

Intimacy with God

Lesson #5: Intimacy and Spiritual Formation

I. Step #1: Let God bring you to life! Eph. 2:4-13

- A. Vs. 5 – We're dead in our sin
- B. Vs. 13 – God "built the bridge" in order to bring us to Himself – forgiven!
- C. Vs. 5 – God makes us alive – regenerated!
- D. Vs. 4, 8 - God showers us with love and grace – cherished!
- E. Vs. 10 – God gives us work to do – empowered!

II. Step #2: Don't be confused

Spiritual growth or maturity has nothing to do with:

- A. Our position in Christ. (See 2 Cor. 5:17, Col. 2:10)
- B. How much God loves us. (See Rom. 5:1-11)
- C. How long we have been a Christian or how much spiritual knowledge we have. (See 1 Cor. 8:1)
- D. How active we are in the church and other spiritual endeavors. (See Matt. 7:22-23)

III. Step #3: Recognize that there are stages to growth

- A. Look at 1 John 2:12-14
 - 1. "Little children" – Positively: knows the Father. Negatively: May be young, impressionable, prone to mistakes, imitating "grown ups"
 - 2. "Young men" – Positively: strong in the Word. Negatively: Learning, growing, occasionally failing
 - 3. "Fathers" – Positively: knows God intimately. Mature, able to reproduce.
- B. Look at Mark 4:3-9, 20, Matt. 13:8 (parable of the sower and soils)
 - 1. "Bear fruit" – thirty fold
 - 2. "Bear fruit" – sixty fold
 - 3. "Bear fruit" – hundred fold (Luke 12:48)

IV. Step #4: Learn to “stare” (feast not snack!)

2 Cor. 3:18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

1 John 3:2 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Our “job”: “beholding” – a steady, consistent purposeful gazing

*“You would be like Christ?” asked Andrew Murray. ‘Here is the path. Gaze on the glory of God in Him. **In Him**, that is to say, do not look only to the words and the thoughts and the graces in which His glory is seen, but look to Himself, the loving, living Christ. Behold Him! Look in His very eye! Look into His face, as a loving friend, as the living God.’” (Enjoying Intimacy with God, Sanders, p.115)*

- A. Scripture – read, memorize and applied (Ps. 119:103, Jer. 15:16, 1 Pet. 2:2)
- B. Prayer – often and with thanksgiving (1 Thes. 5:17-18)
- C. The Lord’s Job: Internal transformation (not external imitation)

V. Step #5: Stay “at home”

John 14:23 “Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

“He has no interest in being a weekend getaway or a Sunday bungalow or a summer cottage. Don’t consider using God as a vacation cabin or an eventual retirement home. He wants you under his roof now and always. He wants to be your mailing address, your point of reference; he wants to be your home.” (The Great House of God, Max Lucado)

- A. Contrast Isa. 28:12 with Isa 28:13
 - “Let the weary rest” versus “do and do, do and do”
- B. Contentment (being independent of external circumstances)
 - 1. Phil. 4:10-14 “I’ve learned the secret...”
 - 2. Days of plenty versus Days of poverty “I understand the difference”
 - 2 Cor. 3:5, 9:8, 2 Cor. 12:10
- C. “Grow up” – 2 Peter 3:18 “ I am maturing”

VI. Step #6: Remember: the purpose of intimate, spiritual maturity is to glorify God!

The key thought: 2 Peter 3:18 “ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

- A. Westminster Shorter Catechism (17th Century): The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- B. Examples:
 - 1. The Universe: Ps. 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork."
 - 2. Animals: Isa. 43:20 "The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness *And* rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen."
 - 3. Angels: Luke 2:14 ""Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

VII. So what? Spiritual formation does have an impact on us as well.

Consider 2 Cor. 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Discussion Questions:

- 1. At what "stage" of spiritual growth are you? (Little children? Young men or fathers?) Are you growing? Why? Why not?
- 2. Why do you think it is so much easier to snack than to feast on God's Word?