

The One True Way to Find the Intimacy You Crave

How you do relationships is both a reflection of and the determining factor in the quality of your life. If your closest personal relationship(s) is doing well, you can handle just about any challenge life throws at you. But if your closest personal relationship(s) is broken, destructive or stagnant, you will struggle to thrive even if everything else in your life is wonderful. But doing intimacy in a fallen world is not easy.

Happiness research verifies the impact of relationships. In adult life, one of the two most important determinants of well-being is the quality of intimate personal relationships, especially with a partner. (The other primary determinant is emotional health.)

This is nothing more than a reflection of how God created us. God Himself can be described as a relationship of equals: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. When God created humankind in His own image, He created us with the need, desire, and capacity for intimacy. "The LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

It's also why Genesis says, "Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

How's Intimacy Working Out for You?

From that original way we were created and from our vantage point in the 21st century, one cannot help but exclaim, "How far we have fallen!"

We keep trying to solve our intimacy problem, in spite of ourselves.

- Most people still desire marriage.
- Stories of love, romance and “the hero gets his girl” are still best-sellers in books, movies and songs.
- The majority of those whose marriage ends through death or divorce hope to get married again.
- A healthy marriage is one of the strongest determinants of longevity and health.
- Sex sells—everything from coffee and cars to porn and violence.

We keep pursuing intimate relationships even when things are terribly messed up. Divorce is common, even though it's disastrous for health and wealth. Young and old are looking for intimacy outside of marriage, sometimes because marriage is not working, sometimes as a way to get intimacy and sex without the baggage of marriage and sometimes because marriage seems impossible. The sex industry makes multiple billions of dollars off of people's broken desire for intimacy, and yet none of that satisfies. Sexual addiction, domestic violence, abortion, infidelity—all are somehow related to our need, desire and capacity for intimacy.

We try, but we rarely get there. Country songs often highlight the disappointment and loneliness of betrayal and looking for love in all the wrong places. We think marriage will solve our intimacy problem and sometimes end up even lonelier than before. We think the problem is our spouse, leave the marriage and discover the next relationship is just as unsatisfying.

It's been this way ever since our first parents were sent out of Eden. If you doubt that, just look at the domestic violence, rape, incest, polygamy, adultery and more in the Old Testament.

Oh, how far we have fallen!

Enter the Gospel

Husbands, love your own wives sacrificially. Wives, respect

your own husbands. Flee sexual immorality. Engage in sexual intimacy with your spouse.

Can we do that? Is it even possible? If this is one more thing to “try harder” at, we’re doomed. Our character is too messed up, our drive for intimacy and sex too distorted, the empty hole in our soul too broken, to solve our intimacy problem by another set of rules.

But remember, the gospel is not about rules. The gospel is Good News! And the good news is that although our intimacy muscle is broken and easily affixed to things that can never satisfy, God has not given up on the way He created us. Intimacy and relationships are too critical to our well-being to give up.

Jesus Hasn’t Given Up on Your Intimacy Needs, and Neither Should You

We are in serious need of transformation here. We cannot “do” this intimacy thing on our own. The only humans available to have relationships with are wounded and incomplete. We ourselves are wounded and incomplete. We all need the cleansing, healing and growth that only Jesus can bring us if we are ever to experience the kind of healthy intimacy we were created for.

You have probably noticed a happy person or a happy couple from time to time. Some marriages last, documenting the joy, health and satisfaction such a healthy relationship provides as well as the transforming grace God offers. And some single people learn to be exceptionally fruitful and satisfied, embracing the growth and intimacy God has available for us even without marriage. (Jesus was the prime such example.)
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