

Making God the Center of Your Life

How do we give God the proper priority in our lives that He deserves as our Savior?

My maternal grandmother was the first person to tell me about Jesus. She was very devout, going to church Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, and Wednesday nights. She put a dollar in the offering plate every time it passed her. She also prayed and taught me to pray. Jesus was the center of her life, to the chagrin of other members of the family. They did not share her enthusiasm for church or the Bible. As a child, I could clearly see that God was the center of her life.

As a youth, I attended a church that followed in the same vein of weekly attendance as my grandmother but added the name “Christ” to Jesus. Everything was “Jesus Christ” in terms of worship and learning. At the age of 12, I joined the church because that was the continuing pattern, and my mother encouraged me to do so.

I learned that Jesus Christ was the Savior who forgave sins. He came out of the grave, proving that He had life beyond death and could grant me eternal life. Beyond that, I was only told to be a good boy. Honestly, I did not understand the idea of sin, except in getting in trouble with my parents, and the idea of eternal life was too far out there. I was trying to get my mortal life started with school and my youth activities.

When I became a man, serving in the Navy, my faith in Jesus Christ was nothing more than a cultural habit from my hometown. I heard the name “Jesus Christ” many times as a profane expression. I would answer and say I was a Christian when I was asked, but Jesus was not the center of my life. There was no more going to church in my hometown since I was aboard ship now.

In those days, I had real questions about everything I had been taught about Jesus and Christianity. For example, should I not also believe in the Father and the Holy Spirit? In a moment of honest reflection, I told Jesus that I did not have enough information to believe in Him, or the other parts of God for that matter.

I believe God heard my honest admission and shortly thereafter sent a man to me who was able to answer some of my questions. He shared a particular Scripture with me, and I suddenly realized the importance of believing in and receiving Jesus.

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 JOHN 5:11-12

I understood that believing in God was how you received the gift of eternal life. I also understood that His Son had been sent to accomplish my transition from death to life. I also understood that the Bible was the testimony of many witnesses instructing me about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

I began my journey of faith as a young man seeking a relationship with God, one that had been shown to me by my grandmother. But that journey was going to go through several transitions with different teachers and experiences.

Let me come to the point of this article. All my teachers could only repeat what my grandmother taught me. When it came to having a deep relationship with God, it was limited to just Jesus. I was taught that the Father turned the kingdom of heaven over to His Son, and I should focus on Him alone. God the Father was just kicking back

on His Throne beyond the stars, but His Son was the manifestation of God for us now. This thinking also included all the covenants that God had made before Jesus came.

I struggled with that theology because I knew Abraham and Moses were saved, but they lived before Jesus. How were they saved?

Then there were the charismatic believers who came along, talking about the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and that you must experience the gift of “speaking in tongues.” Speaking in tongues did happen after Jesus ascended, but how did that fit into the salvation question?

Suddenly, I was confronted with fellow believers saying that Abraham and Moses were saved by keeping the Law, not by believing in Jesus. However, the disciples were saved by believing Jesus was the Messiah. The exception was the charismatic Christians, who believed they were saved because they have the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues.

This is an oversimplification, but this is a fair representation and my experience of growing in the faith.

As a result of all this conflicting theology, my relationship with God did not increase, and I still struggled with the idea of God being the center of my life as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. My relationship with God was religious and not personal.

Let me step back in time to the age of 12. I had joined the church, been baptized, and was representing myself as a Christian. But then I had a very personal experience with “Jesus.” At that time in my life, I saw the movie “The Ten Commandments.”

Everything in the movie came down to the Pass-over. The final judgment upon Egypt was the death of the firstborn. That scared me.

You see, I knew I was of Hebrew descent. The children of Israel are my ancestral family. I was a firstborn son. The judgment fell on every house if it was not covered by the blood of lamb. My house did not have the blood on the door. What was stopping God from coming with another judgment upon the world?

That night in bed, I cried out to the Lord and asked to be saved. I remember asking in the name of God, the God of Israel, the Lord, Jesus, and Jesus Christ. I called on Him with everything I understood at that point.

I believe that God heard my prayer, and when I heard the verse 1 John 5:11–12 as a sailor, it became clear what had happened. I had accepted the Lord into the center of my life at that moment, at age 12, and I had not understood what God had done for me.

But something else happened in the days following “The Ten Commandments.” It was in the early evening, the streetlights had come on, and I was on the sidewalk in front of my home. A voice inside of me spoke. I was not alarmed, but I knew something strange and wonderful was happening. I did not know if the voice was an angel or the Lord Himself. I was not concerned about that. Calmly, the voice asked me. “What would you do if everything you had been taught about God was wrong?” When I tried to answer, I had nothing to say. I had no way of even recognizing error, let alone knowing how to correct it. The voice then answered the question, “God would have to save you then, wouldn’t He?”

As I look over my life of 75 years, I have been told many things about God and my faith. A lot of them were wrong and filled with error. I am not

alone. I believe that many others have had the same experience and are trying to sort out the wheat from the chaff themselves.

For me, I have discovered that the solution to this problem is found in building a relationship with God by learning how to believe in Him, not just learning facts about Him. I now know that making God the center of my life is in the same way Moses desired to know God.

Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are on the face of the earth?" The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." Then Moses said, "Please, show me Your glory!"

EXODUS 33:15-18

I desired to know God beyond what all my previous teachers had taught me, and I needed to know God with all my mind, spirit, and soul. I wanted to know and teach about God as Paul described to the Corinthians.

I also was with you in weakness and fear, and in great trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of mankind, but on the power of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:3-5

I wanted to communicate with God beyond what natural men can do.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak

God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-7

I wanted to acquire the ability to know the Spirit of God with my spirit.

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among people knows the thoughts of a person except the spirit of the person that is in him? So also the thoughts of God no one knows, except the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10-14

God led me on a path to accomplish these things. I learned that He desired that of me even more so than I did of Him.

I sought to find that relationship with God. I discovered that there is a particular word in the Bible that defines that deep relationship with God. It is the word "Bondservant."

The Law of Moses has a particular law called the Law of the Bondservant, found in Exodus 21. It has to do with a slave who gains his freedom but does not want to leave the service of his master. He makes a public testimony and becomes a servant for life because of his love of family and the master. He becomes a bondservant.

This is the model of every believer, set free from the bondage to sin, who desires to remain in the house of the Lord for the reason of love. This is the way to make God the center of your life. This

is what Yeshua taught His disciples: to be Yeshua's bondservant, you had to make public testimony, deny yourself, and love your fellow brethren.

Then Yeshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.

MATTHEW 16:24

"I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

JOHN 13:34

"By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."

JOHN 13:35

"This I command you, that you love one another.

JOHN 15:17

The Apostles developed this relationship with God because of Yeshua. Listen to their testimony.

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

ROMANS 1:1

James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.

JAMES 1:1

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 PETER 1:1

Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:

JUDE 1:1

Why don't Christian leaders today call themselves bondservants of Jesus? Why was I not taught about the relationship God desires from us? God wants us to surrender our freedom, to become the servants of God and live in His House forever.

The word "bondservant" burned through my soul, and I knew that was what I needed to do. All that I had been told was wrong, but now God's Spirit was showing me the path to make God the center of my life.

I no longer struggle with the parts of God. They all have their part in my walk of faith. I pray directly to the Father in the name of His Son, who is my advocate, with the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life."

JOHN 3:16

God the Father sent the Son to provide redemption and salvation. I believe He did that. By believing in the Father who sent His Son, I receive eternal life. It was the Father who raised His Son from the grave! The life is in His raised Son.

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

1 JOHN 5:11-12

Faith begins by trusting and believing the purposes and promises of the Father. This is what was pictured when Abraham received a promised son and then was instructed to sacrifice his son, Isaac. God was demonstrating that He was going to give His only Son as a sacrifice for sin. This is why Yeshua was called the Lamb of God. From that event, we can see God's plan in sev-

eral additional events that He brought to pass, such as when Jacob sent his son Joseph to see to the welfare of the brethren and the flock. Joseph was rejected by his brethren, cast in a pit, raised out of the pit, and sold. The next time Joseph was seen by his brothers was when He was viceroy in Egypt. This is the story of Yeshua being sent, rejected, being buried, and being raised again. The next time Yeshua is seen by those who rejected Him will be when He is King of the Universe.

I have come to work with the Spirit of God, using the Spirits of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. It turns out that those are individual Spirits within the Spirit of the Lord. Consider the Bible's definition of the Spirit of the Lord.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

ISAIAH 11:2

This is how I am able to follow God's instructions beyond what my eyes see and ears hear.

And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make decisions by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge...

ISAIAH 11:3-4a

A bondservant delights in holding his Master in awe and respect and being able to render judgments by the Spirit that are righteous (right and correct).

So how do you make God the center of your life and grow in discipleship?

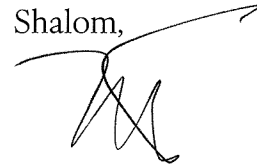
Become a bondservant of Yeshua of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel. He will introduce you to His Father and give you the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Shema will then mean a lot to you. This is what we are all pursuing in the faith.

Hear O'Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One.

DEUTERONOMY 6:4

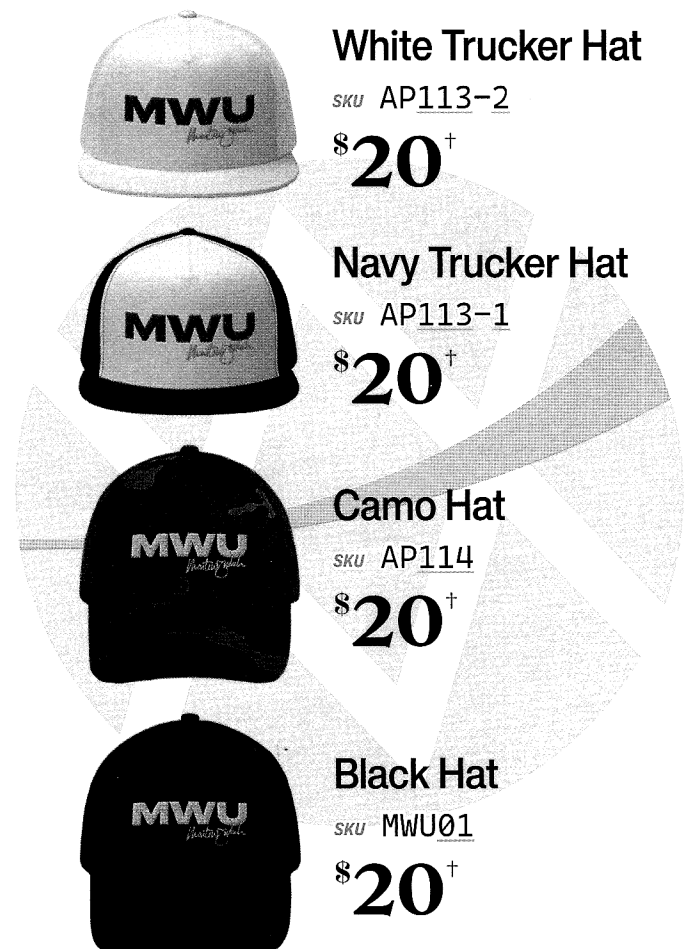
I encourage you to make Him the One in your life. ■




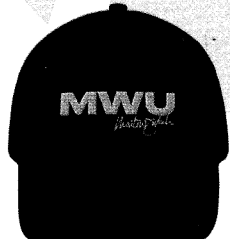
Shalom,


Article written by Monte Judah

* Scripture references from the NASB95

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