

to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8).

#### CONCLUSION

Does your soul thirst for God? Why not give yourself increasingly and progressively to these five ideas. Start by setting the Appointment and get to know God. Then, build the Relationship and deepen your love for God. Let Trust come to full bloom through daily dependence. Then, in grateful response to your new or renewed sense of intimacy with God, obey and serve God (your Task) out of the overflow of a vibrant relationship with the living Lord.

*Reflect on the questions to help you cement these ideas in your mind:*

1. Describe the time in your life when you felt closest to God.
2. What one word or phrase best describes how close or distant you feel to God today, and explain.
3. What does the Bible tell us about loving God in Mark 12:28-31 and Luke 10:25-28.
4. Saint Augustine said, "Love God and do what you want." Is that good theology? Explain your answer.
5. What is the single most important thing you can do right now to have a more intimate relationship with God? Do you think you will actually do it, and why or why not?

Business leader, author, and speaker, Patrick Morley helps men think more deeply about their lives, to be reconciled with Christ, and to be equipped for a larger impact on the world.

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# A LOOK IN THE MIRROR™

AN EQUIPPING NEWSLETTER FOR MEN

Number 55

## *Intimacy With God*

Patrick Morley

Jim asked, "Why is it that the *only* time I'm on my knees is when I'm in a crisis? Why don't I have intimacy with God when things are going well?"

The Psalmist wrote, "As the deep pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2). Is that the way you feel, or would like to?

In this article I'd like us to explore how can you find, or restore, intimacy with God. But first things first. What exactly is intimacy with God?

Let's consider an analogy from marriage. Both new and mature love help us understand intimacy better. When you were dating your wife (if you're married), do you remember how everything she said fascinated you? You shared each other's hopes and dreams for challenging careers, successful healthy children, and a vibrant spiritual and social life. In short, you couldn't get enough of each other. You wanted to know everything about her.

Twenty five years later the nature of your love for her changed (or will change when you get there). Now you have experienced, and survived, a half dozen major tests. You think each other's thoughts. You finish each other's sentences . . . or a half-finished sentence is understood.

Intimacy with God is like intimacy with your mate. It's wanting to know Him at the deepest level. It's wanting to be fully known and accepted for who you are. Intimacy with God means a full, fresh, moment by moment dependency upon His grace and mercy. And it grows deeper with time.

That's a tall order! But you can get there from here. Here's a formula that seems to help deepen all relationships—*Appointment, Relationship, Trust, Task*. Here's how it works. When I saw Patsy, now my wife, walking down the street the first time I thought, *Now there goes the woman with whom I would like to spend the rest of my life!* But I didn't walk over to her and say, "Hi Patsy, how are you doing? Would you like to get married?" No, I said, "Would you like to go out Friday night?" I asked for the *Appointment*. She said no, but that's a story for another time.

Eventually, though, she did go out with me and we hit it off. *A Relationship* began to develop as we spent time together and got to know each other.

Eventually, as we shared out of the depths of our hearts and souls, we began to *Trust* each other. Then, when *Trust* came to full bloom, I popped the question, asked her to marry me, and we did the *Task*—we married. But it took some time.

Intimacy with God develops like intimacy in marriage. It's exciting at first, but takes some time to deepen. As we move through these four steps with God—*Appointment, Relationship, Trust, Task*—we will be rewarded with a deep, profound sense of intimacy with Him. We will find that we increasingly know God, love God, trust God, obey God, and serve God. Let's take a closer look at how to build or renew intimacy by pursuing these five characteristics—*Know God, Love God, Trust God, Obey God, and Serve God.*

Appointment,  
Relationship,  
Trust, Task

#### KNOW GOD

We get to know God by setting the *Appointment*. It takes time, though. We know God through His Works, His Word, His “Whisper”, and Witnesses. God's Works in creation – sometimes called *general revelation* – are windows through which we peer and see clues about God's nature. For example, gaze into a star studded evening sky, watch a mother duck with her ducklings, ponder the rhythms of the tides.

God's Word – sometimes called *special revelation* – tells us what we can know in no other way: the history of redemption and the character of God and His attributes. The “Whisper” of the Holy Spirit is God speaking to our hearts, especially when we pray or read the Bible. Martin Luther once said, “I have so much to do today I think I'll need to pray for three hours.” Also, men need Witnesses. A lot of men today – good men – slip into a jaded, cynical outlook. They need fellowship with other Christians who can testify to the life-altering power of Christ in their lives.

#### LOVE GOD

The more we know God, the more we love Him – that's *Relationship*. When Jesus was asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” he answered, “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength’” (Mark 12:28-30).

To love God with “all” is to love Him with the totality of our being, every ounce of our energy, and the sum of our strength. We are to bring an intensity to loving God. Saint Augustine saw this so foundational that he said, “Love God and do what you want.” He knew that the actions of a man who truly loves God seeks to do His will.

#### TRUST GOD

The more experience we have with the Lord the more we realize, “You can trust God.” I've had a dozen major struggles in which, if God had failed me, I would have been history. You've had yours. The beauty of walking with God a good while is that you build “experience” with Him. In fact, you can come to a level of *Trust* that, even when you see no way out of a gut-wrenching trial, you know from experience you can depend upon Him. The apostle Paul put it this way: “[I am] confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

#### OBEY GOD

When knowing, loving, and trusting God have become deeply etched in our own character, obedience to God—one type of *Task*—will be our natural (or perhaps super-natural) response. Jesus put it simply: “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). Daryl said, “My faith is simple. I read it in the Bible, then I do it. I don't ask questions.” That's because after getting to know, love, and trust God, Daryl has surrendered his life to the pleasure of God.

The key to obedience is to embrace “the authority of the Scriptures.” As one of our Board members says, “It's either true or it isn't, and you either believe or you don't.” If the Bible is God's Word, then our obedience must follow.

The fruit of intimacy is a simple obedience motivated by gratitude for God's grace.

The Bible commands us to repent, be holy, keep the Sabbath holy, tithe, don't commit adultery, and a host of other clear commands that Christians today spend countless hours debating and rationalizing. But the fruit of intimacy with God is a simple obedience motivated by gratitude for God's grace. From my own experience, I know that obedience as a grateful response to knowing, loving, and trusting God is far superior to obedience as duty. If you cannot yet be grateful then by all means—do your duty, but gratitude is better.

#### SERVE GOD

Intimacy with God cries out for an opportunity to express its appreciation in service—a second type of *Task*. The more I grow to love my wife, Patsy, the more I want to serve and please her in every way. I just can't get enough of serving her (and, of course, I always obey). What could be more natural than serving the one you know, love, and trust?

In fact, God has made us with an innate need to serve the one we love. “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus said, “This is