

My Relationship with God: A Brief Guide to Reviewing One's Spiritual Life

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This worksheet is a tool to help you get an overview of your relationship with God as it has developed, especially in its most recent “season.” This sheet will also give you new perspective on the directions which you see your relationship with God to be moving in the near future. Please read the whole worksheet and then respond to each section and question honestly and prayerfully on separate sheets of paper. If lengthy writing is not your cup of tea, you may wish simply to jot down a few notes for each question for future reference. Take your time with each question. It may be helpful, after completing the worksheet, to process the experience of reviewing your relationship with God with a trusted friend or spiritual director. My hope is that the completing of this worksheet itself will be an enlightening encounter with God.

Exercise 1: History of My Relationship with God

On a separate piece of paper draw a graph describing the history of your relationship with God from its beginning to the present. Show the highs and lows of this relationship from its beginning to the present. Identify (and date if appropriate) key peaks, valleys, plateaus, transitions and developments. Then sit and prayerfully look at this chart. What has characterized your most recent “season” with the Lord? How does this season differ from previous seasons? Where does your relationship with the Lord appear to be moving now?

Exercise 2: Pictorial Summary of My Relationship with God

On a blank sheet of unlined paper, draw a picture representing your relationship with God. This picture can be abstract or realistic, black and white or color, Rembrandt or stick-figure. The quality of product is unimportant; the sincerity of expression is important. Allow yourself to deeply feel the movement of your relationship with God as it has been taking shape in the present period. Allow that sense, that feel, to be expressed naturally on paper (if you want to use another visual expressive medium – sculpture, dance or the like – go for it). If you want to, feel free to “name” your art work, or to adorn it with a “life verse” from scripture that has been meaningful to you recently.

Exercise 3: A Journal of My Recent Season with God

Go back in your mind to this most recent season or period of your relationship with God. Look at this period in your mind as if you were photographing it with a video-camera. Do not evaluate it; simply picture it. As you reflect upon this period of your relationship with God write down on a piece of paper responses to the following questions. You need not answer them all; just address those which seem appropriate to your life. Answer them in any order which seems most appropriate to you.

A. What experiences of God characterized this season of your relationship? Were there any particular times of intense closeness or distance sensed? Was this time dry, rich, mixed? How did you respond emotionally to God's work in your life? Could you identify this as a time of passion, love, joy, peace, anxiety, grief, anger, or other feelings? Was there a kind of “mood” which characterized the period? Did your awareness of God itself change in this period?

B. How has your understanding of God developed in this season? Have there been any particular personal Bible Studies, classes, sermons, seminars, books, tapes, or the like, which have had a significant influence on your understanding of God at this time? How do you see God now: as a father, a helper, a judge, etc.? Where do you see your comprehension of the mystery of God taking you in the future?

C. How might you characterize your relationship to the groups and subgroups that comprise your church or religious community. Do you feel more or less “a part” of your religious community? Why? Do you feel your associations with various religious groupings or movements shifting? Are they growing more or less solid? Why? Summarize your feelings and reflections about your religious community.

D. What activity has characterized this season? What have you been involved in? Has there been a development of any new activities flowing from your relationship with God in this season – activities of devotion, service, quest, or other similar acts? Have there been any particular “sins” of which you have become aware during this season, and which have demanded hearty repentance and attention? How might you characterize your ongoing activities at work or at home? Is there any event(s) which has affected your relationship with God at home or at work?

E. What relationships (if not covered above) have played an important role in this period? These need not be pleasant or satisfying relationships, simply important ones. Were there any new relationships introduced, any relationships broken? Where do you see your relationships moving now? Where does your relationship with God bear on these developments?

F. How might you characterize your physical life in this period? Was health or illness a significant factor in this season of your relationship with God? Do any particular events come into mind with regard to diet, athletics, sex, and the like?

G. Was this a time when you had a strong experience with respect to any creative aspect of life? What did you find yourself creating during this season? Were there any crafts, any projects, any art forms, any outings that brought you into yourself, into relationship with God, or that expressed relationship with God? How has the creative side of life expressed or reflected your relationship with God during this season?

H. Were there any events that took place during this period that were particularly striking or dramatic or meaningful? Was there a single event that drastically changed the course of your life-experience (for example a tragic accident or winning the lottery)? If so, how has this event affected your relationship with God?

NOTE: You may be tempted to give lengthy commentary on the movements of your life in this period, especially if the act of reflection has given you new insight. Jot these insights elsewhere and save extended commentary for the next question. The comments and insights are very important and will be discussed. But for this question, just “photograph” the season.

Exercise 4: Evaluation

Now you may feel free to comment or to analyze the relationship you have previously described. How did this period of your life get on? Are you pleased with your relationship with God? Unhappy? Where was God most present during this season? Least present? Why? How do you feel you stand with God now? Where was God’s invitation to you most keenly felt? How did you respond to this invitation? Try not to be too self-critical in this evaluation. Just be honest. A comparison with some virtues, gently but firmly applied might help:

A. Consider the following virtues: a prayerful life, a Spirit-filled life, a Word-centered life, a holy life, a compassionate life, a life of ministry. In which of these virtues do you find yourself the strongest? The weakest? Can you explain?

B. Consider again: a clear constant awareness of God, a profound experience of God, a deep understanding of God and His ways, an obedient response to God. In which of these virtues do you find yourself strongest? Weakest? Can you explain?

Exercise 5: Summary

When you have finished, reflect once again upon the whole of your recent season, without looking at its individual components. Is there a word, a phrase or a picture that would sum up the whole of your relationship with God during

this time? Where do you see yourself in relationship with God right now? Include your insights into this final reflection as you summarize your present understanding of your relationship with God.