



**Foundation Stone #1: Intimacy
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Intimacy with God: An Intimate Relationship Misunderstood by Some Ministers*

The most miserable people in the world are Christian leaders whose intimacy with God has gone cold. And it's so easy to let happen by becoming consumed with the "rituals" of our duties. We can delude ourselves into thinking we're experiencing intimacy with God by virtue of our busyness for him. In reality, we may only be experiencing religious activity.

Many believers think of intimacy with God as a set of behaviors: Bible study, prayer, worship attendance, fasting, evangelism, and so on. These were never intended to be the end goal of a relationship with God but merely some of the means by which such a relationship might be experienced. Adam and Eve walked intimately with God in the Garden, (Genesis 3:8) and Enoch was commended because he walked with God (Genesis 5:24).

There is a tendency among Christian leaders to mistake our investment in preparing sermons, ministry newsletters, Bible studies and the like with our pursuit of intimacy with God. They are not the same. Nevertheless, inviting God to meet with us as we do our preparation and asking the Holy Spirit to instruct us in how we should apply its truths to our own lives can revolutionize such times of preparation. Simply asking, "Lord, how does this apply to my life, my family, my work, my relationship with you?" *before* applying it to those to whom we minister can transform a "burden" of ministry into a fountain of blessing.

Depending on how neglected our own spiritual life has become by our own busyness, we may have to take on fewer projects to make space. However, what we lose in quantity we will gain back many times over in quality and depth in our ability to minister to the hurting people around us. In doing so, we may also discover that the newsletters and sermons we've been preparing *about* the love of God have been a subconscious attempt to earn God's approval. Being made to both love and be loved by God, we can find peace in simply *experiencing* God through the mundane tasks of our daily routines.

Thoughts to Ponder:

- What words would you use to describe your current relationship with God? How is it different from the way it used to be?
- How might you improve your overall level of satisfaction?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Todd Wilson".

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* This article is an excerpt from *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers* (InterVarsity Press, 2007)