

## A Varying Relationship

I think most of us would agree that the events of recent months have affected our relationship with God in varying ways. The Bible, which is mainly about this relationship, teems with illustrations of our diverse responses to him, and him to us. Here are some examples, do you identify with any of them?

### Hiding

**Genesis 3:8-10** pictures God walking in the garden in the cool of evening saying, ***“Where are you?”*** Adam and Eve, naked and afraid uselessly hide from him. Years later the psalmist feels that God himself is hiding., ***“Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”*** **Psalm 10:1**



### Longing

David, in the desert of Judah, longs for God, ***“My soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.”*** **Psalm 63:1.** Jesus has longings too, ***“Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”*** **Matthew 23:37**



## Resting

Here are two lovely, inviting word pictures.

- ♦ “Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him for he shields him all day long.”
- ♦ “The one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders.”

**Deuteronomy 33:12**

And Jesus’s words to his tired disciples, who didn’t even have a chance to eat because of the coming and going.

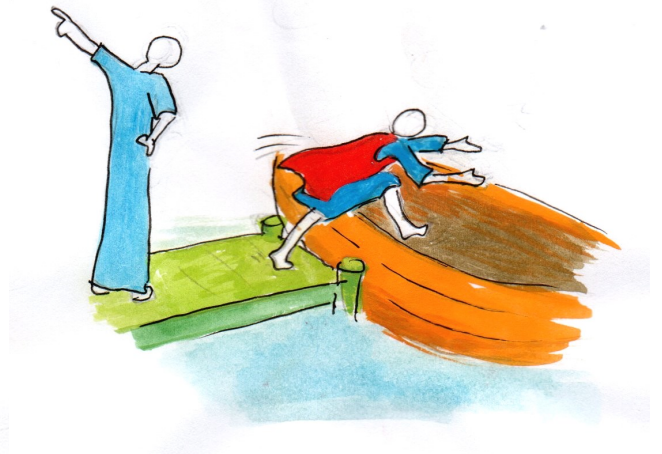
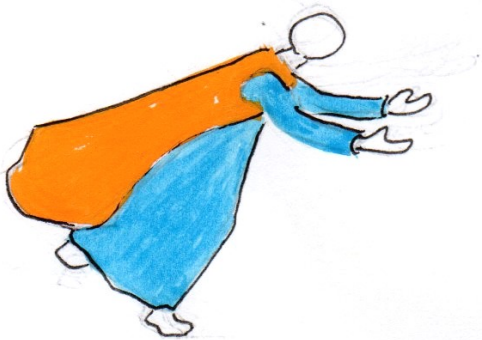
- ♦ “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

**Mark 6:31**



## Running to, or from

The prodigal son’s father, **“filled with compassion for him... ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” Luke 15:20** Whereas Jonah ran away from God. **Jonah 1:1-3**



## Persisting

When Peter refused to let Jesus serve him by washing his feet, Jesus persisted; he said, **“Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” John 13:8**



He encourages us to persist in coming to God, telling the parable of the widow who persisted with the unjust judge, to teach us not to give up. And he responded gladly to those who persisted and overcame obstacles in order to reach him: The woman with bleeding, pushing her way through the crowd; blind Bartimaeus, shouting until Jesus responded; and Zacchaeus climbing a tree. Here is the account of Zacchaeus:



1Then Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2And there was a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who was very wealthy. 3He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not see over the crowd because he was small in stature. 4So he ran on ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see Him, since Jesus was about to pass that way.

5When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and said, “**Zacchaeus, hurry down, for I must stay at your house today.**”

6So Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed Him joyfully. 7And all who saw this began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinful man!”

8But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold.”

9Jesus said to him, “**Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**”

**Luke 1:1-10**





Zacchaeus was small, unpopular, a known cheat. No one in the crowd was going to help him, but he persisted and found a way. When Jesus saw the lengths he'd gone to, he decided to spend the day with him - a man after his own heart. How these two men must have enjoyed that day.

It's the same for us. Jesus wants to connect with us; if we want to be closer, he will respond.

**Here are some questions to consider:**

- **How would you draw a picture of your present relationship with God?**
- **Has it changed in the present circumstances?**
- **How do you feel God feels towards you?**
- **How do you feel towards him?**
- **Do you want that picture to be different? If so, in what way?**

If we want things to be different, we may need to persist through difficulties, but we can ask and keep on asking, trusting that he'll answer.

We once had a puppy. We planned not to feed her at table. She was very good. She didn't jump up or whimper, but just sat there, shuffling her little bottom to get as close to us as possible, and gazing up unwaveringly with those hopeful, moist, brown eyes. Guess who won?

