

5 Steps to Building Intimacy With Christ

As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after you, O God" (Ps. 42:1).

Julian of Norwich was a medieval follower of Christ. In a day of darkness where form so easily took over any sense of believers' intimacy with Christ, she wrote a classic volume on knowing God's love. A quote from her writing says, "God, of thy goodness, give me Thyself; for Thou art enough for me." She came to the experience the wonderful way of seeking God alone for only Himself. She understood that in intimacy with God she found life and peace itself. This again is the heart and core of worship and the secret to a life of fullness and fruitfulness.

The Heavenly Throne Room

Recently when rereading the book of Revelation, I saw again the wonderful picture of what our end goal is in Christian life. St. John recounts the majestic picture for us, "I saw a Lamb in the midst of the throne ... standing as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6a). The thought that struck me was that Christian life itself, its purpose, goal and meaning comes down to this one thing: "the wounded Lamb." This is the centerpiece of the heavenly throne room, the living Christ, the resurrected Christ. He is the one we see, and the throne of God where the heavenly Father sits. Oh, what glories are at His right hand. This, dear believer, is our goal and our ultimate purpose, to know this God, this "Lamb." To find our satisfaction in Him alone. The entirety of heaven revolves around His person; and should not our earthly lives be the same?

Fellowship With God

God had always sought for fellowship and intimacy with man, even when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3:8). As Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:22), we also should earnestly desire that inner life of communion with Him. We can always ask Him to increase that desire in us if we find it is lacking. The wonderful truth for us today is that God can be found and intimately known through His Son Jesus Christ. This abiding relationship can become a vibrant reality for us in every situation by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the cleansing blood of our Lord. Whether we find ourselves in a prison cell or in the most beautiful church sanctuary, whether in a season of restfulness or a season of heaviness, He desires that we find Him in the midst of it all.

God not only allows Himself to be found by us, He desires it. Yet it is altogether too easy to find ourselves filling life with times of Christian songs, Bible readings and even prayer while missing true communion with Himself. God can be missed in these things when He is not sought for Himself, but only treated as a means to an end. We can sadly seek God to appease our guilty conscience alone, ask for temporal help and blessings or attend church simply to check it off on our list of moral things to do. This is the picture of coming to a stream as the psalmist portrays but then not being willing to drink of its goodness. A parched, dry tongue, not willing to refresh itself in the very person of God who alone can satisfy the longing of the soul.

Practical Steps to Take

Here are some practical ways to build and grow in our intimacy with Christ:

1. Remember it is Him and Him alone who we are to worship. When you come to a church gathering, bow your head slightly in reverence, acknowledging God's presence (Zech. 2:13). Let your focus be on meeting God and not on going only to hear a sermon about Him.

2. Throughout your day, take times to quiet your heart and acknowledge the Lord. A moment of silence can be helpful (Ps. 46:10). One practice of the early church was to set aside times of the day for prayer. They followed what are called the hours of prayer, which originated with the early Jewish believers. Some traditions vary, but the times set apart to pray were 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m. Let this start to be a practice in your life of disciplined times to acknowledge the Lord you love dearly.
3. When taking holy Communion (the Lord's Supper), understand that this is part of the heavenly worship of the slain Lamb, and we are partaking in a holy way of worshipping God, just as in Revelation 5 before the throne of God. Allow times of holy Communion to be meaningful and build intimacy with you and the risen Lord.
4. Martin Luther's Small Catechism says, "In the morning, when you rise, you shall make the sign of the holy cross, and you shall say: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Then, kneeling or standing, you shall say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer." The church has always had traditions and practices that helped us put our mind on heavenly things, re-center and focus on the Lord. The sign of the cross is a gesture you make by touching with your forefinger and thumb, your forehead, then stomach, then left shoulder and finally right, making a tracing of the cross over your body. What this says is, "I am not mine but the Lord's; my body, soul and spirit belong to Him." It also reminds us "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20a). This is one other helpful practice that believers have done throughout history to remind themselves of what really matters in life: the cross of Christ and our identification with it.

5. Find some simple choruses that are very worshipful and meaningful. Think back to when you first knew the Lord and those songs that you sang over and over again in intimate worship. Bring your mind back to that place where time did not exist when you would worship the Lord and love to spend time with Him. Recapture these moments, for the Lord has not changed (Mal. 3:6), but we have. Return to the first love you had—He is waiting for you. And if you are not certain where to begin, begin especially by asking Him to draw you back to that place of first love.

Returning to Intimacy

Christian life always begins this way, when we see the great sacrifice of the cross of Christ, the wounded Lamb. We fall on our faces in worship in thankfulness for His love towards us. Daily we cannot help but praise and thank God, not because we have to, but because of experiencing His love and person. But as life passes by, days become weeks and months become years, and amidst the cares of this life, we are prone to wander from that place of intimacy, of worship, of seeking God alone. Perhaps this is a reminder for you; perhaps today God is calling to you saying, “My son, my daughter, come back to Me. Spend time with Me. I have longed for your fellowship and adoration. There you will find rest.” Then our eyes will again brim with tears and our hearts will fill with renewed love for the One we will eternally be praising around the very throne of God.