



In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
One God, Amen.

Starting a Spiritual Life With God

God Seeks out Man

The first thing we should say when discussing how to start a spiritual life with God is that we do not decide by ourselves to renew our own spirituality or to mend our relationship with God but it is actually the Holy Spirit and the grace of God that moves us to think about our eternal life. God has always sought out mankind and its salvation from the beginning. From the time our Father Adam and Mother Eve fell by the guile of the serpent God promised them salvation even though they did not ask for it. Likewise God sought others like Jonah, the people of Nineveh, and the Samaritan woman to name but a few. So we should keep in mind as God speaks in our hearts that the enlightenment of our minds to understand the word of God and our acceptance of it is not by our own accord but by the will of God who had mercy on us to seek us out and work in our hearts.

Repentance – Starting Anew

There can be no doubt that the first step in starting (or restarting) our life with God is repentance. Through repentance and the sacrament of confession we wash our sins in the blood of the Lamb, who died for our sins, and we come out renewed as Saints. Since there is no mixture of darkness with light then we must start out clean with no darkness. Sometimes however there are obstacles to our repentance. For example, our fear of confessing our sins or the feeling that we cannot overcome our sins may prevent us from truly repenting. Also loving a particular sin or being enslaved to it through habit may get in our way. In these cases it is important to realize that no matter what obstacle we face we must work diligently on removing these obstacles from our lives (as stones in a farmland) without giving up on repentance or the work of the Holy Spirit within us. While we may lose battle after battle with Satan, the war is never lost until we give up completely. If you feel you cannot repent or cannot overcome then use the power of prayer and have faith that God listens and is able to give you the triumph over your spiritual enemies.

Obstacles to Starting Correctly

There are many obstacles that prevent us from starting, and maintaining, a spiritual life with God. We list here a few general ones:

- **Love of the world and the things that are in it.**
 - If we love sin than we have enslaved ourselves to it and if we love the lusts and the desires of the world than we have become enemies to God as St. John says: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (John 1:15).
- **Peer Pressure**
 - Like the thorns that grew with the seed that was planted and was choked by them so we too can be choked by our friends who lead us astray.
 - Ask yourself whether you follow the command – love the lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength. Do you love God more than your friends? Whose will do you want to follow more?
 - Remember what Christ said “I do not receive honor from men.” (John 5:41).
- **Pride**
 - By thinking we understand God better than anyone else or that we are smarter than others we condemn ourselves to being foolish.

- “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5).
- **Failure to Specify Goals**
 - We must keep our eye on our goal which is to be with God in the eternal life.
 - We might have other spiritual or earthly goals which may also be good ones but we can’t allow anything to distract us from the ultimate goal.
- **Laziness**
 - Sometimes it is simply easier to accept the status quo without trying hard to overcome our weaknesses. This is not the way of successful people and certainly not the way of the children of God who are given the spirit of success.

False Starts

In their quest to start a spiritual life with God some people fall into the following false starts:

- **Ethical Teachings**
 - By praising good works alone without faith some claim that you don’t need to be religious to be spiritual. Since God is merciful all we have to do is do good works to inherit the everlasting life.
 - We believe that man’s “goodness” is limited and inherently flawed since man himself is not perfect, however the goodness of God is infinite and is to our ultimate benefit so Christians believe not in doing their own goodness but in the goodness of God who works through us through the Holy Spirit. For if man’s earthly wisdom is foolishness to God than so must man’s earthly “goodness” be foolishness.
 - Consider the Old Testament and God’s commandments to wipe out sinners from the land lest they defile it. When the people of Israel allowed sinners to live out of “goodness” or mercy they came back to harm them later on (e.g. Haman from the story of Esther who almost killed all the Jewish people in Babylon and who was a descendant of King Agag who Saul did not kill upon capturing).
- **Sectarian Jealousy**
 - It is easy to think that by attending church or increasing our service we can be on a spiritual path with God, however while these activities are encouraged and helpful they are not in themselves spiritual but they help us get to the true spiritual life. Since God desires mercy and not sacrifice we have to approach all our service with a humble heart knowing that we are not worthy to serve God and that we need God’s grace in our life no matter how successful our service becomes.
 - Sectarian jealousy can also lead to divisions amongst the churches as everyone might see themselves as “better” and is detrimental to the notion of the church being the one body of Christ.

Final Word

The true spiritual life with God is denoted by a deep love of God and others as well as a hatred for sin and anything that is offensive to God. By seeing God and His son Jesus Christ in front of us continually and by asking God to establish the roots of His love in our hearts we can rest assured that God will give us victory, safety and recovery from the fiery bites of the serpent. Glory be to our God forever, Amen.