

THE GOSPEL OF INTIMACY

as of 3.31.2018

GOD MADE US FOR RELATIONSHIP

intimate relationship was God's intention from the beginning. go with me to Genesis chapter 1 verse 26.

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us." We were made to be like God. God has revealed Himself to us as the Father the Son and Holy Spirit. and they have existed eternally in perfect unity with one another.

We get a glimpse into the level of intimate relationship within the Godhead as Jesus is praying in **JOHN 17.21**.

"I pray that **they will all be one**, just as you and I are one - as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."

the greek word to describe the level of intimacy referred to here is "perichoresis" which literally means "mutual indwelling." [**share Jesus hug story**]

so God is experiencing deep intimacy within Himself and when God created us in His image He intended for us to also experience that kind of intimacy with Him and with each other. that was the kind of intimacy that Jesus was praying for.

in fact, Jesus was praying that we would be so intimate with God that the world would know that God is real and that Jesus is the Messiah.

INTIMACY AND THE HARVEST

intimacy with God is directly connected to the harvest. the world is desperate to encounter God and to know that He is real. our job is to spend enough time with Him so that the world can see His glory in our lives. [people should see something different. a spark in our eyes. a light on our countenance. a joy in our hearts that the world doesn't have. [**share Chinese restaurant story**]

we want people to smell the fragrance of Christ on us because we are spending time with Him.

have you ever hugged someone with cologne or perfume on? You smell like that person the rest of the day.

in the same way when we have intimacy with Jesus we begin to carry His aroma. Paul talks about it in **2 CORINTHIANS 2.15-16**.

¹⁵ Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume.

lets go back to the unfolding story in Genesis. God made the garden of eden to have a place to fellowship with us. In **GENESIS 3.8** the Word tells us that Adam and Eve heard the Lord walking about in the garden. what does this tell us? that God was in the regular practice of walking in the garden. in the garden Adam and Eve had fellowship with the Lord. they walked together. they talked together. they knew God's voice and they knew when He was in the garden (they recognized the sound of Him walking).

Adam and Eve's disobedience is what broke fellowship between them and the Lord (they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). **that is why God hates sin** - because it separates us from Him. His entire purpose in creating us (His desire to know us and to have us know Him intimately) is lost when we sin.

at the end of Genesis 3 we see the direct consequences of sin. lets pick up in verse 23.

"²³ So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴ After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."

GOD WANTS TO DWELL AMONG HIS PEOPLE

the next time God expresses His desire to dwell among His people is after He leads them out of captivity in Egypt. He appears to them on the top of Mount Sinai in **EXODUS 20.18-20**.

¹⁸ When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the ram's horn, and when they saw the flashes of lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear.

¹⁹ And they said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen. But don't let God speak directly to us, or we will die!"

²⁰ "Don't be afraid," Moses answered them, "for God has come in this way to test you, and so that your fear of Him will keep you from sinning!"

The people reject the invitation to intimacy because of their sin. God then gives Moses the plans for the tabernacle (which would later become the temple) and the law with its system of sacrificial atonement.

after they build the tabernacle then God comes down and inhabits the Most Holy Place (**EXODUS 40.34-35**). under this system anyone who wanted to approach the Lord had to bring animals to sacrifice for their sins and no one could go into the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant and the shekinah glory of God was.

[share diagram of tabernacle or draw tabernacle on the white board]

only the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place and only one time a year for the atonement of sins. let's look at **HEBREWS 9.1-8**.

That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. ² There were two rooms in that Tabernacle.^[a] In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. ³ Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room^[b] called the Most Holy Place. ⁴ In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now.

⁶ When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room^[c] as they performed their religious duties. ⁷ But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸ By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle^[d] and the system it represented were still in use.

i believe the law and its requirements were an object lesson for us to grow in understanding that even through our best efforts we can't gain access to God. He is that holy. He is way more holy than we think.

if there is anything that the history of the nation of Israel tells us it's that outside of divine empowerment we cannot do what is right before God. God says it this way in **ISAIAH 64.6**, "we are all infected and impure with sin. when we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rages."

and again in **ZECHARIAH 4.6** where God says, "it is not by force and not by might but by my Spirit" that this will be accomplished.

and finally in **JOHN 6.63** where God comes out and says it plainly. "The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words i have spoken to you are spirit and life."

in other words, the sooner you understand that all power to come near to Me, to obey Me and to accomplish My purposes on the earth **come from Me** (or another way of saying it - **come from spending time with Me**) the better.

that is the whole reason why God continues to call us into the Secret Place (into intimate relationship with Him). it is a continual reminder of our dependence upon Him for the power and grace to do His works. it's also a reminder of His eternal purpose in creating us. He desires relationship over activity. let's take a look at a passage that reminds us of that eternal truth.

read **LUKE 10.38-42** (story of Mary and Martha)

GOD MAKES A WAY

when the object lesson of the law and the repeated failures of Israel to follow it are firmly established in the witness of the Word of God then He sends His Son to the earth to reveal His restoration plan.

Jesus begins his public ministry at the age of 30 and in 3 short years, changes history. throughout human history there is no other name that is more famous than the name of Jesus. He demonstrated His divine nature through the wisdom and revelation of His teaching and the Father affirmed His ministry with signs and wonders. Jesus heals the sick. He feeds the hungry. He raises the dead and He declares the Day of the Lord.

then to complete His ministry He lays down His life for the very ones who persecute and crucify Him saying on the cross, "Father forgive them, they know not what they are doing." (**LUKE 23.34**)

Jesus becomes the fulfillment of the law. the final sacrifice that actually makes a way for us to come back into fellowship with a holy God (forever). that is why Jesus says in **JOHN 14.6**, "I am the way, the truth and the life. no one can come to the Father except through me."

and in **JOHN 10.9** Jesus says, "I am the gate. whoever enters through me will be saved." He also said, "anyone who tries to go another way is a thief or a robber." see **JOHN 10.1**.

let's take look at a significant passage that highlights the direct impact of Jesus' death as it relates to restoring intimacy with God in **MATTHEW 27.50-51**. we are picking up the story in the gospel of Matthew where Jesus is hanging on the cross:

⁵⁰ Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. ⁵¹ **At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.**

this is very significant. the curtain they are referring to here is the same curtain that hangs in the Temple between the Holy Place which is where the priests would minister and the Most Holy Place which was the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant and for the manifest glory of God.

The significance of the curtain being torn is that what had separated the people from the Lord (for their own protection) was now removed and people could freely come before the Lord through the blood of Jesus. God says it this way in **HEBREWS 10.19-22**.

¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters,^[a] we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death,^[b] Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, ²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

what this tells us is that Jesus makes a way back into the garden of intimacy with God. the flaming sword that God put in place to guard the way back into the garden in Genesis 3 has been put away for those who come to meet with God under the blood of the lamb.

THE END OF THE STORY

the cross is the breaking in of God's restoration plan. and now the fullness of that plan is being unfolded by the Holy Spirit even up to our generation. because **God won't be fully satisfied until heaven comes down to earth.** God wants to dwell on earth with His people forever. that has always been His desire - but for Him to come now would be destruction for those who are not yet in relationship with Him through Jesus because God is a consuming fire. remember the fire on the mountain?

Let's look at what God says about this in **2 PETER 3.9-13** (lets got there).

⁹ The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.^[a]

¹¹ Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, **what holy and godly lives you should live,** ¹² **looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along.** On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. ¹³ But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

This earth and everything in it is going to be destroyed by the fire of God. there is a day coming when the Lord will return and establish His Kingdom on a new earth. let's check it out in **REVELATION 21.1-7.**

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.^[a] ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

⁵ And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. ⁷ All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.

what is this beloved? **[recap storyline. Its all about intimacy. Genesis to Revelation].**

INTIMACY DEFINED

now that we have established that intimate relationship with God is the entire purpose of our existence and the desire of God's heart i think it's important to talk about what intimacy really is.

true intimacy is the knowledge of someone else's heart. knowing their story. knowing their dreams, knowing the things that are important to them, knowing the things they love, but also knowing the things that cause them pain.

true intimacy is something that we grow into as we invite someone into our heart life and we invest in their heart life. true intimacy can only be achieved when two people both desire it and pursue it. intimacy costs you something because you have to invest in intimacy to achieve it.

with real intimacy you can know how someone will respond in certain situations because you know their heart. you can complete their sentences.

there is a place we can grow into in our relationship with God where a situation is presented and you know what to do because you know God's heart on the matter. you don't even have to pray.

intimacy is not merely knowing factual information about someone. I could have skipped the wedding and the kids and all the fights and all the glorious tears and just read a book about my wife but I wouldn't have true intimacy with her at all.

proximity is not necessarily intimacy. i can be around my wife. passing from room to room without ever making eye contact or having a real heart connection. we hear stories about this all the time. marriages that have been reduced to convenient living arrangements with no true intimacy.

in the same way, you can know Scriptures and not know God. we have churches filled with people in this generation that know all the right religious activity to engage in but have no idea who God really is. they have never experienced His heart. they act religious but reject the power that could make them godly (**2 TIMOTHY 3.5**).

WHY INTIMACY MATTERS

many people have had genuine encounters with Jesus and know that He is real but have never cultivated a life of intimacy with Him. relationships take time and effort. and the Holy Spirit wants to empower us to have a vibrant private life with God. I want to talk about some other reasons why i believe intimacy matters.

MATTHEW 7.21-23 (one of the most frightening and awesome passages of Scripture).

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘**I never knew you**. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

READ MATTHEW 25.1-13 (the parable of the ten bridesmaids)

READ LUKE 13.22-30 (the narrow way)

there is a lot in these passages but clearly all of them are talking about people who profess to know Jesus because in each passage they are all referring to Jesus as “Lord.” in fact, in **MATTHEW 7** they are referring to people who are operating in charismatic gifts (prophecy and casting out demons) and in **LUKE 13** they are saying that they had fellowship with Jesus and listened to His teachings.

but in each case He is denying them access to the Kingdom of God.

the reason for that rejection is stated either that “I never knew you” or “I don’t know you.”

I want us to focus on this key phrase “i never knew you” or “i don’t know you” because it shows up in all three of these passages and appears to carry some significant eternal consequences.

now we know that God knows everything about us. the Word says that God “knew us before He formed us in our mother’s womb” (**JEREMIAH 1.5**) and that, “every hair on our heads has been counted.” (**LUKE 12.7, MATTHEW 10.30**). **HEBREWS 4.13** tells us that “nothing is hidden from God.” so clearly Jesus isn’t referring to **not knowing facts about us** such as where we go to church or how many Scriptures we memorized.

so what is He talking about? I believe that He is talking about **heart knowledge that flows from intimacy**. He is saying, “**i don’t know you** because you haven’t sought my heart and don’t really know my heart.”

Jesus says it again differently in **JOHN 17.1-3**.

¹ After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ² For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³ And **this is the way to have eternal life—to know you**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

this is not just about engaging in religious activity. you can go to church. attend prayer meetings, do outreaches and study the Scriptures day and night but without that heart connection to God (made possible by the Holy Spirit) it will produce nothing. This is what Jesus is trying to tell the Pharisees in **JOHN 5.39-40**.

³⁹ "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.

[give example of Jehovah's Witnesses. they engage in lots of religious activity. in fact, they have done a better job (up to this point) evangelizing the Twin Cities than the true church of Jesus Christ - but there is only one problem - they don't know God and aren't directing people into relationship with Him through Jesus.]

here is **the good news**. if you ask God to remove everything that hinders your intimacy with Him then He is going to do it.

check out **LUKE 11.9-13**.

⁹ "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ "You fathers—if your children ask^[a] for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? ¹² Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! ¹³ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

and a passage that i draw great comfort from the book of Jeremiah.

¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you says the Lord . . ."

JEREMIAH 29.13-14(a) (NKJV)

anyone who genuinely seeks after God will find Him and anyone who asks God to remove anything that is hindering your relationship with Him will find God's grace for change. God longs for intimate relationship with us and will always answer that prayer.

[prayer. wait 5 minutes on the Lord to reveal anything hindering intimacy. come up and confess. altar ministry.]