

INTIMACY WITH GOD

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

Intimacy with God begins with the revelation of His love for us. God has placed in our heart both the desire and ability to know Him and the depths of His love. He yearns that we would be able to understand and embrace His commitment and unfailing love for us which then produces a hunger in us to give ourselves wholly back to Him in an ongoing, intimate way. When we receive Jesus as our Savior, our spirits are awakened with a desire which can only be satisfied as we grow in a lifestyle of devotion and pursuit. John 17:3 tells us, *“and this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Chris whom You have sent.”* Eternal life is the ongoing pursuit to know Jesus, the lover of our souls, in a deep and intimate way. This booklet will provide important keys to help awaken this longing for Him as well as give aids to cultivate a lifestyle of extravagant devotion back to Him.

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“DRAW ME AND I WILL RUN AFTER YOU!”

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.” (Jer. 31:3)

Salvation is a free gift, but intimacy with God, fellowshiping the deeper things of His heart, are for the hungry. He has hidden the depths of who He is in the garden of pursuit (Prov. 2:1-5; 25:2). We begin our journey here, at the entrance to this garden. We realize that we need Him to draw us, to awaken the revelation of His love and commitment to us, and to create a hunger that will only be satisfied with our gazing on Him face to face. God draws us with his very breath, His Word, and the truth of His affections and desire for us. We then ask for the invitation to come in, recognizing our utter inability to even begin our journey without Him first wooing us. The cry of our heart becomes the cry of the Apostle Paul, *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection . . . (Phil 3:10).”* We begin to feel a stirring within us and a cry in our spirit that says, “there must be more!”

It is in these cries that a lifelong process of drawing and running begins. Jesus always draws us first to Himself and His heart (intimacy) and then equips us to run with Him and His Bride fulfilling His burdens and purposes (ministry). Our tendency is to want to run first and be drawn to Him in intimacy when we have time. We must be established upon the foundational truth that God the Father has purposed to fashion a Bride for His son, Jesus, that will be equally yoked to Him in order to reign with Him. He yearns for us to be whole hearted, voluntary lovers in deep communion with Him, fully embracing and running after His Kingdom purposes (Matt. 22:37). When we recognize this as the cry of His heart, we will be able to set our heart toward this pursuit.

We begin by positioning ourselves at the entrance to this garden called, "Intimacy with God". As we call out for Him to draw us in, He will hear our cries and begin to draw us into the inner chamber of transformation. This is our place of meeting, or what Jesus refers to as "the secret place" (Matt. 6:6).

THE SECRET PLACE

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place . . . ” (Matt 6:6)

God is calling us to meet with Him in the secret place in prayer and meditation. It requires time set aside where we can quiet our thoughts from distractions and personal responsibilities. It is here that we are able to listen to His heartbeat, sense His Spirit and know His yearnings and desires. As we wait in the secret place, we remove the veil over our hearts in order to gaze on Him and be transformed into His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). He has been waiting for us in the secret place, calling us to come away. The entrance to the secret place is narrow, only allowing for those who come in humility and longing. You must come as you are knowing that He desires only you and your hunger for more of Him. In Matthew 6:6, Jesus gave us a picture of the secret place where He and His Father dwell and three specific keys concerning it.

- 1. A place of solitude.** Jesus refers to the secret place as a “room” we enter. This speaks of the inner most part of our heart, a place of hiddenness and transparency. We enter the secret place alone, without any props or agendas. It is a time for us to quiet our minds and engage our hearts in order to hear His voice, His wooing, *“My beloved spoke, and said to me: Rise up, my love, my fair one, And come away (SS 2:10).”*
- 2. A place of separation.** Once we enter this place of solitude, Jesus tells us to shut the door. We need to guard our time in the secret place. It needs to become the most cherished place to us. Jesus wants nothing less than our full attention. He wants to captivate us and desires that we also will be able to fully gaze on Him without distractions or interruptions.
- 3. A place of shelter.** Finally, Jesus gives us the promise that this is where our Heavenly Father dwells. Do we want to commune with Him? Then enter the secret place often. Do we desire His shelter? We will find it where He dwells as we abide under the shadow of His wings (Psalm 91:1).

KEYS FOR THE SECRET PLACE

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, . . . ” (2 Cor 10:4,5)

As you begin to cultivate a lifestyle of communion in the secret place, you will encounter obstacles that want to rob you and pull you away. Satan knows the fruit and transformation formed in the secret place and will oppose you every time you enter. It is vital that we understand that there will be “little foxes” (SS 2:15). However, the Lord has provided us with keys for the secret place.

The primary key is our knowledge of who God is and His deep affections for us. How we see God will directly affect how we respond to Him. The enemy knows this and does everything he can to form strongholds in our mind that are in direct opposition to the true knowledge of who He is. For example, if we are not convinced that God enjoys us in our weaknesses, we will avoid coming to Him in the secret place when we have sinned or failed. We need to meditate on the truths in His Word concerning His attributes so that we will relate to Him as He really is!

A next key is rest. As we begin to know Him, not just about Him, we are able to rest in the truth of who He is. The revelation of His affections and delight for us begins to flood our spirit, and we realize this is not a place to strive for His acceptance. We already have it! It is a place to rest in His embrace, His arms of faithful love and devotion. It is His commitment to us that is the strength of our life, not our commitment to Him. When feelings of unworthiness begin to rise up, we need to choose to rest in these truths.

Another key to use in the secret place is devotional music. It is here, in this inner chamber, that we need to disengage our mind and engage our heart. Our mind will want to wander and worry about all kinds of things! Listening to songs with an emphasis on devotion, worship, and adoration will immediately provide the “menu” for our mind leading us to communion and intimacy.

ABANDONMENT AND YIELDING

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart., with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matt 22:37)

As we enter the garden of the secret place, Jesus first calls us to prepare the soil of our heart through abandonment and yielding. He wants full possession of us. He yearns for a complete union with us where we are able to both receive His extravagant love for us and return it back to Him! He wants to plant and cultivate in our heart a “first love” for Him (Rev. 2:4). He knows that it is only this kind of love that will give itself wholly to Him in voluntary, extravagant devotion. Jesus knows that His Bride must be fashioned with the ability to trust Him and gaze on Him even when all else around is in turmoil. When we first enter this garden, in pursuit of intimacy with God, our human love is all we have to offer. It usually lacks the ability to endure seasons of difficulty, pain, testing, and dryness because it is rooted in the “longing to be loved.” Our human love is self centered and self motivated. Mature bridal love comes from Jesus Himself. It is an expression of His nature and His innermost being. Bridal

love is birthed in us through the revelation of His extravagant love for us which then awakens a holy passion in us to give ourselves wholeheartedly back to Him. To bring us to this level of union, He takes us through a process of exchange. We must exchange our human love, with all of its limits, for His pure and undivided love. We make this exchange in the soil of abandonment and yielding.

To abandon oneself is to “give yourself over unrestrainedly to the control or influence of another person with the intent of never again claiming a right to retake it (Webster’s Dictionary)”. Such an act probably frightens many of us because we have developed guarded spirits. Years of pain, disappointments and heartache have taught us to be cautious in how we relate to others and how much we give of ourselves. We usually come to Christ in this guarded condition. We then face a roadblock consisting of an inability to give ourselves fully to Him even though we desire to. At this point we must choose to yield to Him because of who He says He is.

To yield is “to surrender or submit oneself, as fitting or rightfully owed, to another and so die (Webster’s Dictionary).” When a husband and wife join

themselves together through the covenant of marriage, they have chosen to abandon and yield their lives to one another. At some point they made this choice based upon mutual trust. The means by which we enter into a relationship of abandonment and yielding with Jesus, is through faith and trust. This is why Jesus always draws us first with the revelation of who He is and how deeply He is committed to us. He knows each of us must face this crucial choice of exchanging our human love and self will, for His love and headship. Galatians 2:20 tells us, *“it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; . . .”* Abandonment and yielding is practiced by continually losing our own will in the will of God. As we choose to walk such a path, we will then begin to see the coals of “first love” ignite in our heart.

HONORING HIM

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” (Rev. 4:11)

The next step in preparing the soil of the garden is adding the spiritual nutrients which come through choosing to honor the Lord in all we are and do. As we allow Him to draw us into the secret place, we will find a deep longing being birthed in us for Jesus to be glorified and magnified, rather than ourselves. This is actually a transition place in our pursuit of intimacy with God. In Rev. 4:11, the twenty-four elders declared that all things were created for His will or His pleasure. Our flesh wants to draw attention to itself and serve its own desires, but the Holy Spirit in us longs to be in full communion with Jesus. Situations and circumstances that may not have affected us before will now grieve us as we sense the cry of the Holy Spirit to bring honor to Jesus in all we do.

To honor someone is to place significant value on them and is often demonstrated through a price being paid. The one thing of value we have to give Jesus is the very thing He died for, the full affections of our heart.

A beautiful account of honoring Jesus is found in John 12:1-8 with Mary of Bethany. Her passion was to honor Jesus in the greatest way she could, to extravagantly pour herself out to Him regardless of the cost. And so she, “took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.” Mary was moved to pour everything out to Jesus and then in an act of extravagant devotion, wiped His feet with her hair which spoke of complete surrender and consecration to Him.

Others witnessing what Mary did, felt it was a waste. Likewise, as we pour ourselves out to Jesus, giving Him first place in our lives, abandoning our thoughts, ways and desires, it may look to some as a waste. But to the One who has now captured our heart, it is precious, and demonstrates how much we value Him.

CULTIVATING A PASSION FOR JESUS

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor 11:2)

We now begin the season of planting in the garden through developing a lifestyle of extravagant devotion and passion for Jesus. The soil of our heart has been prepared and the fallow ground tilled as we have chosen to give ourselves to Jesus through abandonment and yielding. Rich nutrients have been added as we hunger more and more to see Him honored in our life through death to ourselves and the voluntary giving of our affections to Him. Our heart has been captured by a desire to be totally and completely His (John 17:26). The One who has very carefully and purposefully brought us to this place is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is working intensely within us to prepare us as a pure and spotless Bride for our heavenly Bridegroom. It is vital that we recognize His ministry of bringing us into intimacy with God.

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to reveal the deep and hidden things of God’s heart (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). Our heavenly Father knows how weak we are and how

often we will stumble in our journey of holy passion for His Son. In His wisdom and mercy, He has provided us with the master gardener, the Holy Spirit, who will pour out in abundance the love of God in our heart (Rom. 5:5)! It is He that transforms us into the image of God as we dwell in the secret place gazing upon the lover of our soul (II Cor. 3:18). He helps us in our weaknesses and knows how to intercede on our behalf (Rom. 8:26). His passion and fervent desire is to reveal Jesus and He will only speak those things given to Him by the Father and the Son (John 16:13-15). We can completely trust Him and need to fully embrace His means of preparing in us the garden of intimacy with God. He accomplishes this preparation by taking us through the ongoing process of receiving, waiting, testing, and releasing within a lifestyle of pursuit.

RECEIVING - TRANSFORMED THROUGH HIS EMBRACE

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18)

All of us have experienced the warmth and comfort of an embrace. There are times when difficulties or heartaches are so deep that words fail to convey what is needed. Then someone comes and in silence, embraces us. This simple act leaves us changed, giving us what words never could. We can't explain the exchange that took place, but we know that something was imparted in the depths of our being. God Almighty, the Creator of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, wants to embrace you. He does this through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is a spiritual process of receiving impartation through the experience of encountering and beholding the Lord.

The following is an example of how this process may unfold in a time of communion in the secret place. In response to His drawing, we enter a time of

seeking and waiting upon Him. We use the keys He has given us by resting in the truth of who He is and His affections for us. This allows us to remove hindrances and to abandon ourselves to Him with an unbridled love. We look to the Holy Spirit as we allow worship or the meditation of His word to wash over us. We begin to cry out for Him to consume us with a passion to know Him. We begin to sense the longing in our heart increase and cry out for more. The Holy Spirit may bring to mind a certain scripture or truth to meditate on. In hunger, we begin to chew on it and allow it to go deep into our spirits.

Again, we ask for more. Then, like streams in the desert, we sense a deep peace flood our spirits, a spiritual peace that passes all understanding. We are now in the chamber of our Beloved, face to face, heart to heart. We are consumed with a sense of awe and wonder and we sit in silence, not wanting to break this sweet communion with mere words. Yet, in the silence we realize He is speaking to the depths of who we are. Like the ocean tide being drawn to places it has not touched, we begin to communicate through the language of unspoken words. This is His embrace. We are beholding Him in this experience of His presence.

WAITING - ENLARGING OUR CAPACITY TO RECEIVE MORE OF HIM

“and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately” (Luke 12:36)

In times of receiving, we are allowing His embrace to transform us into His image. In seasons of waiting, we are cooperating with the Holy Spirit, actively working together to water the seeds of the revelation of His love for us. During this time, we often sense a lack of His presence which then causes us to seek Him more earnestly. We search for our Beloved in all the familiar places and develop an increasing hunger for more of Him. Our cries of anguish are only met with silence and we may feel that He has abandoned us. He has not left us, but has only stepped back to draw us out and enlarge our capacity to receive more of Him. The hunger and lack of fulfillment is producing the very thing He is after, a reaching in our heart for more of Him. We need to see the value of waiting for our Beloved, and continue to seek Him. While we wait, we should apply the following keys:

- 1. Schedule Time** - Establish a regular devotional prayer time. Treasure this time and place the highest value on it. Make it a priority, including it in your schedule. If you just try to fit it in when you feel like it, it will never happen! Realize that others may not understand it's importance or priority in your life. You have made a commitment to a lifestyle, not an activity.
- 2. Focus on Consistency not Inspiration** - When we do not sense His presence like before, it will seem dry and barren, completely unanointed. Establish in your heart that you will be faithful and consistent in keeping your times with Him even if it feels like nothing is happening. Recognize that He is using this time to produce more hunger in you, a reaching for Him, which enlarges your heart to receive more of Him.
- 3. Use Devotional Aids** - Allow this time to cultivate the truths of who He is, not just the experience of His presence. Spend time meditating on His Word, especially specific scriptures that speak of His attributes and personality. The emphasis here is not for study but for devotion. Use it as a means to turn your

heart toward Him as you receive the truths of who He is. Pray the scriptures back to Him by personalizing what you are reading. Use devotional music and let the words become the cry of your heart.

- 4. Start the Habit of journaling** - Throughout the Old Testament, God pleaded with His people not to forget who He is or what He had done for them. Likewise, God will give you nuggets in the secret place to encourage you in the times when you do not sense Him. Write these things down in your journal and meditate on them when you need to be renewed in His faithfulness.

Waiting is a time for producing consistency before inspiration, faithfulness before fruitfulness, the recognition of His voice before the experience of His acts. Jesus desires a Bride that knows Him intimately not just feels Him passionately. He knows that bridal love must be planted securely in the knowledge of who He is. Waiting is one of the divine tools the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish this by creating a longing and hunger that will enlarge our heart to receive more of Him!

TESTING - DEVELOPING ENDURANCE TO RUN WITH HIM

“Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out” (Song of Solomon 4:16)

At the same time we are waiting for our Beloved and experiencing an intense longing for Him, we will often encounter testing through trials, hardships, disappointments, etc.. This season has often been referred to as the “dark night of the soul” and must come in an effort to strengthen the tender shoots of intimacy that are beginning to show in our life. There are certain “spices” that He desires from us that will only be released through this process of testing which include the cold “north winds,” the refiner’s fire. We have stepped into the crucible of preparation and proving for “first love,” bridal love, and need to focus on three areas the Holy Spirit is developing in our lives during this time:

- 1. He is strengthening that which He has already planted by drawing our roots into the depths of who Jesus is.** During this season of testing, we face the crisis of who Jesus has become to us. Any strongholds of wrong thinking will quickly manifest and demand our attention. He desires that these impurities

come to the surface in order that they can be removed and replaced with the truths of who He is. At this time, it is essential that we saturate ourselves in the Bible and allow His revealed word to bathe us and renew our minds (Eph. 5:26).

- 2. He is proving His faithfulness.** He purposely allows this season in order that we would experience the reality that it is His faithfulness, His commitment to us, that sustains us. Although we may feel abandoned during this time and not be able to make sense of our circumstances, the truth is He is still our faithful Bridegroom, jealously guarding us and drawing us deeper to His heart.
- 3. He is developing in us an endurance to run with Him.** To endure is to persevere under the weight of something with an attitude of hopeful expectancy. We must have our hope rooted in who He is and His unflinching commitment to His Bride, not in our own abilities. It is during the season of waiting and testing that the Holy Spirit is developing in us the ability to endure, to be able to stay close to His side in the face of fear, uncertainties, difficulties and seemingly impossible situations knowing nothing can separate us from Him (Rom. 8:35-39).

RELEASING - EXCHANGING OUR LIFE FOR HIS

*"I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice . . . Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!"
(Song of Solomon 5:1)*

The Holy Spirit has diligently been at work in the garden of intimacy with God, cultivating in us a passion for Jesus, We have felt His embrace, the very touch of God on our heart. We have experienced the intense longing for Him as we waited for our Beloved knowing He was enlarging our heart to receive more of Him. We yielded to the season of testing with it's cold north winds and now the spices are beginning to release their fragrance. Others are now drawn into the garden because of the sweet scent of these spices and Jesus, our Beloved, begins to share us freely with others. The time of releasing has come where we will begin to develop a history of running with Jesus. We are learning what true ministry is and responding to His desires instead of fulfilling merely our own visions.

We are now completely His. Nothing else matters but His purposes, His passions and the burdens of His heart. We say "yes" to wherever He leads us,

Our life is no longer our own (Gal. 2:20) and our greatest delight is to give ourselves extravagantly to Him in devotion and pursuit. It is here that He desires to form in us a history with Him, knowing His voice, confident in His leading, responding without hesitation when He beckons us to run with Him. Up to now, the Holy Spirit has been preparing us by cultivating in us a passion for Jesus. The final process, that of releasing, will now seal what has been planted.

Releasing is a time for stepping out of our comfort zones. As Jesus calls us out, we allow Him to form in us a history of personal experiences of who He is. Intimacy requires this level of knowing someone. When we share with others about His faithfulness, it is because we have an experience not just a theory. He wants to prove Himself to us so that we will know Him and be able to run with Him in full trust and abandonment. The cry of His heart is to have a Bride that experiences Him passionately, knows Him intimately, and follows Him obediently.

MATURE LOVE

*“Who is this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved? . . . ”
(Song of Solomon 8:5)*

Mature love is total and complete abandonment to Jesus. The Holy Spirit has faithfully planted us in the garden of intimacy with God. He has skillfully brought us through seasons designed to reveal and cultivate in us a greater revelation and understanding of our Heavenly Bridegroom. He knows that it is through this unveiling of the face of Jesus, that we will receive the knowledge of the glory of God and then be able to voluntarily give ourselves to Him (2 Cor. 4:6). As a flower opens it's petals to the morning sun, we now desire to give ourselves wholeheartedly to the lover of our soul. We are coming up out of the wilderness, the times of testing, difficulty and preparation, and we are leaning upon our beloved in surrender and abandonment . . . this is mature love.

The revelation and truth that we are His inheritance, destined to reign with Him for eternity, explodes in our heart. It is not about us; it's all about Him! Our identity, our destiny, is to be wholly His, knowing His voice, hearing His

heartbeat, fulfilling His purposes. We are leaning on our Beloved, gazing into His face, trusting His ways, allowing our every step to be directed by Him. It no longer matters what He can do for us, or how our ministry can be fulfilled. The consuming fire in our lives now is simply our Beloved and all that concerns Him. Our desires have now become His desires. Whether we feel Him or not no longer matters. We know who He is and have drunk deeply from the well of revelation of His commitment to us. If we stumble, we now run into His embrace knowing His devotion and pleasure for us is not dependent on our successes or failures. He loves us with an everlasting love and with lovingkindness He draws us to Himself. (Jer. 31:3). He has become the passion of our life! Our obsession is now to be His!

CONCLUSION

Our journey to intimacy with God begins with the revelation of His love for us which awakens in us the desire to step into the garden of pursuit. It requires ongoing nurturing and is a lifelong pursuit as we desire to seek out the depths of our Beloved. The progression toward intimacy that has been described in this booklet is likened to a garden that is meant to be visited over and over again. Different seasons will find you being drawn to specific areas of the garden as the Holy Spirit jealously seeks to prepare you for your heavenly Bridegroom.

In addition, you may find yourself losing your first love through neglect. In Revelation 2:4-5, we are given the method for renewing this “first love”. We are to remember from where we have fallen, repent, and do the former things. Do not allow condemnation or failure to stop your pursuit of intimacy with God. It is not your attainment that He looks at but the intention and reaching of your heart for Him. He desires only you and your hunger for more of Him!

Finally, receive the truth that intimacy with God is attainable for all and not just a chosen few. Jesus' final prayer to His Father was a plea that we would love Him with the same love that His Father has for Him (John 17:26)! It is His desire and His will for you to know Him passionately and intimately! Make this your great quest and you will begin to see forming in you the great end time cry . . .

“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, “let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. 22:17



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SCAN FOR SUNDAY
SERVICE TIMES

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