

Building *Intimacy* with God

Devotional

W E E K 1



Week 1

IS INTIMACY WITH GOD POSSIBLE?

We talk a lot about intimacy with God (whether or not we actually use those words). Knowing Jesus is supposed to cure our loneliness, give us purpose in life and help calm our fears. While an intimate relationship with God is presented as a “cure all” for both now and eternity, few Christians actually know what intimacy with God practically means.

One of my favorite authors, Dr. Larry Crabb, once said, “I know that God is all I need, but I don’t yet know Him well enough for Him to be all that I have.”

As we face the fear of losing loved ones, possessions and jobs, do we know God well enough for Him to be all that we have? Is it even possible to have that deep and meaningful of a relationship with the living God?

We may meet some “super Christians” like Francis Chan who seem to have special access to God. But that doesn’t seem like something that is attainable for the average Christian like you or me.

God told the Israelites, “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for me with your whole heart.” I believe that same promise is for you and me. I don’t have more of God only because I don’t want more of God. Another of my favorite authors, A.W. Tozer, wrote, “You have as much of the Holy Spirit as you really want.”

God can use our current circumstances to awaken in us a desire for more of Him. When we seek more of Him, we will have more of Him.

TAKING *notes*

Because intimacy with God is so intangible for most of us, I want to look at five practical ways the Bible shows us of intimacy with God.

1. We experience intimacy with God when we worship Him. Read John 12:1-8 and 2 Samuel 6:14-22. These are both intimate expressions of love and worship. Notice that both Mary and David were criticized for their lavish worship of God. They were lost in love, probably oblivious to how others viewed them in the moment of worship.
2. We experience intimacy with God as His child. The Bible often uses the language of Father and son/daughter to describe our relationship with the Lord (see Romans 8:15, Hebrews 12:7-11, and Matthew 7:7-12 as examples). Even if you didn't have a good and loving father, you understand the idea of a father who protects, shelters, teaches, disciplines and affirms his child. We find intimacy in calling out to our daddy for direction, comfort and love... resting in His care and provision.
3. We experience intimacy with God as a friend. In today's world, "friend" has a lot of meanings. You might have hundreds of people you consider to be friends. When Jesus invites us into friendship, He means intimate friendship (See John 15:13-15). Not everyone is a friend of God. In fact Paul said that when we were apart from Christ, we were His enemies (Romans 5:10). But trusting in Jesus's death and resurrection brings us into friendship with God. Jesus wants to be the first person you "call" with good news or bad. He will grieve with you and rejoice with you. He is the "friend who sticks closer than a brother."

4. We experience intimacy in God's work. There is a huge difference between asking God to bless our work (even spiritual work!) and joining God in His work. Read John 15:1-17. Jesus expounds on friendship by saying that true fellowship will result in spiritual fruit. As we know Christ, we will naturally shift from doing our own work to being part of the work of the Father. Experiencing God work in and through you is an awesome way to sense His presence! (even if it's something as simple as reaching out to someone He's placing on your heart).

5. We experience intimacy with Jesus when we suffer. This is the intimacy that no one seeks, yet Jesus and His followers present it as the greatest way that we can know God. Read Philippians 3:7-11. Paul experienced such deep intimacy in sharing Christ's sufferings, that he actually longed for more. These sufferings can take two forms. First of all, we can choose to have the mind of Christ through the difficult things that come our way. Maybe right now, you are suffering loneliness, sickness or loss because of COVID-19. If you choose to have an eternal perspective, asking God to refine you through the trials, you will grow in intimacy with Him. The second way we know God through suffering is when we suffer persecution, loss or rejection because we follow Jesus. We choose the path of suffering because He is better than life itself. Paul, John, James, and Peter all refer to this type of suffering in their letters to the early Christians. This is perhaps the most profound intimacy we can experience with God here in earth.

TAKING *notes*

Of these five ways to experience intimacy with God, pick one or two that you want to focus on. Meditate on Scripture passages that paint the picture of this intimacy. Incorporate the longing for this intimacy in your prayer life, asking God to taking you deeper in knowing Him.

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe..." —Ephesians 1:17-19