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Intimacy: It's More than Sex

Intimacy. We all say we want it. Books, blogs, and articles are written about it, yet achieving intimacy is much more difficult and multi-dimensional than the world tells us.

Intimacy is often framed as a physical, sexual relationship we have with another, but many sexual relationships are anything but intimate. While two physical bodies may be touching, there can be miles between the two hearts. Thoughts, feelings, secret motivations, hidden agendas, unmet needs, the list is endless.

What is intimacy really?

It began at creation. God created a man. The man, Adam, had a relationship with God where God knew Adam and Adam knew God.

Then God created a woman. The woman knew God before she knew Adam. She was in God's presence before He brought her to Adam and Eve had her own experience of knowing God and Him knowing her.

Then God brought the man and woman together, and they knew each other (Gen. 4:1). The Hebrew word "knew" indicates much more than sexual oneness. Adam and Eve were 'naked' in each other's presence (Gen. 2:25), and there was no shame in their mutual nakedness.

Intimacy is really a deep knowing of another. It is not confined to marriages or other relationships which involve sex. It is much more than sex.

Intimacy is when we bring all of ourselves to another within the appropriate boundaries of that relationship. A married couple's intimacy should include sexual intimacy, whereas a parent-child relationship has different boundaries, a friend-friend relationship has yet another set of appropriate boundaries.

Intimacy with my husband means that I am willing to bring all of my heart, mind, and body to him, while yet retaining my uniqueness, my own 'self'. Back to the Garden of Eden, God created a man and a woman who were both unique individuals and had their own sense of identity before they knew each other.

Intimacy in marriage was never intended to wipe out our individual selves. Yes, we become one, but just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have three distinct roles and separateness, so it is to be in marriage.

The Father, Son, and Spirit are not in competition and neither are we when we, as two individuals, walk in the full glory and intentions that God created for us individually.

In the Garden, a place where Adam and Eve were intended to have oneness and uniqueness, intimacy was lost

when manipulation, blaming, accusation, and invalidation entered the hearts of Adam and Eve and separated them from God and from each other.

Intimacy is hard work. Our flesh resists the true intimacy. While our hearts yearn for intimacy because we were created for it, at the same time, we fear and resist it.

While our stories are all unique, certain things are common to our resistance to intimacy. Just as in the beginning, our own agendas can separate us from each other and hinder our intimacy. Our woundedness can hinder our intimacy. Yes, spiritual warfare can hinder our intimacy.

Recognizing these hindrances is the first step to moving them. Sometimes we can't name the hindrances without help. The Holy Spirit helps us by speaking to our hearts and speaking through the Word. He also speaks through others, such as a trusted friend or counselor.

Intimacy is risky. Giving all of our hearts to another gives them the ability to hurt us, and in truth, we will be hurt in all our human relationships to some degree or another because we are all fallen and fail and disappoint one another in many ways. Yet the rewards of intimacy include being truly known by another human and loved, valued, and accepted because of who we are. Such knowledge is powerful in its effect.

Intimacy with God involves bringing all of our hearts to him. This includes being willing to be truthful with Him about our anger, disappointment, and other feelings that we have toward Him and others. Read the Psalms. David, a man the Scripture says was 'after God's own heart', expressed the full range of emotions to God. He did not feel unsafe with God. He knew God was not fragile. God was able to experience all of whom David was.

We say and 'know' that God knows all about us anyway, but we live and act as if we can fool Him. He doesn't want us to live this way. There is no value in hiding our hearts from God. He wants us to dare to bring all of our hearts and souls to Him in truth.

Jesus said we could know the truth and the truth would set us free. Inherent in this teaching is the idea that God operates in truth. Yet we often try to hide our hearts from God, others, and even our own selves, as if in doing so, makes our struggles less real. In fact, just as in the Garden, hiding our struggles gives them more power.

We are not to pursue the same level of intimacy with everyone. It is not healthy or appropriate to give our hearts, minds, and bodies away in wrong ways, but there are healthy ways that we must pursue intimacy.

Intimacy. It's hard work.

Intimacy. We were created for it. With God and with others.

Will we be hurt if we pursue it? Yes, but to live without it is to live as an empty shell.

Will you honestly evaluate your more important relationships in regards to intimacy? Do you need to work on bringing the truth of who you are into those relationships?

One day, the Scripture says we will know even as we are known. Intimacy. Until then, the hard work of intimacy pays huge dividends as we experience a little heaven on earth.

You can also find this article published on Intimacy: It's More than Sex, and on the tag pages David, Gen. 2:25 , Gen. 4:1, intimacy, John 8:31, Psalms, sex.