

Intimacy with God

"Imagine you're having a conversation with a close friend over a cup of coffee. You're sharing your deepest thoughts, desires, and fears with them, and they're listening attentively, offering words of encouragement and guidance. You feel heard, understood, and valued.

Now, imagine having that same kind of conversation with God. You're sitting in your favorite chair, Bible open, and you're pouring out your heart to Him. You're sharing your joys and struggles, and He's listening intently, offering guidance and wisdom.

But, what if you felt like God was distant, uninterested, or even silent? What if you struggled to connect with Him, to feel like He was really present in your life?

Today, we're going to explore how to cultivate intimacy with God, how to deepen our relationship with Him, and how to experience His presence and guidance in our lives. We'll look at the barriers that can hinder our intimacy with God, and we'll discover

practical ways to overcome them, so we can experience the joy and freedom that comes from knowing Him deeply."

We normally tend to associate the word intimacy with relationships with our loved ones eg in the context of marriage.

I have been married for 16 years now, and still my relationship with my wife is an ever-unraveling mystery. Every day I learn more about who she is and how to love her. I still learn how to do life with her, how to connect more with her, and how to build a bright future with her.

The Bible uses the metaphor of marriage on several occasions to draw a picture of the relationship between God and humankind. (See Ephesians 5:22-27)

I love this because it so beautifully captures the intimacy, mystery, and progression of a relationship with God. We are always discovering more of who He is, more of how He loves us, and more of how we can love Him.

Today we will explore the importance of intimacy with God, and using practical strategies on how to overcome common barriers to experiencing His presence and guidance in our lives.

Everything you do, think, experience, and believe is rooted in the quality of your relationship with God. Knowing what kind of relationship God is looking for, understanding what the terms of this relationship are, and knowing what kind of person you are entering a relationship with are essential parts of getting the most out of that relationship.

Every good thing anyone could possibly desire is waiting in the presence of a loving, holy God. It's so simple. Yet so many believers miss this powerful truth.

It's a truly amazing concept when you stop and think about it The God of the universe, that awesome Being who spoke the worlds into existence, has given you and me the opportunity to walk into His throne room and fellowship with Him. Even more amazing is that many Christians fail to

exercise this wonderful privilege!

Every day, countless believers make the decision to say no to God's offer of fellowship, choosing instead to spend their time filling their minds with television or mindless recreation.

I once read an article where the writer made a statement that seemed to resonate in my spirit. She said very bluntly, "To not live in daily contact with God is not only sinful; it's stupid."

There is a mountain of truth in that statement. There is so much to be gained from learning to walk in God's presence, and there is so much we miss when we neglect it. The good news is, the Bible has much to say about how to live in the presence of God.

Cultivating Intimacy with God

Here are some practical tips on how to cultivate intimacy with God:

1. ***Set aside quality time***: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Regularly schedule quiet time with God.
2. ***Pray authentically***: "Pour out your heart to Him" (Psalm 62:8). Share your thoughts, feelings, and desires with God honestly.
3. ***Study His Word***: "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Read and reflect on the Bible, allowing God to speak to you.
4. ***Listen and wait***: "Wait on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). Practice silence, waiting for God's guidance and wisdom.
5. ***Worship and praise***: "Worship the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2). Express your love and gratitude to God through music, prayer, or journaling.

Barriers to Intimacy with God:

1. ***Sin and guilt***: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive" (1 John 1:9). Unconfessed sin can create distance.

2. *Distractions and busyness*: "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Prioritize time with God.

3. *Doubt and fear*: "Fear not, for I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10). Trust God's presence and promises.

4. *Pride and self-reliance*: "Humble yourselves before the Lord" (James 4:10). Recognize your dependence on God.

5. *Unforgiveness and bitterness*: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). Let go of unforgiveness.

Practical Ways to Overcome Barriers:

1. *Confess and repent*: "Confess your sins to one another" (James 5:16).

2. *Prioritize time with God*: "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33).

3. *Seek community and accountability*:

"Encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

4. ***Practice humility and surrender***: "Humble yourselves before the Lord" (James 4:10).

5. ***Choose forgiveness and release***: "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13).

By understanding and overcoming these barriers, we can deepen our relationship with God, experiencing the joy and freedom that comes from knowing Him intimately.

Benefits of cultivating intimacy with God:

1. Deeper understanding of God's love: "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

2. Guidance and wisdom: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall

direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

3. Perfect Peace:

Isaiah 26:3 NKJV

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

4. Strength and courage: "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

5. Transformed life: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)

6. Fruitfulness and purpose: "I am the vine, you are

the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

7. Rewards:"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6)

By cultivating intimacy with God, you can experience these benefits and deepen your relationship with Him, leading to a more fulfilling and purposeful life.

Reflection:

- How have you experienced God's manifest presence in your life?
- What are some ways you can seek a deeper awareness of God's presence?
- How can you share God's presence with others?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we seek intimacy with You, we long to experience Your manifest presence in our lives. We yearn to feel Your warmth, guidance, and comfort. Just as the Israelites saw Your glory in the temple, we desire to see Your glory in our hearts and lives.

Lord, we know that Your presence is not limited to a physical building or location. You are always with us, but we ask for a deeper awareness of Your presence.

Manifest Your presence to us, Lord, through:

- The Holy Spirit's guidance and conviction*
- The Bible's truth and wisdom*
- Prayer power*
- Worship's joy and surrender*
- Fellowship's love and support*

May we be like Moses, who saw Your glory and was transformed by it (Exodus 34:29-35). May we be like the disciples, who saw Your glory and were

empowered by it (Matthew 17:1-13).

We pray for a fresh revelation of Your presence, that we may:

- Know You more intimately*
- Trust You more fully*
- Obey You more faithfully*
- Serve You more joyfully*

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

