

NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE 2

Intimacy: Hearing His Whisper

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us...that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one..."

– John 17: 20-23 (NKJV)

"I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." – Song of Solomon 7:10 (NKJV)

*"A young Jewish boy name Mordecai was dedicated to the Lord by his parents. Mordecai grew in age and wisdom and grace but...he loved the world, gulping down the days and dreaming through the nights. His parents sat him down and told him how important the Word of God was. But when it came time for him to go to the synagogue and learn the Word of God, he would not leave the lakes he loved to swim in and the trees he loved to climb. Nothing could persuade him. But one day the Great Rabbi visited the village and asked to be left alone with the boy... He picked up the boy and held him silently against his heart. The next day the boy began going to the synagogue before going to the woods and lakes and trees. And the Word of God became one with the words of Mordecai and the trees and the lake. Mordecai grew up to become a great man who helped many people. And when they came to him he said, 'I first learned the Word of God when the Great Rabbi held me silently against his heart.'"*¹

Jesus. We are so used to hearing this one Name, so used to saying it, that our hearts are often left unmoved, despite the weight of glory it carries. It is not until we draw away from the noise and distractions of life, quiet ourselves, and whisper His Name, that our hearts become sensitive enough to hear His own whisper to us.

This still and small voice that speaks to each of us by name is often what causes us to respond to Christ's call in the first place. We experience His tangible presence, or a revelation of His holiness convicts and leads us to repentance. We know in a moment that we must respond and that our lives will never be the same. Knowing this personable God in a personal way and hearing His voice by His indwelling Spirit is the deepest, purest, and most fulfilling form of intimacy we can ever encounter. And this relationship is the very reason we were created.

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them," (Gen. 2:26a-27, NKJV). God, who is Three Persons in One, lives in continual, uninterrupted, perfect communion with Himself. The nature of love is to give and to sacrifice and the sacrificial fellowship of the Trinity is what makes God love – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, perpetually giving to, sharing with and fulfilling One Another. Out of the overflow of this perfect love that exists in the Godhead, man was created: another being that God could share this perfect love – His Perfect Self – with. Not only did God create man to experience a perfect relationship with Him, but He also created man in His image. Reflecting the likeness of God explains the deep longing we all have to know and be known; to love

Pre-Article Questions:

1. What do you feel God desires the most out of you?
2. Where do we often get our view of God and how does this impact our relationship with God?

and be loved. God experiences perfect fellowship and He desires to share this fellowship with us. If this is the image we reflect, then it follows that anything less than perfect, holy, love from Him and supernatural, eternal communion with Him will never meet our expectations, for the standard of intimacy printed on our hearts is the mark imprinted by God Himself.

No other relationship will ever satisfy us like this one. Nothing else in life will ever fulfill us as only God can. The depth of love that God desires to share with us through Christ is as great as the expanse of eternity. God's Word reveals to us the type of relationship Christ desires to have with us, His bride. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father says, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours," (Luke 15:31, NKJV), mirroring the heart of Song of Solomon 7:10. We are the Lord's beloved and His desire is for us. He is for us. He is always with us. And the fullness of perfect, passionate, holy love in His heart is ours.

But the only way for such intimacy to be our experience – the only way for this love to truly be our heart's treasure and not just plastic tokens in our pocket – is for us to spend time with God. In earthly relationships, it is as we spend time with others that we grow closer to them, come to trust them, know what they are like, and know how they feel about us. It is no different with God. Time alone with the Lord fills us anew with the experiential knowledge that He loves us, has accepted us, and calls us His own.

Without continuous intimacy, even our sincerest efforts and desires to 'live for God' will eventually prove hollow, frustrating, and burdensome. We are called to be light in the world and light cannot be sustained without a source of fuel. It is only as we store up oil in our hearts through time with God that our efforts to share this same love can be sustained. If we are not deliberate in seeking Him with our whole hearts, the sweetness of His voice and the tenderness with which we respond can become a fading memory instead of our daily experience with Him.

So how do we deliberately seek God? By walking in practical diligence with a sensitive spirit. We cannot rely on tons of free time or let sensing His presence decide whether and when we will close the door on the world and turn our gaze toward God. When life gets hectic and God seems distant, it is only by consistently meeting with Him in His word and prayer that we do not burn out or get discouraged. We cannot rely on our emotions, for we will not always 'feel' God, or 'feel like' He is speaking to us, but He is always available to us in His word. And His word is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV). As we read God's word, He reads us. Even more, He writes His words on our hearts, transforming us into His image, and drawing us ever closer to His heart.

With that said, practical diligence cannot blaze a trail straight to God's heart without a sensitive spirit. A plan of action is helpful; it is not the point. The point is to experience God's love. We must be attentive to the moments when His Spirit tugs at ours, calling us to simply be still and know He is God. "Failure to recognize the value of mere being with God, as the beloved, without doing anything, is to gouge the heart out of Christianity." Sometimes, we cannot begin to do this until we throw all the action plans, Bible studies, and

memory verse goals up in the air, let them fall where they may, and run instead straight into God's arms, climb into His lap, and rest for awhile. Only then – only here, in His embrace – can we hear Him say, 'Stay here, My child. Stay here as long as you like.'²

Scripture Questions:

1. Do you believe that God desires deep fellowship with you, or do you believe there are limits on His love for you? If so, what are some reasons for this that you can recognize?
2. Please share one of the first times you experienced and believed that God loves you.
3. God often speaks in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:11-12). Can you recall a time when God spoke to you?
4. Read Luke 10:38-42 What is the 'one thing' that Jesus tells Martha is needed? What does Jesus say is the reward for choosing this one thing?
5. Read John 15:1-8 What does 'abide in Christ' mean? What does Jesus say are the results of abiding in Him?

Application Questions:

1. Matthew 25: The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is Jesus' commentary on the importance of "storing up oil" through intimacy with Him, for a life of service and in preparation of His coming. All the virgins slept except five were prepared. What are some common distractions that use up our time?
2. Does the way you spend time with the Lord resemble the wise or foolish virgins? What changes can you make in your daily life to make sure you are storing up oil?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your immense love for us. Thank you that you sacrificed your Son, Jesus, on the cross so that we might be able to experience your love and have an eternal relationship with you. Reveal this love to our hearts. Reveal the truth of how you love us in the areas of our hearts where we have trouble accepting or believing your love for us. Help us to make a concerted effort to spend time with you. Give us a desire to spend time with you and in your word. Open up the Bible to us so that reading it will be enjoyable and fulfilling. Let it become a part of our lives that we cannot live without. May the goal of our lives be to love you and be loved by you every day.

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Memory Verse: John 17: 20-23

Please meet with your prayer partner and hold each other accountable to the following commit to a specific time each day, at least thirty minutes, to spend time with the Lord in prayer, reading and or journaling. Consider using the additional reading.

Additional Scripture:

Matthew 22:35-40