

## #177 “Intimacy with God”

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Proverbs 3:32 says, “For the devious are an abomination to the LORD; But He is intimate with the upright.” The KJV says God’s “secret” is with the righteous. The word for intimate could also be translated to mean “counsel,” “company,” or “familiar converse” (<http://www.studylight.org/isb/view.cgi?number=05475>). The Holy Spirit Who indwells our hearts is said to be our Counselor (John 14:26 KJV), the One Who gives advice, help, insight, wisdom, comfort, and admonishment. The Spirit leads us, proving that we are indeed children of God (Romans 8:14). The unbeliever cannot have intimacy with God because he does not know God. God knows of him, but He doesn’t know him in the familial, relational sense. The reality is that fundamental to Christianity is deep relational symbolism. The church is pictured as the bride of Christ in Revelation 22:17. The Bible frequently refers to believers as children of God (John 11:52) and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17 KJV). We are part of God’s family. Therein we have fellowship with God and can walk intimately with Him.

Some people see the term “intimate” and disdain the term for the term itself. Some people struggle to build relationships, to foster trust, and to rely upon others. Some people struggle to connect emotionally even with their spouses. But the reality is that God connects with His church at the deepest spiritual level. He lives within our hearts, leading us by His Holy Spirit according to His voice in the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We as His children know His voice because we know our Shepherd (John 10:27). We can discern between Satan’s leading and God’s leading. We can discern truth from error thanks to the Scripture and the Spirit’s help in illuminating our minds to its meaning. Intimacy with God is part and parcel to knowing God and walking with Him. We should not be turned off by this reality, but we should be strengthened and encouraged by it.

The gospel of John gives us a visible picture of the intimacy Christ had with His disciples, calling them His friends (John 15:15). They ate together, served together, laughed together, prayed together, and worshipped together. John himself reclined his head upon Christ’s chest at one point during the Last Supper (John 13:23). Jesus never rebuked John for expressing his love for his Savior and soaking up a feeling of closeness and love. He adored Jesus for Who He was. He knew and believed that Jesus was the Son of God, and he wanted to be wholly devoted to loving Him. Like a child resting in the arms of his father, so there is great rest and safety in the arms of our Savior. We don’t have a physical Jesus with us today, but we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and God’s Word speaking to us. God’s Word is alive (Hebrews 4:12), at work, and powerful. God still speaks to His people through it. If we want to grow in our friendship and intimacy with God, we need to keep listening to Him through reading and studying His Word. There is plenty there to keep us busy for our eighty or so years on this earth. He has much to say, if only we would listen.

Some complain that God feels distant, and they seek a supernatural manifestation that enters the physical realm to prove God's closeness. Others confuse mysticism with true spirituality and seek to talk to "Christ" in the spirit world. This is not closeness with God, and it is not how we enjoy our intimacy with Him. God says that He is intimate with the upright. First of all, we must be made righteous in Christ's sight through salvation. Then, even as believers, we need to purify ourselves as He is pure by confessing our sins to Him and obeying Him (1 John 1:9, John 15:4-5). This is how we abide in Him, like a branch to a tree, being one with Him. We are not Him, and He is not us. We cannot confuse oneness with "being God." Oneness is simply being united with Christ in heart and in mind because we are living obediently. It is letting Christ live out His will and desires in and through us as we yield our wills, minds, and hearts to Him. God is near to those who draw near to Him (James 4:8). God's prerequisite for us walking intimately with Him and knowing His leading is that we refuse to hide sin in our hearts. God cannot hear our prayers in such a condition (Psalm 66:18). Purity and humility combined with being in God's Word regularly lead to intimacy; it is as simple as that.

Yet we are to be growing deeper in our relationship with God. We need to keep being in His Word, seeking to learn more and more about Him and His ways. Those who are married know that courting their special someone required a serious investment of time, energy, listening, giving, and sharing in order to grow in intimacy. Even to keep a marriage strong takes a lot of time and investment. Similarly, it requires effort to know our God better as we study His Word and seek to take steps of obedience.

The culmination of our intimacy with God will be when we go to be with Him in eternity and see Him face to face. He is the One Whom all of our hearts long for, and finally we will see Him and know Him for all that He truly is. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5).