

Intimacy With God

by Carter Conlon

Intimacy with God is a relationship that involves knowing and being known by Him, and requires surrender and trust in His love, which is available to all who respond to God's love and trust in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 34:17

Scripture: Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, Revelation 20:11-13

Topics: "Intimacy With God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of a moment that is yet to come, when all people, both living and dead, will stand before Jesus Christ for judgment. Many will realize at that moment what they have missed out on in their lives. The preacher shares his personal experience of longing for something beyond what his family could provide, and how he found fulfillment in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He highlights the eternal nature of this relationship and the hope, joy, and purpose it brings. The sermon also emphasizes God's love and sacrifice in sending his Son to die for our sins, offering forgiveness and the opportunity for intimate fellowship with God.

Transcript

I want to talk to you for a moment about intimacy with God. Now, you heard it in the testimonies tonight, and you'll hear it repeatedly, no matter how many stories are told, no matter how many times they're told or who tells them, that there is a need in every one of our hearts for intimacy. That means to love and be loved outside of ourselves, outside of who we are.

Now, I know that life's experience has beaten that down in many people, many who are here tonight. Life's experience, you did trust, you did try, you did reach, but you didn't find what it is you were looking for. I was raised in a fairly kind and nurturing family when I was very young, and it was only when I was about 13 that I began to realize that I was longing for something outside of what my mother and father and immediate family could give to me.

In the town I was raised, there were back alleys, and across the back alley was a girl about my age. She was about 13 at the time. I was 13.

And that's when I first began to be aware that there was something outside of my family that interested me. And one day she was out in her backyard, and I went outside and my mother had asked me to trim the tree. There was a tree in the backyard with trimmers, so I took off my shirt and I flexed as much as I

could, every possible muscle in my 13-year-old body, and I began to cut that tree while flexing.

And then I knew an intimate moment was coming. And suddenly I heard my name from across the alleyway. Carter, she said.

And, you know, I knew. I finally caught her attention. She said to me, Boy, are you ever skinny? I can count all your ribs from way over here.

I put my shirt back on, went into the house, buried my head in the cushion on the couch. And that's an intimate moment. I don't like the memory of it.

I never want it to come back. I never, ever would want to experience that moment again. Devastating when you first reach out and have that kind of a response.

But there are a lot of intimate and personal moments in this life. It can be the memory, perhaps, that comes to you of a kind word or kind gesture. Something somebody said.

I remember I had a schoolteacher that I never forgot her words. She, I was a troublemaker in grade school. Hard as that might be for you to believe today, but I was, I was.

And I remember her coming to me one day and she said, I prayed and God showed me he's going to use your life very powerfully. And I looked at her and I never forgot her words. It was hard to shake it.

She was always very kind when others weren't kind. And I remember thinking how nice it would be to be a person like that. And those moments have stayed with me all of my life.

When I first gave my life to Christ, I was 24 years of age. And she was now in a seniors facility. And I remember she was the first person I called.

And I said, do you remember me? And she remembered me. That was back from grade six, I believe, at that time. And I said, I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

And she just told me at that moment, make sure you go to church. Make sure you stay close to God. Intimate moments can be a sense of accomplishment when that first diploma or certificate or whatever it was was placed in your hand.

And there was a sense of well-being that came into your heart, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of all things were possible, at least in those early moments. The time that you first realized that you loved someone, it can be a memory that never fades. You may have lost it.

It may have slipped through your hands somewhere along the line. But it is an intimate memory and a precious moment that came into your life. It can be the time when you held a new life in your arms or the time that you said goodbye to one that was passing out of this world and into another.

I can remember the first time I ever held my firstborn son. I remember walking out of the hospital that morning and a weeping in my heart, an overwhelming sense of both joy, awe and responsibility coming into my heart. And an intimacy of that moment that can never, ever, ever be forgotten as long as you live on this earth.

I remember leading my father to Christ. And in the last hour of his life, first time ever my dad and I had talked about heaven. The first time we'd ever talked about forgiveness.

The first time we'd ever talked the way we talked. He was a World War II veteran. And many of the World War II veterans we understand today, post-traumatic stress disorder, we didn't understand it then.

And he exhibited a lot of the signs. I understand it now having studied it. So he's a man who found it very difficult to share his innermost thoughts.

But I found a different man the moment he surrendered to Christ. It's like a floodgate of pent-up emotion was released from his life. First time ever I'd heard him tell me he loved me in all of my adult life was the last hour I had with my father.

I would give almost anything in this world to relive that hour. And I remember going home that night and so excited to be able to go back into the hospital that night to further this conversation. With a father that had become a new man right before my eyes.

Only to find out he had slipped into a coma. He never recovered and he was gone shortly after that. If you think hard enough you'll remember a moment that you wish with all of your heart could last forever.

Recently I had a moment like that. I was visiting my oldest son in Canada and he has two children now, two boys. And one is just a baby and the other is two and a half.

And we were in his room one night and I was reading him a bedtime story. I had a puppet and I was singing silly songs. And the two of us were laughing so hard we were almost crying.

And I remember sitting there with him on my knees wishing that this moment could never end. Wishing it could always be this way. Somehow wanting in my heart could it not be frozen in time that this doesn't have to change? Could he stay two and a half forever? Could I stay 55? Could he be my grandson and I be his grandpa? Could we just kind of do this? It was just one of those moments that you never ever ever want to change.

Some people tonight live with regret because it's only with the passing of time that you realize that what once came your way and today you'd give anything to have it back again. You'd give anything to have that moment back but it slipped through, it passed, it's gone. And on this side of eternity anyway you're never going to get to experience that particular moment again.

And I don't have to go into specifics because those that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you know exactly what it is that I'm saying this evening. And so it is in the Scriptures. Just let me read it to you.

In Revelation, the book of Revelation chapter 20, don't turn there let me read it to you. John says in verse 11, I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened.

And another book was opened which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them and they were judged every man according to their works. You know there are many, many people one day at this moment, because the Bible says

there's a moment coming when all who have lived and all who have died are going to stand before Jesus Christ.

And it's at that moment that many, many people are going to realize what they let slip through their fingers. Many are going to realize that the fullness of everything I ever longed for, as Jose shared tonight, I don't know how to tell you, I don't know how to put it in words, but Jesus Christ has done something in my life. And the fullness of everything I've ever longed for, of everything I've ever wanted, everything I've ever needed is going to be standing before us.

The Bible says that at his face heaven and earth fled away. Something about this radiance of Christ, something about the majesty of Jesus Christ, something about this awesomeness of Christ. And the books will be opened, the scripture says.

And the dead will be judged out of the things that they did. Now those who are without Christ are already judged. So what is this judgment? Why does it have to happen? I can see these books being opened, and all of a sudden for one moment in time, you will begin to realize, now I'm speaking to those who are without Christ, you'll begin to realize how much God loved you.

You'll finally understand it. That verse in scripture that says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. You'll finally understand those words, for God so loved the world.

You see the radiance in that face. And from that face everything that is ungodly must disappear. Everything that has not responded to this love, everything, everything, everything, that has not received this offer of forgiveness, flees from this presence of almighty God in Jesus Christ.

And the books are opened, not because God has to prove anything. But when those books are opened, those who are without God begin to realize finally what the scripture says, that all of our works are like filthy rags in the sight of God. That we can't work our way into heaven.

We can't work our way into this love of God. We can't do enough to ever, ever get to that place of intimacy with God that will last for all time and all of eternity. It will show men who thought that because of their church attendance and because they gave to charity twice a year, that somehow they were going to earn their place into this heart of God and into this intimacy with God for all of time, only to be proven as the books are opened that this is false reasoning.

There is no way that you and I can earn the favor of God. There is no way that we can work hard enough to gain entrance into that which our heart has really longed for. You were created by God.

You were created for God. You were created for intimacy with God, not just in time for all of eternity. And all of these moments that you and I experience throughout our lives are all just types and shadow plays of something much deeper, something much farther, something much more lasting.

There is a moment coming. Praise be to God for those who know Christ tonight. We begin to understand.

We are now laying hold of this intimacy with God. We are now beginning to understand. Not only have we been saved by God, but there is an intense longing of the heart that is fulfilled in this relationship with God, not just here on the earth, but for all of time and all of eternity.

The day I found Christ. I found a Savior. I found a relationship.

I found freedom. I found hope. I found joy.

I found a purpose for living. And it's not just for time. It's for all of eternity.

It's a moment that will never pass away. It doesn't have to pass away. It's not going to pass away.

It's not like things in this life that we just hope are not going to be gone, or we lost them and they're not coming back. This is a relationship with God that is only increases. It only goes from image to image, as the Bible says, and glory to glory.

10,000 years from tonight, I'll be shouting the praises of my Savior. 10,000 years times 10,000 years from tonight, I'll be giving God glory for what He did in my life. I'll be having the most intimate conversations with the God who created me and the God who created this universe.

I'll have come to the realization that everything my heart ever longed for is found in Him. What an awful moment it will be for many when those books are opened and they begin to realize that they fell short of the glory of God. That no man of human reasoning can get by the entrance gate as it is the God placed before all and the decision that every man has to make to inherit eternal life that God offers freely through His Son.

I don't know if we'll have a sense around, a sense sound around experience standing before the throne when all of a sudden perhaps we'll hear the nails being driven into the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. We'll hear those final moments and hear those final words on the cross. Perhaps the words of Isaiah will come back to us where he said, I have not forgotten you.

I engraved you on the palms of my hands. A mother may forget her child, but I will not forget you. And perhaps in that moment, all men ever created in the image of God will understand the depth of God's love.

Understand what God had for us. Understand why God became a man. Understand why He walked on this earth for 33 years proving that He was God.

Understand why He went to a cross. Understand why He spoke words of everlasting life because He passionately loves those that He created with His own hand in the image of God. And wants you and I home with Him for all of eternity.

It's not a moment that has to slip through our fingers, beloved. It's not a moment that you have to stand and experience the loss of forever. On this side of eternity, God gives every man and woman ever created in the image of God an opportunity to make a decision.

An opportunity to have our sins forgiven. An opportunity to have all of the list of wrongs that is against us wiped away by trusting in the sacrifice of God's Son on the cross 2000 years ago. For our forgiveness.

For our hope. For our life. He says, I stand at the door and I knock.

And if any man opens, I will come in. I'll sit down with you. I'll supper with you.

It means I'll begin to commune with you. You'll have fellowship with me. You'll begin to know who I am.

We'll begin to walk together. We'll talk together. I'll begin to change you.

You'll have a testimony of my love. You'll never again be the same. And it's not a moment that has to be lost.

He says even beyond this, I'll come into your life and I'll begin to heal you. Where you've been bruised in your heart. Where you've been disappointed.

Where you've been wounded. Where things have happened that you think you're never going to get over. He said, I'll come in and I'll prove to you that I'm God.

I will fulfill every longing you've ever had in your heart. You'll not lose the memory of those other experiences that you thought would be lasting intimacy. They'll still be there.

But you will lose the pain. And their ability to wound you will be gone. I'll open every prison door.

And I'll give you sight like you never believed that you could have in your entire life. And it won't be just for time. It won't be a passing moment.

It will not be just a religious thing on Sunday night and Tuesday night and Thursday night. It will be for time and into eternity and all through eternity. Praise be to God.

God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son. God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Christ died one time. A godly man who had never committed any unrighteousness.

God died in the flesh to pay the price for all the wrong things that you and I have done. That we might be forgiven. That we might have an access, an entrance created before us into heaven for all of eternity.

That we might begin to understand the intimacy of God. And have fellowship with God. And walk with God.

And talk with God. God said, I'll prove myself to you. He said to Ezekiel, I'll give you a new mind.

I'll give you a new heart. I'll give you a new spirit. I'll give you a new future.

I'll give you a new hope. Praise be to God. And none of it has to slip through your fingers.

None of it has to ever be a distant memory. None of it, none of it, none of it can ever be taken away from you. He said, He who comes to me, I will never cast him out.

Praise be to God. I thank God for all these other memories. I thank God for all these other intimate moments.

But I would forsake all of them for eternity. For the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. And what God has given.

How He leads. How He speaks. Every night.

Every morning. Every morning. Every day.

Walking through the day. We sing an old hymn. It says, He walks with me.

And talks with me. And tells me I am His own. I don't know how much time is left.

You know, you and I live on borrowed time. We don't know that we have tomorrow. Nobody can say for sure.

Especially when nations have in their hands weaponry that can really make life a lot shorter than we anticipate it's going to be. We really don't know. But we do know one thing.

That God lovingly longs for you to come back to Him. He lovingly longs to give you and I something that is eternal. It cannot be taken away.

And time will not erode it. It will never become old. It will never be stale.

It will be something that lives in your heart like a brand new song. Every day. Every moment.

Every hour. For all of eternity. We spoke last Sunday night about heaven.

About an explosion of God. An explosion of knowledge. An explosion of understanding that will come into your heart.

It all hinges on what you do with Jesus Christ and His cross. Whether or not when those books are opened, you are welcomed in to eternal intimacy with God or sent in another direction. Into a place where God is not and never will be.

It all comes down to what you and I do with Calvary. What do we do with the fact that God became a man and died on a cross? How do we respond to it? Do we scoff at it? Do we put it away? Do we treat it as if it's just some kind of a religious illusion? A fallacy? Something that is fanciful thinking but will never bear any weight or have reality in our hearts? How do we deal with Jesus Christ determines how we spend eternity. If you are serious tonight, you'll take a serious look at this.

I was a religious skeptic of sorts until I was 24 years of age and I met a Christian. And it so intrigued me that this man spoke of change. As you heard these testimonies tonight, you saw change.

I was so intrigued by the love this man had in his heart for a Savior I'd never seen. I didn't know anything about this Savior but this man had a living relationship with Him. The intimacy I'm speaking about was already in his heart.

He was a cop, he was 6'2", he was tough, he was a career man. He was well presented but he was passionately in love with God through Jesus Christ. It so shook me.

I couldn't shake it. I couldn't put it away. He talked about change.

He said, I was a womanizer, I was a drunk and a gambler. But the man I was looking at was everything but those things. He told me, he said, if you come to Christ, he said, Jesus promises to come to you.

And he said, I'll give you a new life. Now I'd always wanted a new life. There was that longing in my heart for something that nothing could fill.

Not music, nothing could fill it. Nothing. Everything I'd tried.

I'd tried a lot of things and they'd all fallen short. They were all just passing moments that I started speaking about tonight. But through Christ, I heard that something was offered that was eternal.

It never faded away. I started to study the Bible. I got into the Gospel of John.

I read it as a student. I read it and asked God to speak to me. And when I read it, I began to understand something about God.

Who he was, what he had done for me. The rightful claim that he had to my heart and to my life. And I think most of all, I began to understand that he loved me.

Until one day I couldn't take the argument anymore and pulled over on the side of the road. And I prayed a simple prayer. I said, God Almighty, if what Irv, his name was Irv by the way, I said, if what Irv has told me is true and if what I'm reading is true, then I want you in my heart to be my Lord and Savior.

I didn't hear sirens go off. There were no bells or whistles. I had no experience, nothing that I could say.

And nothing experiential. But the next morning I woke up. I sat on the edge of my bed.

And I wrote a song. I'll play it for you one day. It's called Who Can Stand Against Me.

And I knew I was a different man. There had been a change. I had been brought into a living relationship with God.

It's been over 30 years now. It never gets stale. It never gets old.

It never passes away. I'm never left with the thought that I wish this could last forever because I know this will last forever. It's an amazing thing to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

If you don't know him tonight, all you have to do is admit that you're a sinner. That means you've sinned against the law of God. You've done things and lived in a way that isn't right.

You simply have to have the humility to admit it. And then understand that God didn't want to lose you. So he became a man, went to a cross, and paid the price for what you deserve and I deserve.

You deserve on that day to be cast out of God's sight for all of eternity. I deserved it. But God put the penalty of that on his son.

An innocent man went to the death chamber, as it is, for a guilty one. Somebody took your place. And he says, what I require of you is that you believe that I died for you.

You open your heart and receive the forgiveness I offer you and begin to walk with me. Is it that simple, pastor? It is that simple. That's where I begin and that's where you will begin if you have an honest heart tonight.

The songs you sing or you heard sung tonight, the testimonies you heard, can be just an intimate moment in the house of God that perhaps will pass for some forever. And it will be just a fading memory 100,000 years from now being in a place where God is not. A longing that, oh, what I could have had, and I let it pass through my fingers.

You can afford to lose a lot of things in this life, but you cannot afford to lose a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If tonight you can say, pastor, you have just spoken into my life, I am a sinner. I need a savior.

I'm going to ask you unashamedly. Would you just raise your hand all over? Go ahead and do it. God bless you and you and you and you all over in the balcony.

Just raise your hand as the choir comes. Well, the choir is already here as your orchestra comes back and we begin to sing. If we could all stand and I'm going to ask those who raised their hands, would you step out of your seat and those who want to follow them and just come meet me here? We're going to pray a prayer together.

And tonight you're going to leave here forgiven something in your hand that you will not lose for all of eternity. Let's stand together. And would you slip out of your seat, balcony, main sanctuary, follow these that are coming.

Make your way here and we're going to pray together. Bible says that the angels in heaven are waiting to rejoice over one sinner that repents. Praise God.

There's going to be a party around the throne of God tonight. Annex, we'll wait for you. You make your way over here from the education.

And I will wait for you. Look at these young people coming. Young men.

God bless you. Praise God. Sir, God bless you.

You'll never, ever make a greater decision than this one tonight. Why don't you follow these that are coming? People who are here tonight, you're living without God. Come.

Let Jesus Christ forgive you and change your life. Just follow these that have already come. Make your way to this altar.

We will pray together very, very shortly. The greatest decision you'll ever make in your entire life tonight. And I know a lot of you don't feel good maybe about the way you've been living.

You don't feel good about even being in God's presence. But you need to understand something tonight. That God has wanted you more than you've wanted him.

He's kept the earth as it is. He's not dissolved everything and created a new heavens and new earth yet because he's been waiting for you. For you.

He wanted you. He knew you. The scripture says.

Before you were formed in your mother's room, he knew you. He knew your name. He knew you'd be here tonight.

And he's been waiting for you. When God became a man and died on a cross, it was heaven's initiative, not yours. God came and made a way back to him available to you.

And he wants to forgive you. So many people come to God and they feel like. Well, it's almost like God begrudgingly will forgive me if I kind of do what I'm told to do.

But no, it's not that way at all. God wants to forgive you. All that was needed was you to agree with him.

No matter what you've done, he took it on himself. No matter what kind of a lifestyle you've lived or how many people you've hurt or how you've been hurt. Whatever has happened in your life, he took it all on the cross.

And says, I'm willing to forgive it, all of it. And I'll prove myself to you. Because the same spirit that raised me from the dead, Jesus says, will come.

The Holy Spirit will come and raise you into a newness of life. You'll become another person. The Lord will prove himself to you.

Praise be to God. I'm going to lead you in a prayer. It's not a formula.

There's nothing about this prayer other than just to help you to understand how to come through to God. If you mean this in your heart, the Bible says if you believe that Jesus came. If you believe he died for your sins.

If you believe he was raised from the dead to prove to you that you can trust God. If you receive this offer of forgiveness, you will be saved. With the heart you will believe and with your mouth you will confess.

And God will receive you. Now you may not understand it all, but I'm going to just lead you in a simple prayer. And it will be the beginning of a new life.

Do you believe that tonight? You have to believe that. Let's pray together. For these.

And we can pray with these that have come. Lord Jesus. I am a sinner.

I have lived in a way. That is not good. And I don't deserve.

Eternal life with you. But tonight. I understand.

That you love me. So much. That you would go to a cross.

Allow yourself. To be beaten and rejected. And suffer the punishment.

That I deserve. For how I have lived. God, how could you love me like this? I don't yet understand it.

But you will show it to me. You will make it known. To the depths of my heart.

Help me to reach out. And to respond to your love. And not to draw back from you.

Help me. I open my heart to you, Jesus. I invite you to come in.

To my life. As my Lord. And my Savior.

I receive. Your offer of forgiveness. I receive.

Your offer of a new life. And I believe. That this very moment.

You have heard my heart. You know I'm sincere. My sins are forgiven.

And when I die. I'm going to live with you. In heaven.

For all of eternity. I will never lose this. Because you have promised.

That as I'm sincere. In my commitment to you. You will not cast me away.

Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you. Thank you for loving me.

And receiving me. In your precious name. Amen.

Praise God. I'm with you. Praise God.

I'm with you all the time. All the way. Listen.

For those who have prayed that. And you don't know where to go from here. There are people downstairs in the lower lobby.

That will give you a copy of part of the New Testament. You can read it for yourself. They'll pray with you.

If you need prayer. They'll tell you how to get plugged in. To a church somewhere.

If you're not from this area. They might be able to recommend somewhere. You can fellowship or what kind of a church to look for.

Where you can be safe. and grow in knowledge. And so that's available to you.

But the Bible says tonight that heaven is rejoicing over you. There's a party in heaven over you tonight, that heaven is rejoicing. Heaven is rejoicing over you tonight.

There's clapping, there's shouting around about the throne of God. Folks, can we join them for just a moment and give God thanks for these? Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Bless God.

Let's sing a song. Let's give God glory tonight. We've got to give God glory.

What a wonderful night this has been. Praise God. Give God a shout of glory in this house tonight.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Don't you ever give up on God because he'll never give up on you. Don't you ever give up.

Don't you ever turn away. Don't you ever walk away and say, God has forsaken me. What you're experiencing tonight is forever.

It's forever. Don't let anybody rob you of it. It's forever.

Praise God. One more time for these ones. Give God a shout of glory.

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