

Jesus brings true intimacy. Intimacy really begins with God. Brother Lawrence deeply influenced my understanding of what it means to truly love God. In the book on his life, "The Practice of the Presence of God," the author says on Brother Lawrence, "Even picking up straw gladdened his heart, for reaching down to the ground to get the straw, if done to show love to God, made him happy. The clue? Loving God and nothing else, not even God's gifts..." Turn to Matt 11:25-27 MES: **Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: "Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You've concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work."**

²⁷ Jesus resumed talking to the people, but now tenderly. **"The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen."** In my times of troubles and feeling vulnerable, I learned to press into Jesus. When we first moved to California I didn't know anyone, had 4 kids in 4 different schools, a traveling husband while my mom was going through chemo and radiation for colon cancer. I felt like a nobody because no one knew me and I wasn't yet connected with new friends. I remember saying to God, "God You know me. You're all I need." In that moment, I surrendered my needs to feel important, for recognition and connection. Just when you think He's all you have, you'll find He's all you need! My intimacy with God carried me through this very difficult season. I can't find my well being in my circumstances, I find my well being in God. What are you going through that you need to surrender and let Jesus be your All? God knows you and loves you. He is all you really need.

Only Jesus brings true intimacy. I used to have major mother in law issues until one day the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation. Ruth, my mother in law is a remarkable woman who was also a handful for me to deal with. My sister and I were talking about family issues when she thoughtfully remarked, "There's a little bit of Ruth inside all of us." The light bulb went on inside my head and my heart. I wasn't standing on the side of love. I was standing my own self-righteous ground, unable to have true intimacy with my mother in law. For the first time I saw how bossy I really was. My husband had married his mother! There is a little bit of the centurion who killed Jesus in every one of us. I need to

always stand on the side of love. Being one with God keeps you on the side of love in intimacy with Him because God is love. Turn to John 17:21 NLT: ***“I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one--as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”*** Jesus calls us not to stand against anyone, but to stand on His side of love. Who you perceive as the enemy, God sees with love. God isn't just on your side. Whether personal conflict or all out war, He is on everyone's side. All falls under His authority and love. We are all on the same side even when we have different viewpoints or disagree. Not about agreement, but loving and understanding. When Joshua recognized the Lord, he fell on his face in worship. “Take off your sandals,” the Lord said, “for the place you are standing on is holy.” When we gather together in love and share from our hearts deeply, we are on holy ground. This is where we find intimacy. Do you perceive God's presence when you are on the battleground of life? Are you seeing Jesus in your loved ones, in your neighbor?

How about your loved ones?? When Michael and I first got married, he shared that his family had never said to each other, “I love you.” Because I used to tell him how much I love him and he loved it, he learned to say to his mom and siblings, “I love you.” My family said it, but my husband's family did it. Now all of Michael's family says, “I love you.” They are all so sweet and loving. Don't say it unless you're willing to put feet to your love, but saying it is a big step to emotional intimacy. Having Jesus in the center brings true intimacy.

My husband and I learned to show each other agape love. *Agape* love has no strings attached. It isn't looking for what it can get but for what it can give. God calls us to live with agape love. There are four Greek words describing love: eros, stergo, phileo and agape. *Eros* or sexual love, not found in the New Testament, implies a demand for love, not a giving love. *Stergo* is devotion to one's family. *Phileo* is affection such as fondness between good friends. *Agape* is beloved sacrificial love. It desires to please and promote the welfare of the person. *Agape* love goes out to the utterly unworthy. *Agape* love isn't looking for what it can get but for what it can give. It loves for the sake of loving!

Marriage is sacred in God's eyes because it's the only place that demonstrates all 4 forms of love. Satan does the reverse of God. He puts sex first because he prioritizes body first, then soul and spirit. God honors spirit first, then soul and body. Within marriage, with healthy boundaries sex is not a selfish act, but an expression of God's love for the other person. It becomes an act of worship

because the eros is founded upon the agape. Jesus said in Matthew 19:5, ***"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."*** Sex brings intimacy when God is in the middle, according to His Word. God's practical laws lead us to His spiritual principles. The physical act of sex in God's eyes reflect the spiritual principle of Oneness with Him. ***"The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you loved me."*** John 17:22-23. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for revelation to replace "sexual need" for true spiritual need. He will replace your void with true intimacy: a oneness with Him.

Entrust yourself to God Alone. When I entrust myself to people I'm always eventually disappointed, betrayed or in some way let down. Our Core Leader Jackie summed my thoughts for me: We can't expect other people to fulfill us with what only God can give. It becomes idolatry when we put it before God. Trusting God Alone and not people actually brings true intimacy between each other because we are letting God connect us. Turn to John 2:23-25 MES: ***"During the time he was in Jerusalem, those days of the Passover Feast, many people noticed the signs he was displaying and, seeing they pointed straight to God, entrusted their lives to him. But Jesus didn't entrust his life to them. He knew them inside and out, knew how untrustworthy they were. He didn't need any help in seeing right through them."*** Jesus did not entrust Himself to others. We need to follow His example. We need to entrust Him Alone and not others which is idolatry. As we follow His example we will find intimacy with each other. For 33 years, sometimes I would tell my mother in law I loved her, but she never said anything in return. I learned not to expect anything but would share love out of honor and because it was in my heart. My mother in law and I are closer than we've ever been. She is now 88, in a retirement home, getting more frail, sometimes losing her memory and more needy than she's ever been. Last week Charlie and I went to visit her and Charlie made her the most popular person in the retirement home! When I left, she told me 3 times how much she loved me for the first time in 33 years. "Honey I love you so much. Thank you for coming. I love you. You've taken such good care of my son. I love you." Friends, this is intimacy - we never know where Love is going to take us. This is agape love. Will you wait for it?