

Jeremiah talks about God writing God's laws and putting knowledge of God within our hearts. Because God is in our hearts, God is with us always and supplies our needs. God declared that God would do this despite the Israelites turning so far away from God. God puts that knowledge in our hearts because God realized, based on his experience with the Israelites, that God putting Godself within us was the only way to guarantee we'd always be connected with God. God is in our hearts in the form of the Holy Spirit. Because I was raised in the Western Church, I believe that Holy Spirit comes out of what Jesus did through his crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension.

To understand the concept of God's Spirit being in our hearts, I want us to think about small children.

Small children, even infants, demonstrate that Spirit to us. As infants, they show us what faith is --- they are dependent upon us for their needs and have faith we'll meet those needs. They wouldn't be able to exhibit such faith without God.

As they grow in toddlerhood, they have a sense of goodness and innocence that reflects that Spirit. Nothing else in the world has had an opportunity to bury that innocence. Children also know God instinctively because they have God's laws and word- logo – within them.

Here's an example of that:

Jerome Berryman, an Episcopal priest who spent most of his career as a pediatric chaplain and Christian educator, has studied God and children his whole life. You might also be familiar with Father Berryman as the creator of Godly Play, which helps children put language to the God they know intuitively.

When Father Berryman was a pediatric chaplain, he talked with a small child with a terminal illness. The child had come from an atheist home, and her parents did not believe in God. And, the child had always been sick. She'd never been taken to church or had any opportunity to hear about God. He was testing his Godly Play model before releasing it and told the story of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. He described how Jesus cared for the sheep and helped them find green grass. And, he asked the child questions about whether they'd been led to find things they needed. At some point in the conversation, the child said, "I always knew there was someone like the Good Shepherd, but until now, I didn't know His Name."

Consider that for a minute. The child had always known God, despite never being taught. Father Berryman's teachings just gave her language for God. The child had always known someone loved her and provided what she needed even though no one had told her. She was in tune with God, who was in her heart.

So what about us? We have God in our hearts, too. And we've all been to church, so we know the name of this person who loves us and supplies our needs. But sometimes, we forget.

Here's another example, this time a story about an older child. It's printed in the book, *The Heart of Christianity*, by Marcus Borg. A little girl was an only child, but her mother was pregnant. She learned that she was to have a baby brother.

The mother went to the hospital and came home with the baby boy. A few hours later, the little girl asked to be alone with her baby brother. The parents were worried about this, but the girl was persistent. Finally, they remembered they had an intercom in the nursery. So, they allowed her to be with the baby, and they huddled around the intercom in case something happened that wasn't good.

As they listened over the intercom, they heard the little girl's steps as she approached the crib. Then they heard her say to her newborn brother, "Tell me about God. I've almost forgotten."

Sometimes we forget about God, too. As adults, the challenge for us is to keep our hearts and minds free from all the other stuff of the world so that we don't bury that Spirit within us. Sometimes, we are so busy struggling with whatever is going on in our lives that we forget about God. We forget that God is within us. We forget that God is all around us. We forget that God is everywhere. And we forget that God is ready to meet our needs – not necessarily our wants – but our needs, according to what is best for us.

So, how do we remember? How do we go back to that childlike knowledge and faith?

Here are a few suggestions. First, be with small children. Watch them and see how they show faith in having their needs met. Also, see how they show innocence and openness to what the world has for them and how little they worry.

Another idea is to take time each day to clear your mind of distractions. This is sometimes harder than it sounds because, for most of us, our mind wants to keep working even when we try to quiet it. Meditation is a practice. The more we work at it and learn techniques to quiet our minds, the better we'll get at learning to keep them quiet. When we are free of other distractions, we can reconnect with God.

Finally, faith improves with practice, too. Sometimes we think God isn't answering our prayers because God doesn't answer them in the way we expect. Here's a challenge should you choose to accept it. Keep a prayer journal for the next six months. Write what you ask for in your prayers. Then, pay attention to what happens and write it down in your journal. After six months, you'll be amazed at how God has answered your prayers. Many answers will come through others, and some will even come through your actions – God within you again.

God has put God's Word –the Essence of God – within our hearts. God did this because it was the only way to keep us connected with God. We're born with God in our hearts, but sometimes we let our own struggles bury that God, and we forget. Let's take time to remember God and God's faithfulness to us.