

# Why So Many Born-Again Believers Have Never Accepted God's Love

God is a romantic, and He is definitely interested in the issue of intimacy. That is why it is so important that we begin this study about intimacy by reflecting on the scripture "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1a). Without God, intimacy is short-lived and incomplete.

My personal spiritual journey started with the love of God being poured into me through the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without His consistent love and gentleness, I would know of nothing to write on these pages about intimacy. He is my greatest teacher on giving and receiving love and intimacy.

The scripture that declares this message loud and clear to me is Psalm 127:1: "Except the Lord build the house, those who build labor in vain." This can be no truer than for the couple who desires intimacy within their marriage without actively involving God in the process. As this scripture indicates, they would definitely be laboring in vain.

You may be a born-again Christian believer. But you may be someone who has never accepted the love of God into your life.

If you have never encountered God personally, I encourage you to take a moment and ask Jesus Christ to show you His love and His forgiveness for all the sins that have separated you from Him. Only then will you experience true intimacy from the master of intimacy Himself, Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, spiritual intimacy is not an automatic attribute of all who believe. I have spent countless sessions with believers who don't understand even the basics of spiritual

intimacy. So many individuals and couples struggle painfully with the concept of intimacy with the Father.

Honesty is a basic fundamental to spiritual intimacy in any relationship, including your spouse. This includes honesty to yourself. Intimacy can never be increased where dishonesty and deception exist.

Many individuals have what I call an “image relationship” with themselves. They work at crafting their image so much that they themselves buy it hook, line and sinker. Such image-crafters usually focus on the wonderful parts of themselves, such as their gifts or shining qualities. Their self-styled image may be charismatic, outwardly displaying wonderful virtues such as caring, sincerity, spirituality and intelligence. They often appear nearly perfect.

When I was a young Christian in Bible college, I couldn’t even walk out of the dorm room unless everything matched. I was quite an image to behold—a young, clean-cut, well-dressed Bible school student and choir member. Nevertheless, I only had an image relationship with myself. I was completely unaware of my real heart condition or even how I truly felt. I appeared righteous and was always ready to convince anyone that I was OK. The only problem was that I wasn’t real. I was well-schooled in all the religious rhetoric; I could spout off dozens of memorized Bible verses to fit the moment, but I couldn’t have a relationship to save my life.

What does this have to do with spiritual intimacy? Everything, if you’re a Christian desiring intimacy. In truth, I was a hurting human being who used religion to protect my heart, and it took God years to tear down that self-image so that I could begin to experience genuine intimacy.

Self-honesty is very important. Not one of us human beings is perfect or even close to it. If you take any one of us away from the normal comforts of daily life and place us in an

unusually stressful situation, such as an all-day layover in an airport or being stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, less than wonderful things will often come out of our hearts.

It's absolutely wonderful to be human, isn't it? We are imperfect by our very design. If we could be perfect, then we wouldn't need a Savior, would we? Growing beyond false religious images and discovering who you really are is just the beginning of spiritual intimacy.

Are you thinking that this really doesn't apply to you? Try this exercise to find out. Think of your three greatest flaws. Now take a minute and come up with seven more. I find that in doing this, many of us can come up with one or two—but 10? Who even imagines that he could have 10 faults? Take a moment at this point and write down 10 of your worst faults and see how long it takes.

The longer it takes for you to come up with 10 faults, the more important self-honesty is going to be for you on your journey toward spiritual intimacy with your spouse. By the way, when you're writing down these faults, don't cheat and ask your spouse to help.

Honesty about how you feel, honesty about your perceptions and honesty with who you are, are central to spiritual intimacy. As you go through this exercise, you will begin to discover more and more about the real you than you may have thought possible.

The great news is this: You won't be doing this alone. God will be with both you and your spouse, walking together with you throughout this journey.

Recently at a lunch meeting a woman asked me how a man could be taught to see the real beauty of a woman when he first meets her. I responded that it was not possible. How can you appreciate the complex caverns of a woman's soul at a moment's glance? It takes a journey of decades for a man to behold the

beauty of a woman. The fragrance of a woman's many passions for life, love and relationship; her waves of emotion; and her valleys of woundedness and fear could never be understood during a superficial encounter.

Intimacy is an exciting journey with a wonderful destination. The adventure of intimacy's discovery makes the traveling so much fun for you and your spouse. Honesty is one signpost on the way to spiritual intimacy. You must be honest with yourself, with God and with your spouse. {eoa}

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