

Intimacy with God

I believe that one of the most important things we can do to help us mature in Christ is to cultivate a time of prayer and meditation with God. In this article I want to encourage you to think about how to deepen your time alone with God. These thoughts follow those of Charles Swindoll in his short book *Intimacy with the Almighty* (Thomas Nelson). I highly recommend you purchase a copy to further your learning about intimacy with God.

We Are Not on Our Own

If you are a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, you have the Spirit of God living permanently within you. In 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 we read, “For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,”

The very Spirit we have in us searches the depths of God. This Spirit will help us to know God more deeply. If you begin to know God more deeply what will happen with your desires for the things of this world? It will start to be pushed out won't it. Paul taught the Corinthians that the believer in Christ has the mind of Christ. “For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:11-16).

To have the mind of Christ is to put the things of God first in our lives. We can never be too heavenly minded, but it takes time, it requires effort to push through the noise and works of this world. Daniel said of God “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.” (Daniel 2:22). It is this God who wants to reveal these things to you. To have that happen requires time. Time to listen. Time to wait. The decision before us is in four parts and each requires discipline.

1. Reorder your private world...simplify
2. Be still...silence
3. Cultivate serenity...solitude
4. Trust the Lord completely...surrender

What would happen in your life, in your relationships if you started down the path of exercising these disciplines? The apostle said this about his desire, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,” (Philippians 3:8).

Simplicity

“Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.” (Ecc. 7:29)

Simplicity is not the way of the world. More choice. More complexity. It seems the more we try to fix the world the more chaos and complication we bring into it. God didn’t create the world this way. Sin entering the world through Adam has brought with it complication and chaos. We were made in the image of God for true righteousness and wisdom but have turned from God to seek out many devices or schemes that distort the image of God in us. William MacDonald put it well in his Old Testament commentary, “Even in his fallen condition, man still has an intuitive hunger to find perfection. He goes through life looking for the perfect partner, the perfect job, the perfect everything. But he cannot find perfection in others or in himself. The trouble is that his search is confined to the sphere *under the sun*. Only one perfect life has ever been lived on this earth, that is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now He is above the sun, exalted at the right hand of God. And God satisfies man’s hunger for perfection with Christ—no one else, no other thing.”¹

Part of the solution is to simplify. A challenge in my life is saying “no” to opportunities, good and sinful. Growing in strength and peace in Christ means saying no to things that are not necessarily bad but may not be what is best. If we don’t make time for God there is danger that the word of God will not penetrate our hearts and minds to change us. And how could it if we do not find time to be in it? This is obvious but if we continue on in the complexity and chaos of the world, with little time for God, our hearts will grow cold to Christ and subject to further seduction of the world.

¹ William MacDonald, [Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#), ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 904–905.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:3). Living in the simplicity and purity of Christ is the first step to a deeper intimacy with God. It requires us to reorder our lives and slow down. That will not come without intense determination. Are you ready to fight for simplicity in your life? Are you prepared to fight for intimacy with God?

Silence

The world around us is anything but silent. Developing times of silence into our lives is a discipline that requires constant attention. Without silence it is impossible to hear the still small voice of God (1 Kings 19:11, 12). We are commanded in the Psalms to be still and know God, I like how the NASB puts it, “Cease *striving* and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”² Cease striving, be still in other versions. Do you struggle to cease striving and be still? You are not alone. The command is to STOP, make time for God. God is giving this command to you and to me. He desires us. He desires time with us. That means time we are not working, not reading, not listening to something else...just stopped, sitting in silence, meditate on His word, listening for God’s voice. I don’t know about you but for me in my ADD state of mind it is a hard discipline to cultivate.

In a world that intrudes on our every waking moment we have to be mindful of when we need to come away and spend time in silence with God. The more time we spend with Him the more sensitive we become to His voice. The deeper we will go in our walk with Him. As Chuck Swindoll puts it in Intimacy with the Almighty, “Silence...makes our moments of stillness meaningful. God does not speak to the hurried, worried mind. It takes time alone with Him and His Word before we can expect our spiritual strength to recover.”³

Solitude

Living in the simplicity and purity of Christ is the first step to a deeper intimacy with God. It requires us to reorder our lives and slow down. Silence helps us to hear the voice of God. The next two steps to intimacy with God are solitude and surrender.

Solitude is where we cultivate serenity. Solitude is the time we spend identifying the clutter in our lives and work to eliminate it. Solitude is where we work through struggles. It is a time where God works to help us see what really needs our attention. He brings to mind the

² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ps 46:10.

³ Intimacy with the Almighty, Charles Swindoll, pages 48, 51, Thomas Nelson, 1996.

things we try to hide from others. The things we need to truly deal with. In solitude I have to face what I have avoided.

In solitude I grow in my knowledge of myself and God. I come to learn more deeply about the love of God for me and who I am in Him. The challenge with solitude is to stay in it. To make the time and take the time to think on God and let God speak to me is not easy. It is not always comfortable. In Psalm 139 the psalmist realized the need for in-depth examination in his life, "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely." "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139: 1-4, 23, 24)

We can become so busy that we do not hear the voice of God examining us and calling out the sin in our lives that needs to be addressed. The discipline of solitude gives us time to hear, examine and act on our lives.

Jesus loves each one of us. Like He said to the disciples in Mark 6:30-32 He says to us as well, "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place." (Mark 6:30-32). Jesus saw the value of solitude. We need to do the same. Take time this week to consider when and how you build solitude into your life.

Surrender

Finally, in all of this from silence to simplicity to solitude we need to surrender to God. Proverbs 3:5, 6 tells us, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." We submit to Him, we surrender our lives to Him, because He is trustworthy. When we take the time to simplify, to be silent, to be in solitude with God, to trust Him...it is not that He *may* make our paths straight, He will make our paths straight. He is trustworthy.

Start Small

Developing the habit of time alone with God is not easy. Developing any habit takes time. The best way to start a habit is to start small. Developing a time with God I've found is best done in the morning before the busyness of the day overtakes you. If you are just starting to have a quiet time with God start with five minutes a day of reading and prayer. If you want to

go a little further, then add a minute or two of meditation on a verse. Take six or seven minutes of time in silence and solitude with God every morning. As you continue in doing this ask God to help you learn from what you read and think upon. Slowly add time to your quiet time with God. Remember it is the quality of the time you spend with Him not the quantity.

In your walk with Jesus, I want to encourage you to think about finding time in your life to create intimacy with God. God will bless you in it and...He will work in and through you to bring blessing to others because you made the decision to spend time with Him.