

## Maintaining a Meaningful Relationship

Hebrews 3: 12-15

If the Lord allows us to make it until tomorrow, Tanya and I will have been married 24 years. I have been blessed with a great wife, for which I am truly thankful. Our marriage has been wonderful, but it hasn't reached the level we enjoy today on its own. Meaningful relationships require work; they don't just happen.

The same is true of our relationship with the Lord. A meaningful relationship with Christ doesn't just happen. Now I realize that it was the blood of Jesus alone that saved me; I didn't earn or deserve my salvation, but if we are to enjoy a day to day relationship with Jesus, one that makes a profound difference in our lives, it will take work. People who live and walk close to the Lord don't get there by simply floating along. They have made their relationship with Jesus a priority in life. If we will commit ourselves to making Jesus the priority in life, we can enjoy a genuine closeness with Him. Let's look at the [principles](#) involved in: [Maintaining a Meaningful Relationship](#).

**I. Our Self-Examination** (12) – [Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.](#) We are charged to [take heed](#), to carefully consider where we stand with the Lord. In order to maintain our closeness with the Lord, we must be willing to examine our lives and be willing to make the necessary improvements for the good of the relationship. The text reveals two areas that need to be carefully examined.

**A. Our Hearts** – [Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.](#) The previous verses deal with the heart of Israel as they wondered in the wilderness, [Vv.8-10](#). God had brought them out of bondage across the Red Sea, provided for their every need, and yet they were filled with unbelief. They were constantly doubting and questioning God's favor and His ability to meet their needs.

- A meaningful relationship with Jesus requires a heart of faith, one that trusts and depends upon the Him. Where are our hearts today? Do we really believe that Jesus is all He promised He is? Do we fully trust in His power to sustain us in this life? Have you fully surrendered your life to Him? A heart of doubt and unbelief will certainly hinder your relationship with the Lord. It tells the Lord that you are not confident in Him.

**B. Our Habits** – [Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.](#) The people of Israel strayed from God in the wilderness. They

refused to trust and follow Him. We can say that we love the Lord and desire to walk with Him, but our actions reveal the truth. Our actions speak so loud that people can't hear a word we are saying!

- What does our life reveal? I could tell Tanya every day I love her, but if I never showed or expressed that love with my actions, she would soon begin to doubt my sincerity. It is difficult to do, but we must take heed of our lives. A heart that isn't centered on the Lord will soon lead to habits that aren't centered on Him. When we lose our focus and commitment to maintaining our relationship, it quickly suffers from our neglect. Maintaining a close relationship with Jesus requires a life that is lived in light of Him.

**II. A Sacrificial Exhortation** (13) – *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Meaningful relationships are never one sided. Our concern must also include the interests of others. I can't expect to receive all the time and never give of myself. Many Christians treat Jesus as an unlimited "gift card." They constantly want to receive His blessings, but never give anything in return. Jesus isn't only concerned with what we offer unto Him, but what we offer to fellow believers. He expects us to maintain meaningful relationships with each other. Look at our sacrifice:

**A. Its Basis** – *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today.* The word **exhort** means "*to call to one's side in order to comfort and console.*" We are not here to make sure everything goes the way we desire. We have an obligation to our church family to be an encouragement to them. I know that it's hard to put others' needs ahead of our own, but that is what the Lord expects. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

- We aren't to do this only on Sunday or when things are going our way, but each and every day. We are to lift up one another daily, right now! I think many times we tend to focus on the physical nature of folks and fail to realize they are also a part of the body of Christ. Jesus loved them enough to die for them and He expects us to love them as well. We'll never have a meaningful relationship with Jesus if we don't exhort the brethren!

**B. Its Benefit** – *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* This thing of giving of ourselves for the good of others is beneficial. All of us have a need to be loved and cared for. I have never enjoyed being in a place where I didn't feel wanted. We can be of great benefit to those around us by simply giving of ourselves.

- I have heard far too many people say they want nothing to do with the church because of the way someone treated them at church. Those people's hearts were hardened by [the deceitfulness of sin](#). Satan used someone within the church to hurt them and they may never give church a second thought. I have seen Christians, who have been in church for years, get hurt and abandon the church and God. The Lord is pleased when we love each other and encourage each other in the faith. When we give to others, we give to God!

**III. Our Steadfast Endurance** (14) – [For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.](#) As with any relationship, commitment is essential. Many of our spiritual problems result from the “ups and downs” in our relationship with Jesus. We cannot neglect the Lord and expect our problems to simply go away with a simple prayer. There is a need for a daily walk with Him. Notice:

**A. The Requirement** (14b) – [if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.](#) Jesus wants us to live a life of consistency. We are expected to maintain the zeal and commitment we had when we were first saved. We all started well at the moment of salvation. We need to strive to finish well.

- Do you remember the excitement when you were first dating? You were completely consumed with thoughts of that special someone. You tried to do all you could to please them. Sadly we often lose the commitment we had at the beginning. The same holds true with our spiritual lives. Think of the joy you had when you were first saved. You wanted to draw closer to the Lord, learn more of Him, and couldn't wait to get to church. Many times we lose that zeal and before we know it, the world has taken the Lord's place in our lives. Jesus wants us to maintain that closeness with Him.

**B. The Reward** (14a) – [For we are made partakers of Christ.](#) If we will commit ourselves to seeking a closer walk with the Lord, we are assured of being [partakers](#) with Him. If we want to enjoy the fullness that a close relationship with Jesus offers, we must meet His requirements. That tiny little word “if” carries great significance. Our salvation wasn't dependent upon our works, but our fellowship with the Lord certainly is.

- Enjoying the goodness of God is available to all Christians, but many never realize their full potential in Christ. Our lives cannot be lived as if we are saved and it makes no difference what we do. We can have a meaningful relationship with the Lord, but we must live upright and work diligently to possess it!

**IV. The Specific Expectations** (15) – [While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.](#) The Lord has made His presence and fellowship available, but we will have to meet Him on His terms. He will not abide where sin is. We must maintain a pure life if we desire that closeness with the Lord. He gives two specific expectations:

**A. Hear His Voice** – [Today if ye will hear his voice.](#) The Lord speaks many times, but we are often too busy to hear or simply don't want to listen. A genuine relationship with Christ involves being sensitive to His voice. He speaks to us in many ways, but it is always for our good. A heart that has learned to hear the voice of God has yielded itself to Him. We'll never attain spiritual fullness if we are unable to hear His voice.

**B. Heed His Voice** – [Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.](#) Knowing what the Lord desires of us is good, but we must take it a step further. We must learn to act upon His commands. My wife doesn't talk to me just so I can hear her words. She does so expecting me to respond. The Lord speaks to us and expects us to respond to Him.

- Do you desire to maintain a meaningful relationship with the Lord? If so you will have to respond to His will for your life. He is leading us into the greener pastures of His grace if we'll only listen and follow!

**Conclusion:** Our relationship with Jesus should mean more to us than it did yesterday. We ought to grow closer to Him as the days go by. Maybe your relationship isn't what it used to be or what it should be. That can change today if you will come to the Lord with a desire to have your fellowship restored.

You may not enjoy a relationship with Jesus. He may be someone you've heard of, but never met personally. Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with you as well. That relationship is only possible through salvation. Why not come today and begin a relationship with the Lord in salvation? Come if He has spoken to you!