0 to 100, how confident are you about the unseen world around you?

Our invisible God is continually aware of what's going on in the physical world. WE may not see HIM, but His eye is always on US!

- Do you live according to its reality, or do you just know facts ABOUT it?
- Do you have Spirit-to-spirit communication with God?

These three questions may seem overly simplified. But, if you don't have confidence in the unseen and aren't spiritually relating to an invisible God, how can you ever LOVE Him as He wants to be loved? (See Newsletter 2003-10/11 "Love the Lord Your God with All...")

The apostle Peter emphasizes the union between loving our Lord and trusting Him, even though we have yet to SEE Him.

Though you have NOT seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him NOW, you trust in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8).

If it weren't for the Holy Spirit abiding with our spirit, NO ONE would be able to love an unseen God. In fact, it's your ability to love Him as He commands that assures you that you really ARE indwelt by the Holy Spirit!

We have two more questions for you to weigh:

- On a scale of 0 to 100, how would you evaluate your love for God? Be honest with yourself.
- If you're reading this with someone else, how would THEY appraise your

love for God? Be honest with each other.

If it weren't for the Holy Spirit abiding with our spirit, NO ONE would be able to love an unseen God.

In fact, it's your ability to love Him as He commands that assures you that you really ARE indwelt by the Holy Spirit!

God Who Is Invisible Reveals Himself In His Creation

Keep this important truth in mind: In order for physical beings like ourselves to experience an unseen God, HE must reveal Himself to us.

Did you get that? For an invisible God to be experienced and truly known by people, HE must reveal Himself to them. And, His revelations of Himself are multi-faceted.

One means of revelation is through His creation all around us. Sadly, many Christians don't realize how much of His character is revealed by what He has made! Yet, we're assured, "*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse*" (Romans 1:20).

Our Lord designed in advance to reveal His eternal power and divine nature through His physical creation. So anyone who claims that there IS no God can't give Him any excuse on Judgment Day.

Many Christians have an aversion to recognizing God in His creation. This is partly due to ongoing fear that we may slip into worshipping what He CREATED, as many pagan religions do. Because there IS that possibility, Paul warns us to

not follow the example of those who DID know the truth but forsook it:

*They **exchanged** the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served** created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen (Romans 1:25).*

Christianity has for centuries emphasized obedience to the commandments that attest to God alone as our only Lord. HE forbids acknowledgement or worship of any idol or demon that sets itself up alongside Him.

*You shall have no other gods before me. You shall **not make for yourself an idol** in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall **not bow down to them or worship them** (Exodus 20:3-5).*

That doesn't mean that our Father can't or won't USE His creation to speak forth messages. For example, our Lord has used magnificent sunsets and rainbows right after significant events in our own lives to affirm His presence and pleasure in what occurred.

Another example: Sue and I haven't had a paycheck since November, 1982. During times of prayer for financial need, our loving Father has had us find coins on the ground to assure us that the funds are coming. And, they always have!

Once, while we were doing a seminar in Phoenix, a Christian Navajo friend was hiking with us when a beautiful coyote crossed the trail in front of us.

Immediately our friend turned to face us. "Someone very close to you is about to die. The coyote crossing a person's path has been a sign from God to my people for centuries."

When we arrived back at his home, the phone rang. My brother in Connecticut was calling to tell me my mother was in the hospital dying. She passed into our Lord's presence a few days later.

Make sure YOU haven't been prevented by inordinate fear from seeing our God's fingerprints on what He's created. Don't deny Him the joy of sharing revelation of Himself through it.

God not only formed all of creation, He also has CONTROL over it. He can part the Red Sea as a path of escape for His people, and He can send birds and manna from heaven for food.

All throughout the Bible we see our Lord using plagues, storms, earthquakes and other natural disasters to warn and to chastise people. This God, Whom the Bible tells us DOES NOT CHANGE, is still doing the same today through signs that point to His power to get our attention!

In Jesus, The Invisible God Becomes Incarnate

Our God has gone much further to reveal Himself than through His creation. Our holy and loving Father sent His own Son, Jesus, to us. Jesus is the full physical embodiment of the invisible God!

Many Christians think that Jesus came to earth only to pay the penalty for their sins. Even though His sacrifice accomplished that, there was deeper purpose to His incarnation. "*[Jesus] is the **image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation***" (Colossians 1:15).

The Son of God became a physical revelation of the invisible Father. That's why Jesus assures us, "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*" (John 14:9).

There are many testimonies today

from ex-Muslims who have entered the Kingdom because Jesus appeared to them in such a way that their mind's eye could perceive Him. His incarnation became a personal reality to them.

Mike's Testimony

My first encounter with Jesus came in 1977 while I was stationed aboard a Navy ship operating off the coast of California. I'd been reading the Bible for a little over a year, and growing increasingly frustrated with my own religious upbringing. So much of what I was reading conflicted with my religious traditions.

On our last night at sea before returning to San Diego, I was laying on my bunk reading the Bible. I was exasperated over the disparity between God's Word and what my denomination had taught me.

At that moment the Spirit of Jesus entered my stateroom. I didn't SEE Him, but I knew He was there. He spoke to me: "Mike, the answer to your frustration lies in the meaning of the parable that you can't sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment (Matthew 9:16). Your sister Mary will explain the meaning of the parable to you."

I found myself at peace but baffled. My sister and I had been estranged for over a year, ever since she decided to follow Jesus, and leave the denomination we'd been raised in. I was extremely prejudiced and believed only those in my denomination were going to heaven.

The next morning our ship pulled into the pier and Sue picked me up. On the way home I told her what had occurred in my stateroom the night before, and how I had to see Mary. She told me that Mary had called the previ-

ous night and was coming to see me. Wow!

As soon as my sister got out of her car I ran up to her. "Please, explain the meaning of the parable that you can't sew a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment!"

She replied, "Jesus was talking about religious practices and telling the people that they couldn't put their faith in Him and in their religious practices at the same time. It would only tear everything apart." I remember responding, "Well, whoopeedoo." Her words didn't have any meaning for me, so I was still frustrated.

The next night, Saturday, Sue and Mary took her daughter and our son out for ice cream. I knelt down in front of our fireplace and cried out to God, "You told me she'd explain the meaning!" Then a voice spoke to me, "Mike, you need to leave your denomination and find where ALL my children are."

On Sunday morning we were having breakfast with two of Mary's friends who lived in our town. After the meal they were going to go to their congregation, and we to ours.

In the middle of the meal I looked at Mary and her two friends, and words began to come out of my mouth, "Would you take me to your church this morning?" We were all flabbergasted! For me to go to a church outside my denomination was as impossible as a Muslim worshipping in a synagogue.

We arrived at a small rural church building in time for Sunday school. I'd never been to Sunday school before. The pastor greeted us and we waited for the other 20 to 25 people who normally attended. Only one other person came.

After fiddle-faddling thinking more might come, the pastor started the class.

“I want to talk about this verse, Acts, 4:20, *‘For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’* Does this verse have any special meaning for anyone?”

Well, I concluded that Sunday school is where you caught up each week about what God had been speaking to you during the week. So I began sharing what happened to me on the ship Thursday night, and in front of the fireplace Saturday night.

My sister recounted how she knew in her spirit she was to come and see me. By the end of the class time everyone was in awe over the marvelous thing God had done. Even the pastor could hardly get his jaw off his chest.

It was that day that I repented and became a follower of Jesus, no matter what the cost.

It’s key that you EXPECTANTLY LOOK for God to reveal Himself. The Bible shows us that He does: through His creation, through Jesus, and, as we’ll see in the next segment, through His indwelling Holy Spirit.

If you aren’t looking for Him in these ways, you’ll never know Him as He desires.

Remember: To truly know our Lord is to experience Him.