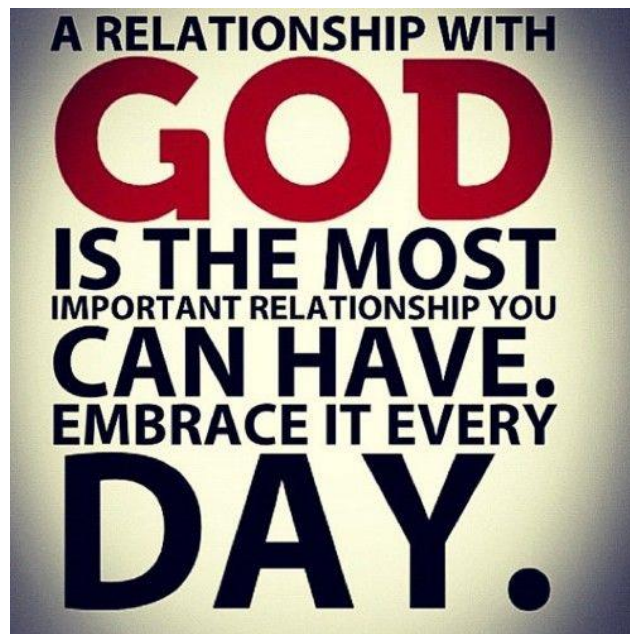


*Bible Study*

# What does “having a relationship” with God and Jesus mean?

And how do we actually have a relationship with them?

By C M White  
Version 3.0





## What does “having a relationship” with God and Jesus mean?

Authored by Craig Martin White. Copyright © Craig Martin White, GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is promoted through History Research Foundation (USA), History Research Projects (Australia) and Friends of the Sabbath (Australia)

[www.friendsofsabbath.org](http://www.friendsofsabbath.org)

No part of this work may be edited. It may be freely shared as part of research, projects or for educational purposes as long as quotes are properly cited.

All graphics are taken from the internet where they were made freely available.

### **History Research Projects**

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

[www.friendsofsabbath.org](http://www.friendsofsabbath.org)

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions.

The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

## Contents

<b>What is a "relationship?"</b>	4
<b>How to have a relationship with both God the Father and Jesus Christ</b>	5
<b>Our Daily Walk with God</b>	10
<b>What did the old Worldwide Church of God teach?</b>	12
<b>Concluding Remarks</b>	18
<b>Appendix. Herbert W Armstrong's Letter of 12 December 1958</b>	22
<b>Appendix: This is the Life - Real Abundant Living!</b>	24
<b>Appendix: Expressing Gratitude</b>	29
<b>References</b>	30

### Related Studies

- *A Note on the Name of Christ* by C M White
- *Christians Helping Each Other* by C M White
- *Just what do you mean ... 'Christ in you'?* by C M White
- *Seven Laws of Success* by H W Armstrong
- *The Mystery of God* by C M White
- *They have their Reward* by C M White
- *This is the Life - Real Abundant Living!* by H W Armstrong
- *Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?* by H W Armstrong

## What is a "relationship?"

Some claim that the old Worldwide Church of God never taught or seldom practiced a relationship with Christ.

Is this the case?

Do we even know what a relationship is?

*Collins Dictionary* provides us with a definition:

"The relationship between two people or groups is the way in which they feel and behave towards each other."

(<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/relationship>)

Here is another definition:

**1. relationship, human relationship** (*noun*)

a relation between people; ('relationship' is often used where 'relation' would serve, as in 'the relationship between inflation and unemployment', but the preferred usage of 'relationship' is for human relations or states of relatedness)

*"the relationship between mothers and their children"*

**2. relationship** (*noun*)

a state of connectedness between people (especially an emotional connection)

*"he didn't want his wife to know of the relationship"*

**3. relationship** (*noun*)

a state involving mutual dealings between people or parties or countries"

(<https://www.definitions.net/definition/relationship>)

A relationship is a level of connection and even feelings where two walk together in harmony toward a common goal. It is one of getting on with the other person and wanting to spend time with them whether as a friend or relative. In the Biblical sense it would be a good and even close, connection and walk with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

So, when some say we must have a "relationship with Jesus" do they know what that relationship is? Do they know how to go about it? What is their part in building and enhancing their relationship? What about God the Father in all of this? Should we also not have a relationship with Him, too?

This short Bible study seeks to answer these and other related intriguing questions.

## How to have a relationship with both God the Father and Jesus Christ

It is true that God and Christ are actual Persons and not just a set of laws or doctrines. But they are Beings Who have characteristics and beliefs which we must be in step with to have a relationship with them.

But as Beings, They have values, standards, laws, teachings (doctrines), feelings or emotions and a Way of Life which is essential for us to follow.

To relate to Them, we have to "be on the same page" as Them. They are the Ones Whom determine the relationship, not us. In fact, there is no true relationship outside of the way They have established which is the way of life that builds holy righteous character and leads to eternal life in a family relationship with Them.

That is why we pray "in the name of Christ" as His name is a metaphor for his authority, belief system, character and all that He stands for. Refer to the Bible study ***A Note on the Name of Christ*** for further information.

Unfortunately, some leave the Father out of the relationship equation, or at least minimise Him. But what do the Scriptures tell us? Notice:

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers **will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him **must worship in spirit and truth.**" (John 4:23-24)

Notice that our worship is primarily toward the Father and it is in accord with His terms. Worshipping God is another way of saying having a relationship with Him. Or that we have a daily walk with Him.

Herbert W Armstrong addressed this in his article "Should we pray to God or only to Christ?", *Good News*, May 1960:

"We cannot approach the Father by our own merits. We have none. Christ is the door -- the way. One does not go TO a door and STOP. He goes on THROUGH the door. Christ gives us access to GOD. And He INTERCEDES with God FOR US.  
**This intercession of our blessed HIGH PRIEST DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE PRAY TO CHRIST AND THAT HE THEN CARRIES OUR REQUEST TO THE FATHER.**  
**... we have access direct to the Father, to pray direct to Him by CHRIST'S PERMISSION.**  
Christ, our High Priest at the Father's side, ALSO petitions the Father for us -- offering HIS SACRIFICE in lieu of our unworthiness ...  
HOW do we have FELLOWSHIP? By meeting with -- conversing with!  
When we PRAY to the Father, and/or to Christ, we are speaking to them. When we read and study the Bible, they are talking to us. The Bible is the Word of GOD. Although Jesus is the WORD -- the direct author of the Bible -- yet He spoke only as the FATHER

commanded Him. So the Bible is the WORD to US from both the FATHER and the SON."  
(p. 8) [emphasis mine]

We cannot worship God by compromising with paganism, false doctrines, bad attitudes toward the brethren, Sunday or Christmas observance. Or wrong concepts of Who and What God is. Or what His view is on this or that topic (eg abortion, euthanasia, globalisation or women ministers). We cannot adopt political correctness and modern philosophies as they compromise with the world and still be in a close relationship with Him. We must take on His character, interests and holiness – and eschew our will.

Our relationship must be truly worshipping Him "in spirit" clean and pure, devoid of outward trappings, pretence, deceitfulness, and subtlety toward others. It must be open and good, pleasing to God, not pleasing to our own senses and wishes.

We must also worship "in truth" which incorporates the entirety of God's Word and not just cherry-picking parts of Scripture one may prefer such as the sayings of Christ or parts of Paul's writings. Taking these out of Biblical and immediate context leads to false assumptions and false doctrines that lead us away from our walk with God.

In other words, we must surrender to His will for our good and eternal life.

Any relationship is on His terms and striving to be like Him Who is the ultimate spirit Being Whom has all the truth (Matt 5:48).

"Though man looks on the outside and is drawn to religious acts of pomp and ceremony, God looks on the heart and delights in the one that approaches Him humbly, reverently and in the fear of the Lord - for God is close to those that are humble in heart; He saves those who are crushed in spirit; He feeds them that are hungry for Him" (<https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/john-4-24>)

There are obviously also feelings involved in this relationship including remorse, gratitude, child to Father love and such like. But that is an aspect of the relationship – it is not all there is to the relationship.

We can have all the feelings and emotions we want, but who says that is what God expects and wants from us in lieu of obedience, trust (faith), truth (doctrines) and such like? The Bible nowhere shows that emotion is more important than obedience. Nor should there be no feelings either as our relationship with Him is not sterile and impotent.

It is meant to be alive and one where one can serve God and others in many respects including prayer, good works, and spiritual gifts.

Christ also tells us to pray to the Father:

"Do not be like them, for **your Father** knows what you need before you ask him.  
Pray then like this: "**Our Father** in heaven, hallowed be your name ..." (Matt 6:8-9)

As we can see, the Father is central, and we enter into a relationship with Him through Christ. As such

we must pray to the Father (Matt 6:6)<sup>1</sup> in Christ's name (authority and power) because He is our High Priest interceding for us (Heb 7:25; IPeter 3:18; Eph 2:18).

Further,

**"Listen to your father who gave you life,** and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.

Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.

**My son, give me your heart,** and let your eyes observe my ways." (Prov 23:22-26)

"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12)

"So therefore, **any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.**" (Luke 14:33)

**"You are my friends if you do what I command you."** (John 15:14)

**"Set your minds on things that are above,** not on things that are on earth.

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col 2:2-3)

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**

**Do not be conformed to this world,** but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom 12:1-2)

There are conditions and requirements for a family relationship with the Father and His Son, the church's Bridegroom.

Also, Christ distinctly stated:

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, **because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.**" (John 5:30. See 10:30)

**"All things have been handed over to me by my Father,** and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom

---

<sup>1</sup> "In Matthew, the Lord's Prayer 6:9-13 is presented as a model for the disciples. Matthew locates it at the very centre of the Sermon on the Mount ... Jesus ... particular use of "abba" shows his highly personal and intimate relationship with God" (M J Dacey (c2010), *The "Our Father" in its Jewish Context*, Sydney (unpublished paper), pp. 1, 7).

the Son chooses to reveal him." (Luke 10:22)

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him ...

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. (John 14:6-7, 10)

**"All that the Father gives me will come to me,** and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For **this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.**" (John 6:37-40. Cp 5:39-40)

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that **they may see your good works and give glory to your Father** who is in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

**"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.**

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; **but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.** [cp 6:38; 7:16-18, 24; 8:28, 38, 40; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8].

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

These things I command you, so that you will love one another." (John 15:8-17))

"Then comes the end, **when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father** after destroying every rule and every authority and power." (ICor 15:24)

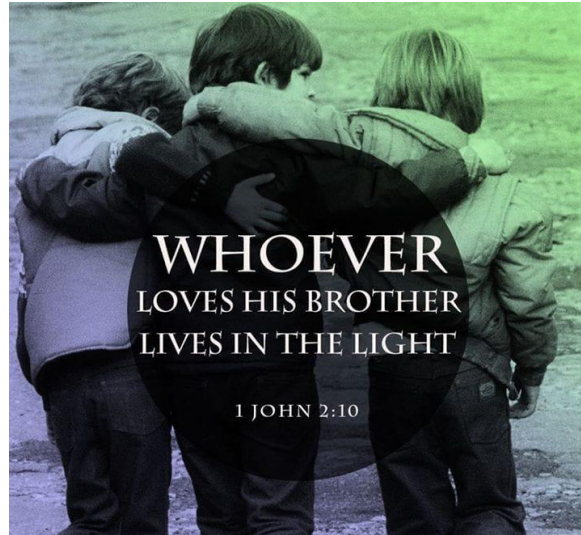
Notice: Christ is pointing out the way to a relationship or daily walk with Himself and the Father and it entails keeping Christ's commandments of loving one another, which is a summary of the Father's overall



commandments or laws. In other words, to have a relationship with Christ and the Father, Christians have to love one another. Throughout the Bible we are told how to do that.

We also know that like a Father, He cares for us and the old WCG knew that (for instance refer to Clayton Steep's article "How much does God care about you?" *Good News*, August 1983, pp. 11-13.

Similarly, Abraham was called a friend of God in several Scriptures: IIChron 20:7; Is 41:8; James 2:22-23. Compare James 4:4.



As in any family, it is the father (with his wife) who lay out the terms of the relationship so that everyone in the family can get along and work as a team. There are rules, policies, rewards, punishments, eating together, spending time chatting and getting to know one another's needs, caring for and getting along with your siblings, achieving, and making your parents proud and so on.

How similar this is to God the Father's relationship and expectations for us. Herbert W Armstrong's booklet *Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?* provides convincing evidence for this God Family relationship. To me, this is probably the most under-rated and least read booklet Mr Armstrong has produced.

Several times in this booklet Mr Armstrong mentions the God Family relationship and its parallels to the human family – a relationship we must have with Him. He actually uses the word "relationship" a number of times.

In other words, a relationship that is not on God's terms does not work and is unacceptable to Him. A relationship that involves the spiritual community or church and that shows love towards others is part of the relationship.

However, the relationship is not only "personal" but also communitarian.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, **if you have love for one another.**" (John 13:34-35)

"Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**'" (Matt 25:37-40. Cp Rom 12:16)

The above demonstrates some of the aspects of the relationship we have with God. It also involves others in the spiritual family! We are, after all, not meant to be alone (take James 2 as an example of required Christian conduct).

I cannot emphasise this enough: it is not a selfish relationship of "just God and me". It includes that of course, but it also encompasses others in the family of God and all those we encounter. The relationship is familial and not only individual.

Too often some emphasise having a "personal relationship" with Christ but seldom mention the Father or other members of the spiritual family. At other times they do include the Father. Either way, their view of this relationship takes on selfish proportions, minimising or even excluding others.

## Our Daily Walk with God

A true relationship means walking with God (Gen 3:8; 5:22-24; 6:9; 24:40). As Herbert Armstrong used to quote scores of times:

"Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?" (Amos 3:3)

We must seek out God and draw nigh to Him if we are to walk in tandem with Him. And that walk is **according to His requirements** – the requirements that lead to developing Godly character – not according to our arrangements.

First of all, He calls you and opens your mind to Him (Rom 8:28; John 6:44; Luke 19:10; Ps 65:4). But then you have to earnestly seek Him out. Draw near to Him and He will likewise, respond (James 4:8; Jer 29:12-14).

"And 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." (Heb 11:6)

"Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who **seek the LORD** rejoice!  
**Seek the LORD** and his strength; seek his presence continually!" (IChron 16:10-11)

"The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded,

and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. **If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.**" (IIChron 15:1-2)

"I love those who love me, and **those who seek me diligently find me.**" (Prov 8:17)

**"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;** let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Is 55:6-7)

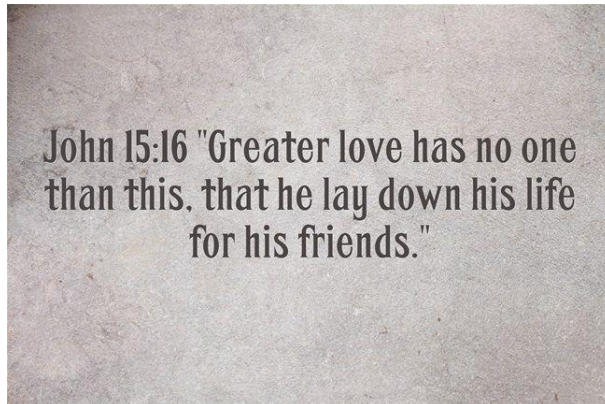
"You will seek me and find me, when you **seek me with all your heart.**" (Jer 29:13)

"But **seek first the kingdom of God** and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matt 6:33. See 5:6; 7:7-8)

Other Scriptures on seeking God include: Deut 4:29-31; IChron 22:17-19; IIChron 15: 12-15; 26:5; Ps 22:26; 63:1; 69:32; Is 26:9; 65:1; Jer 29:11-13; 50:4; Hos 3:4-5; 5:13-15; Amos 5:4-6, 14; Col 3:1-2.

Once again, the above also demonstrates the consistency in themes and wording between both Testaments (in this case "seeking" God). God has not changed His values and Laws regardless of the arguments of many protestants between the two Testaments.

Seeking Him out and walking with Him every day is part of the relationship and I cannot find anything in old Worldwide Church of God literature or sermons that contradict any of this. To the contrary, our walk with God was taught time after time after time in sermons, articles and studies though the word "relationship" may not have been used all the time.



Here are some components of our walk with God as a child walks with a Father (and thus with Christ as our Elder Brother):

- It must be devotion as to one's human Father and therefore it is important that you tell Him you love and appreciate all that He has done for you including offering eternal life (ie demonstrate gratitude). In other words, **show Him affection** (Acts 2:21). But saying "I love Jesus" over and

over and over time with emotion does not make a relationship at all. In fact, it is downright silly if not an affront to God

- Repent of drifting away from our walk with Him and reconcile with Him **on His terms** (IJohn 1:9; Acts 2:21)
- Have faith and reliance on Him, but not to the extreme where He does everything for you. Rather, let Him work **with** you, not always **for** you
- **Converse with Him** in prayer and on an ongoing basis and praise Him (Eph 6:18; Luke 18:1; IThess 5:17)
- It must also be **devoid of false ideas and practices** (Is 55:7-9; John 4:22-24), otherwise we deceive ourselves
- Have the right intentions and **permit God to scrutinise us and help cleanse us** (Ps 139:23-24; 66:18)
- He has **His arrangements** in place, and we must obey them
- **Align with the interests He has** and thus hold common interests with Him
- Take on a big project together by **using the talents and spiritual gifts He has granted to you**. Accept His gifts and use them to His glory

“Truly I say to you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

## What did the old Worldwide Church of God teach?

One can read old Worldwide Church of God literature going back decades. Similarly listen to sermons and studies by Herbert W Armstrong and other ministers and you will find every aspect of Christian living that comprises a relationship with God and Christ.

While the term “relationship” was not always used, the doctrinal concept was absolutely there. I do not know if we recoiled from the term “relationship” because of the mushy and emotional false relationship concepts promulgated by Pentecostals and evangelicals.

Regardless, does it matter what term we use for the same concept – a “relationship” with God and Christ?

How to have a relationship with God the Father (and His Son) is found throughout Church of God literature and in all my decades of association with the Church, I cannot fathom how some feel that we did not teach this. Unless they are affected by others who are influencing them.

A random listening to some of Herbert W Armstrong’s Bible studies and sermons reveal that he talked a lot on Christ and His salvation work etc. Not in a mushy, namby-pamby way, but in an adult, serious, truly spiritual fashion.

In a letter he issued 12 December 1958, presumably to office staff and the ministry. Here are extracts (the entire letter is contained in the **Appendix. Herbert W Armstrong’s Letter of 12 December 1958**):

“I have just noticed, in going over letters written in the Letter Answering Department, a tendency which – as this reminds me – most of us have unconsciously followed.

It is the habit of speaking of salvation only in terms of "living out a life of OBEDIENCE to God." We seem to have a tendency to speak ONLY and solely of OBEDIENCE – commandment keeping!

We seldom mention that experience of CONVERSION – utter SURRENDER, total REPENTANCE, accepting CHRIST in living FAITH as personal Saviour, and receiving the HOLY SPIRIT.

We do not seem to stress sufficiently CHRIST as SAVIOUR – faith in Him, and then HIS faith in us (living faith which is inseparable from obedience) ...

We must stress the WHOLE TRUTH more – repentance, surrender, CHRIST AS SAVIOUR, being CHANGED by God's Spirit as God's GIFT, by GRACE, following our conforming to His conditions of repentance and FAITH IN CHRIST". [emphasis mine]

Refer also to the **Appendix. This is the Life – Real Abundant Living!** for further evidence of the Church of God's teaching on all of this.

Notice the advice he gave church members in "An Open Letter to our newly begotten brethren recently baptized", October 1957, *Good News*:

**"He is now your FATHER! Not figuratively, but actually-REALLY!**

**Now you can go to Him just as any child can go to his father**, for counsel and advice, for wisdom, for direction, for HELP in any time of need. Would a good human father deny his own child any good thing the child might really need? Neither will your heavenly Father deny you anything that is really for your good ...

You must go to a private place, alone with God, and have *long talks with Him*—yes, *every day!* Unburden your heart to Him. Take *all* your problems, your interests, your plans, your troubles to Him. **Talk over everything with Him, continually. Then, even when going about your work—when walking down the street—when driving your car, or wherever you are or whatever you do, talk with God as you work or as you drive or walk along.** Go to a private place, and kneel in prayer (on both knees) as often as you can, and at least once every day. But *talk with God often* in between. *Pray without ceasing!*" (p. 2)<sup>2</sup> [emphasis mine]

For example, in a sermon given in Melbourne, Australia in August 1981 he talked about walking with Christ (1 hour 30 mins mark).

Another on *Passover Examination* (undated) he discussed our fellowship with the Father and Christ but

---

<sup>2</sup> In a radio broadcast series on the book of Hebrews, Mr Armstrong quoted Hebrews 4:16 and then added "How often do you go to that throne of grace? How often do you take advantage of this? How often do you claim the promises that God has made on your behalf, to fight your battles for you, bring you out of all your troubles, to solve every problem and trouble that comes along and show you the way out, to guide you, to lead you, to give you wisdom, to heal you when you are sick, to provide every need if you are in real need? Of course, He didn't say every want; and we think a want is a need quite often when it isn't, I know." (*Hebrews Series 01, Answered Prayer*).

that we have to surrender your goals and attitude to life with Him. Interestingly he also mentioned how he loves the song "You never walk alone".

In 1983 on the first Day of Unleavened Bread Mr Armstrong made the following final comments during his sermon titled "Coming out of sin"

**"Then I began to look into the Bible and I saw this golden text, John 3:16 they call the golden text of the Bible. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish."** And I began to see that a soul can die. I saw twice where it says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." I saw back in Genesis where Adam was a soul. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a soul. And to that soul God said, you take of the tree I forbid you to take and you will die. You will surely die, and he did die ...

**Well, now then I saw it said that God loved us enough that He gave Jesus so that we wouldn't perish.** I thought that to die meant to perish! And that was terrible. That meant that we'd be as though we'd never been ...

**We have to rely on God. He will give us the help. Jesus is there at the right hand of God as our High Priest, interceding for us. Rely on God! Seek His righteousness! Hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. Rely on God. Go to Him in prayer about these things.** And continually spend more time in prayer .... This is the time for New Year's resolutions, only you'd better make them stick this time." [emphasis mine]

In other studies I listened to he talked about the two key things to come into fellowship with God: repentance and faith; how we have to reconcile with God; and how He must rule over us.

Some old Worldwide Church of God sample extracts are provided below as further evidence. In fact, the literature, Coworker Letters, articles, sermons and Bible studies were all full of how Christians must have a family relationship with God and Christ.

"This particular TV program, like all others except The WORLD TOMORROW, made Christianity a religion of GETTING. There are only TWO broad, general WAYS or philosophies of living. Satan's way is GETTING--TAKING. God's way of life is GIVING--or outflowing LOVE to God and to neighbor. The FALSE prophets of Satan talk about GETTING--that is, RECEIVING Christ. **They talk about Jesus, but say little about God the Father or our special relationship to Him.**" (Herbert W Armstrong, *Coworker Letter*, 27 May 1980) [emphasis mine]

"God's law is the basis of God's GOVERNMENT. Law is merely rules that regulate one's way of living. The world has rules or laws regulating all sports and games. **God's law regulates human RELATIONSHIPS--with God, and with neighbor. God's way is LOVE-- outflowing concern for the GOOD of others--humility, obedience to God, cooperation, serving, sharing with neighbor.** Satan's way (this world's way--human nature) is the way of rebellion, competition, strife, violence, disagreement." (Herbert W Armstrong, *Coworker Letter*, 26 Jan 1983) [emphasis mine]

"This world started with one man, Adam. God had created him with a mind capable of dealing in matter--material objects from the ground. Before Adam were two choices--the symbolic tree of LIFE by which **God would have given him knowledge through the Holy Spirit for a happy relationship with his Maker and fellow humans**--spiritual knowledge and the spiritual attitude of LOVE toward others--along with immortal LIFE. The other symbolic tree was the taking to himself, in his carnal mind, the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong-- all in the carnal self-centered attitude." (Herbert W Armstrong, *Coworker Letter*, 22 Nov 1982) [emphasis mine]

There were also various articles that I should reference such as "Jesus Died for You – Can You Live for Him?", *Good News*, February 1984:

"Yet how often do we fail to deeply comprehend and think about the death of Jesus Christ? The hectic, mind-dulling pace of everyday life overwhelms us. We're kept busy, **often selfishly pursuing our own interests**.

Jesus does not take a central place in our thinking — He is forgotten along with other past events. It seems our primary focus is on ourselves. That is one reason we need the Passover. It is a memorial — a reminder — of Jesus' sacrifice, a time to deeply ponder our Savior, the relationship we should have toward Him and the life we must live as true Christians.

...

Repentance means changing. It means turning from sin. It means living for God's will, not your will (I Pet. 4:1-2). This is our reasonable service:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

**As we approach the Passover season, we need to deeply consider the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our spiritual lives. How much do we appreciate Christ's sacrifice?**

How much do we live to perform God's will? Do we rely upon His example to resist sin (Heb. 12:3)?" [emphasis mine]

Another is "The Greatest of These Is ... Love", *Good News*, January 1974:

"Christ called this love a new commandment: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). But it was also based on an old commandment (I John 2:7; 3:11). Long ago, it was recorded in the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). Christ raised this Old Testament commandment to a new plane by His perfect example.

Christ in no way annulled the "old" law of the Ten Commandments. He showed how the Ten Commandments should and must be kept. **Love is the way by which the law may be kept completely, satisfyingly and richly — not merely in the letter but**

**in the spirit (the intent and purpose of it) as well.**

Love Has Two Main Facets

It is possible to get a wrong idea about the law of God. This is perhaps best illustrated by the religious sect of Jesus' day called the Pharisees.

The Pharisees taught such a servile adherence to the letter of the law that its higher meaning became lost from view. Christ put His finger on this key lack in the Pharisees' approach when He said:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23).

Christ recognized the higher meaning of the law and fully realized that the law consisted of much more than a list of "do's" and "don'ts" — the first facet of love. The other facet of love requires us to have certain character traits — to be a certain type of person. Here He specifically mentions we are to have judgment, mercy and faith. And judgment, mercy and faith are called the "weightier matters of the law."

...

God will give His Holy Spirit to those willing to obey Him (Acts 5:32). He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to us than we are to give good gifts to our children (Luke 11:13).

But we must be willing to live God's way — all the way! We must be willing to love others "as he loved us." This divine love, then, comes through true conversion.

**True conversion is not a selfish experience.** It is the exact opposite. Conversion allows one to express all the ingredients of love in the fullest way. Conversion is a matter of learning to love God's way. Then our human minds can be motivated by Christ and the Father's love living in us.

**By giving ourselves totally to God (which means all He stands for), we can totally give ourselves to our fellowman.** Without this prior commitment to God, we cannot know how to truly serve man in every respect; for through knowledge of God is knowledge of how to love others." [emphasis mine]

I recall the old Worldwide Church of God sermons and literature and it seems to me there was a lot more about Christ, true repentance, gratitude for God's calling, serving others and such like than we give credit for. Refer to Herbert Armstrong's renowned article *This is the Life - Real Abundant Living* at the rear of this article for further evidence of what was really taught.

Here is an example from one of his sermons:

"We've been talking about giving thanks, and we've had Thanksgiving Day. And I remember when I was just newly converted or being converted. I don't know whether I'd even been baptized yet. But I was attending different churches. I was looking into the Truth for the first time in my life. (This is about 55 1/2 years ago now.) I was attending a certain Baptist church one Sunday, and they had had a contest going on. They gave an award for the one that could answer the question the best — of what is the most prevalent sin, the most often committed sin, the most widespread sin. I don't



know how you would answer that question. I'm not sure I'd answer it even the same way. But, anyway, a young woman won the prize by saying that the most prevalent sin is ingratitude, failing to be thankful for what you have; and certainly it's a sin that just about everybody commits.

Now it happens that **I sort of begin my prayers regularly by giving thanks.** I'm not sure that's just the way it ought to be, but I don't think it's a wrong way. But Jesus gave us a sample prayer. I want to mention that. And He didn't say give thanks the first thing. He might have, because it certainly is right. But the sample prayer He gave was "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," exalting the name of God. In a sense that is giving thanks; and giving thanks is hallowing God's name, because you are giving thanks to Him." (sermon, *US of Europe is Coming!* 27 Nov 1982).

Here is another example:

"In the last year or more, I've been especially concerned about the passage of scripture that talks of hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness. I began to wonder: Did I really hunger and thirst for it? I knew I ought to want to have God's righteousness. And I had to really stop to think, and begin to pray about it, before I began to really. And I thought I had, but I hadn't really hungered and thirsted for it. I WANT God's righteousness! Now if you can understand, you will too..." (sermon *Rely on God* delivered on the first day of Unleavened Bread, 6 April 1985).

After talking about Romans 6:23 and John 3:16 he later states:

"So we begin the seven days today of Unleavened Bread: coming out of sin. We still have to come out of more sin. **There are many little things—oh, there're so many, I can't go into all the things. The many things you can say, just by hurting someone's feelings with something you say. The tongue is something no man can tame. The many, many sins: the temptations that we have. Now, we all have to fight these things,** and it is a struggle. But finally there won't be a struggle, brethren, if we win out!

**And we can't do it on our own. We have to rely on God. He will give us the help. Jesus is there at the right hand of God as our High Priest, interceding for us. RELY ON GOD.** Seek His righteousness. Hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. Rely on God. Go to Him in prayer about these things, and continually; and spend more time in prayer. I think we're getting toward the Laodicean condition, and we need to check up. Now we're just starting all over again, one more year. This is the time for "new year" [Exodus 12:2] resolutions, only you'd better make them stick this time!

Well, I can't make an outline of a sermon [due to his condition]. I can just come out here and talk. But I think I've talked to you long enough for today. We're on the way out of sin. Let's look forward to the glory that shall be revealed in us, brethren. It's a struggle. It's a struggle for me, the same as it is for you. We all have it. **We're going to be accused falsely, by others. We all have Satan to contend with. But we have Jesus Christ as our**

**High Priest. We have God as our Father. And we can rely on both Christ and God the Father. Be sure that you do."** [emphasis mine]

And while you are about it, re-read the old booklets such as *All about Water Baptism, What kind of Faith is Required for Salvation?, What is Real Repentance?* and a number of old Correspondence Course lessons on Christian living subjects. The reader will soon see that the old Worldwide Church of God never left out Christ or a relationship with both Him and the Father.

I cannot recall if the actual word "relationship" was used or not used in a major way in sermons and studies by preachers or Mr Armstrong himself— but does it make any difference? Did not the old Worldwide Church of God teach having a relationship with the Father and Christ? But on *Their* terms?

Just using the word "relationship" doesn't mean that using that word is proof that one has a relationship with God. Because God is the one Whom sets out the parameters of how to have a Father-child relationship. It is not up to us to make these determinations. Anything we offer up outside of His parameters are not considered of any value to Him (Gen 4:3-7; Deut 12:12-13, 30-31; Is 64:6; Matt 22:1-13; Rom 10:2-3).

## Concluding Remarks

So, let's recap.

Does your spiritual walk feel like a rote exercise instead of a meaningful relationship with God? Do you find yourself growing closer to or away from God?

Has your memory dimmed with time and been affected by other ideas that is leading you to believe that the Church of God had not taught about a relationship with God and Christ? Yet the protestants have?

How can this be?

Refresh your memory and re-read the old literature and listen to the old sermons and you will have a different view.

Listen: the Church of God has taught that God created mankind to have a family relationship with Him, commencing with the Old Testament saints and later with the Church. In the future it will be with billions of people who are converted and resurrected into His eternal Family.

This relationship is meant to change our lives and bring joy and purpose to us. Has it? If not, what has hindered that relationship?

Ponder deeply on that point. Matt 13:1-30 applies. Recall your early exciting years as you came into the Truth and the subsequent ups and downs.

And to re-ignite the right relationship with God and Christ (not just Christ), practice the following:

1. Love God and His truths and tell Him that. Express your gratitude for all He has done for you and the wonderful salvation He offers (John 3:16). Refer to the **Appendix: Expressing Gratitude** for what Herbert Armstrong taught on this
2. Repent and have faith in God – cast aside your former self (Rom 3:23; 6:23)
3. Accept Christ's immeasurable sacrifice as the Lamb of God (Rom 5:8; ICor 15:3-4). And understand that He suffered on the earth just like we do, but far more (Rom 6:8; Hebrews 4:15)
4. Follow Christ as He leads you into contact with the Father (John 14:6)
5. Pray, fast, meditate. Study the Bible and the true doctrines. Praise God for Who He is and what He does for you. And the wonderful salvation He has offered to you as a free gift!
6. Practice the Christian Way of Life that emulates Christ – God in the flesh including fellowship with and serving others
7. Use the holy spirit and the spiritual gifts and talents God has given to you – in service to others and to build up the Church of God.



Of course, the reality is that our relationship with both the Father and Christ differs between us – the overall 'template' is the same, but we are still individual sons and daughters of the Father and He is walking with us to develop character and capacities for the future, eternal Kingdom.

"Jesus Christ, who is very GOD, is also our ELDER BROTHER! He made it possible for us to have access to the Father so that we might be begotten by the FATHER. We are not begotten by our elder BROTHER. A brother does not beget and sire brothers! We are begotten by our FATHER into HIS FAMILY ...

**Yes, PRAISE GOD for it! We have access direct to the FATHER -- and also to Jesus Christ! Many times DAILY we may go into intimate COMMUNION with BOTH God and Christ -- our FATHER and our BROTHER! Our GOD and our SAVIOUR! HOW WONDERFUL to really come to KNOW the great supreme GOD! How grateful to Jesus we should be for making this blessed privilege possible! The MOST JOYOUS thing in life is to have this COMMUNION -- this close and intimate FELLOWSHIP with BOTH the FATHER and Christ the SON!" ("Should we pray to God or only to Christ?" *Good News*, May 1960, p. 12) [emphasis mine]**

The relationship with the Father and Christ, must be intimate so that you actually know Him, His ways and will. That you emulate Him and become like Him.

He knows His flock by name. How different to some 'pastors' who count numbers and supposed 'growth' each Sabbath – but Christ is interested in YOU personally, as is the Father:

"To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and **he calls his own sheep by name** and leads them out...

My sheep hear my voice, and **I know them**, and they follow me." (John 10:3, 27)

Notice the following explanations:

"[*he sheep hear his voice*] All the sheep, whether belonging to His flock or not, know from His coming that they are about to be led out. *His own sheep* (first for emphasis) *he calleth by name* ([Exodus 33:12](#); [Exodus 33:17](#); [Isaiah 43:1](#)), and *leadeth them out* to pasture. Even in this country shepherds and shepherds' dogs know each individual sheep; in the East the intimacy between shepherd and sheep is still closer. The naming of sheep is a very ancient practice: see Theocritus 5:102." (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* online, John 10:3)

"Though the sheep can hear other voices, they recognize the voice of the shepherd and can distinguish it from all the others. Likewise, the shepherd knows the sheep. Theirs is a relationship based on mutual knowing. That the sheep can hear the voice of the shepherd is a reflection of their familiarity and trust in the shepherd. This hearing of the shepherd's voice can therefore serve as an analogy for faith." (*Bible Hermeneutics*, John 10:27, <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/53185/what-is-the-nature-of-the-voice-john-1027-is-talking-about>)

He even grants gifts to His children like any human father (Matt 7:11; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6-8) and rewards His children too (Rom 8:17; Matt 19:28-29; 5:5 etc)

"...the song I'll Never Walk Alone" ... I knew I wouldn't have to walk alone – that Christ would be with me – if I would be with Him. But I had to go His Way. I had to be CONQUERED by Him. I don't believe anyone receives the holy spirit until the human spirit has been conquered by God and His spirit ... I love that beautiful song that the choir sang in the morning service – You'll Never Walk Alone ..." (Herbert W Armstrong, *Passover Examination* (sermon), 4 March 1982)

The relationship with Them is more than prayer, praise, study, Sabbath services, obeying the Commandments and so on. It is dynamic, emulating Them in such matters as serving others, fellowship, eschewing selfish gain, outgoing concern for others, anticipating their needs and a whole lot more.

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." (Heb 13:16)

It means developing the fruit of the spirit, practicing the beatitudes and using the spiritual gifts and talents He has generously bestowed upon us and also avoiding the attractions of this world.

It is a living walk with Him on the road to complete salvation. For He is not distant, He is with us in spirit,

dwelling within Christians and in His Church – the Bride.

Read John 14:21-23 and Rev 3:20 again and all that entails.

Fellowship with Him on a daily basis, always in communication, crying out to Him and urging Him on to stand up and take action in your life and in the Church of God (Ps 46:1)! There can be nothing more important in this life.<sup>3</sup>

“When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from **before my eyes; cease to do evil,**

**learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.**

**“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.**

If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land;

but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Is 1:15-20)

---

<sup>3</sup> “Our relationship with God is the most important relationship in life; all other relationships spring from it. On it depends everything meaningful” (J Moskala, “The Meaning of the Fear of God: The Crucial Notion of the Everlasting Gospel - A Biblical Study,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 30, No. 1-2 (2019), p. 11)

## Appendix. Herbert W Armstrong's Letter of 12 December 1958

### RADIO CHURCH OF GOD

World Headquarters  
Pasadena, California

Herbert W. Armstrong  
*PRESIDENT & PASTOR*  
Broadcasting  
"THE WORLD  
TOMORROW"  
Publishers of  
THE PLAIN TRUTH

Palm Springs, 12/12/58

I have just noticed, in going over letters written in the Letter Answering Department, a tendency which – as this reminds me – most of us have unconsciously followed.

It is the habit of speaking of salvation only in terms of "living out a life of OBEDIENCE to God." We seem to have a tendency to speak ONLY and solely of OBEDIENCE – commandment keeping!

We seldom mention that experience of CONVERSION – utter SURRENDER, total REPENTANCE, accepting CHRIST in living FAITH as personal Saviour, and receiving the HOLY SPIRIT.

We do not seem to stress sufficiently CHRIST as SAVIOUR – faith in Him, and then HIS faith in us (living faith which is inseparable from obedience). **We must remember that the orthodox fundamental worldly churches and evangelists stress almost solely just CHRIST, and FAITH in Him, and accepting Him as personal Saviour. Our more or less general omission of this leads many automatically to assume we preach a gospel of EARNING salvation by WORKS.** To a world accustomed to hearing almost altogether about CHRIST and a "born-again experience" (which of course they do not understand), we put ourselves and God's TRUTH in a wrong light. Instead of speaking of being CONVERTED – CHANGED – by real repentance, surrender, FAITH in CHRIST, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we speak of "coming into the TRUTH." A man may "come into the TRUTH" – that is, let a certain amount of truth into his mind, and still be totally converted. We must not lead people to gather that we believe only in Commandment keeping (which to them means SATURDAY-keeping) and EARNING salvation by WORKS.

**We must stress the WHOLE TRUTH more – repentance, surrender, CHRIST AS SAVIOUR, being CHANGED by God's Spirit as God's GIFT, by GRACE, following our conforming to His conditions of repentance and FAITH IN CHRIST – the CHANGE from carnality to Spiritual-mindedness – being BEGOTTEN – and THEN the overcoming and enduring and GROWING life of obedience and living faith, with Christ living HIS LIFE in us. Let's not leave CHRIST and GRACE out of our speech and letters.**

With love, in Jesus' name,  
Herbert W. Armstrong

[emphasis mine]

## Appendix: This is the Life - Real Abundant Living!

### **Good News, May 1986**

By Herbert W Armstrong

Do you know how to live fully — abundantly? In this article you will learn how you may taste the joys of real abundant living.

Why do religious people often seem to feel that their religious life must be one of giving up all the fun and the enjoyment of living — that in order to please God, they must endure a life of morbid gloom?

Sin to many of these people consists of things that many other people consider to be most desirable.

To them, sin is going contrary to a number of "don'ts." "Don't smoke." "Don't dance." "Don't play cards." "Don't go to the theater." "Don't ever touch a drop of alcoholic beverage." "Don't do this!" "Don't do that!"

#### **What's wrong with religion?**

A prominent lawyer's wife once said to me: "I couldn't ever become a Christian. Why, if I had to give up smoking, dancing, card playing, the theater and all the pleasures of life, what would there be left to live for anyway?"

A world-famous philosopher, editor and lecturer whom I knew — and who also had no use for religion — said that he did not desire to be repressed or to live a life of painful penance. "I de sire," he said, "to be radiant, cheerful, friendly and to meet people with a smile."

Apparently he assumed that such a happy life could not be a religious life.

But strangely, none of these people KNEW HOW TO LIVE.

Very few have ever found or tasted the true abundant life.

Now the Creator, who gives you the breath that you breathe, does not desire for you to live an empty, depressed or an unhappy life.

You never please the Eternal by giving up happiness or anything that is good for you.

#### **God wants you to be happy**

God Almighty has never given you a single "don't," except those things that are going to harm you, tear you down, bring on un happiness later.

Oh, of course, some of these things give you a thrill or a little kick out of life temporarily, but there is always a boomerang. They exact a great penalty later, and the price is too high. It isn't good business.

God forbids those things that are bad for us, the things that are going to bring on unhappiness and bring on a life of emptiness and gloom.

But never does God Almighty forbid one single thing that is for your happiness, your welfare, your real well-being.

I'm reminded of an elderly man who was of the "shouting kind" of religion. He rose up one time in a church meeting and he shouted out a question to those assembled. He said, "Brethren, are you enjoying it, or are you only enduring it?"

Some people endure a solemn, stiff and formal church service. And some, emotionally inclined, will go to the kind of church meeting where there is much shouting and much emotional response, merely to have a good time during the meeting. The rest of the week religion doesn't seem to have a great part in their lives. Others feel that if they become, as they call it, "saved," they must forever after live a gloomy life of giving up everything that they formerly enjoyed, and that their solemn, unhappy lives of self-denial will somehow please their Creator. Of course, that kind of religion is more or less a superstition!



### **Christ brought abundant living**

Let's get this matter straight. The founder of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, said that He came to this earth for a purpose. "I have come," said Jesus, "that they may have LIFE, and that they may have it more abundantly" ([John 10:10](#)). Jesus Christ came to bring us the "ABUNDANT LIFE." Do you know what that is?

God Almighty intended the real Christian life to be one of joy.

Do you know that if you have the real Christian life, if you have the Spirit of God within you, it's going to bring about this result? It's going to, as we say, "produce fruits."

Now what kind of fruits will be produced in a real Christian life? Not the morbid, unhappy life. Here is the fruit. Here is what will emanate from a real Christian life. It is found in Galatians 5, beginning with verse 22. "The fruit of the Spirit" — this is the Spirit of God. This is the Holy Spirit that God imparts only to those who are truly converted. **"The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE" — first of all is love — and the second is "JOY." Joy is happiness, brimful and running over.**

**That doesn't sound like an unhappy, empty, morbid life, does it? Here's love that will just flow, spontaneously; out from you!**

The first "fruit of the Spirit" of God is LOVE. Love will mean that your face is beaming. It's going to mean that you are really giving out. It's going to mean that you are radiant and happy. Love results in JOY, the second product of the Spirit of God. The third is "PEACE." Instead of going around quarreling, resentful, bitter, unhappy and arguing — that's not peace, that's a kind of war — you'll be at peace in your mind and with your neighbor, and with your God!

And the next is "longsuffering," which in more modern English is "PATIENCE." Impatience makes more people unhappy than almost anything else! If you can really learn the lesson of patience, you're learning one of the things that will make you happy, and make life worth living.

The next is "kindness," and then "goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." That is the fruit of the Spirit. It will spontaneously spring forth from you. That, you will be emitting from yourself, radiating from yourself, all the time, if you are a real Christian.

### **But most people are not Christians**

You read in [Romans 8:9](#) that unless you have received, from without, the Holy Spirit of God, you are not any of Christ's! You are not a Christian.

There are millions of people who profess Christianity who are not Christians according to God's definition. They're not Christians at all!

Of course, in a Christian life, there are troubles. There are going to be even persecutions. Jesus Christ was persecuted. He said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" ([John 15:20](#)). That comes from without. That's something that comes from other people. That doesn't necessarily need to disturb you inwardly.

And the person who does have this inward peace, the person who has this joy and this love and this patience — and who has this tolerance for other people — isn't going to be too much disturbed because other people don't agree and perhaps persecute.

Yes, you're going to face problems and trials. Those things are good for us. They come upon us for a purpose — to help us develop character. And a real Christian understands. It doesn't make him unhappy.

### **We all have trials**

We are going to have troubles, problems and trials just like everybody else. They come to test us. They come to strengthen, to build our character. **And that's the very purpose of our being — to make us like God.** We, like Jesus Christ, can be born into the Kingdom of God. Notice [1 Peter 4:12-13](#) :

"Beloved [this is speaking to real Christians], do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you,

as though some strange thing happened to you."

Some people, when some of these trials and these problems come, think nobody else has ever had anything come upon them like that. It's some strange thing that is peculiar to them. That is not true!

Every other person on earth is having problems. Everyone is having troubles. They have things to meet and to overcome, solutions to work out, the same as you do. It's not strange. And so here is the teaching of God. He says: "But REJOICE," yes, rejoice inwardly in these things, "to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings."

Christ suffered, but Christ also said to His apostles, "My joy I leave with you." "I have come," He said, "that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly."

He came to give us THE ABUNDANT LIFE. He had that kind of life. He was happy. He was filled with joy, even though at the same time He was a man of sorrows — and why?

**Because He LOVED all human beings, and He saw the way they were going.** He saw how they were destroying themselves, how they were bringing unhappiness and emptiness, fear and worry, poverty, sickness, disease and sufferings on themselves. He thereby shared their sufferings. He was a man of sorrows. He was sorrowful for them.

But He was a man who was happy inside. He was setting us an example of the kind of life that we should live. So we read here: "Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

### **Why we can always be happy inside**

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

There isn't one person in 10,000 professing Christians who really knows and understands what that incorruptible inheritance really is. It is far greater — filled with far more splendor and glory, and far more happiness — than you probably ever imagined. That is what is in store for you if you will surrender your life to God.

It's up to you!

Peter continues, saying that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, "ready to be revealed in the last time" (verse 5).

That means a time yet future, ahead of us just now, only a few years future in our time, at the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth once again!

"In this," continues this scripture (verse 6), "you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials" or trials and troubles that come upon us, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes" — because this trial of our faith is developing character that will never perish. It's more valuable than gold.

### **What do you do when troubles come?**

When a trouble comes upon you, instead of griping, grumbling, moaning and being un happy and miserable about it, realize that something is come upon you to try you, to develop character, to develop something in you that you will carry with you for all eternity.

But when troubles come, do you rejoice in them? Do you realize that something is come that is more valuable to you than a great sum of gold?

Or do you grumble and complain and wish that such things had never come?

Jesus Christ came so that our lives should be changed from what they are. They are to be changed from drifting, going the easy way, acting according to impulse — which builds no character, which is putting nothing into us that we can take with us, nothing that is real, that is lasting and permanent — to the life that finds the true values.

He gives us a life that does meet and overcome obstacles and temptations, a life that is just filled with

happiness, brimful and running over with joy, the real abundant life. We realize what is being accomplished, where we're going.

**You have a goal if you are Christ's.** You have an objective. You know where you're going; you see the progress you're making. It gives you a thrill of happiness.

### **Material blessings, too**

And, incidentally, if your life is the right kind that God desires, which is for your good, if you seek first the Kingdom of God, which is your objective in life — or should be — and His righteousness, the right ways of life, He says that all these material things shall be added.

God, perhaps, may not add material things early in life. He may not add them right away. It may be some little time, but He will give you all the material goods and necessities that you really need, and even a great many of the luxuries, if your life pleases Him. Yes, you can have those things when you know how to possess them and use them.

What is an abundant life? What is abundance? Here is the definition: "possessing an overflowing fullness." It means great plenty — great plenty of life and real living. It means exuberance. It means abounding. That's the kind of life that Jesus Christ came to reveal that we could have.

Not very many people understand it. Not very many people understand what real Christianity is. Not very many professing Christians know what a real Christian life is. They're making themselves so unnecessarily unhappy.

**The true Christian life, then, possesses an overflowing fullness of the things that are the fruits of the Spirit of God — an overflowing fullness of LOVE (it's God's love — it's a genuine, spiritual love), a fullness of JOY, and of PEACE, and of faith, of meekness, of temperance.** Does YOUR life possess those things? Have those things come into your life to fill you?

**I know that you fall a great deal short of all of that. Everybody does. We all still fall short. But that's our goal!** That is the life that we shall live in the Kingdom of God. That is the life that we should strive for, and with God's help we can gradually grow more and more into it.

That is the challenging life we grow into, the life of God's Spirit within us — that is the HAPPY life, that is the JOYOUS life, and the ABUNDANT life.

The abundant life must be a life that has abundant RESOURCES. If you have these resources, they have to come from somewhere, because if you look within, you will find that they are not there! We have some resources within, but they fall far, far short from the kind of abundant living that Christ reveals and I'm telling you about. You don't have these kinds of resources within and you can't obtain them from the "around."

Look around you. You can't obtain them from other people because they don't possess these resources either.

### **God above is the source**

We can have abundant resources if we know where to go to obtain those resources. But material wealth does not give anyone those resources. It can only add to them.

You don't have them within. You can't get them from the around.

But you can receive them only from the above, from God Almighty.

God Almighty is the great Giver, not only of life, but of life more abundantly. God is the Giver of the great resources. He is the Almighty. God Almighty has a great deal of power to give you, to impart into you. You can receive from Him abundant FAITH, the resource of POWER, faith to drive out fear and worry, faith to drive out discouragement before obstacles, to know that it's going to work out every problem, power where you are now weak, to give you love to cover up and to drive out bitterness and resentment when others do you wrong.

The LOVE of God will cover all of that and drive it out. God will give the resource of WISDOM that you now lack. God has all knowledge and all wisdom. God says if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally. And if you really believe, it shall be given, and understanding, too! And then zeal and energy — real

living, driving energy that is needed to do the work that you must accomplish.

I am going to mention something personal. To conduct this Work I lead a very busy, driving life, and expend a great deal of energy. A physician friend of mine once asked me: "Mr. Armstrong, I don't see how you do it. Where do you get this energy? How do you keep going so long and under so many hours of strain and stress, and still have that driving energy? "

I told him, "It's one of the resources that I get from above."

Of course, I find it necessary to observe the laws of health and practice moderation in all things. It requires self-discipline.

### **It can happen to you, too**

You, too, can have these resources that make you happy. These are the things that we all need. These are the resources that can come only from God. And these are the resources that will produce those fruits of love, and joy, and of peace, and of patience.

Most lives today are empty, absolutely empty! They are filled with boredom, with frustrations and fears. It is as you read in [Isaiah 55:1](#): "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Everyone is really thirsty for the good things of life, for the happiness, the pleasant things and, to some extent, even exciting and thrilling things in life that we could and should have. But most lives seem empty. The well is dry, and they're thirsty.

"Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?" (verse 2).

What do you drink in? Jesus said that if you drink of Him, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart [innermost being] will flow rivers of living water" — not stagnant water, but living water, sparkling water. "But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, which those believing in Him would receive" — the Holy Spirit of God ([John 7:38-39](#)).

### **You need God's Spirit**

**The Holy Spirit of God is pictured as living water. It comes into you. You go to Christ to receive it. You don't bottle it up and put a cork on it. It flows out from you.** The Holy Spirit flows out in love, peace and joy, radiating from you. There is no other way to find these resources. There is no other way to live a happy life.

The laws of God are a way of life. The Bible in its whole is a way of life. Jesus Christ said that we must live by every word of God. If you live by every word of God, you will live according to the way of life that God has laid down in His Book, the Holy Bible.

It is the way of life that is the abundant life. It's the way of the happy, the cheerful life that simply radiates. It radiates sunshine and happiness, and it's always happiness within. The well is not dry. It's filled!

Now here is what this kind of life will mean. It means that you will be RADIANT. It means that God's Spirit in you will radiate cheerfulness and smiles, friendliness toward others, love, sincerity, calm courage, goodwill and interest in others, instead of being so self-conscious, with so much over interest in your own self.

If the Spirit of God is in you, you will be plain and simple. You will put on no airs. There will be no posing, as most people do in the world. You will be natural, and not pretending. You will be honest and frank and unaffected, clean in mind and in body. You will be humble. There won't be self-confidence. There will be faith in God, instead.

You will be humble, but you will have THE FAITH and THE POWER OF GOD, whose power is unlimited. You will be strong through this faith of God. There will be no weakness, but great strength. You will have wisdom, and you will have courage. You will have everything, every resource you need.

You will be ready always to say, "I don't know," if so it be. You will be ready, always, to admit error when it is so proved, to confess wrong and to change to what is right, wherever you are wrong.

You will be ready to accept correction and reproof, and to act upon it no matter how humiliating or painful. You

will diligently study to learn the right way and to live it, and you will study the Bible to find it.

You will face every obstacle that comes along — every difficulty, every problem and trouble — unafraid, in the full faith of God, looking to Him for wisdom and knowing that He will guide you and deliver you out of it.

The attitude of a Christian

**Here is the kind of attitude you will have. You will wish others to live their lives, too, up to their highest, their fullest, their best. You will be concerned for their welfare. You'll try to help others every way you can, never to hurt or to injure.**

**You will never meddle. You will never dictate, interfere or give unwanted advice, or speak ill of, nor give gossip about others.** Never will you go around griping, complaining and murmuring things that make you and others unhappy.

You will always be willing to help others by giving them a chance, and mainly you can help others by helping them to help themselves, by encouragement, by setting a good example, by thus inspiring and uplifting others, giving advice only when it's welcomed, and when they want it and are willing to open their minds to receive it.

You will hew to the line of the one supreme goal of life, which should be to inherit the Kingdom of God, to be born of God into the very Family of God. You will relentlessly pursue this goal with zeal, with enthusiasm, with drive and with energy fired by godly ambition, with hope, with faith, living by every word of God.

The Bible will be the authority that you obey, the authority that you look to for everything in your life. You will be overcoming your own human nature and the world, resisting Satan, drawing nearer to God by constant daily Bible study and by prayer, and by occasional fasting and prayer. That is the Christian life. It's the happy, the abundant life.

It's yours for the asking. It's yours for the willingness to confess your sins to God and to repent of breaking His laws. It's yours if you're willing to DO what He says.

[emphasis mine throughout]

## Appendix: Expressing Gratitude

Herbert W Armstrong taught to show gratitude to God for what we have and what He has done for us. This was brought out in articles and sermons. Here is one example:

"We've been talking about giving thanks, and we've had Thanksgiving Day. And I remember when I was just newly converted or being converted. I don't know whether I'd even been baptized yet. But I was attending different churches. I was looking into the Truth for the first time in my life. (This is about 55 1/2 years ago now.) I was attending a certain Baptist church one Sunday, and they had had a contest going on. They gave an award for the one that could answer the question the best — of what **is the most prevalent sin**

, the most often committed sin, the most widespread sin. I don't know how you would answer that question. I'm not sure I'd answer it even the same way. But, anyway, a young woman won the prize by saying that the most prevalent sin is ingratitude, failing to be thankful for what you have; and certainly it's a sin that just about everybody commits.

Now it happens that I sort of begin my prayers regularly by giving thanks. I'm not sure that's just the way it ought to be, but I don't think it's a wrong way. But Jesus gave us a sample prayer. I want to mention that. And He didn't say give thanks the first thing. He might have, because it certainly is right. But the sample prayer He gave was "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," exalting the name of God. In a sense that is giving thanks; and giving thanks is hallowing God's name, because you are giving thanks to Him." (Herbert W Armstrong in a sermon on *A US of Europe is Coming!*, 27 Nov 1982).

Evangelist Raymond McNair wrote an entire article about this. Here is a small extract:

"God will take away our blessings if we don't really appreciate them and give Him thanks - if we don't learn to serve Him joyfully for all the great abundance of the many blessings which He has so lavishly bestowed upon us (Deut. 28:47, 48). Don't be guilty of committing the terrible sin of ingratitude! (II Tim. 3:2). Learn to be thankful to God and to your fellowman for everything!" ("Ingratitude. A Deadly Sin," *Good News*, March 1968, p. 21)

The famous author and philosopher Gilbert K. Chesterton also made mention of this:

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder."

Finally, God's Word tell us to rejoice in all circumstances:

"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.  
GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." (Hab 3:17-19. Cp James 1:2-4)

## References

Armstrong, H. W. (1957).	"An Open Letter to our newly begotten brethren recently baptized", <i>Good News</i> , Oct, pp. 1-2.
Armstrong, H. W. (1958).	Letter to staff and ministry, 12 Dec.
Armstrong, H. W. (1960).	"Should we pray to God or only to Christ?", <i>Good News</i> , May, pp. 5-8, 12.
Armstrong, H. W. (1980).	<i>Coworker Letter</i> , 27 May.
Armstrong, H. W. (1982).	<i>A US of Europe is Coming!</i> 27 Nov.
Armstrong, H. W. (1982).	<i>Coworker Letter</i> , 22 November.
Armstrong, H. W. (1982).	<i>Passover Examination</i> (sermon), 4 March.

Armstrong, H. W. (1982).	<i>US of Europe is Coming!</i> (sermon), 27 Nov.
Armstrong, H. W. (1983).	<i>Coworker Letter</i> , 26 Jan.
Armstrong, H. W. (1984).	<i>Why Marriage! Soon Obsolete?</i> Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA.
Armstrong, H. W. (1985).	<i>Rely on God</i> (sermon), 6 April.
Armstrong, H. W. (1986).	"This is the Life - Real Abundant Living!" <i>Good News</i> , May.
Armstrong, H. W. (N. D.).	<i>Hebrews Series 01, Answered Prayer</i> (sermon).
Collins Dictionary. (N.D.).	"Relationship", <i>Collins Dictionary</i> online <a href="https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/relationship">https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/relationship</a>
Dacey, M. J. (c2010).	<i>The "Our Father" in its Jewish Context</i> , Sydney (unpublished paper).
Daily Verse. (N. N.).	"John 4:24", <a href="https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/john-4-24">https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/john-4-24</a>
Definitions.net. (N. N.).	"Relationship", <a href="https://www.definitions.net/definition/relationship">https://www.definitions.net/definition/relationship</a>
Gentet, R. E. (1974).	"The Greatest of These Is... Love", <i>Good News</i> , Jan.
Kackos, G. M. (1984).	"Jesus Died for You - Can You Live for Him?" <i>Good News</i> , Feb.
McNair, R. F. (1968).	"Ingratitude. A Deadly Sin," <i>Good News</i> , March, pp. 5-6, 20-21.
Moskala, J. (2019).	"The Meaning of the Fear of God: The Crucial Notion of the Everlasting Gospel - A Biblical Study", <i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i> , Vol. 30, No. 1-2, pp. 1-20.
N. N. (2004-24).	<i>Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges</i> online.
N. N. (2024).	<i>Bible Hermeneutics</i> , <a href="https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/53185/what-is-the-nature-of-the-voice-john-1027-is-talking-about">https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/53185/what-is-the-nature-of-the-voice-john-1027-is-talking-about</a>
Steep, C. D. (1983).	"How much does God care about you?" <i>Good News</i> , Aug, pp. 11-13.



## What does “having a relationship” with God and Jesus mean?

By Craig. M White

History Research Projects  
GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001  
[www.friendsofsabbath.org](http://www.friendsofsabbath.org)

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.