

Intimacy, Part 1

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul,
and mind.*

Matt. 22.37 (Jesus is repeating Deut. 6.5)

When we gather, we grow in *intimacy* with God by taking time to HEAR & OBEY what God is teaching us in His Word.

AVOIDING THE INFORMATION TRAP

Our society exalts information and knowledge. We revere intelligent people and praise academic achievement. We hold the pursuit of knowledge as one of the highest ideals of society and a mark of true success in life. Believers can get caught in this trap, thinking that knowledge is the ultimate measure of faith. They may spend their lives pursuing Bible knowledge and may sound very smart and insightful. But the question remains: Do they actually obey what God is teaching them?

MATT. 7:21-23 *[Jesus says] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

Intimacy with God comes not from knowledge or works, but from a living relationship marked by loving obedience to Him. We could say that pleasing the Lord does not depend on how much you know—it depends on *who* you know!

God does not measure a person based on knowledge or educational achievements. Quite the contrary! Throughout the Bible we see that God often uses the most unlikely people: Gideon, Rahab, and David to name a few. Consider what was said of the apostles:

ACTS 4.13 *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

THREE STEPS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD

True intimacy with God is not about worship services, acts of devotion, or warm fuzzy feelings. The Bible teaches us how to demonstrate love for our Heavenly Father:

1 Die to Self.

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself..." Matt. 16:24

The Enemy uses self-pursuit, sensationalism, and greed to distract us from God. God uses discipline, tithing, and fasting to help us to focus on Him rather than self.

2 Seek God and Listen to Him.

"The Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you." 2 Chron. 15.2b

"He who has ears, let him hear." (Jesus says this 16 times!)

3 Live in Obedience.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15 (1 John 5.3)

? In Acts 9-12, how do we observe believers taking these three steps? Do you think they grew in intimacy with God?

At this point hand out two copies of this lesson sheet to each participant. Let them practise teaching one another what you just taught them.

Use your own stories to teach these points.

ASSIGNMENTS

OBEY at least one thing you learned from this lesson or your study of Acts.

SHARE the gospel message with at least one person over the next week.

STUDY Acts 13–16.

WRITE what God is teaching you, using the *Acts Worksheet* (handout).

TRAIN at least one other believer outside this group, just as you were trained.