

ENEMIES OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

by Pattie DeLea



When the Lord Jesus was asked by a lawyer which commandment was the greatest, He replied as recorded in Matthew 22:37. It states “You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great, most important, principal, and first commandment” (amplified). These words of Jesus, instantly tell us how to prioritize our life. There are many good things in this life, even important or urgent things, but Jesus said loving God with all that is within us is the principal thing. What is your relationship like with Jesus? Do you really know Him as your closest confidante, your dearest friend, your Lord and Savior? Do you know His sense of humor, His anger against injustices, His pleasures? Have you heard Him weeping over the lost? Can you sense His heart for others? If not, you need to examine your own heart. Perhaps you are following at a distance. Perhaps you don’t know Him as you ought. His heart is for deep ongoing relationship with you. Not on and off, not sometimes, but steadily and always. All relationships take time and effort. This one is no different. In fact, this relationship will be a struggle. Not because Jesus is trying to get away from you, but because there is an enemy of your soul that hates you to have relationship with the living God. All sorts of distractions will arise as you pursue Christ. These distractions come in many forms but basically are from the world, the flesh, and the devil. The worse, are when an individual is not aware they are being distracted! All distractions work to diminish or lessen our first love relationship with Jesus. Today, I will discuss four areas for you to ponder in your own life.

The first area that diminishes our first love is our identity. As believers in Jesus Christ our identity should always be in the “new creation in Christ” that God made us to be. Key words here are IN CHRIST. We all have many roles in this life: father, mother,

Don’t confuse Identity With Function

husband, wife, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, grandparent, accountant, engineer, minister, apostle, dental assistant, real estate agent, teacher, pilot, taxi driver, nurse, actress, doctor, therapist, worship leader, cashier, pastor, etc. All these roles are

functions, however, and not who we are! These roles are what we do, and they are simply jobs. I am certainly not saying it is not important to do what God calls you to do in this life. Quite the contrary-you must know your identity and keep it in Christ if you are to be successful in any work the Lord may call you to-but that is only a function, it is not you. Our true identity in Christ Jesus is like all the great Bible truths-they must be visited and revisited to stay alive in our hearts and minds. Never forget Jesus does not need us-we need Him. He chooses in His outrageous mercy to work with mankind. I will never forget something I heard Pastor Jack Hayford said, “Jesus is more interested in your being than in your doing”. This points to having a relationship with Jesus in-

stead of with your function in this life-whatever that may be. A function can, and will change-Jesus never will. He is “the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). His love is never based on our function. He desires to be your best friend.

How does He want us to follow after Him? Again, same verse with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. It means that as you are “functioning” you always have in your mind that all you do and how you live is for the “audience of ONE”- Him. He is the ONE you desire to please above all others. Your heart burns for more of Him, your soul longs for Him, your mind (thoughts and ponderings) are about Him day and night. You can’t get enough of His sweet presence, His beautiful voice, His lovely whispers, His leadings and awesome personality, and amazing sense of humor. You love the revelations about Himself that He gives you. You hear Him when it is still and quiet but you also hear Him in the depths of noisy worship! Wow, it sounds like when you “fall in love,” and isn’t that the point? Jesus wants you to love Him every day of your life.

Audience Of ONE

That is exactly how He feels about you. When you get quiet with God-is it for YOU? Are you asking Him to answer prayer, trying to hear a sermon idea, whining, and complaining? Stop all that and just love and adore the Bridegroom King...intend in your heart to ask for, to want nothing, but to love HIM. One author said “don’t treat God like you do a gas station” in other words getting a fill up because you need it. If your identity is in the wrong place many things will offend you, the least of which is that you will not be able to receive correction without becoming defensive. Simply because you will take a correction to be about you when it may be just about your function. Remember, You are NOT your function. Don’t get identity and function confused. Jesus knew His identity so well that He was never offended. Not even on the cross “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. Frankly, I believe every believer should wake up in the morning and the first thought of the day should be of Jesus. If this is not true of yourself, then examine yourself and repent. In the Song of Solomon it speaks of Dove’s eyes. We’ve learned that doves have no peripheral vision. They only see straight ahead of them. They cannot become distracted from what they put their eyes upon. That is how God wants us to be concerning Him as our first love. Focus on Him and never take your eyes off of what is in front of you. We become what we see consistently. See Jesus. Become like Him. Don’t allow any distractions, good, bad, or seemingly indifferent to distract from your first love. As you press into God, you will gain more of Him and less of yourself in the process. Follow hard after God. Pant after Him as the Psalmist said “As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul panteth after Thee” (Psalm 42:1).



The next thing that can diminish our first love relationship is Pride, sometimes called the messiah complex. Pride is defined as an inordinate self esteem, a good opinion of one’s own dignity, importance, merit or superiority

whether cherished in the mind or displayed in conduct (one is secret the other outward). In Proverbs 8:13 it talks about twisted speech. This is anything contrary to the Word of God. The word wicked comes from the root word to twist like a wick, thus wicked. The enemy always twists God’s word. Proverbs 16:24 talks about honeycombs. Just as honey penetrates every part of the comb that it becomes pitted with a pattern, so God wants His word to penetrate us to form the pattern of Christ within us. He wants to form Jesus into the fabric and makeup of who we are. Be careful if any of the following things describes you. You may be on the road to pride. Do you yearn for the praise and accolades of men? Just because you are the object of praise, does not necessarily cause pride, rather it is the longing for it that is the danger. Are you a score-keeper? Do you add up your prestige points in your mind and compare them with lack of points others may not have? When others do things differently than yourself do you consider them inferior because your way is the only way? You better repent. The answer to pride is it’s opposite, humility. I love what Dr. Peter Wagner says in his book “Humility”. “Humility is a personal choice we must each make,” 1 Peter 5:5 and Romans 12:2 & 3.

Andrew Murray says, “part of humility is a willingness to be underestimated, or slighted and to feel no resentment.” The road to humility is to decide to be humble, steer clear of legalism in yourself or others, adhere to Biblical submission, and submit to God’s leading, accept legitimate praise, but reject flattery. Refusal to accept legitimate praise is not a sign of humility-it is a sign of insecurity. Learn to just say thank you

Another issue that poisons our first love with Jesus is envy. Envy is often referred to as “The Green-Eyed Monster.” The root of envy is pride. Envy is defined as malice, ill will, painful or resentful awareness of a perceived advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. Read James 3:7 through 4:10 amplified Bible. Signs of possible envy are: rejoicing over another’s failures (this is hidden-envy usually is a hidden sin) remember, as a member of the Body of Christ any loss, failure, gain or victory is everyone’s-not just yours as we are members one of another 1 Corinthians 3:3. Another sign of envy is compulsively defending yourself against criticism without examining if there is any truth in it. How about when you know you are misunderstood? Do you hanker to get in the last word or can you come in the opposite spirit? Can you let it slide? Here’s one-how do you handle someone else getting credit for something you did? I like what Matt Sorge says in his book titled “Envy”...“envy does not have to be full grown to be present within our hearts.” There are hundreds of Bible examples of how envy led to much evil. Here are a few: Abraham and Lot, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Rachel and Leah, Miriam and Moses, Korah and Levites, Saul and David, Barabbas and Jesus.



One thing that will bring envy to the surface is promotion. In fact, Pastor Michael Cavanaugh says, “envy is the product of being favored by God.” Don’t wait for promotion to do this-ask the Holy Spirit immediately and if He shows you this evil is there, repent on the spot. That is why we need His guidance and care.

Finally, another area that can cause problems in our relationship with Jesus is our efforts at perfectionism. The Bible tells us in Matthew 5:48 (amplified), “you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect, that is, grow into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity.” Striving to be perfect is one thing. Perfectionism is an entirely different story. In order to understand the difference we must look at the two definitions from Webster’s dictionary. Perfect means to be proficient, without fault, satisfying all requirements, accurate, or faithfully representing the original (that is my favorite-we are to faithfully represent Jesus to the best of our ability). Perfectionism on the other hand is defined as having the disposition or attitude or thinking that regards anything short of perfection to be unacceptable. Is God perfect? Yes, of course. He tells us in fact to imitate Him as dear children (Eph 1:6).

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