



LOVE GOD

RELATE TO GOD

Introduction

What makes a relationship strong? Much could be said, but without question, strong relationships take *time*. Ask the elderly couple holding hands in the park. Ask the friends who have known each other for decades. Ask the co-workers who truly work as a team. Common to each is a relationship forged by participants investing *time* in the others.

The investment of time does not just happen. Relationships built on a passive approach are relationships that are not built. Strong relationships are grown through the investment of time in the other person's life because the time has been *planned*. The elderly couple converses at dinner—every night—exceptions are rare. The friendship spanning decades changed when college was over, but they continue to meet—every August—exceptions are rare. The co-workers who work as a team have consistent off-site meetings—every quarter—exceptions are rare. Time is never available unless time is made. The investment of time takes planning.

What's true of our relationships with people is true of our relationship with God.

If we are going to cultivate ongoing and authentic relationships with God, we must invest *time*. If this investment of time is going to happen, we must be thoughtful. The exercise that follows is designed to help plan intentional time with God. Planning does not mean you won't periodically break your plan or that you are confined by your plan. It's your plan, and you'll change it as circumstances change. But without a plan, there will always be something else you can do.

For purposes of this exercise, we will consider two forms of time.

Daily Time

This is the time invested in the normal rhythms of life. At the person-to-person level, this is family dinner, lunch every Tuesday with a friend, or a couple's date night. Planning daily time with God will increase the odds of this time truly happening.

Breakout Time

This is a periodic time when you're given the freedom to do and enjoy what you most want to do. At the person-to-person level, this is the yearly vacation or the quarterly retreat with the team. Cultivating your relationship with God on an open afternoon or during a time when the pressure is off will enrich your relationship greatly.

Who Are You?

Before creating your plan, consider your uniqueness. Do two things:

- 1) Check the descriptions that resemble you.
- 2) Of those you check, as best you can, rank them.

_____ **ARTIST:** Artists most naturally think in pictures and metaphors and often connect with God best through sensory stimulation. The sounds of instruments, the smells of incense, and the sights of the cathedral all draw the heart of an artist upward. Artists are strongly influenced by environment, their physical setting, and are wise to be mindful of this when entering into conversations with God. Artists also discover God through the work of their hands. Through painting or photography or other artistic endeavors, they both celebrate God's creative power and uncover new spiritual depths through their work.

_____ **ATHLETE:** Athletes prefer movement and often connect with God best during physical activity. A brisk run or a vigorous workout at the gym serve to release energy and clear the mind in ways that allow them to hear God's voice more clearly. Attempting to connect with God through quiet prayer or still meditation may feel initially odd to athletes. But it may also be something they benefit from, so long as it is done in smaller doses, especially at first. Too much, and the athlete will punt.

_____ **CONTEMPLATIVE:** Contemplatives are happiest when deep in thought. They often connect with God best through reflective meditation. They are often discerning and keenly aware of their surroundings. In contrast to the athlete, the contemplative experiences the greatest clarity in a place of stillness and quiet. This tranquility affords them the freedom to openly explore the nuances and trace the contours of any spiritual truth or thought that comes to mind.

_____ **MUSIC LOVER:** Music lovers are often musicians, but not always. They are those who know the difference between music that is cliché and music that is captivating. No doubt they have favorite genres. But more than the genre, they simply appreciate good music. They love music because it touches something deep within them. Thoughtful music lovers will intentionally select particular songs for their time with God that inspire the kind of connection for which their hearts are most hungry. For those with skills of their own, time with God will often include writing and performing musical creations of their own.

_____ **OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST:** The outdoor enthusiast often connects with God best through experiences of nature. There are those who prefer arduous hikes up a mountain, and there are those who prefer quiet walks in a garden. Either way, their hearts swell at the sights and sounds associated with breaking out of confinement and into fresh air. The wide open view from a lake. The tree-lined trail. The intricate detail of a tiny rose bud. Relishing these majestic moments inspire the outdoor enthusiast toward thoughts of God.



_____ **STUDENT:** Students are characterized by an insatiable hunger for knowledge. They are driven to understand truth at deeper and deeper levels. Accordingly, they often connect with God best through study of Scripture. They are rarely satisfied with simply being told *that* some spiritual reality is true. Rather, they have a great need to understand *why* it is true and how it fits with other spiritual truths. Students enjoy deep theological reflection and understanding Scripture in its full and original context.

_____ **WRITER:** Writers revel in refining their thoughts through words. For them, it is not just the unloading of words on a page but the ping of a finely-tuned phrase or the arc of a well-crafted paragraph. When they converse with God, they will search for the exact words that capture not just the content but also the tone of the thought. Like woodworkers shaping a form by sanding away the roughness, writers sand phrases to smooth out their thoughts. Through the process, they not only express their own voice, but increasingly, they hear the voice of God.

_____ **OTHER:**



Brainstorm

With your uniqueness in mind...

- 1) Brainstorm ways you could cultivate your relationship with God. Resist analyzing the ideas. This is just brainstorming. Planning comes next.
- 2) Based on the nature of the idea, place it in either the Daily Plan or Breakout Plan column. (Definitions of *daily* and *breakout* are on the cover page of this exercise.)

Daily Plan

Examples for an athlete/outdoor enthusiast:

- Work on Scripture memory as I ride the exercise bike at the gym.
- Talk to God about my daily Scripture readings as I go for my nightly run.

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

Breakout Plan

Examples for an athlete/outdoor enthusiast:

- Go hiking alone one weekend and use this time to talk to God.
- Plan a camping trip with my Running Partners. Bring my guitar for worship together.

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•



Daily Plan

With your brainstorming in mind, create a Daily Plan. Make your plan realistic rather than idealistic. A little bit over a long time will bring great depth.

DAILY:

1. READ:

Choose a time of day for daily Scripture reading:

Choose a location conducive to the realities of your daily life and the uniqueness of your spiritual personality:

2. MEMORIZE:

Choose a time of day you will review the Scripture memory verses (while running, before bed, first thing in the morning, at lunch, while doing dishes, while driving, etc.):

3. MEDITATE:

Choose a time of day you will meditate on what you've been reading and move into an authentic conversation with God. It may be identical to the Read time above, but if you read in the morning or evening, you may want to consider a time in the day you will pause to remind yourself of what you read that morning or the night before. This kind of brief pause can bring what you read into the realities of your life.



Breakout Plan

With your uniqueness in mind...

Plan at least one breakout time.

Consider a monthly, quarterly, or yearly tradition you may want to implement.

Note: If planning your breakout times feels burdensome, then reconsider either your ideas or your timing. Breakout time should be highly reflective of your uniqueness and something you look forward to doing.

One Planned Breakout Time:

A Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Tradition:

