

Intimate Union

by Art Katz

Art Katz emphasizes the importance of intimate union with God, where we come to Him with loving abandonment and trust, and He transforms us into His likeness.

Duration: 35:43

Scripture: Matthew 5:39, Matthew 22:37, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:31-32, Philippians 3:8, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Reconciliation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of intimate union with Christ Jesus. He highlights the example of the apostle Paul, who considered everything else as loss compared to the knowledge and experience of being united with Christ. The speaker emphasizes that this union is not just a technical or superficial relationship, but a deep and vital joining with Christ in his suffering, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. The speaker also mentions the need for self-denial and delayed gratification in our relationships, contrasting it with the casual and indifferent attitude many have towards God.

Transcript

September K-008. Art Katz speaking on the subject, Intimate Union. This is a young couple who, we use that phrase, living by faith.

This is for real. I marvel at what God can do in so few months. But He's doing a very quick work everywhere.

Enormous, this hour. I stagger and I reel and I can't keep up with my God. We just had in Turley's town of Charleston, West Virginia.

I spoke in the Episcopal Church. They wouldn't let us go. I said, well, I could tell you a story.

Tell us, tell us. And that night I was given the name of a Jewish man who owned a radio station. So I called him up and I invited him to that meeting.

If he had come, his life would never again be the same. God was there. He said, well, I can't come, Mr. Katz.

He said, but I'm sorry, I'm busy. I was just about to hang up and I heard myself say, well, could we have breakfast together tomorrow morning? He said, yes, if you'll come 8 o'clock in the morning. I said, oh.

So I was there at 8 o'clock in the morning. He said, I want to know right away so I can't give you more than 15 minutes. Half hour later, he had that strange look in his face.

He said, what time is your plane leaving today? I said, about noon. He said, could you come back at 1030? At 11 o'clock in one of the rooms of his building. He said, Artie said, if I receive this Jesus, he said, would that be disloyal to my Jewishness? I said, brother, this is the supreme act of Jewish commitment.

Is to receive the promised Messiah of Israel according to the Jewish scriptures. And with that, he bowed his head and followed me in prayer and the spirit of God came down. My scalp was tingling.

When he finished praying, he said, oh, he said, oh, what's the strange feeling in my chest? Other Jewish people have said to me, are you trying to convert me? I said, no, God is only seeking to make a mensch out of you. Because you can't be a man, that's what mensch means, without God. It takes God to be a man.

And the world is dying for the want of the knowledge of God. To know God is everything. And I'm telling these university kids who are so brittle in their knowledge, so intellectual, so contentious, ready to change the world.

You know all kinds of things, you're filled with knowledge and trivia and details and data. That's the kind of knowledge that deadens and innovates. But there's a knowledge that brings life.

It's not the knowledge about God, it's the knowledge of God. And that's a knowledge and a knowing to be experienced, right? How many people know that the deepest kind of knowledge is something that isn't merely cerebral? It's the kind that you experience. When I was a kid growing up in Brooklyn, full of anguish and bewilderment, I knew that the great words had to do with life.

What does truth mean? And life and death and love and righteousness and compassion. I didn't know what those words meant. And I knew that you couldn't go to a Western dictionary to find out.

Those words have to be experienced. And there's a word that has to be experienced to be known. It's the word that was made flesh and dwelt among us.

To know God is everything. And you know that the word to know God in Hebrew is the same word as to know a woman. Abraham knew Sarah, Adam knew Eve.

It doesn't mean that they had a casual kind of relationship where they learned little brittle facts about each other. Born in such and such a place, IQ and so on. They came into one another in such a way and received from that intimate interrelationship such a knowledge of each other that passes words.

And I'm so happy for this church that I can speak this thing that God has given me without any fear that it's going to be misunderstood. It's sometimes a lonely thing to be a man of God and a messenger in this hour. I can't think of an hour in which we need a deeper spiritual discernment than this hour.

We're liable to condemn the message and messengers of God as somehow trying to sell us strange new doctrines and miss what the Spirit of God is speaking. And you know it's interesting that at the very end of the ages there's a showdown between the two great spirits, light and darkness. And we read in Revelation of that spirit of Satan, that hua, manga that brings the whole world into huadam and into infidelities and fornications.

And a few verses down in that same 19th chapter of Revelation we speak of one who has come for his bride to bring that bride to a wedding supper spotless and attired in heavenly garments. It's going to be one of the two things. It's going to be a marriage such as the world has never known in such holiness or it's going to be people steeped in such huadam in such infidelity and such fornications as the world has not seen either.

Isn't it interesting that Satan always seeks to emulate, imitate, grotesquely caricature and deform the things of God. God intends marriage. He intends sacred relationship.

He intends sex as a most beautiful and fulfilling experience and an expression of intimacy. And Satan seeks to corrupt and to destroy and to ravage and to make of it mere lust and obsessive kinds of things and the kinds of things that are grotesque. We're seeing both these spirits poured out on earth.

So I want to speak to you for a few minutes tonight about knowing God in the only way that he can be known intimate union. And isn't it interesting as a Jew as I surveyed the history of Israel the sad tragic history of Israel that God speaks about their apostasy as having gone a whoring after other gods. And God said that you broke my covenant.

You broke my wedding contract though I was a husband unto you. And God suggests to us that the relationship that we have with him is akin to the relationship that he intends for us to have with each other. And I tell you that the quality and depth and character and honesty of the relationship that we have with each other is no greater nor more honest nor more deep than the relationship that we have with him.

And I tell you that you have to live with a girl like Inga. She's tremendous. Just when you think you know something she asks you a question and you gasp and you sputter.

And one day she said to me that scripture says that Jesus was tempted in every point like as we but he was never married. How come? See I know my wife. You have to read between the lines.

What she's really saying is he never had to put up with one like you. So how can the scripture say he was tempted in every point like as we? You know it's a tremendous question. And I really began to ponder that and I believe this is the answer that the Lord gave me.

Truly Jesus was never married but he knew relationships. Marriage is the name given to one set of relationships. It's the most profound set.

It's the deepest relationship and every one of us knows it when we enter into it that more is required of us in this than any other relationship in our lives. But I think that what God wants to suggest to us is that every relationship has exactly the same basic constituent elements. Whether it's the relationship between a flock and a pastor between races between parents and children between the family of God and a church.

Relationships are relationships. And I want to speak to you about some of the basic ingredients of relationships that we might understand what it means to know God. This isn't a desire to shock or to be controversial but I think that we do need a fresh apprehension of familiar things.

And I think we're going to hear God's voice speaking in more and more radical ways in this last day. There are ears that have been grown gross from hearing and have not heard. And God is speaking to us in a new way to cut right to our hearts that we might understand.

So what are these constituent elements of relationship, of intimate union? For they're exactly the same with Him as it is with each other. And I'm going to be very simple and speak with great clarity of speech. Well, first of all, it requires two persons.

You say, ah, just how fundamental can you get? Well, I tell you, I'm getting more and more fundamental. I used to take relish in intellectual and cultural things and I'm getting so simple and so narrow I mean, it's pathetic. I'm an embarrassment.

I'm getting to that place where I desire to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. Yet, intimate union is only possible between two persons. You say, ah, well, that's evident.

Oh, is it really? It's not possible between a person and a denomination. It's not possible between a person and a body of tradition. It's not possible between a person and a God who is a concept or an abstraction or an impersonal force in the universe.

Intimate union is only possible between two real, authentic persons. And I tell you that that relationship is no more real than the reality of those two persons. And there's no question about his reality but very often there's a question about ours.

This is a cardboard, synthetic, plastic age full of corruption, full of dishonesty, full of deception, full of slick things. And I think a lot of our personalities are trying to be formed, at least the advertisers are trying to persuade us by the kinds of things that we dab under our underarms and put on after our shaves. There's a lot of people in this world that have no sense of identity and no sense of who they really are.

And that's our big Jewish hang-up. What does it mean to be a Jew? And I tell you, until we come into that intimate union with Him, there's not a way of knowing. And as honestly as we'll come, as real persons with Him, that will redound to the beauty of the relationship to which He's calling us.

He's calling us to an intimate union, an interpenetration between two persons. And you know we've lost the sense of that, people? The spirit of whoredom and infidelity and fornication is already being heaped out over the earth. And marriage has become so trafficked in and so broken in its original meaning that there are probably many people in this room who can speak out of the experience of their families, out of broken homes and divorce, and I more than you all.

And there are many who come into marriage with this thing already in the back of their mind. Well, if it doesn't work, there's always an out. What more convenient thing than divorce? And I remember with my history kids in California, when we discussed the issue of the Civil War as a divorce between North and South, they were fully persuaded that if a woman is not happy, she has every right to break the relationship.

I mean, isn't the pursuit of happiness in the Bible? No. It came the same place where the rite of revolution came from, out of hell. And I'm talking as a former American history teacher.

God hasn't called us to a pursuit of happiness. He has called us to know and to love our God with all our heart and all our soul and to follow Him in the way of the cross. It's not happiness as the world knows it.

It's joy. There's a sense in which marriage was understood as people holding themselves in reserve, keeping themselves chaste and untouched for that union that was going to be permanent and enduring and eternal. The idea of the lost virginity was something of great shame because we were unique

personalities.

There was never one like us before. God had created us. His image was in us.

We were to keep ourselves for that one whom He intended for our lives. And when those two sacred, unique entities came together and interpenetrated, that was to be for time and for eternity. How different is the spirit that pervades the idea of marriage and relationships today.

Even the idea of keeping yourself and waiting for that one relationship to come has been entirely lost. It was only a generation ago that a Jewish girl would wait for her husband. The guy struggled to come out of the slums of the east side.

His parents were from the old country. He went to night school and worked night and day to get through and get a degree. And then he went to medical school.

And then he had to be an intern. He struggled. And finally, maybe when he was 30 or 32, he finally put up his shingle.

Then he got married. And she waited, and they waited, and waited. They held themselves.

Self-denial. Delayed gratification. Completely opposite in the spirit of the stage, which is the now generation.

Now. Gratification now. Fly now.

Pay later. And a lot of us are paying later and paying bitterly. And I tell you that the relationships into which we've come, much broken and much disfigured, are just exactly the same as the relationship that the world has with God.

Broken and disfigured. We're just as casual and just as glib and just as indifferent with Him as we are with each other. The one is a symptom of our condition with the other.

Real marriage requires a holding yourself in reserve for that one. A sacred union in which you're going to allow that thing that you are to be interpenetrated by another. And why should you allow it? Because you trust Him.

Because you come lovingly. Because you come with expectation. Because you know that you're not going to be violated or exploited or abused or misused.

You confidently open yourself to the interpenetration of the other whom you know is your lover. And you've got to come with that trust and with that confidence and with that abandonment. But how many of us come with gripped teeth? With bitten lips? With a distaste? With doing our mechanical duty and going through rote mechanical motions? Thinking that we're discharging our obligation? Oh, how sad and how pathetic and how inadequate.

And oh, what a caricature for the joy which God intended to be for those who come in love one to another. A lot of us are coming to God. The world, if it comes, it comes to God with gripped teeth and with pursed lips.

Giving Him an hour on Sunday or throwing Him a bone or a scrap. It's not with loving abandonment to come into that union which is knowing. And I tell you to come, you've got to come naked.

There's no other way. You've got to come without concealment. You've got to come trembling.

You've got to come hearing the call of deep unto deep. And if we come with so much as a covering, what kind of a relationship and what kind of intimate union is that going to be? We've got to come not just once but continually, periodically. It's not a drudge.

We're coming for a renewing. We're coming for a reenactment of a loving union. It's never the same.

It's not erode. It's not mechanical. It's not dull.

It's unique. There's no limit to the knowledge of God. There's no limit to the penetration of the depths of His infinity.

And every time you come to Him in that loving abandonment, you touch and sense new depths in that relationship with Him and in yourself. There's never a falling back to where you were. You're raised from height to height in that loving relationship with Him who bids us come.

It's something alive and creative. It's dear and it's every time new. It begins in hopeful expectancy and it goes on in deepened confidence to new expectancies and to new confidence from time to time to time in that relationship, in that knowing with God and with each other.

It's an interesting thing about this intimacy that God has ordained. For every other creature it may be different. For us, it's face to face.

And I praise God for that, to be required to behold the face of the lover. Jacob said, I've seen God face to face, yet I live. It's something to look into the face which is that symbol, that expression of the uniqueness of that personality with which you're coming into intimate union.

Have you seen God face to face? Have you turned your face up to Him? I tell you, it's joy. You can never again return to any previous aloofness, any detachment, any being alone or any solitariness. It's a losing of one self from the other, a kind of coming together and mystical merging that's deep and tense and personal and total.

And you know you can see it on the face of one who's a lover. We don't see it too often. It's a rare thing.

But every once in a while you find that pair who are really lovers, so caught up in each other, so fulfilling each other's hearts and lives. Their faces beam with light and with gratification. And there's simply no room in their hearts for anyone else.

Quite different from those quote unquote bachelors in the office and that we see around us who are married and wear a band and have some kind of a technical certificate. But they're bachelors in their spirit and their eyes are continually roving and hearts filled with lust because they're hearts that are empty, unfulfilled, seeking for gratification in the world, some excitement, an experience, a passing thing. There's a God who wants us to know Him in a deep, intimate union that will so fill our hearts and souls that there'll be no room in our heart for any of the blandishments of the world seeking to put its hooks in us.

Our faces will tell the story we're lovers of the living God. What are the enduring results of a relationship such as this? I've just mentioned that fulfillment that frees us from anything in the world that would seek to seduce us. And the other is that in such love as that, coming back time and time again for that renewing and for that reenactment, you begin to take on the coloration, the aspect, the character, the personality, even the appearance of the loved one.

And many of us have noticed this in people that are married 20, 30, 40 years. They tend to resemble each other. Have you ever seen that? It's happening now.

I'm only married seven years and you couldn't talk about two more dissimilar people. She's nodding her head there. Right.

There's this dark Jew from New York full of contention and intellectual and all that stuff and a hot shot. And this simple little girl from a village of 500 in Denmark who had barely gotten through the school at the age of 14 or 15 who murders her own language, let alone English. Simple little thing.

And how is God going to bring you and this Gentile together? But I tell you, there's something that happens in intimate union. I'm becoming less clever every day. I look at my wife and I blink my eyes and I marvel.

She's getting so smart. She's the family treasurer. She's the financier.

She takes me by the hand like an idiot and watches over me. And she says, of all the Jews, I had to get you. And the Malachites will tell you, she's getting good looking.

She's taking driving lessons now. I mean, what God is doing in this girl's life is something phenomenal. This is a girl who slept with a light on all her life because she was afraid of the dark.

Who twice attempted suicide in her adolescence. Ravaged with fear and dark things. And now in the light.

Gloriously breaking forth. And oh, oh, oh, how God could bring together such lives as this. And I saw her taking driving lessons and they came up with the car and I saw behind the wheel, she had her hair, she looked so beautiful and confident.

I said, is that my little finger? We're getting to look like each other. Pray for her nose, will you? I'm joking, but I know that you understand. It's a precious thing.

It's a wonderful thing. God has called us to real relationship. He's called us to real intimacy.

I think we're doing our young people a disservice to go shh, shh, shh. As if we're not supposed to speak about this thing and maybe it's dirty. When they have an intuitive sense in their hearts that this is at the very heart of life itself and it's the most profound experience that's open to them.

Yes, it is. Just as profound as that experience to which God calls us to know Him in intimate union. Again and again.

It's life. It's very life. Where God isn't calling us to a religion.

He's not calling my Jewish people to be converted. To be introduced as former Jews. He's calling us to union with our God who is holy and righteous and just and loving.

And I think one of the greatest compliments that's been paid me on this trip. I just came from Buffalo. And a woman said, she said, I hope you'll understand when I say this.

You've changed. She said, I heard you two years ago, she said. And I appreciated your testimony.

I knew a guy had his hand on you. But there's something more tender about you now. You're more loving and there's something much softer in your nature and in your voice and your life.

And I always want to turn away and cry. Praise God to take a piece of granite like this, a hard, battered man and to work and to conform him to the image of His precious Son. Every time I come to Him in abandonment, naked, stripped, bare, delighting to see His face and opening myself to the penetration of His love.

I'm never again the same. And He bids me come time and time again. And the rest in the arms of Him who was coming for His bride without spot and without blouse.

Hallelujah. And is it not written that David dwelt two full years in the city of Jerusalem? And there was his son that saw in his face not for a period of two years. And so the heart of my God yearns for His and for their fellowship and for their communion.

And He would cry unto thee by the Spirit and would impress thee on the cry and the yearning of His heart for His people. Think not that He is overwhelmed by thy amount of activity and that that can satisfy His deepest longings. For the deepest longings of God can only be met by the love of His people and the time that is spent alone with Him.

I have placed this word in the mouth of my servant and I would speak to thee tonight that there is a cry in my heart for you and I would draw thee. Yea, I would permit thee to come before me. And in my presence thou shalt know this union that has been described before thee tonight.

Pride not thyself in what thou hast done but ask of thy God that you might know Him in increasing intimacy. For to this thou hast been called before the foundation of the age that you would know Him and take on His features and the expressions of His own inner heart. Oh, how... to be spoken to by the living God.

You say, Art, what's the problem? Why don't, why don't we just come to the altar? Why aren't the wedding bells pealing? Why don't we hear the strains of the organ? Here comes the bride. Why aren't there those who are eagerly coming to such a wedding as this and such a knowing as this and such an intimate union as this? I'll tell you that there's a little difference between this wedding and the weddings that the world knows. No kosher catered affairs here.

No flash bulbs popping in faces here. No best gobs and gowns here. No stacks of wedding presents here.

There's only one place to be married to the bridegroom and few there be that are willing to come. It's the cross of Christ Jesus. It's Calvary.

And to perhaps the necessary circumstance of being united with Christ really offends the world's taste. After all, a dunghill of Calvary, a rude, blood-spattered cross, a battered, despised bridegroom with a visage marred more than any man will hardly attract many away from the seductive world to a union with him in his crucifixion, in his death, in his burial, and in his resurrection life. Little wonder we see so little

evidence of those who live with him for there are so few who are willing to die with him.

But when we do, when we come to that cross, every plastic, rigid, encrusted thing of our heart and life snaps and breaks and pops. Out comes that flow of love, that resurrection life, that ointment that God wants to pour forth into the world to bring healing and deliverance and salvation that the world might see in our face the signs of the lover, that light that comes, that gratification of a heart that overflows from the love of him because we've joined him in that one place alone where he's to be met and where we're to merge with him in his cross, in his suffering, in his shame, in his reproach, in his pain, in his death. The hour is late, children, and the stakes are too high to mistake our natural sociability our natural gregariousness, our accidents of personality to be somehow the expression of Christ in us.

There's a great deal of back-slapping in Christianity, in full gospel circles and bear hugs, but so too do the Rotarians and the Elks and the American Legion. We need something more authentic than that. We need the love of him who is love and who will transmit that love in us and through us if we're willing to come and be wedded to the Son of the Living God.

How many of us are willing even to open our own lives to each other? How many of us are willing to sacrifice leisure and privacy and reveal our secret lives to each other, let alone lay down a life for a friend? How many of us can turn the other cheek to each other, let alone to the enemy? And I've had many a sad experience in the course of these weeks of speaking in Pentecostal and other churches to see resentment, jealousies, fears, every kind of separating influences in cold, rigid churches where people are afraid to go out of the same door for fear they'll rub elbows and end a 15-year resentment. God has called us to union, to an openness one to another, to an interpenetration of our lives and not to a Sunday potluck supper Christian culture. He's called us to intimacy and union and life with Him first and then with each other, walking in the light as He is in the light.

There's a place of intimate union waiting for each of us tonight. It's the place of suffering and shame of which we sing so often but cling so rarely. There's a God who's waiting for us to join Him in a wedding.

Many in the world have called themselves by His name and they have a technical certificate. They were baptized in such and such a time. They belong to such and such a denomination.

But their lives betray them. Their eyes are full of whoredom. They fornicate in their hearts.

Their eyes are roving at the seductive and blandishment things of the world. They haven't affirmed with a hearty I do their marriage vows. They're not living like married men.

They're like those men who begrudge their wives to take them to a movie and out to a restaurant and give them ten bucks for a hat and feel that maybe they fulfilled their marital responsibility. We can't treat our God in such a way. He hasn't called us to a hit and miss and put a notch in our belt.

He's called us to a continuing, deepening, intimate union and relationship with Him on the cross of Christ Jesus. I want to read in conclusion tonight just these simple words. The third chapter of Philippians where there's one who speaks who knew this union perhaps better than any man.

I am crucified with Christ, Paul said. For me to live is Christ. A man so caught up in the bridegroom, he had no life unto himself.

He had no impulses unto himself. He had no concern unto himself. He doted and waited on and meditated and contemplated and had a heart sensitive to wait until here to receive the leading of the Spirit of Him to whom he was wedded on that cross.

And therefore, it was that life that was poured forth to establish the churches in the Western world. It was that life that came through that personality to give us half the New Testament. And we read in the third chapter in the eighth verse, I count all things for loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the knowing of that intimate union with Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but done that I may win Christ and be found in Him.

I stand at the door of your heart and knock if any man hear my voice and open to me. I will come in. None of this superficial stuff of lives gliding off one another.

In, penetrating in a permanent, continual presence of merging lives, interpenetrating one with the other. And attend first that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death. There's a God who's called us and is calling us in this last hour to a union of such intimacy, such depth, such love that can come only on the cross of Christ Jesus, only in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Have you heard the call of the bridegroom? Have you heard that heavenly appeal? Here comes the bridegroom. There's a God who's seeking for those who will affirm their marriage vows this night. They've not come to light flirtation.

They've not come to mere technical relationship. They've been called to a union, to a coming again and again in a vital joining and a merger with that one who is the off-scouring of the world. The world's reproach, the shame, the one who's waiting, that battered bridegroom, visage marred more than any man, to those who will embrace Him and be joined with Him in His suffering, in His crucifixion, in His death, in His burial, and in, praise God, His resurrection.

I'm going to ask my brother Charlie to come and sing the song that breaks my heart every time I hear him sing it. I heard him sing it first as an unbeliever, and it was the cry of a man whose heart was hungering for some kind of union with the ground of being and with the God of all this world. He sings the same song now, but it comes out as the song of one who's a bride, one who has come into that infinite union, who knows Him and who loves Him.

I want you to hear that song tonight, and I want you to hear it as a wedding invitation, a wedding march. We hardly have any room here at the front. I don't know what to do or how to invite you, but I just ask you maybe just to, as you hear this song being played and you've heard the voice of the Spirit of our God calling us to intimate union, you want to affirm your wedding vow this night, even unto death, even unto the fellowship of the sufferings.

Will you just stand up and find a place to the front of this room, stand by the sides of the wall, stand in the aisles, stand for the invitation of the bridegroom, the soon-coming King, who will come for a bride without spot, without blemish, who will give us that reward, that heavenly wedding supper, with Him, for all eternity.

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