



Article by Dr. Charles
Stanley on page 2

SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

By Ron Hood

“But you, when you pray, enter into your closet and lock your door, and pray to your father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you in public.”

Matthew 6:6 Aramaic Bible in Plain English (©2010)

An intercessor once said about praying for another person, “It seemed God was telling me that *“I have their ear but not their time.”*”

It resonated with me also. I have heard His Voice many times and failed to give Him private, uninterrupted closet time. I have been guilty of hearing Him with respect, but not allotting intimate and secret time for Him. This type of relationship is similar to engagement relationship versus marriage relationship. We love to hear and be around our loved one, but it is not the same as the secret private time together in marriage. Scripture

validates this. “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” John 17 explains that we are to be one with Christ and God through the Holy Spirit. Paul said, “Of Him are we are in Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:30. So, spiritual marriage is scriptural, but is our relationship with God similar to a healthy marriage relationship?

If we spent as much intimate time with our spouse as we do with the Lord, the activity in divorce courts would be much greater. In fact, lack of intimacy with spouses is frowned upon in Jewish law and cause for divorce.

Our prayer time is our time of intimacy with God. Some say, well, I pray without ceasing; through the business day, and life in this world, I just keep my thoughts on God. But, will that work in human relationships? I think not! Intimate time must be spent to really know those we love. A minute a day with God is not enough. Is that enough for your spouse? Just a little talk with Jesus is not enough to really know Him. Charles Stanley has a good lesson on this matter of “intimate spiritual relationship with God.” *Ron Hood*



CHARLES STANLEY: God doesn't want our interactions with Him to end at salvation; that's where they *begin*. If we communicate with Him only on a surface level, we cheat ourselves and hinder fulfillment of the **Lord's ultimate goal for us—an intimate relationship with Him**. Though this is His desire for each of His children, many believers, unfortunately, do not live in the close fellowship that He's made available to them.

...Some Christians show little interest in spiritual things and are unaware of the shallowness of their interactions with God. Others are confused and frustrated, wondering why they don't hear His voice or feel His presence. Even though they attend church, read their Bibles, and pray, He still seems to be far away and disconnected from them.

In the last few years, the term “intimacy with God” has become one of those phrases that Christians toss about in their conversations, but how many of us actually know what it means? If I asked you to describe it, could you? Part of the problem is that in our culture, the word *intimacy* has become synonymous with sex. But we're talking about a spiritual

oneness that is not based on the physical senses. God is spirit ([John 4:24](#)), and that is how we must relate to Him.

Understanding Intimacy with God

To help us comprehend what closeness with the Lord looks like, let's examine the writings of David, whom the Bible calls a man after God's own heart ([Acts 13:22](#)). [Psalm 63:1-8](#) gives a vivid description of His consuming passion for His Lord.

Yearning for God. The most obvious element in this Psalm is a thirsting and yearning for the Lord (v. 1). Every other pursuit in life seems like a dry desert when compared to the fulfillment of an intimate relationship with God. Our souls and spirits will never experience satisfaction until we discover the joy of devotion to the only One who can fill our emptiness (v. 5). David's passion even had a physical element to it: "my flesh yearns for You" (v. 1). At times, those who have a particularly close connection with the Lord experience an aching for more of Him.

...New Values and Priorities. Soon our relationship with God becomes the best thing in our lives and takes precedence over everything else (vv. 3-4). No other pursuit is more valuable. All the possessions, power, pleasures, and prestige this world offers are empty after experiencing the fullness of knowing the Lord.

Satisfaction and Fulfillment. He captures our thoughts and emotions (v. 5-6). Do you remember what it feels like to be in love? No one had to tell you to think about your loved one; your thoughts just automatically flew to him or her. That's what it's like when we love the Savior. The joy of being in His presence satisfies us as nothing else can.

Trust and Dependence. God becomes our shelter in life's storms when we crawl under His wings of protection and cling to Him in total dependence (vv. 7-8). Those who know intimacy with Him feel the safety that comes with submission to His will. Since they know His heart and trust His goodness and wisdom, they have no cause for fear.

Who wouldn't want such a rich and rewarding experience with the Lord? But it won't happen automatically or accidentally. Just consider how human relationships develop. Close friendships aren't instantaneous; they must be cultivated over time. In the same way, spiritual unity with the Almighty must be diligently pursued.

Getting to Know God

The first step in our quest for intimacy with the Lord is getting to know Him—who He is, what He does, how He thinks, and what He desires. Even though God is invisible and inaudible to our physical senses, a close relationship with Him is cultivated the same way human friendships are—through time spent together, communication, vulnerability, and shared interests.

Time Spent Together. We will never achieve closeness with the Lord unless we invest time and effort in getting to know Him. A neglected relationship simply won't grow in richness or depth. Are you too busy to spend time each day with Him? If that is the case, the immediate demands of your schedule are robbing you of an awesome eternal treasure—deep, satisfying communion with God.

Two-Way Communication. The most obvious way to become better acquainted with the Lord is through two-way communication. But our prayers are often monologues rather than dialogues. We come to Him with our list of concerns, but how often do we take time to listen for His response? Although God delights in hearing our prayers, He also wants us to be still and listen to Him.

...Just remember that whatever He says will never contradict His written Word. The more you listen, the more you'll hear His voice, and soon your time with Him will become your greatest delight.

Vulnerability. Another important factor is our willingness to be open and honest, exposing every area of our lives to the Lord. No one can be forced into an intimate friendship with God. In fact, the depth of this relationship is limited by the extent of our transparency with Him. Although the natural response is to shrink from such vulnerability, we need to remember that He already knows us inside and out and loves us more than we can comprehend.

Shared Interests. If we're going to grow in oneness with God, we must learn to share His interests. He is always attentive to our concerns, but do we really care about His desires and purposes? ...In our overly busy schedules are we sending an unspoken message to Him: "I'm not interested in You!"

Results of Knowing God

Some Christians confuse knowing the Lord with knowing about Him. But no experience we have with Him or fact we learn about Him should ever be a strictly academic pursuit.

Rather, such knowledge ought to continually transform us, influence others, and prepare us for heaven.

....Our experiences with Him teach us that He is faithful and can be trusted. Recognition of the wisdom and goodness of His plans prompts willing submission to His leadership. And before long, time spent with Him becomes the best part of each day. Instead of watching the clock, we'll want to stay longer because His presence satisfies our souls as nothing else can.

Influence. This kind of passion for the Lord is contagious and influences others. My granddad was a man who knew God intimately. As he told me about the things that Christ had done in his life, a desire to know the Lord like that captured my heart and shaped the direction of my life from then on. I didn't change overnight, but today the most powerful and awesome experience I have is getting face down before God, sensing oneness between His Spirit and mine. Don't wait for heaven; get to know your amazing Lord today. CHARLES STANLEY.

Excerpts from the article, "INTIMACY WITH GOD"

"You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father." John 14:13

"In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." John 16:23-24