

105 – Concept of and Intimacy with God

I. Introduction

A.W. Tozer (1961, pp. 1-3) wrote: *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. . . Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?' we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. . . Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God."*

Our concept of God, our understanding or idea of God, is of crucial importance to fully expressing the _____.

II. What is God like?

A. God Is _____!

"Unusually large in size or in degree, distinguished or famous, of much consequence"
"Of extraordinary powers, of high rank or position, of noble character"

B. God Is _____!

"morally excellent, righteous, sufficient"

C. God Is _____

D. God Loves _____

III. What Is Your Concept of God?

A. A Concept is a _____

1. Concepts control us more than _____
2. Our concepts are often based upon _____

B. How Man _____ God

C. Correcting Our _____ of God

“The deep fear behind every loss is that we have been abandoned by the God who should have saved us. The transforming moment in Christian conversion comes when we realize that even God has left us. We then discover it was not God, but our image of God that abandoned us.... Only then is change possible.”

- Craig Barnes

IV. Our Concept Of God

A. Often Based On Our _____

B. False concepts about God

C. Five Hidden _____ of Distortion

1. The Inter-generational Cycle
2. Attribution
3. Parental Projections
4. Self-Projections
5. Early Religious Training and Experiences

D. My _____ Concept Of God (see attached sheet)

V. Four Steps to Being Reparented by God

A. Understanding the _____ God

1. _____ gives the idea of God
2. _____ interprets and organizes the content
3. _____ establishes a relation to man's experience
4. _____ is the study of God's Word

B. Separate any _____ in your past from truth

C. Make a _____ decision

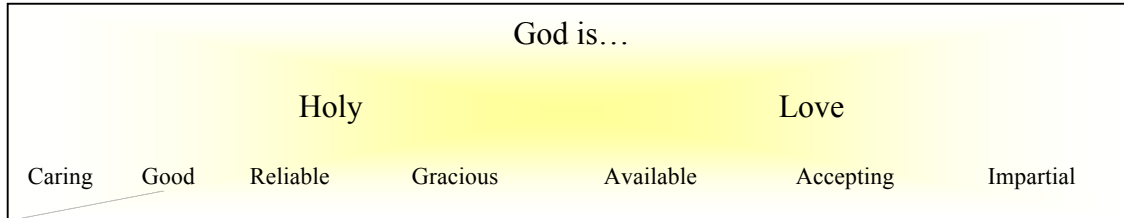
D. In prayer, invite God to be your Father of choice.

E. Approach God as a child

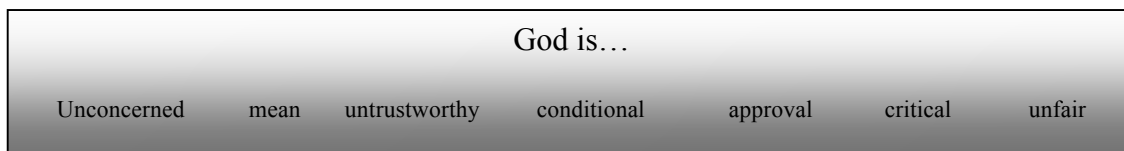
Who Is God

1. When I think about being with God, I feel _____
2. When I have to trust God, I feel _____
3. When I think about God, I feel _____
4. When I think about God, I wish _____
5. Sometimes I get angry with God when _____
6. It frustrates me when God wants me to _____
7. I really enjoy God when _____
8. The one thing I would change about myself to please God is _____
9. When I think about God's commands, I feel _____
10. The thing that I love most about God is _____
11. I feel angry towards God when _____
12. Sometimes I wish God would _____
13. I can really depend on God when _____
14. The one thing that frustrates me most about God is _____
15. In my relationship with God, I am always sure that He will _____
16. The one thing that frightens me about God is _____
17. God surprises me when _____
18. The one thing I would like to tell the whole world about God is _____
19. The one thing that bothers me most about God is _____
20. The one thing I'm afraid God will do is _____

How the Good News Becomes Bad News



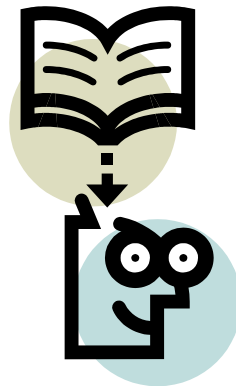
As a result of Unhealthy Relationships, Trauma, Sin, Sickness, etc...
We decode as bad news



We have a distorted Concept of God & Damaged Love Receptors
(the Holy Spirit sometimes needs a temporary assistant, like a mentor)

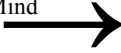


We need to renew our minds with God's truth!



“...you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”
John 8:32

The Truth about Our Heavenly Father

The lie...	Renew Mind 	The truth...
He is...		He is...
Distant and disinterested		Intimate and involved (Ps 139:1-18)
Insensitive and uncaring		Kind and compassionate (Ps 103:8-14)
Stern and demanding		Accepting and filled with joyful love (Zeph 3:17; Ro 15:7)
Passive and cold		Warm and affectionate (Is 40:11; Hos 11:3-4)
Absent and too busy for me		Always with me and always eager to spend time with me (Jer 31:20; Ez 34:11-16; Heb 13:5)
Never satisfied with what I do, impatient or angry		Patient, slow to anger, and pleased with me in Christ (Ex 34:6; 2Peter 3:9)
Mean, cruel, or abusive		Loving, gentle, and protective of me (Jer 31:3; Is 42:3; Ps 18:2)
Trying to take all the joy and fun out of life		Trustworthy and wants to give me a full life; His will is good, perfect and acceptable for me (Lam 3:22-23; Jn 10:10; Ro 12:1-2)
Controlling or manipulative		Full of grace and mercy and He gives me freedom to live as I choose, even if I am wrong (Lk 15:11-16; Heb 4:15-16)
Condemning or unforgiving		Tender-hearted and forgiving, and His heart and arms are always open to me (Ps 130:1-4; Lk 15:17-24)
A nit-picking, demanding, perfectionist		Committed to my growth and proud of me as His beloved child (Ro 8:28-29; Heb 12:5-11; 2Cor 7:4)

VI. Intimacy with God

“Very few people today find Jesus interesting as a person or of vital relevance to the course of their actual lives. He is not generally regarded as a real-life personality who deals with real-life issues but is thought to be concerned with some feathery realm other than the one we must deal with, and must deal with now. And frankly, he is not taken to be a person of much ability.” (Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy)

A. The Story of Eli and Samuel [1 Samuel 3:1-10]

1. Samuel was the product of his mother’s _____.
2. “Now the boy Samuel _____ to the LORD.” (1 Samuel 3:1, NKJV)

B. “We have become too _____ with a God we do not _____.”

“Today the heart of God is an open wound of love. He aches over our distance and preoccupation ... He weeps over our obsession with muchness and manyness. He longs for our presence.” (Richard Foster)

VII. What Does “Intimacy With God” Mean?

A. “Intimacy” can be defined as:

B. Intimacy with God

“Some years into our spiritual journey, after the waves of anticipation that mark the beginning of any pilgrimage have begun to ebb into life’s middle years of service and busyness, a voice speaks to us in the midst of all we are doing. *There is something missing in all of this*, it suggests. *There is something more.*

The voice often comes in the middle of the night or the early hours of morning, when our hearts are most unedited and vulnerable. At first, we mistake the source of this voice and assume it is just our imagination. We fluff up our pillow, roll over, and go back to sleep. Days, weeks, even months go by and the voice speaks to us again: *Aren’t you thirsty? Listen to your heart. There is something missing.*

We listen and we are aware of ... a sigh. And under the sigh is something dangerous, something that feels adulterous and disloyal to the religion we are serving. We sense a passion deep within that threatens a total disregard for the program we are living; it feels reckless, wild. Unsettled, we turn and walk quickly away, like a woman who feels more than she wants to when her eyes meet those of a man not her husband.

We tell ourselves that this small, passionate voice is an intruder who has gained entry because we have not been diligent enough to practicing our religion. Our pastor seems to agree with this assessment and exhorts us from the pulpit to be more faithful. We try to silence the voice with outward activity, redoubling our efforts at Christian service. We join a small group and read a book on establishing a more effective prayer life. We train to be part of a church evangelism team. We tell ourselves that the malaise of spirit we feel even as we step up our religious activity is a sign of spiritual immaturity and we scold our heart for its lack of fervor.

Sometime later, the voice in our heart dares to speak to us again, more insistently this time. *Listen to me – there is something missing in all this. You long to be in a love affair, an adventure. You were made for something more. You know it.*” (Brent Curtis & John Eldredge, Sacred Romance)

C. Without intimacy

1. _____ substitutes for meaning, _____ substitutes for creativity, and _____ relationships substitute for love.
2. We live from _____ rather than from _____
3. Communion with God is replaced by _____.
4. _____ substitutes for mystery

D. Our heart does not respond to principles and programs; it doesn't seek efficiency. It seeks _____.

“It is by the heart that God is perceived [known] and not by reason ... so that is what faith is: God perceived by the heart.” (Oswald Chambers)

VIII. Intimacy Is An Aspect Of The Nature of God.

God designed man for _____.

“Relationship, or bonding, then, is at the foundation of God's nature. Since we are created in his likeness, relationship is our most fundamental need, the very foundation of who we are. Without relationship, without attachment to God and others, we can't be our true selves. We can't be truly human.” (Christian Psychologist Henry Cloud, Changes That Heal)

IX. Intimacy Is What The Gospel Is All About.

A. The heart of the Gospel is:

1. _____ about killing sin (dealing exclusively with the sin issue)

2. The heart of the Gospel is: _____

B. "Gospel" means _____

1. John 3:16

2. The Good News

3. Life without end

X. When Intimacy With God Is Ignored

A. Addictions

1. Addiction occurs when our _____ to bond intimately with God is bent and we begin to seek intimate connections in _____

2. "All of life is _____, and all of life is a quest for God. Any compulsive behavior that I cannot control is an addiction – a _____ search for intimate connection." (Doug Banister, Sacred Quest)

B. Low Self-Esteem

"Healthy self-esteem is more than believing certain facts about ourselves. Healthy self-esteem is knowing that we are loved because we have tasted intimacy with One Who Is Love. Failing to bond with God intimately robs us of the daily awareness of our 'belovedness' in Christ and reinforces a dangerous gap between what God says and what we experience." (Sacred Quest)

C. Depression

D. Become Religious

“Religion, a tiresome system of manmade dos and don’ts, woulds and shoulds – impotent to change human lives but tragically capable of devastating them – is what is left after a true love for God has drained away. Religion is the shell that is left after the real thing has disappeared.

When we fail to attach our deepest longings to Christ, religious activity can become a perverse counterfeit of true religion. Hours of sweaty jogging on the church treadmill become a substitute for cultivated intimacy with our divine Friend and Lover. We find ourselves going through the motions of church life. Prayer becomes a quasi-magical means of warding off evil powers instead of a warm dialogue with a Friend. The pastor’s sermons no longer hold our attention. We grow numb to the eternal plight of our lost neighbor. ‘Global missions’ captures little of our heart, money, and prayers. Our heart drifts from the priorities of the kingdom of God. The greatest stories of the Faith no longer shape our decisions and dreams; lesser tales, tales sprinkled with sensuality and moral darkness – devoid of the heart of God – take their place. Our life quest begins to look remarkably like the life quest of our lost friends and neighbors.” (Sacred Quest)

E. Burnout

“Our clergy ancestors clung to their saddles for as long as they could sit up and take nourishment. Today we clergy are halfway out the door, retiring posthaste, the spring having gone out of our step. Despite our denial, we know deep inside we are not on top of our ministry; our ministry is on top of us.” (Leonard Sweet, SoulTsunami)

F. Relational Problems

“We can only enjoy relational intimacy with other people as we enjoy relational intimacy with Christ. The cherished loved ones in our lives make good friends but poor gods – we dare not ask them to be for us what only God can be. Yet often we do.” (Sacred Quest)

G. Loss of Vision

“Vision is birthed out of intimate communion with our Lord. We discover our calling in life as we come to know the Caller. I find that many people lead visionless lives because they do not know the One Who Is Vision. They spend their entire lives doing what everyone else thinks they should do, or what needs to be done, or what someone they respect likes to do. They never pause long enough to find out what Christ has called them to do.” (Sacred Quest)

XI. Enemies of Intimacy With God.

A. Ignorance

B. Poor _____ of God

C. Identity theft

D. Busyness

“Be still, and know that I am God ...” (Psalm 46:10, NKJV)

“We are not transformed by studying a person, but by beholding a person. Busyness is not conducive to beholding. We take time for what we value. And we behold what we love. It is not the duty of beholding that changes us, though, but rather the beauty of the one we behold.” (Ken Gire, The Divine Embrace)

“The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ, the very things he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him. It will be God working in him to will and to do.” (A. W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God)

E. Religious Activity

F. Fear

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJV)

XII. An Invitation to Experience Greater Intimacy with God

A. Factors that can enhance intimacy with God:

1. Simplicity
2. Silence
3. Solitude
4. Surrender

B. The progression of intimacy:

1. Trust leads to _____.

2. Vulnerability leads to _____.
3. Transparency leads to _____.

C. Depending on the Holy Spirit to bring you into a greater experiential _____ of God.

An experiential knowledge of God is a matter of _____
not discovery.

- a. Revelation
- b. Discovery

I Hope You Dance

“Like the Emperor at a great ball, the Lord Jesus himself has chosen you to be his partner in the grandest dance of all, and he lovingly awaits your answer. The dance may be frightening and unfamiliar, and you may be hesitant to try. But take a chance; move out onto the dance floor and into his embrace. If you long to know him more, to hear his voice up close, to follow his lead for the rest of your days, then look into his eyes. Place your palm in his. And step into a more intimate relationship with the King of Creation, the Emperor of the ball.

The dance of intimacy is more than just steps. It’s about being in the Lord’s arms as we follow his steps, close enough to his heart that we feel the music. It’s not about just being swept away, however good that feels. It’s about being swept away *by him*. It’s not about what others think of us; it’s about what *he* thinks. And what he thinks is captured in his eyes.

John Michael Montgomery’s song “I Love the Way You Love Me” is a song he sings to the woman he loves. ‘I love the way you love me,’ Montgomery sings. ‘Strong and wild. Slow and easy. Heart and soul. So completely.’ It is the way Jesus loves.

The Christian life is about us following Christ’s lead, not about him following ours. He doesn’t ask us to write the notes to the music or choreograph the steps to the dance. He asks us merely to take his hand and follow him. To move when he moves. To speed up when he speeds up. To slow down when he slows down. And to stop when he stops. It is scary living like this; scarier still ministering like this. After all, we are relinquishing the lead. But look who we’re relinquishing it to. The Emperor. We shouldn’t feel humiliated that we haven’t been asked to be the leader. We should feel honored that we have been asked to be his partner.

The freedom of the dance is in following Christ’s lead. He dances so naturally and moves so fluidly that sometimes we don’t even have time to think about where he is taking us. Wherever he is taking us, though, there are things he wants to show us along the way, experiences he wants to share with us, words he wants to speak to us. At various turns on the dance floor, there is grace he wants to extend to us . . . and grace he wants to extend *through us* to others.

Our assurance for the guidance we need is not in our education, however excellent it may be. It is not in our experience, however extensive. It is not even in our gifting, however extraordinary. Our assurance is in the arm he has around us. He wants us to feel the firmness of that arm, to trust in its sureness, and to have the music of his voice become such a part of us . . . that we can almost forget about our feet.

Life with Jesus is a divine dance. But we don’t have to be a dancer, let alone a good one, before he calls our name, extends his hand, and invites us onto the dance floor. He doesn’t want us to worry about what we don’t know. He isn’t worried. He knows we will learn as we go. And that is precisely how we learn – *as we go*. We learn to dance by dancing. While we are dancing, we will learn the spontaneity of the dance . . . and we will learn to *love* the spontaneity. That won’t happen while we are studying the dance. Not while we are watching others dance. It will happen *while we are dancing*. When we take his hand, Jesus will take us places on the dance floor. Some of them will be exciting places. Others will be scary. Still others puzzling, and we won’t know why he has taken us there.

Sometimes the uncertainty of life is scary; we don’t know exactly where we’re going or how our life is going to end up. It would help to have the sheet music. It

would take a lot of stress out of life. The sheet music is what the disciples wanted when they asked, 'Who of us will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Or when they said, 'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?' The bad news is, the Emperor doesn't offer us the sheet music. The good news is, he offers us his hand. He doesn't ask us to memorize the music or choreograph the dance. He simply asks that we place our hand in his and trust him for the next step." (Ken Gire, The Divine Embrace)

I Hope You Dance

*"I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance,
Never settle for the path of least resistance ...
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance,
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance,
I hope you dance ... I hope you dance."
(I Hope You Dance, Recorded by Lee Ann Womack)*

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