



## On Prescribing Relationship with God

This article addresses pre-conceived or popular notions and prescriptions regarding how one carries on relationship with God.

For example, the following people *wrote* their prayers to God: David (73 different Psalms), Moses (Psalm # 90), Solomon (2 Psalms, # 72 & 127), the family of Asaph (12 Psalms, # 50, 73-83), the family of Korah (10 Psalms, # 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87), Heman (Psalm # 88), Ethan (Psalm # 89), and 50 other prayers by unspecified authors. We don't know if these people wrote all, or most, or some, or few of their prayers; but at least 150 have been canonized as Scripture. (One of the Dead sea Scrolls { 11QPsa } attributes 3600 prayers to David.)

One point I'd like to make is this: For these people, committing their prayers to writing happened to be a major aspect of their relationship with God - at least, that's the aspect of their relationship with God we know the most about - their written prayers. Consider this: In carrying on their relationship with God, these people dictated these prayers to scribes, and these prayers were recorded, repeated, shared publicly, and passed down from generation to generation. I think we can conclude that God liked that - He has seen fit to preserve these written prayers for thousands of years and to be translated into hundreds of languages.

Is this an aspect of your relationship with God? Am I suggesting that we should write prayers to God? Maybe. Why not? However, in my Christian circles, and I believe in most circles, the idea of *writing* prayers to God would be looked on today as "liturgical", too formal, lacking intimacy, even symptomatic of lacking "authentic" relationship with God.

But writing prayers to God is just one aspect for consideration. More to the point: Maybe our concept of an "authentic" relationship with God is based less on true authenticity and more on pre-conceived and popular notions and prescriptions. Maybe we are unconsciously insisting that relationship with God fit into some narrow mold which seriously limits our potentialities for knowing God. And just as sadly, maybe limiting

ourselves to pre-conceived and popular notions and prescriptions distracts us from unique directions and devotions which God intended for us to develop as individuals. With seemingly infinite variety in the creation, it seems to me God would be desiring more than cookie-cutter relationships.

So, what are the particular ways am I suggesting that we carrying on relationship with God? My point is to not be limited to pre-conceived and popular prescriptions; therefore, I'm not prescribing any particular ways. What I am suggesting is this: Consider all the various spiritual disciplines (holy habits). We should desire to have a well-rounded relationship with God, and therefore we should desire to be devoted to a number of spiritual disciplines. But we should also be open and humble enough to learn from others what they have learned about God through their devotion to particular spiritual disciplines.<sup>1</sup> But we should also embrace those particular spiritual disciplines which we find most "natural" to ourselves - that is, those which we find ourselves almost unconsciously gravitating towards - those spiritual activities for which we are highly motivated to do and are passionate about. I am not suggesting a "specialist" mindset but rather embracing the uniqueness which God intended for each of His children.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the subject of Spiritual Disciplines, there are many good books written by Richard Foster, Gordon MacDonald, Donald Whitney, Dallas Willard, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Suggested reading: "Sacred Pathways" by Gary L. Thomas.

I'll use myself as an example: Do I write prayers to God? I've written a few. I've also written a few poems and a few songs. But I am more inclined to pray, receive inspiration, research Scripture, reflect, and write biblical teaching articles. Last night I fell asleep thinking about these things. And soon as I awoke this morning, I grabbed a cup of coffee and began to develop my thoughts into written words. I've been reflecting and writing on this for hours now. Why? Because I believe that, in this way – through writing, God is relating to me, and I am relating to God. This is His one of His desires for our relationship. And I embrace and highly value that.

I don't see the sense in trying to conform to some pre-conceived and popular prescriptions on how we should be relating to God. I want to be and do what God created me to be and do. Don't you?

Consider these two translations of Galatians 6:4 ...

"But let every person carefully scrutinize and examine and test his own conduct and his own work. He can then have the personal satisfaction and joy of doing something commendable [in itself alone] without [resorting to] boastful comparison with his neighbor." *Amplified Bible*

"Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life." *The Message*



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By W.D. Furioso



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W.D. Furioso  
Editor, Frances Furioso  
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Bill & Frances Furioso

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, discipled many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet... [www.AtChristsTable.org](http://www.AtChristsTable.org)

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