

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 3: Abandon to Intimacy with God
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)
{ Read Slowly }

Three Amazing Men of God

David was known as a man after God's own heart. He seemed to have few lapses in his focus on God. Yet his life was filled with trouble, heartache and relational carnage. It is recorded in the story of Job that he prayed daily for himself and his family. He was a true as true can be with respect to his allegiance to God. Yet, in one fell swoop, Job lost all of his grandchildren, his children, and everything they had was reduced to rubble. Job was even inflicted with extreme medical malady.

Another faithful man, Joseph, had tremendous faith and intimacy with God, but suffered incredible injustice at the hand of his own brothers. So just because one finds God to be very dear to himself, does not mean that life will be any easier than it is for an irreligious man. In fact, there is significant evidence that life is often more difficult for God's best servants than for most others.

Passionate Desire

Many believers through the ages from Jesus until now had a similar yet uncommonly deep affection for God. To be sure, their source of love and ours is the same rushing river of God. Anything positive in relationship flowing from us is simply the overflowing of our banks by the rising river of God's love. Left to ourselves, our human nature will selfishly extract love from others rather than to lavish it upon them. To become channels of

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God's love to others is the very purpose for which we were apprehended by God. Paul stated in Philippians 2:13, "... but I follow after so that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ."

Legacy of Intimacy

This produced people like Madame Guyon, Francis Fenelon, Brother Lawrence, Oswald Chambers and Frank Laubach. These names may be unfamiliar to you, but they all possessed a deep longing for God. All who have cultivated the same desire for God as King David, pursue intimacy with Him incessantly. Tragically, many churches teach faith in Jesus, but little more. Relationships will ultimately fail unless the parties continue in hot pursuit of their mutual desire for each other. The primary objective for us and the purpose of God in creation is to develop an up close and personal experience with Him.

Love Is Pleasing

We have all been in love at some time in our lives. And those of us who have been madly in love with another person, know what it means to be madly in love. When you are overwhelmed with that kind of love, you will do anything your lover desires. And usually, when you know what they desire, you are already trying to fulfill their desire before they even ask. Ultimately, we come to be able to finish one another's sentences. Many times we are already thinking a thought which they express, before they even open their mouth to say it. And, so it goes. When you love someone deeply, you always want to please them. And the love story of the Bible is to show us how intimacy with God is the objective and romancing Him is essential.

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Emotion Not Thought

Relationship is not a thinking proposition. It is an emotional proposition. We cannot love with our heads. We can only love with our hearts. The inclusion of human philosophy and science in our religious practice and teaching has caused us to drift as a Christian culture far from the *Christ-In* culture which existed in the wake of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. *Christ-Ins* were overwhelmed by the love of God. When we fall in love, our spirit connects intimately with another. No amount of intellectual study of my lover will endear me to them. Only a mutual attraction to each other's collective emotional gallery will draw us into a deep desire for each other. And nurturing of relationship is only facilitated by consistent pursuit of greater caring for the one we love.

Love Is Emotion

Love **is**, after all, an **emotion**. We know the distinct difference between emotion and logic as it is common knowledge that emotional decisions are generally more risky than logical ones. Just as we thrive on emotions, so does God. So He used His rational mind to engineer the universe and us. He did this to facilitate His ultimate purpose, that is to establish a love affair with any who would respond to His overtures toward them. But we cannot have affection for God with our mind. We can only know God in relationship through our emotional connection with Him, and a deeply affectionate one at that.

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A Passionate Love Affair

It seems that generation after generation drifts farther and farther from God. Some of this is purely the tendency of the natural man to cater to his own whims. But tragically, much of the drift is caused by the incorrect doctrines and practices of the *Christian* way. As we make idols out of the scriptures and altars out of Biblical artifacts, we replace the love of God with a form of godliness that saps the power out of the Gospel.

Beware of your own propensity to *stand on the Bible* making it an idol to be worshipped above all else. This relegates the God of the Bible to a lesser place. And, if in reflection on your life, you discover that the Bible has not produced a lifestyle which closely resembles the unconditional love that Jesus lived, consider the only viable option you have. **Abandon to intimacy with God**, which alone conforms us to the likeness of Christ. Releasing control to the powerful Presence of the Holy Spirit radically changes our relationship with God. Life then exudes an adoring, passionate love affair with God.

Experience: Irrefutable Evidence

There is a radical difference between reading about someone or something and experiencing them. We all know facts about many people, but only those with whom we share a close relationship can we thoroughly enjoy! Experience always trumps logical conclusions. Love itself is extremely illogical, but once smitten by love, one cannot dismiss or forget the euphoria of that love!

The deep affection of God can only be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit at the moment we are smitten. Thus

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a personal, deeply intimate relationship with God is infinitely more valuable and satisfying than the Bible could ever be. The Bible was written to convey the story of God's love and grace from beginning to end. It was also intended to be a proof text by which we can test our motives and complicity with the love of God.

The Bible — Idol or Compass

"God said it. I believe it. And that settles it." This trite and useless phrase is often spoken in church. It is senseless for two reasons. 1) What you *believe it* means may be very inaccurate. Consider the opposing views of brilliant theologians who agree on very few interpretations. 2) *That settles it* presumes that you have all the right answers already which precludes any further pursuit of revelation (stagnation)! *Whenever the use of scripture denigrates relationship, its purpose is no longer being served and its message is abused by way of misinterpretation. Devoid of Jesus' love, the Bible is not God's Word.* — J. H. Alan

Intensity

Many have talked about the Bible, studied it avidly and striven to comply with its very literal interpretation, but have missed the point altogether. If the scripture has only made points in your life, but no appreciable difference, it has surely become an idol before which you may bow, but through which you have produced no fruit on your branch of the vine.

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Do It Yourself

There are countless self-help resources (books, videos, audio tracks and so forth) to which we can turn to find out *how to* be better Christians. We think it is our duty to become more like God. It is evident that most Christians bury themselves under tomes of these resources or religious activities in an attempt to do it themselves. That is, to *get it right*. Yet, the more helps we explore, the farther from intimacy we get. This applies to relationships in general and also to relationships with either God or man. Unfortunately we fail to consider that we are doing the exact same thing as the original couple in the Garden of Eden, partaking of the fruit of self effort in an attempt to be more like God!

Education is a wonderful thing. However, one must desire to be educated in order to appropriate and use the information presented. No student learns anything unless they are motivated to do so. Motivation can come from within or without. But without it, the student fails to fully absorb that which is being taught. Most of us want to help others learn what we know whether they want it or not. When we share our pearls of knowledge with totally deaf or disinterested ears, we simply babble to ourselves!

It's Your Fault

So, if you are stuck in a shallow relationship with God, it is completely your own fault. God has placed His Holy Spirit within you to teach you God's ways and affections. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of time and eternity. But, unless and until you desire to learn from

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Him, you will remain ignorant and dissatisfied spiritually. It is your choice. No one else can decide for you.

Road Less Traveled

The journey of living abandoned to intimacy with God can at times seem lonely. This is because so few even take the first step. Or if they do begin, they quit too soon to find the love, joy and peace it can bring. But as the proverbial saying goes, "It sometimes takes one step backward in order to take two steps forward." But the important thing is that there is no hurry or need to take the journey at high speed. As a matter of fact, the faster we go, the more beauty and scenery we miss.

Teaching Moments

Every experience in your life has the potential to teach you or others some valuable lesson. If you will search for the revelation each trial or difficulty may bring, you will be amazed at how much more God can teach you. Seize each moment (decision point), ponder its meaning with God, discover His purpose in it, and do what His Spirit directs you to do about it. "Seek and you will find." applies to every event in your life. Look for God in each one and you will see Him right there with you in it.

Casting Myself Into the Story

Although we may have many companions as we live abandoned to intimacy with God, nobody can live our experiences for us. Nor can we experience anybody else's life. When we come into God's Presence, we come by

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ourselves. It boils down to simply this, God and us. It is God's intention that I cast myself into each role in each parable of Jesus. By doing this, I can discover the truth about me and become more authentic.

The better I understand myself, the better my chances are of dealing with reality. The more I accept who I am, as opposed to who I wish I was, the greater my freedom to express myself. Since intimacy requires complete trust that my lover will never abandon me, in this state with God, my complete honesty sets me free. Perfect love casts out fear. And it is only fearless relationships that satisfy the soul.

Don't Let Others Do Your Thinking

Most religious people, even Christians, accept the doctrines of others rather than making up their own minds about God. We tend to become faithful to the religion of our parents. If we were treated badly by our parents, we may adopt anything other than their particular brand of religion. We seem to choose the *safety in numbers* over the narrow lonely road to life. The Bible is clear that the road to destruction is wide and heavily travelled. I suggest you abandon the *safety in numbers* theory in favor of the safety of God and His truth.

You and God Alone

There is only safety and security in the love of God. So, until you seek God alone as your trustworthy life partner, you will be in danger for most of your life's journey! The great news is that when you become intimate with God, not only *will you know* it, but also *others will testify* that they see the intimacy in you. There is no limit

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to intimacy. Keep on seeking deeper and richer affection for God. Let me qualify the limitless nature of God's intimacy. His offer and supply is unlimited. However, we can and do limit the measure of His intimacy which we receive by crowding it out with selfish indulgences, applause and self worship!

Pitch the Pulpit

Many Christians think that they would be better Christians if only they had better pastors and teachers. Likely the opposite would be true. Most of us tend to follow charismatic or influential people rather than blazing new trails. So, a more appealing pastor might actually become a crutch for you to lean on. The truth is this. The more you depend on another person for knowledge of God, the less you will *know* God for yourself.

A great orator may get your attention and affection. But no inspirational speaker can compare with the author of the Bible. And since we are given the presence of God's Holy Spirit, who inspired all of the writers of the Bible, we can learn far more and more accurately what God wants us to learn from His Word by His Spirit. Meditation is the practice which will bring us to stillness such that the Holy Spirit can guide us into all truth. You can trust Him! *Just be still.*

Release Control

Having been born to be control freaks, we have great difficulty letting God be in control, or anyone else, for that matter. Yet, control issues are the predominant ones leading to stress and unbecoming behaviors. One of my own pastors once said, "The comfort of God is

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wrapped in my release of my control over my life.” Later God added to this, “*and the lives of others.*” So a major element of a life abandoned to intimacy with God is the release of all control to God.

As long as I tried to maintain control over this or that, I lived with a pretty great measure of stress. This stress turned my concern for matters into worry, anxiety, guilt, shame and fear. So I began to equate *comfort* with *peace* and reworded my pastor’s statement. “The peace of God is wrapped in my release of my control over my life and the lives of others.” This one phrase has been a daily practice ever since.

Sick and Tired

When you get sick and tired of being sick and tired, of a less than satisfactory experience of God, is the very moment when God is most likely to begin revealing Himself in the most intimate ways! God is always madly in love with us. He is simply waiting for any who will join with Him in a passionate love affair. Intimacy cannot be achieved by thought or imagination. Intimacy only ever occurs by way of desperate desire to be intimate in any relationship. If you are serious about this journey of abandon to intimacy with God, you *will*, at times, experience a sense of loneliness for people. But when complete intimacy with God becomes a reality for you, there will never be a lonely moment for you again! I speak from personal experience. I have not experienced a single moment of loneliness in over 10 years!

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