

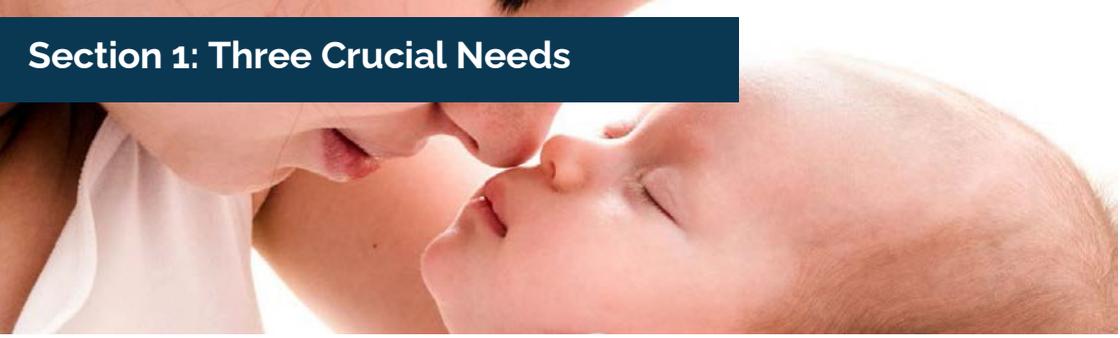
Going Deeper **Separation Anxiety & Our Longing for Intimacy**



Discipleship
Course

How Can I Experience God?

Section 1: Three Crucial Needs



What Everyone Wants

Psychologists tell us that every one of us was born with three crucial needs:

1. The need for **SECURITY** in the form of unconditional love
2. The need for **SELF-WORTH** and feeling valued for just being me
3. The need for **SIGNIFICANCE** or knowing my life has a meaning and purpose

In the beginning when God created human beings, he created them to find these crucial needs met in him.

BUT there was a problem.....

God also created human beings with **FREE WILL** to choose to obey or to disobey their Maker.

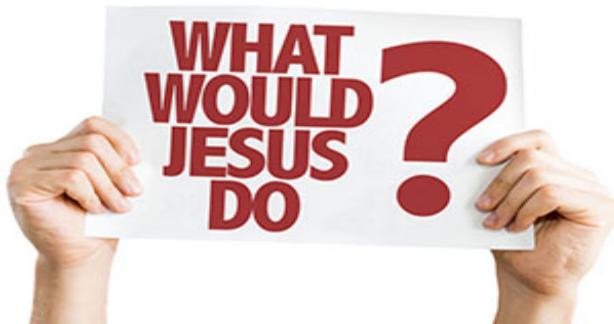


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Section 2: The Origin of Our Longing



Trouble In The Garden Centre

Chapter 2 of The Book of GENESIS reveals that before the Fall Adam and Eve enjoyed unfettered, intimate communion with God in his perfect creation.

But in **Chapter 3** we see this idyllic relationship was shattered when they were seduced into disobeying God's instructions regarding the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree represents human free will to obey or disobey God.

Broken Relationship & Loss of Intimacy

The moment they rebelled, that perfect relationship with their Creator was broken and there were serious consequences. Not only did sin and death come into a world, where such corruption and decay were previously unknown, but both the man and the woman experienced a changed relationship with their Maker.

We see that God declared to Eve that her rebellion would result in two consequences:

- (a) Pain in childbearing and
- (b) A desire for her husband instead of her perfect communion with God.

Instead of looking to God to satisfy her deepest needs for security, self-worth and significance, she would now look to her husband and discover that he was incapable of meeting her need for intimacy. She would discover that sex is no substitute for the unconditional love of God.

Likewise Adam was condemned

- (a) To hard labour in husbanding their environment; and
- (b) To a new role as head over his wife. He would find that she too was incapable of satisfying his crucial needs but would nevertheless look to her instead of God in his longing for intimacy.

Longing For Intimacy Is In Our Human DNA

The Bible account in **GENESIS 1:26-27** says that Adam was made in God's image.

But in **GENESIS 5:3** we read that when Adam and Eve's son Seth was born, he was born in the image of his father Adam, not God. And ever since the Fall, mankind has inherited the sin-gene in our DNA and a longing for the intimacy he once enjoyed.

A God-shaped Hole Inside Us

This refocusing of our attention on fallen humanity rather than God is the origin of our longing for an intimacy which no human being could ever satisfy. That is because God created us with a God-shaped hole inside us that only he can fill and a longing for intimacy only he can satisfy.

We see this longing for intimacy expressed in the first lines of **PSALM 42**.

PSALM 42:1-2 *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go & meet with God?*

This longing is actually a God-initiated desire as we see in **PSALM 27:8**

*'My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."'*

We Are Created For A Love-Relationship With God

You see, God created us for a love-relationship with him.

The great Early Church Father Augustine of Hippo wrote:

"Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you, O God."

Section 3: The Answer to Our Longing



God's Answer To Separation Anxiety & The Fear Of Death

Even as he banished our first ancestors from his presence and the security of perfect relationship, God had fashioned the solution through the shedding of the blood of an animal in place of the sinner.

GENESIS 3 also says that Adam and Eve made a covering from animal skins to cover their nakedness. In other words something or someone else had to die in their place for their sin to be 'covered' and God's justice satisfied.

In **LEVITICUS 17:11** we read:

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

The Meaning of 'Atonement'

The word *atonement* means 'covering for sin'. A holy, just and righteous God cannot look upon sin without punishing it. So in the Old Testament we see God institute a system of sacrifices to 'cover' the sin of his chosen people through the sacrifice of an animal in place of the sinner. The blood of the animal atoned for or covered the sin of the human sinner.

This shedding of blood to atone for sin also provided for the restoration of the sinner to fellowship with God and the mending of the relationship that had been broken by God establishing a covenant with his chosen people Israel based on this sacrificial system.

But this system of sacrifices simply served to highlight man's complete inability to keep all God's commandments as part of the covenant relationship. And so God promised a more radical solution to enable human beings to be reconciled to God.

God's Promise of A Heart Transplant

In **EZEKIEL 36:22-27** God promised to do something only he could do to deal with sin.

"Give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign LORD:

I am bringing you back, but not because you deserve it. I am doing it to protect my holy name, on which you brought shame while you were scattered among the nations. I will show how holy my great name is — the name on which you brought shame among the nations. And when I reveal my holiness through you before their very eyes, says the Sovereign LORD, then the nations will know that I am the LORD. For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land.

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my commandments."

God's New Covenant Established Through A Perfect Human Being

In fact it would take the death in our place of a perfect human being who was without sin - an unblemished lamb, the Lamb of God, to pay the price once and for all for the sin of the whole world. Only in this way could we be reconciled to God forever and our fear of death and the anxiety of being separated from loved ones be finally overcome, as we read in **HEBREWS 2:14- 15**.

Because God's children are human beings — made of flesh and blood — the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (NLT)

The Need To Be Born Again To Be Reconciled To God

The only way we can be reconciled to God and restored to fellowship with him is by undergoing a supernatural process whereby the resurrection life of Jesus Christ is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit at conversion. Jesus called this process being '**born anothēn**' - a Greek word meaning both '*again*' and '*from above*'.

When Nicodemus, a religious leader and member of the Jewish Council, *The Sanhedrin*, came to see Jesus secretly one night, he did not understand what Jesus meant when he said in **JOHN 3:3-5**:

"I tell you the truth, unless you are born anothēn you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus.

"How can an old man like me go back inside his mother's womb and be born anothēn?"

Jesus replied,

"I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born anothēn.'"

The Meaning of Being Born Anothen

To be born anothen involves a supernatural act that only God can perform. It happens when a sinner admits s/he is a sinner who cannot help her/himself in God's eyes and asks God to forgive her/his sin by putting his/her trust in the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary to 'atone for' or 'cover' his/her sins. When I admit my sin, ask God to forgive my sin because I place my trust in Jesus' blood to cover my sin, God says he forgives me and promises to fill me with his Holy Spirit to enable me to resist the temptation to sin and give me victory over the power of sin in my life.

We read in **1 JOHN 1:8-9**:

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

In **ACTS 2: 38-39** the apostle Peter tells the crowd who were gathered to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem and were asking how they could be saved from God's wrath:

"Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away — all who have been called by the Lord our God."

The New Birth Is God's Answer To Our Longing For Intimacy

Paul writing in **ROMANS 8:1-4** says:

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

The Law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

Later in **verses 38-39** Paul adds:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Result of Being Born Another

The result of my being born from above supernaturally by the Spirit of God is that Jesus now lives in me by the Holy Spirit and God fulfills my three crucial needs for **security, self-worth** and **significance**.

Instead of looking for love in the wrong direction and ending up in all sorts of trouble through drink, drugs, sex or working my butt off to prove I'm ok really, I can now rest in the experience of knowing God loves me with an everlasting love that nothing and no-one can separate me from.

Now that's what I call Good News! What about you?

NOTES



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