

Intimacy With God

by Charles Stanley

Intimacy with God is a closeness of relationship, a depth of relationship, a confidentiality, a personal relationship, a relationship of genuine love toward God, and it requires us to be willing to go through difficulty and suffering to develop it.

Duration: 55:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 17:4-7, Matthew 17:9, John 14:9, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Intimacy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of developing an intimate relationship with God. He explains that as we depend on God and seek Him, we will begin to see Him in new ways and experience a deeper connection with Him. The preacher highlights Proverbs 4:18, which compares the path of the righteous to the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter. This signifies that as we walk in God's path, our understanding of Him and His ways will increase. The preacher also mentions that knowing God goes beyond listening to sermons and involves actively engaging with His Word and allowing Him to work in our lives.

Transcript

When anyone mentions the word intimacy, usually what we think about is a relationship between two people. Usually, if it is in the commercial, it oftentimes has sexual connotations. But there is an intimacy that is far, far beyond simply that relationship between two people, and that is an intimacy with God.

And that is the title of this message, Intimacy with God. And I want you to turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 17, and I want us to read these first nine verses. Now, you may read this and wonder, well, where do you get intimacy with God from this? So I want us to turn and look at that, if you will, and then we'll find out in just a moment.

This is the event of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and he begins by saying, And six days later Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him.

And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, behold, a

bright cloud overshadowed them.

And behold, a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid.

And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Arise and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.

Now Jesus, you'll recall, had twelve apostles, or twelve disciples as we call them, and yet three of these he treated a little different than he did the others. They were sort of called the inner circle. There was an intimacy, I believe, between Jesus and Peter, James, and John that is not to be found with all the other disciples, though he loved them all, I'm sure, taught them many, many things, but there's something about these three.

If you'll notice here in this 17th chapter of Matthew, that of all of his twelve disciples, he only took three of them, Peter, James, and John, to what I believe was probably the highlight of Jesus' life in these three years of ministry. Now, of course, the baptism was a very important time for him because the Father also manifested himself. Many of the things that he did were very important, but if you'll notice here that Jesus is speaking with Moses and Elijah transfigured in his physical body with a touch of the glory he had before he came and after he ascended.

This is a highlight in Jesus' life. He only took the inner circle, Peter, James, and John. Go back, if you will, to Matthew chapter 26.

In Matthew chapter 26 is the most traumatic moment in Jesus' life until he is hanging on the cross, and notice what's going on. Verse 36, then Jesus came with them to the place called Gethsemane and said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray. Now, he's got them all there except Judas.

And he took with him, a little distant further, he took with him not all the eleven, but he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, that's James and John, and began to be grieved and distressed. And he said to them so that those three could hear him, my soul is deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and keep watch with me.

Now, when we talk about intimacy, what are we talking about? We're talking about a closeness of relationship, a depth of relationship, a confidentiality, a personal relationship, a relationship of genuine love toward the others. And so usually when we talk about intimacy, we're talking about people's relationship with each other. And there are many, many books out on intimacy, and I think 99.9 if not 100% of them are about relationships between individuals.

I want us to talk about what I know must be in the mind of God the most important thing about his relationship with us and ours with him, that God is not satisfied with simply fellowship. God desires intimacy, closeness, and depth that is so deep and so close, fellowship doesn't even come close to it. Now, I want us to see several things, not necessarily from this passage, but I'm coming back to this passage and look at it more thoroughly, but I want us to look at several things here about this whole idea of intimacy with God.

First of all, and that is intimacy with God is the priority in his creation process. That intimacy with God is the priority in his creation process. Look, for example, for a moment at the importance of it as far as the

reason or the purpose of the creation.

Why did God create us? He created us, first of all, to love us and to be loved by us. He created us in order to be glorified by the lives that we live that would point to him. And thirdly, he created us to rule over, exercise rule over his creation according to Genesis chapter one, verse 26.

So those are his three primary purposes. And therefore, when you think about it, if he created us to love him and to be loved in return, he has intimacy in mind. He didn't create us like angels.

The second thing I want you to notice about the creation is the pattern he used in that 26 verse of the first chapter of Genesis. If you'll notice what he says, he says, let us make man in our image according to our likeness. Now, he could have created us like angels, but he didn't.

He created us as unique human beings. And what did he do when he said, let us create man in our own image? He was not talking about anything physical because God is spirit. So he's talking about the image of God as he is as person.

That is, he has intellect. He can think and reason. He has emotion.

He can feel he has a will to make choices. God created you and me in order that we may be able to relate to God as he is. We can think as he thinks, not as full as he can think.

We can feel something of what he feels and that we can reason and make decisions. We have a will by which to make decisions. So on the basis of that, if you look at the creation itself, God had an intimate relationship in mind when he created us, his purpose for creation, loving, glorifying, and ruling the man in which he created us after his own likeness.

That is the pattern of the creation so that you and I are so made. We have the capacity to have a closeness, a depth, a relationship, a love relationship, a personal relationship with another person who is God himself. That is intimacy, genuine, true, lasting intimacy.

And remember this, that God begins this creation process of intimacy within us because for him it is an eternal process. You and I were not made for time. Most of us, I'm afraid, live as if time is the issue.

In God's eyes, time is not the issue. Eternity is the issue. And therefore he created us to have an intimate relationship with him, not for time, but for time and eternity.

God is up to something good, big, wonderful in the life of his children. So we say, first of all, the priority of intimacy is very evident in the whole creation process. The second thing I want you to notice here is this, and that is that God's purpose in pursuing this intimate relationship with us, that is why would God want to have an intimate relationship with us? Why would he want to be so close to us? Why would he want to have a depth of relationship? Why would he not just want to create us and send us out like he does angels to do his work? Because that wasn't his purpose for creating us to begin with.

And so what is his purpose for pursuing the relationship? Now, let me say this about this whole idea of his purpose here, because sometimes we do forget this, and that is that he takes the initiative. We don't take the initiative, he does. And you say, well, don't we talk about building a relationship with God? That's true, but he takes the initiative.

For example, he says, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that seeks after God. Nobody has ever found God as a result of their seeking him.

You and I discover, as we say, God as a result of responding to God, reaching down to us. He's the one who must reveal himself to us. And all through the scriptures, for example, especially in, especially, shall we say, in the gospel of John, especially in this gospel, do we see Jesus making statements that let us know that only as God reaches out to us.

For example, he says, only those whom the father grants me can come to me. He says, no, no one can come to the father except by me. And he says, no one can come except they'd be drawn by the spirit.

There's no such thing as anybody getting saved anytime they want to. Nobody can just find God anytime they choose. You only find God and discover God as God reveals himself.

And as he reveals himself, then we discover what he's like. God takes the initiative in the whole issue of discovering him, finding him, or the whole issue here, we're talking about intimacy. For example, turn to Jeremiah 31.

In Jeremiah 31, just this third verse, I want you to notice here what he says. He says in the third verse, he says, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, I have drawn you with loving kindness.

God is the one who draws us and he draws us with loving kindness. Think about, for example, in the scriptures, how many times that all through the Bible, God is taking the initiative. For example, in the garden of Eden, who took the initiative? God comes looking for Adam.

In the life of Noah, it was God who took the initiative to save him and to preserve him from the flood. It was God who took the initiative in the midst of a pagan society to reveal himself to Abraham. It was God who took the initiative in the life of Moses when he was there in the wilderness and he suddenly saw this burning bush.

Whose bush was it? Who set it afire? Who did the speaking? It was all God's initiative. All the way through the Old Testament, God is taking the initiative. God is revealing himself.

God is unveiling himself in the experiences that people face in their life. For example, in the New Testament, let's just take one, Saul of Tarsus, who believed in Jehovah God but was absolutely deceived by what he thought on his way to Damascus to eradicate Christianity from the face of the earth. And what happens? The Bible says that God took the initiative and struck him down and as a result began to speak to him and he said, why do you kick against the pricks? It was God who took the initiative to save Saul of Tarsus and make him a statesman for Christianity and a missionary.

God is taking the initiative. Every single thing you and I know about him is the result of God teaching us. Everything about our relationship is the result of him taking the initiative.

It is all God and none of us. So we are responders to the initiative of God. Therefore, nobody can take any credit for what they know about God and no one can take any credit about finding God.

When somebody says, I found the Lord. No, what you did is God who knew you began to work in your life and unveiled himself to you and you discovered who he was as a result of his initiative. No way that you and I can take any credit for being saved by the grace of God.

It's all him. It is all of God. And so it is with this whole idea of intimacy.

What would we know about intimacy with God? How could you and I build a relationship with God? We can't build it. We can only respond to what he is doing now. So we asked the question, what is his purpose for doing so? Why does he take the initiative? What's he got in mind? Well, let me just say this, but for most of my life, I have always believed that God in his relationship with us and in this whole idea of this closeness and depth of intimacy and relationship, that God's purpose for doing so was for my benefit, that God wanted us to build a relationship with him, an intimate relationship with him and he with us for our benefit.

But the truth is that that isn't the truth. God's priority and that's part of it. But the priority of his purpose is that God wants us to know him.

He wants to reveal himself. God is saying, look, look, behold, look what I'm like. For example, if you love somebody, genuinely love them, you want them to know you and you want to know them.

And if you and I are excited about something, we want to tell somebody, we want to share it with someone. But we have forgotten in our self-centered, selfish, sort of a me, myself and I kind of Christianity and everything revolves around us. We've forgotten who the star is.

We've forgotten who the center of attention is. We've forgotten what it's all about. The world does not revolve around us.

It revolves around God. And the problem with most Christians is we go to church. We want to hear sermons that will help us, encourage us, protect us, inspire us, motivate us, us, us, us, us, us, us.

Well, you think according to that, that Austin's, we are the center of the universe. When the truth is, listen, when the truth is God is the center and everything in life, listen, God is the center. And in your life and my life, everything should center in him.

So listen, his purpose is to make himself known. He wants us to know what he's like. Now you hear us talking a lot oftentimes about knowing God.

Well, the only way to know him is, is by experience. You know, I can have a lot of head knowledge, but if I don't have experience knowledge, if it isn't working inside of me, I don't really have it. I don't really know it.

I may know what somebody told me and intellectually, I may be able to give it back, but it isn't mine until I experience it until God is working it in my daily experience in my life. His motivation is that he wants us to know it. He wants us to know that he's a person, not a thing.

Many people act like God is some force, some thing, something out there. And you hear people talk about the Holy Spirit. It, uh, the Holy Spirit is it.

The Holy Spirit is not an it. The Holy Spirit, God, God, the father, God, the son, God, the Holy Spirit is a person. You see, God is a person.

He wants to be known as a person. He gave us intellect. He gave us emotion.

He gave us will to be able to relate to him on an intimate, personal basis. And think about this. Most people are saved.

And when they're saved, they sort of have the idea. Now that you say, here's what you do. You go to church, read your Bible, pray, give and so forth.

And therefore it's almost like now that I'm in the door and I'm saved, I do the following things to keep God pleased and keep him off my back. I'll read my Bible. I pray.

I try to be as good as I can. And so one of these days I'm going to die and go to heaven. That is totally removed from what God had in mind.

His very purpose for saving us was what intimacy, a relationship. Why did he create us loving us and to be loved by us and to be glorified by us and to rule over this world, which he created. Everything about God is good.

Everything about God is wonderful and great. We're the ones who've messed it up. And so his desire is that we know him.

And so therefore he desires to reveal himself. And in intimacy, he is continually revealing himself. Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father.

And he, listen, he wanted, he desired that they understand who he is. He said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. I'm going to do those things.

I see the father doing. So what you see me doing is you understand what he's like. And so continually he was pointing them to him and revealing as much as possible that they could understand.

And so when he had to leave them, he said some other things I'd like to tell you, but you can't hear them now, but I'm going to send the Holy spirit. He's going to keep on teaching as long as you live. He's going to be on the inside of you, revealing to you things about the father that I can't tell you now.

So what does he want us to know? He reveals his attributes of love and mercy and kindness and goodness and graciousness and justice and judgment. That is there are multitudes of attributes of God. Now, how am I going? How is God going to reveal himself to us? The only way for him to reveal himself to us, for us to truly understand is not just reading the Bible.

Now, this is always the foundation. And let me say this. God isn't going to reveal to you anything about himself that is not confirmed in this book.

And I don't mean by confirmed, finding yourself a scripture and twisted it around to make it and to make it mean what you want it to mean. No, I mean a viable passage of scripture that says, this is what God is like. So the attributes he wants us to know what he's like.

He wants us to know his ways, how he operates. I'm simply saying that the only way to develop intimacy with God is to experience him by allowing him to unveil himself to us in the experiences of life, which means what it means that I must be willing to go through difficulty, hardship, pain, suffering, joy, happiness, peace, you name it. Why? Because there's some things I am only going to learn about God by hurting and suffering.

He says, you know, suffering is a part of the Christian life. And when I hear people say, well, if you're living for Jesus, you're being obedient to God and you're doing what's right. You're going to live in peace and everything is going to be fantastic.

You're going to have all the money you want. Well, you know what? I can't find a singer. I can't even find two or three words in the Bible that you could put together to make that true, because that's not what the Christian life's all about.

You see, the Christian life is not all about me feeling good and having everything to fit my pattern and everything to satisfy me. The Christian life is about God, the almighty sovereign of this universe, loving you and me so much that he's willing to unveil himself to us and to reach out to us and to build an intimate relationship with you and me so that all that he is, you and I can discover and know as he unveils himself to us through the Holy Spirit. God is excited about the truth of himself.

He wants us to know him and Jesus life was the life of unveiling who the father was and all these experiences in the old testament of these characters. Every time you see God working in the life of one of those men, you know what he's doing? He is unveiling the reality of himself. That's why when people say, well, I really want to know God.

Well, I want to tell you how to know it. You don't know him simply by listening to sermons, sermons, messages, maybe stimuli. They may be words of instruction that give direction, but you and I will never develop an intimate relationship with him until we're willing to take the truth, apply it to our heart and allow God to send us into the valley oftentimes to hurt, suffer pain on the mountain peaks with joy and peace and happiness and allow him to say to us, this is what I'm like.

For example, how will I know what God is like as a comforter until I hurt? How will I know what God is like as a healer until I'm sick? How will I know what God is like as one who accepts me until I feel rejection so that the experience of growing in my intimacy, a part of that is growing in life and suffering and going through the pain and heartaches of life. That's how we know who he is. And listen, somebody can tell you, you can memorize it until you can hand it back.

It is not yours and mine until we walk through the fire and the pain and the suffering and the hurt. Then we can speak with authority and say, let me tell you who God is in the light of what he says. This is who he is.

And so he wants to unveil himself. He wants to show us. So that's one of his primary purposes.

A second one is this, and that is in order to accomplish his work. So as you and I are growing in our intimacy with him and we're beginning to understand what he's like and he keeps unveiling and you see, he wants to reveal himself. He said in John there, the 15th, 14th, 15th, 16th chapters, he said, he said, those who love me and obey me, he says, the father and I, we will reveal ourselves to them so that God wants us to understand as fully as possible what he's like.

Now, if you've been a Christian a long time, you've learned a lot of things over these years and you would ever want to go back where you were 40 years ago and your little knowledge and understanding of God, what has God done? If you've been in the word and you've listened and you've studied and you've prayed and you've allowed God to work these things into your life, look how you've grown over the years. You have a greater understanding of who God is today than ever before in your life. But think about all the people who go to church week after week, or who've been saved and backslidden, don't go to church at all, how little they know about God.

And you hear them making statements that are totally erroneous, totally unbiblical. They're as sincere as they can be. The problem is they just don't know who God is.

And they'll talk about, well, God this and God that and God the other. And the truth is they're absolutely totally out in left field, over the fence, have no earthly idea what God is like. Why? Because they've never taken any time to understand what he's like.

He wants us to know him. Now, the better you and I know him, what happens? The more fruitful we are in our life, the more productive we are in our life. And you see, the more intimacy we have with him, the more we understand his plan, his will, his purpose.

And so the more intimate we are with him, the more we understand him, the more we're going to be walking in his will, walking in his way, doing things God's way, waiting upon him, trusting him, being patient and relying upon him. The less I know about him, listen, the less I know about him, the more of self will dominate our life. We'll do it our way.

We'll do it the world's way. We'll be impatient, you name it. Because that's natural carnal flesh in operation.

But as the spirit of God is working within us and he's unveiling himself and we're seeing his ways and seeing what he does, then we become more productive, more fruitful in our life. And God is doing what? What's his original purpose? Loving us, glorifying himself and accomplishing his work, ruling. And so he gets it done.

The most productive people, I mean, real genuine fruit are those who have a continually growing intimate relationship with God through his son, Jesus Christ. Now, so the next question that we have to ask is this, what's the sequence of events by which God does build this relationship with us? Well, I think there are four simple things. Number one, he chooses us.

He says in Ephesians, we've been chosen. For example, Jesus said his apostles, he said, you didn't choose me, I chose you. And notice he also said to them, he said, I'm not calling his servants.

I'm calling your friends. If you go through the gospels, it'd be amazing how many things Jesus said that says intimacy, intimacy, intimacy, intimacy. He wants this relationship to be more than just apostles, disciples, followers.

What? He says, I'm calling you my friends, Peter, James, and John. He took into the innermost being of his heart. You realize that in the gospel of John, three times when John, the beloved, who is the writer of the gospel is referring to himself, you know how he refers to himself, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Now he was probably the youngest one. Imagine that he says the disciple whom Jesus loved three times. He says the disciple whom Jesus loved.

What is John saying to us? He's saying to us, Jesus and I had such a relationship. When I think about my relationship to him, I can only think he, he loved me. He loved me.

The only way for me to describe my relationship is I'm the disciple whom he loved. Now, was he implying he was the only one? No, but he's simply saying this. I had such an intimate relationship with him.

If you want to know what I think about it, he just loved me. Does not God desire that all of us feel that kind of love? I'm a man whom God loves. You're a woman whom God loves.

We are his children whom he loves. So what's the sequence of events? He chooses us. That's number one.

Secondly, he reveals himself to us by his love. What does he do? He points us to the cross. He says, you're living in sin.

Your life is in ruin. You're rebelling against God. You're going to destroy yourself.

Let me tell you how much I love you in your sin. Let me tell you what I'm willing to do for you in your rebellion. Let me show you what I want to do for you and in you and through you.

I want you to look at the cross and I want you to see what my son, Jesus, the Christ did in your behalf. He died. And so what does he do? He reveals himself, his love to us.

Then the third thing he does. That is, he responds to our invitation for him to come into our life, which he himself motivates. And so we invite the Lord Jesus Christ into our life as our personal savior.

And he comes in to take a boat. The Bible says he did. Jesus said, I'm abiding in you and you're abiding in me as the branch abides in the vine, lives in the vine, lives off the vine.

What a beautiful way in nature to describe that intimate relationship grafted into the vine and now taking root, the vine and the branch become one. He says, I'm abiding in you and you're abiding in me as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except to abide in me. No more can you accept you abide in me.

And so now we have invited him to our life. And what does he do? He begins immediately, immediately to unveil himself to us, reveal himself to us, to build that intimate relationship. I think about when I was 12 years of age and gave my life to Christ.

When he convicted me of my sin, I walked down that aisle, only walked two, two pews because that's as far as I'd sit. I always sat on the second pew on the end. I walked out, knelt down and the Lord Jesus Christ saved me.

I knew almost nothing except I would read the Bible. I had my mom's old big Bible with big black print in the back that had all the headings of all the subjects I want to read. So when I, when I was saved, I knew very little, but I didn't know this, that God wanted to do something in my life.

I didn't have any idea what it was. I knew that he saved me, but then what? But you know what, as I began to read the scriptures and begin to pray and prayed out of a lot of ignorance, I'm sure, and read a lot of scripture and didn't know, didn't have any idea what it meant, but you know what was happening? God knew my heart just like he knows your heart. And so what did he started doing? He started working in my life.

And as I think back what he was doing, primarily, he was just sort of gearing my mind and my heart to him. And as I think back over the years and realize how he worked in my life in difficulties and hardships and all kinds of bad situations in which I grew up, what was God doing? What he was doing unbeknown to me was building an intimacy with him by taking me through hardships and difficulties and situations when I was absolutely, totally helpless to dependent upon him. Now, I didn't even have any idea what was happening, but I can look back and see that God builds intimacy in our lives through those experiences.

Now, so we say, what's the sequence of events? Well, for those of us who believe us, he's already done this part. He's chosen us. Secondly, he has revealed his love for us at the cross.

And then he's come into our life as our savior, Lord, and our master in our life. And he has begun to build this intimacy. Now, here's the tragedy.

The tragedy is most people don't have any earthly idea that there's any such thing as an intimate relationship with God. Oh, they know that they've been taught that God is in heaven and we're down here and we pray to him when we get in trouble, we have needs. Some had, they've never connected the point because they've not been taught that he is not satisfied unless there's an ever growing, continually growing intimacy.

So there are degrees of intimacy. We're all degrees. Now, if I don't know that that's what God wants, and I think the only thing God wants is for me to be good and to me to do what he says do and for me to live up to rules and regulations, I'm going to miss the whole point of being saved.

God in all of his wonderful, almost inexpressible love as far as human minds can conceive of it. What he desires is to say, I want to show you what I'm like. I want to show you what I am like.

And when you see what I'm like, you're going to love me and obey me and worship me and adore me. And you're going to choose me. And I'm going to be the priority of your life when you see what I'm like.

And when you and I see what he's like, nobody's going to have to beg us to worship, beg us to read the Bible, beg us to pray, beg us to give, beg us to share our faith. Listen, we're going to be so excited about him. We just got to talk about him.

We just got to get into where we want to know what he's like, the secrets of events. And he's already working those in our lives. Now, the next thing I want you to look at here is this.

I want us to go back to this 17th chapter. I haven't forgotten it. 17th chapter.

And simply to say that intimacy with God involves a depth of relationship. Now, what I want to do is I want to give you 15 characteristics of a relationship. Now, no, I'm not going to explain them all because if I do, we'll be here for a while.

And so, but I do want you to jot them down. I want you to jot them down because these are characteristics of a genuine, intimate relationship, not just that you can have all kinds of relationships, distant relationships, sort of close relationships, all kinds of relationships, bad relationships. We're talking about this closeness, this depth, this intimacy, this personal, this warm, this indescribable, genuine love each for the other.

Well, if we had time, we could take these 15, go through much of what's in the 17th chapter, other chapters of the scripture and say, look how Jesus was showing this intimacy here. But I want to give them to you and maybe just comment on a few things here just to give you a little idea. But number one, we're talking about a growing, intimate relationship with God.

One of the first requirements is time. If you'll think about it with whom did Jesus spend most of his three years, not with the multitudes, not with the crowds, but with 12 men, he gave them his time primarily because no matter what he was doing in the daytime, you think about in three years, he spent his nights

with them. They must have set up late and talked, got up early.

He got up early and prayed. And so he spent time with them. Secondly, sharing that's absolutely essential to build a relationship.

And so what happens? God, let me ask you a question. Have you ever been to God and prayer? And he said, sorry, I'm too busy. Never.

God has all the time I need for me and my relationship with him. He has all the time he needs to build his relationship with us. The problem is sometimes we're too busy.

So time is sharing. God wants us to share with him in our prayers. He wants to share with us.

He wants to speak to us through his word primarily, but also in our praying. So sharing. Thirdly, respect.

You realize that God respects you as an individual. He respects your freewill. He doesn't force intimacy upon us.

And one of the characteristics of intimacy is respect. And he builds that into us. Number four, listening.

He's always willing to listen. Now he says, if I regard sin in my heart, if I just absolutely totally rebel against him, choose deliberate, willful disobedience to him. He said, you know, my hand's not shortened that it cannot save my ear.

It's not deaf that it cannot hear except for the sin. But he's a listener. Jesus was a listener to these men.

Then attention. I don't ever have to worry about getting God's attention. He has to work at getting mine sometime and yours sometime.

That's what intimacy is all about. Giving attention in Jesus with these apostles, always giving them his attention, his time, his sharing, his listening, his respect, his attention. And number six, his acceptance.

He accepted Judas, who was going to betray him. He accepted Thomas, who doubted him. Peter, who was always trying to take control of the whole 12.

He was always an accepting one. Now, you know, God accepts you and me just the way we are. But you know what happens to us sometimes? We don't accept him the way he is.

We want to either shape him into our mold or get him to conform to something that we have in mind or make an adjustment in his plan, his purpose to fit ours. You see, he accepts us just the way we are and he wants us to accept him and wisely conform our life into to meet his purposes and his plans for us. Well, there's another.

When I think about what intimacy is all about, listen to this. Intimacy is always about openness, transparency. And I think this is beautifully demonstrated here in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When he said, now think about this, he'd already said to him, if you've seen me, you've seen the omnipotent sovereign of this universe having all power. They had seen him in all kinds of circumstances and situations. And now in the Garden of Gethsemane, here is Jesus being as open as a man can be.

He says to those three, he says, oh, he says, I just think I'm going to die having to face what I'm facing. He says, my heart is grieved even unto death. Now, listen, it's one thing for a man or a woman to say that, but listen, when God clothed in human flesh says to his three friends, I think I'm going to die facing the cross, facing separation from my father, facing becoming the sin image of the whole world.

That's real openness. Sure. I said, I'm equal to the father.

Sure. I said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father, but right now, Oh, you know, we come to God. Oh God, our heavenly father.

And we try to fake him out. Listen, you know how God wants us to come to him. God, I'm a mess.

I made myself a mess. You ought to just throw me out. God, I am a horrible mess.

You know what he says? I've been knowing that since four years born that's genuine acceptance, but he wants us to be transparent and open. You see, that's the only way we can build a relationship. I mean, listen, I see people all the time who, who carry this fakey kind of self-sufficient egotistical prideful, arrogant attitude.

They're not about to open up to God. If they opened up to the God who knows everything, you know, just think how stupid this is. No, I'm not going to talk about that.

You know, I just don't want to deal with God about that. He already knows it all. It's not that God is waiting to build an intimacy with us.

He desires to, but when I shut him out and won't be absolutely open and transparent with him, and you see, we can deceive ourselves. And even in prayer, we can just say, well, I'm not going to handle that. I'm going to deal with that.

And what we're doing is we refuse to be open, transparent. God absolutely right. You're absolutely correct.

Yes, God. Yes, I did exactly that. Well, he already knows it, but if I'm going to, if I'm going to have an intimate relationship with him, then I've got to just be transparent.

Just tell it, tell it to him like it is. When I think about openness, it's extremely important. Listen, you won't grow in your relationship to Jesus Christ any further than you are willing to be open in your spirit to him.

Next word must move on. Truthfulness. One thing you don't have to worry about.

He's always going to be truthful. Now, sometime we can lie to ourselves and deceive ourselves, but he won't. And when we do, we just hinder our growth with him.

The next word number nine is giving. There's no way in the world for us to be developing and growing in our intimate relationship with him without a giving spirit. Now just imagine this, somebody coming to church and refusing to give God anything and talk about their relationship to God.

I can tell you what it's like. It's a mess. That's what it's like, because listen, the initiator of an intimate relationship is doing what he is continuous.

Listen, do you realize that every single solitary second of your life, that God is pouring life into you? He's pouring life into you every single second. And the idea that I want to say, yes, you know, I just can't afford,

can't give this, that and the other. There is no way.

And the reason so many people are barren in their Christian walk and don't sense the presence of God and don't feel this sense of intimacy is because they blocking it out, refusing to give, refusing to be open, refusing to share, refusing to accept God as he is. They want to make him something he is not. All right.

Number 10, forgiveness. There's no such thing as an intimate relationship with someone who can't forgive. And the wonderful thing about God is he is continually forgiving us.

The blood of Jesus Christ, his son is continually cleansing us from all sin. And you see, we try to fit him into a mold that we say, well, I know God forgives some things, but no, God has already placed on the Lord Jesus Christ, every single solitary sin that can ever be committed, has ever been committed, will ever be committed. And he bore the penalty of it all.

That's why he was saying, I don't think I can handle this because our sinfulness, our wickedness separated him from the father, which is something that had never happened in eternity past. That's what hell was to him. And that's what hell is ultimately an eternal separation from God, the father.

And listen, once I understand what intimacy is and God's view of intimacy, then I began to understand why to God, the son, Jesus, hell was separation from him because that's all he'd ever known was oneness with the father. He made us to be one with him and to be eternally separated from him when he made us to live eternally with him is hell itself. That's how much he loves us.

Listen, the next word is trust. You cannot have an intimate relationship with somebody you don't trust. Now, most of us have probably grew up having been taught things that ultimately caused us not to trust God.

I'm sure I did. You said, well, anybody should trust him. Well, that's true.

But I could ask you if you probably do certain things in your life, you say, well, no, why not? Well, the truth is because you don't trust him. When somebody, when somebody says to me, well, sure, I trust God. Well, let's have the time.

Well, that hasn't got anything to do with it. It's got everything to do with it because God says I'm the time and my refusal to do so. It doesn't make any difference what anybody tells me.

You can lay it on the line at this point. The only reason a person will not give to God is because they don't trust him to do what he says, which is that he can take nine tenths and go much further with nine than I can go with 10. Now, if the bank has said to you, you give me every time you give me \$1 out of your 10, I'll give you two back.

How many of you'd line up at the bank? Every single one of you. If somebody says, as long as you'll give me one, I'll give you two back. You keep nine, give me one.

I'll give you two back. Let me ask you a question. What limits almighty sovereign God? Only one thing, my lack of trust in him.

You say, what about sin? Well, my sin is a lack of trust. If I trust him, I'm not going to do it in my own power, doing it my own way and disobeying me, I'm going to trust him. And so as you look at how he worked in the life of these disciples, they were learning to trust him.

You see, now remember this, when he called them as fishermen, he was an itinerant preacher from Nazareth. He had to teach them. They had to see, he had to unveil.

He had to reveal that he was God. Can you imagine what Peter must've thought the first time he said, you've seen me, you've seen the father. Now, wait a minute, hold it.

Now we know you're the Messiah. You see, all of that was this cut and dried as we think it is because we don't have all the details of what they thought. If I think I'm going to build an intimate relationship with God until I learned to trust him, it's not going to happen.

He is not going to be able to build that intimacy within me until I am willing to trust him. That's why reading the scripture is so important because here is probably the best way for me to learn to trust him is to get in the word and find out what he says. And then understanding that watch him work it in my life.

And listen, not only watching him work it, but then give him the credit for doing it. Next word is understanding. He certainly understands us perfectly.

We don't always understand his ways, but here's the wonderful thing about being a Christian and walking in the spirit. Here's what happens. As God works in your life and my life, what does he do in the experiences that we go through? He does what he gives us understanding.

Now in the beginning of this experience over here, I may think, God, I'm walking in the dark. Well, I don't know. I can't handle this.

I don't know where I'm going next. I may fall off a cliff. I don't know what to do next.

The longer we walk in obedience to him, you know what happens? It's like the scripture says, I want to give you this scripture. It's a wonderful text. He says in verse 18 of Proverbs chapter four, look at this, but the path I want you to find it.

Proverbs four chapter four verse 18, but the path of the righteous. Now watch this. It's I love this.

It's like the light of dawn. Now dawn is when the light just begins the way he says the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn that shines what brighter and brighter until the full day until noon. He says, when you and I are walking in his path, when we are following him, what happens? He says in that nighttime, I can't see my way clear, but at dawn I begin to see.

And then what happens? The brighter the sun, the clearer things become as you and I develop in our intimate relationship with him. You know what happens? The day gets brighter. I mean, the scene gets brighter.

The way gets brighter. The path becomes we begin. Listen, we began to understand God in his ways.

All right. Number 13 approval. One thing he says is that, that we have his approval.

Sometimes I don't think God has my approval. How many of you ever gotten mad at God when things sometimes haven't always gone the way I want them? I mean, it had to be something pretty bad, but I mean, uh, a good is what I thought it didn't go my way. Sometimes I've had to say, well, Lord, I just forget it.

Now I'm sure he doesn't get upset. He doesn't strike me dead. He just knows I'm trying to have my way and I'm having a little pity party down here because he's not giving me my way.

Well, you know what? We have his approval. Anyway, you see, God is the reactor. Listen, he's not a reactor.

He's got, he's got, I didn't expect you to do that. I'm surprised you disappoint me. No, because since he's already seen it all, he isn't disappointed, isn't surprised.

And he doesn't get upset. The reason you and I have his approval is because of his son. His blood bought my approval and yours.

Now he approves of us. He doesn't always approve of all my actions and my conduct and my conversations, but he approves of me as a person, just like he does. Your next word is comfort.

That is, you see, if there's going to be an intimacy, a relationship, that's going to be comfort. Let me ask you a question. How will I ever experience the comfort of God? Just one way need it.

That's the only way need it, which means I'm going to have to hurt. I'm going to have to be grieved. I'm going to have to be sorrowful.

And you see two people have an intimate relationship, a comforters to each other. And he says, listen, he says, I'm so interested in your comfort. Here's what I'm going to do.

I'm going to sit. When I leave, I'm going to send you a person of the Holy spirit, and he's going to be with you and you and upon you. And I'm going to call him the para clay toss the comforter.

So that the one who lives on the inside of you and me, the Holy spirit is, he has been called by Jesus to comfort. If that is an intimacy, tell me what it is. He said, I want to be sure you're comforted.

The last word, number 15 is love. You see, there's no way in the world for us to be able to begin to measure God's love for us. All 15 of those things are absolutely essential to a real growing, genuine, intimate relationship.

Can you have one without all 15? Yes, it can grow, but you missed something, but I believe all of those are important. And when I look at God, I don't see him coming up short in a single one of these. He's right on target every single time.

Now, the last thing I want to mention quickly, simply this with whom is God intimate. I want you to turn back to Proverbs again and look, if you will, at the third chapter, Proverbs chapter three, with whom is God intimate. We're talking about his desire, his creation.

He set it up this way, his desire, the way he unveiled himself with whom is God intimate. Here is a clear, definite, concise statement about those with whom God chooses and will unveil himself to be intimate. Does he desire to be intimate with all of us? Yes.

He says he's going to be intimate. That is, we're going to grow in our intimacy. Look, if you will, in verse 32, for the crooked man is an abomination of the Lord, but he is intimate with the upright.

Now, what does he mean by upright? Listen carefully. It does not mean sinless. It does not mean perfect.

It means simply this. An upright person is one in our language today who has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal savior. And listen, whose heart is bent toward God, who desires the will and the way of God, who attempts to walk after the ways of God, who stumbles, who struggles, who sins, who makes mistakes, but who keeps getting up and keep moving and keeps their focus upon God and whose desire in life is to be obedient to him and to follow him and to fulfill his will for their life.

That is the upright person. You know what he says? He says, I'm going to be intimate with him. I'm going to be intimate with her.

That is, I am, I am going to work my intimacy into that person's life. But the Christian who is careless, indifferent, unconcerned, and cares on lots of religious activities, but has, listen, who has no heart for God. And the best way for me to describe an upright person is this.

An upright person is a person whose life is God centered. Everything gets channeled through the grid of what pleases the father. What does God think about this? What would God have me to do? I must do this in the power of God, the God centered life.

That is the life in which God is building intimacy. Now, if you had to describe your life today, would you say in your relationship to the father, would you say that it's a little cold, a little empty, a little barren, a little distant, sometimes confusing, or could you say, my life with God is exciting. Man, I blow it sometimes.

I make mistakes. My conversation's not always right. My conduct's not always right, but I love him above everything else in life, and I just want what he wants in my life, and I want him to keep on working on me no matter what.

I want to know who he is. I want to know his ways. Which one of those best suits you? Well, you know, I'm good at giving you lots of points.

Did you know that when it comes to knowing how to build an intimacy with him, I can't give you any? Let me tell you why. Because he's the one who does the building. Do you know the only thing that you and I have to do for God to build an intimate relationship with us? Just one thing I can do.

Now, I can read the Bible and pray. A lot of things I can do to help me understand him, but the primary thing is this. I just have to yield my life to him and say, Father, you're the initiator in building this intimate relationship, and I want you to so work in my life, remove anything from my life that hinders this intimacy, add anything you choose, but Father, I just yield myself to you and say, Lord, send into my life whatever's necessary to build that intimacy with you because I know that's your will and your primary purpose in my life, not to make me happy or healthy or wealthy, but intimacy, closeness, depth, understanding, knowing you, warning you, loving you, obeying you, choosing you, desiring you.

Father, whatever it takes, I just yield myself to you. You know what'll happen? You won't have to figure out what to do. Here's what he'll do.

He'll just weave your life through circumstances. You know what'll happen? You'll begin to be thrust upon him. You'll begin to depend upon him.

You'll begin to need him. You'll begin to see him in ways you've not seen him before. And you know what's happening? What he's doing is building a wonderful, intimate relationship with you by taking you through experiences in which you discover what he's like.

You know what? We couldn't improve on that if we lived a hundred million years. He's got the greatest plan in all the world. You know what that means? That I'm not responsible.

He's the one who's responsible. All I have to do is say, yes. Yes, Lord.

What's next? Yes. My yielding is his signal that I want intimacy and he goes to work. Father, when we think about you being a sovereign, holy, righteous, perfect, all-loving father and desiring to be intimate with us, it's beyond our understanding almost.

But we love you and we praise you and we thank you that you love us that much. I pray the Spirit of God has spoken personally and clearly to every single listener and that you have stirred something within us that will not allow us to be what we've been, rest where we are, but rather to open our heart to say, I yield everything in order that you may accomplish your purpose, which will be the greatest delight of my heart, father, and that is to walk in an intimate relationship with you. Thank you, dear God, that you love us that much.

It's my prayer in Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to the teaching ministry of Dr. Charles Stanley, speaker on the In Touch television and radio broadcasts.

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