

# ***Intimacy with Jesus***

## **1 Intimacy with Jesus...**

- is abiding in his presence, recognizing his care for us, and actively seeking to follow him in everything.
- is something we experience and not just a theoretical concept.
- involves our hearts and minds, and affects our words and deeds.
- draws us into exalting God and leaves us unconscious of ourselves.
- does not exclude God the Father or God the Spirit. God dwells in us in all persons of the Trinity.
- influences all of our lives. Our primary identity is our relationship with Jesus.
- is *not* an add-on to our lives. It is not another compartment disconnected from the rest of our lives.
- is *not* about gaining power for ourselves. It is about him, not us.
- is *not* a source of pride. All the credit goes to him, not to us.
- can be disrupted by our sin, but it can be restored by repentance and confession.

The Bible doesn't use the word "intimacy". The closest Bible word is "fellowship". See 1Cor 1:9 and 1John 1:3,6.

## **2 Obedience**

The Lord Jesus expects our obedience. We are obligated to obey because of who he is, and we want to obey because of what he has done for us. Obeying him is always for our good (although we often don't recognize it at the time).

This isn't a matter of "the letter of the law". The Pharisees kept to the letter of the law, and we know what Jesus thought of most of them. It's a matter of getting to know our Lord well enough that we usually know what he wants and then do it because we love him.

Yet we will disobey. That is sin, and it will disrupt our intimacy with him. But, praise God, he made a provision for our disobedience. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1John 1:9) Then our intimacy with him can be restored.

## **3 Dependence**

Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) It is his plan that we be wholly dependent on him, moment by moment, for everything. That certainly includes our intimate relationship with him. Intimacy is possible only because he enables it and because he has chosen to dwell in us.

If we ever think that we are better than others because of our intimacy with Jesus, we have deluded ourselves. It is all about him, not about us, literally.

## 4 Desire

Intimacy with Jesus doesn't just happen, taking us by surprise. We need to seek it (Jer. 29:13). This is included in what Jesus meant by "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt 5:6). Paul obviously sought it strongly (Phil 3:7-14). When you desire intimacy with Jesus with your whole heart, you will find it, but probably not before.

## 5 Time

It takes time to develop true intimacy in any relationship. That's true of intimacy with Jesus too. We spend time with him when we read and meditate on the Scriptures. We spend time with him when we pray. We spend time with him when we are encouraging one another in the faith.

But there are many demands on our time. There is our work. There is our family. There is upkeep on our homes. There is so much of significance on television that we really wouldn't want to miss. Where is there time for Jesus? Unless we will put time with Jesus as our first priority rather than the last, we will not progress in intimacy.

## 6 Bible

You would probably agree that the Bible is like no other book. It is of infinite worth because its writing was superintended by God. He himself gave us the Bible that we might learn to know him and what he desires of us. God the Holy Spirit will use the Bible more than all other books to deepen our relationship with Jesus. We then need to be consistent daily in spending some time in reading and meditating on the Bible.

I know the Bible is worth more than all other books combined, but I don't spend more time in the Bible than I do in all other books combined. I wonder why.

## 7 Prayer

Prayer is a means of pouring out our hearts to God. It includes things we need from God (our "daily bread" for example) but it is much more. It is for praising him for who he is. It is for thanking him for all he has done for us. It is for seeking guidance on what he wants us to do. Perhaps this is what was intended by Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." When our heart delights in God, we will ask for more of him, and not so much things from him.

A couple of good books on prayer that will help in intimacy with Jesus are *Praying: Finding Our Way Through Duty to Delight* by J.I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom and *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Tim Keller.

## 8 Others

There are two aspects here.

We will almost certainly need human help as we grow in intimacy with Jesus. We will need someone to encourage us when the going is tough. We will need someone to nudge

us back on track when we have gone in the wrong direction. We will need someone with whom we can share our discoveries and joys. A group of two or three might make a commitment to each other to help each other in the journey. A LifeGroup might decide to make growing in intimacy with Jesus a focus for its activities.

The second aspect is that Jesus wants us to be involved with others, especially with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Doing so helps to keep us from being focused on self. It also opens us up to the joy of intimacy with many others.

## **9 Doubts**

Yes, doubts will come. They could range from “This is too good to be true” to “I can’t imagine I’ll ever be aware of his presence.” Remember what D.A. Carson said. “Faith is the God-given ability to perceive certain things that are true, and to trust your whole life to them, and to him who establishes their truthfulness.” You have been given faith to perceive the truth of who Jesus is and the truth that intimacy with him is offered to you. Commit yourself to what God has made known to you. You can trust him to be with you and to provide what you need. If the doubt leads you to affirming your faith, then it has served you well.

## **10 Suffering**

I don’t like suffering. I don’t want suffering. If I start to suffer, I will ask God to remove it. But I may be unwise in this. Sometimes God sends suffering to us so that he can teach us something about himself or about us that we could not learn by any other means. Then the suffering bears a precious gift to us.

We are very ill-equipped to judge whether our suffering is good or bad while we are in it. What is clear is that we will need intimacy with Jesus much more than ever. That implies two things. We need to grow in intimacy with Jesus when things are going well because we will need to draw on that intimacy when we are going through a time of suffering. Second, we must not take the suffering as indicating that Jesus is not with us; He promised he would never leave us nor forsake us (De 31:8, Heb 13:5, Mt 28:20).

## **11 Expectations**

Jesus wants intimacy with us, and if we come on his terms, we should expect to have intimacy with him.

We should not expect it to come quickly or all at once. Paul said he hadn’t arrived at that goal, and neither will we. But we can grow closer to Jesus, day by day.

We should not expect to hear his voice audibly, although he can do so if he chooses. More likely he will enable us to understand Scriptures that apply to us. It may seem like it is our insight when it is really his. Because he is in us, it will not always be easy to tell what is coming from him.

We should expect both times when our relationship with him feels wonderfully vital and fresh and times when our relationship feels distant and dry. He hasn't changed. We may have. Or the change may reflect something that he is trying to teach us.

We should expect to experience joy in him and love flowing from him through us to others.