

THOUGHTS ABOUT INTIMACY

Compiled By Pastor Glenn Pease

The Bible makes it clear that God is an intimate personality. He is three Persons in one Godhead, and all three are as one in thought and action. There is never conflict or disagreement, but perfect harmony. The Bible also makes it clear that this is the goal God has for His people, that they be one, and not divided. The Gospel broke down all walls that separate the peoples of the world, and it made possible the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, which is the church. Paul in Rom. 12 stresses how this body with all of its parts with different functions is to be one in perfect harmony. All the New Testament letters stress over and over that we are to love one another, to care for one another, to serve one another, to be kind to one another, to bear one another's burdens, to fellowship with one another, to forgive one another, and on and on with continuous stress on unity and intimacy as the ultimate ideal.

This ideal of intimacy in God, and in the church is carried over to be the ideal as well in the marriage bond. In other words, the Bible makes it clear that intimacy is the ideal goal toward which every relationship must move if it is to be the best that it can be. From the beginning the twofold steps of marriage are leave, and cleave. A couple leave their dependence upon their parents, and they cleave in dependence upon one another. They leave the old relationship of intimacy and cleave to a new one, which they are to make the most intimate relationship they have in life. All of this means that the primary goal of marriage is to develop intimacy. Intimacy is what makes marriage all it was meant to be.

Dr. Ruben writes, "...the single most important characteristic of a deep relationship is a shared personal history. The partners history together, whatever its length, is of prime importance to them. Shared history has little value to people who are involved only superficially....Reverence for these parts of their life's experience that they shared--problems, frustrations, tragedies, accomplishments, change, growth, hurts, joys, exchanges with other people--is crucial in deep relationships."

Dr. John Trimble in *Hard To Achieve* wrote, "My hypothesis is that not many people experience intimacy although most people profess that they would like to. Not every person is even capable of achieving intimacy as discussed in Chapter 3. Apparently, from observing the behavior of people, most couples are not willing to set aside the necessary time and to invest sufficient energy to improve their capacity for intimacy or to work on intimacy with their partner. As a result, few couple achieve much intimacy often. That has to be my conclusion. I find no writers who disagree with what I am saying here, although they do not state the case as pointedly as I do."

Sharing in depth seems especially difficult for some people who have been brought up in families where they keep everything to themselves. Some men seem to feel that the telling of personal thoughts and feelings is a sign of weakness or a threat to their manhood. Even to say, "I love you" is to confess the need of another person, which some, in their fear of becoming dependent, find difficult to do. The fear of intimacy is often based on poor self-esteem. A person feels that to know them intimately is to cease to like them, for they feel ashamed of who they are deep inside. They feel unlovely, and so they do not want to share that, and bring out all of the negatives they feel inside them. What they do not realize is that these negatives inside influence their external behavior in negative ways. If they would share and get these feelings out in the open, they could get them modified and even eliminated. God knows the worst

about us, and yet He still loves us. If we let our mate know us more deeply we will learn that they too love us in spite of our defects, and will, like God, help us to overcome the defects.

You cannot anchor a ship with a string, for it demands a rope and a rope is a strong thick cord made by twisting smaller cords together. A rope does not just happen, it has to be made. So the rope that holds a couple together has to be made by weaving together many smaller experiences of intimacy. Couples need to review their life every so often. They need to think back on the events that brought them together, and which led to their enjoyment of one another to the point that they wanted to marry each other. They need to focus on the fun times they had together on vacations, and on times with their children that were precious. Look at reruns of your old video you took when the children were young. Weave your own rope with the many little things that made your relationship one of pleasure and joy.

Falling in love is exciting, but staying in love is even more exciting. Falling in love is like the 4th of July, but staying in love is like patriotism. It is not just an event, but a value that covers all events. We can have a terrible 4th of July, and yet still love our country. You can have a flop of a Valentine's Day, and have all work out for the worst, but a day, or an event, does not define romance and love. It is the over all long range process that matters. Falling in love is not something you plan ahead of time, but staying in love is a choice and a challenge that you commit yourself to by investing time, money, and labor. This is what intimacy is all about.

When you marry, you choose to value intimacy over variety. You choose to specialize, and instead of knowing a lot of the opposite sex in general, you strive to know a lot about one of the opposite sex in particular. The single person is a general practitioner, but the married person is a specialist in love. J. Allen Petersen wrote, "There is no love in marriage; love is in people, and people put it into marriage. There is no romance in marriage; people have to infuse it into their marriages." The point is, couples need to work at intimacy. It does not just happen. Intimacy means being fully at home with someone. It is where I am free to be completely myself without fear of rejection. It is fear of rejection that causes us to hide from another. When I am loved without fear I do not fear to love others. It frees me from the need of paying attention to myself and worrying about whether I am lovable.

The number one problem brought into this world by the fall is "The intimacy crisis." Man has an inability to be close to God, his mate, others, and even himself. The ultimate failure of intimacy is hell, which is total aloneness, with no relationships whatever. The ultimate goal of salvation is eternal oneness with God and all others. The great universal battle of light and darkness, good and evil, love and hate is the battle for intimacy. In short, the goal of life is to develop greater intimacy. "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." That is the ultimate intimacy.

Ed Wheat in Secret Choices writes, "Medical doctors have found that an intimate relationship between a husband and wife can determine how well that couple masters the crisis of life. A high degree of intimacy can also provide shelter and relief from the ordinary tensions of life. Life becomes richer and more colorful when shared with an intimate partner; it offers love and laughter, pleasure and stability. In fact, we believe the secret of staying in love for any married couple can be summed up in this one potent word: Intimacy."

Steven A, Hammon wrote, "God created us, I believe, with a deep, instinctive need for intimacy.....Reports from concentration and prisoner-of-war camps indicate that people who had had meaningful relationships with even one other person stood a far better chance of survival than those who shut others out."

Dr. C. Edward Crowther writes, "About ten years ago I conducted a study of people who were dying in hospices and orthodox hospitals in the U.S. and England.....I talked at length to each of the almost two hundred people in my statistical population sample. They were open and kind with me, and I was very grateful for their time. When I asked each person individually what mattered most in life, around ninety percent answered intimate relationships." He goes on, "In my practice of psychotherapy, I see many, many people every year. Most have symptoms of anxiety or depression, or they are beset with behavioral disorders such as over indulgence in drugs, alcohol, food, or work. Increasingly I'm finding the absence of intimacy is the common denominator in the analysis and treatment of people with these and many other symptoms."

Zig Zigler tells of the Indian who discovered oil in Oklahoma, and went from poverty to great riches. Everyday he went to town in his new Cadillac. He was the safest driver in that whole area, because he had his Cadillac pulled by two horses. He hated machines, and so he never learned to start it. He used it like a carriage. This seems very weird to us, but there are parallels in our lives. Many never learn to use their VCR or their computer. We are often content with the external value of machines, but never care to get into the inner workings of them. This is true of marriage also. We pay a lot of attention to the externals of the wedding and the home, but very little to the intimacy of the mates.

Intimacy can be difficult to capture. It is like the formations in the clouds. You see the dog, but by the time you get someone's attention to look, it has faded. They are constantly shifting and hard to capture. So it is with intimacy. Now you have it, and now you don't. Intimacy is based on self-disclosure. That is why it is often easier to talk to a stranger than to your mate. After a few years in marriage, mates often feel there is nothing left to share. To counteract this, mates must be sharing new feelings, new convictions, and up to the minute perspectives on many aspects of life.

Howard and Charlotte Clinebell in their book, *The Intimate Marriage* say, "Intimacy is not so much a matter of what or how much is shared as it is the degree of mutual need-satisfaction within the relationship." Mates need to feed each others body, mind, and spirit. The food that nourishes all three is the honest sharing of your own inner being. Wives tend to need this more than husbands. Men like intimacy but women love it and this is a major difference in the sexes. Women are more personal and that is why they do not enjoy sports as much. They see it as hard to develop a close relationship in the ring or on the football field. Men tend to think of intimacy as sex, but wives tend to think of it as all the talking and affection that prepares them to enjoy sex. The wise couple seeks to meet each other's need for intimacy, and because this can mean two different things, each has to try and think like the other, and not just focus on what intimacy is to them. Switching roles can help make you more conscious of the other's perspective, and it can add some spice to your love life.

It is possible to develop the paralysis of analysis, and study problems until you are sick of the whole thing and give up in total frustration. You

Both mates contribute to the loss of romance and intimacy. But the husband, as leader of the house, bears the responsibility to restore the romantic relationship. He is to begin to treat his wife with the attention she needs to get motivated to please him. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. Jesus was the initiator, not the church. We love Him because He first loved us. Husbands leading the way is the biggest need in our culture.

J.A. Fritz goes so far as to say, "You can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will find no statement where God has commanded or demanded that a woman love her husband with an agape love. It's always turned around- "Husbands, love your wives." A woman is like a pump that must be primed. If the water of love is put into her she will automatically respond with love, she does not have to be commanded to do so. This is innate in the feminine structure."

In general, romance is more important to women than men. Studies show that the absence of romance is high on the list as a source of depression in women. Men rate it near last place. Why should this be? Men derive self-esteem from being respected in their place of work. Their success in the world makes them feel good about themselves. Women, however, feel worthy when they are loved. The female has a far deeper need for feeling loved, and needs the reassurance of romance. Her self-esteem depends upon it more than does a mans. He finds it hard to grasp why it is such a big deal to her.

One man said, "I just don't understand my wife. She has everything she could possibly want. She has a dish washer and a new dryer, and we live in a nice neighborhood. I don't drink or beat the kids or kick the dog. I've been faithful since the day we've been married. But she's miserable and I can't figure out why!" When the counselor heard this he wrote, "His love-starved wife would have traded the dishwasher, the dryer and the dog for a single expression of genuine tenderness from her unromantic husband. Appliances do not build self-esteem; being somebody's sweetheart most certainly does." Millions of wives way amen to that. Husbands, listen and learn.

Finally, studies show that being at ease and not up tight is the key to romance. When people are filled with anxiety it kills the spirit of love. The experts say relax and enjoy, for if you don't relax, and instead are full of doubts and fears, you will guarantee yourself a negative experience. We are not just talking about sex here, but about a total relationship. The mate that feels confident and good about themselves will make their partner feel the same, and this is romantic. The key to intimacy is to just be a caring person toward your mate. It is not some elaborate scheme to win their affection. This can be fun on occasion, but true intimacy is found in the everyday caring about the other, and doing the little things that help them feel better about themselves and their life. It is giving the little pleasures that are another piece of the twine that makes the rope that holds them together bigger and stronger. Intimacy is God's goal in all relationships, and this needs to be something we specialize in as we relate to our mate daily.

INTIMACY

3. Bruce Larson says sex is not the means to union, but a way of expressing it. Those who expect to find oneness in sex will be dissappointed. Sex is an

expression of a oneness already felt. Love, then, is the key to sex and not vice versa.

4.

5. Way back in 1970 Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock said we are beforming a modular society where people are like components we plug in or take out to meet our needs. We do not get personally involved in many peoples lives that serve us. I do not care who waits on me at the grocery store. If they replace these people I may not ever notice. I have almost no degree of intimacy with these people even though they meet a need I have. They are interchangeable and disposable like parts of a machine. This happens even in marriage where mates just use each other to meet needs but do not develop intimacy. We fear intimacy for if we open up that can be information that can be used to hurt us.

6. 7. Mariyn Monroe playing Roslyn in the Misfits says of her cold husband she is going to divorce, "He wasn't there. I mean, you could touch him but he wasn't there." Closeness in itself does not produce intimacy. A pile of football players is close but there is no intimacy. There is a craving for intimacy, but there is also a cost, and because of that cost there is a great deal of escape from intimacy. Promiscuous sex is an escape from intimacy, but appears to be an addition to intimacy. But what people are trying to do is to get intimacy without paying the price. They want a quick fix and sex seems like the way to get it. But it is an unwillingness to pay the cost of developing a close relationship with another person. Sex without love is bargain basement intimacy. Simon and Garfunkel sang to the youth of the 60's, "If I never loved, I never would have cried... I touch no one and no one touches me..I am a rock, I am an island...And a rock feels no pain, and an island never cries." The message is don't fall in love and get involved with people in depth, for it is costly and it can hurt. The way to be free is to escape intimacy.

8. Webster has these definitions:

1. Marked by very close association, contact or familiarity.
2. Marked by a warm friendship developing through long association.
3. Of a very personal or private nature.

Intimacy is very subjective and for some it means sharing your ideas of what kind of car you like, and for others it is sharing how you feel about nudity in the kitchen. If you need to talk about the price of corn in Kansas, then one who has that same interest will provide you with intimacy. Intimacy happens to us when we feel a sense of affirmation in a relationship. When others share their weaknesses with us we feel a sense of intimacy, but when they hide behind a shield of superiority intimacy is impossible.

9. Daniel Wilknis said, "The anxiety of nonbelonging is perhaps the deepest of all known anxieties." Anyone who makes us feel we belong produces intimacy.

10. Intimacy is when people love each other in spite of all their defects and imperfections. Infatuation is when you only love the ideal. In courtship we present a highly edited version of ourselves. We cover the blemishes and hide the defects, but all is revealed in marriage, and this is when real intimacy begins.

1112. Lowell & Carol Erdahl in Be Good To Each Other wrote, "A wife once told of her problem in marriage. She first bragged about her husband. He was an excellent provider and was faithful and kind. He was good with the children and she had no doubt of his love. "There is just one little thing," she said, "he doesn't talk to me." Subsequent conversation is revealed that wasn't literally true. He did talk about some things. He said, "Please pass the potatoes," and "What movie would you like to see tonight?" He talked about painting the house and going to the ball game but he did not share what was in his deepest heart. He didn't confide his personal thoughts or feelings. As the months and years passed, she began to feel as if she were living with a stranger.

Yet whatever our patterns of past isolation may be, something in us yearns for a relationship in which we can be open and honest with each other. While

inhibitions keep us from sharing freely, yearnings for intimacy invite us to risk saying something that will help break the defensive wall that keeps us a lonely stranger separated from the one we love.

There are ways in which these defenses can be broken. The woman who complained that "he doesn't talk to me" told her husband of her anguish and was surprised that he was open to visiting with a third person, in whose presence they were able to make a new beginning in their relationship. She learned that there were some ways in which she contributed to her husband's silence and others by which she made it easier for him to be more open. We sometimes encourage and enable the very behavior and attitudes in each other which we most dislike. We may, for example, complain of the silent partner and yet so ridicule his or her feeble attempts at sharing that he or she is put down into retreating to a safer solitude. Or, while complaining of too much nagging and bickering, we do all sorts of things that continue to provoke it.

13. Dr. C. Edward Crowtuer wrote, "The more intimate I get with you, the more vulnerable I become. The more you get to know me, the more I am likely to lose you because to know me is not to love me.

If you know me less well, you might love me more.

If you know me too intimately, you will realize how inadequate I am, how fearful I am, how lonely I am, how worthless I am, how unlovable I am, how lonely I am, and what a loser I feel that I really am. I am not worthy to be loved by anybody, especially someone as marvelous as you.