

Week Three: *Intimacy*
1 Corinthians 1:4-10

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Intimacy is a term that is often relegated to the physical aspect of a relationship. But it is more multifaceted than that. Intimacy is the mutual openness, vulnerability, and sharing between people. Intimacy can be found in a marriage, dating relationship, family, or even a friendship. When you think about the close relationships in your life, which ones, if any, would you describe as intimate using this definition?
2. It seems obvious, that intimate relationships are close relationships, but what actually makes them close? In other words, what makes a relationship close, by your definition?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-10. The author, Paul, was writing to a group of people that he knew well. What did he call them in verse 10? How did he exhort them to treat each other?
4. In order for the Corinthians to avoid divisions and be united in mind and thought, what would have to happen first?
5. It's impossible to be united in thought and mind with someone that you do not know. In *The Power of the Other*, Dr. Henry Cloud said, "True connection always means being emotionally and functionally invested in other people, in a give-and-receive dynamic. Disconnection lacks something, in one direction or the other—either in the giving or the receiving. Truly connected people do both. They are emotionally present and able to give and to receive." When you think about your closest relationship(s), how would you rate your give and take dynamic? Is there give and take in both directions?
6. Sometimes our relationships are lacking because we are unwilling to do the hard and messy work of improving them. It's sometimes easier to leave them well-enough alone. Thinking about these same relationship(s), how motivated are you to work on yours? Explain your answer.
7. End your FIFTEEN by committing to take an honest look at the state of intimacy in your close relationships this week, even if it is uncomfortable.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Do you believe in love at first sight? Why or why not?
9. In *Psychology Today*, Theresa E. DiDonato, Ph.D. says, "Love at first sight isn't really "love". The kind of qualities that are known to reflect love—intimacy, commitment, passion—are not particularly strong in those first moments when people say they've fallen in love at first sight." What aspects of intimacy are missing in someone you just met?
10. Read the following verses and note what each have to say about our relationship with God.
 - a. Jeremiah 1:5

b. Romans 8:29

c. 1 Corinthians 8:3

11. One of the objections to love at first sight is that the person you have just met does not truly know you. The opposite can be said of God; he knew you even before you were born. How does that truth affect how you feel about his love for you?
12. Now read Ephesians 5:1-2. How are we to respond to God's love?
13. It's so hard, but so important, to be truly known, even in the most intimate of relationships. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Give thanks to God that he models this for us by truly knowing us and still loving us deeply.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

14. God's love is a picture of true love. Researcher Brené Brown says, "True love begins with being seen and known. In order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen." If being seen and known is important for us to feel love, then it is important if we want to express love to others well. How can you better express love in your relationships? Try to make your answer very practical by thinking about one particular relationship in your life. How can you make them feel seen by you?
15. Thinking about this same relationship in question #14, are you satisfied by how much you feel seen and loved by him or her? Why or why not?
16. How might taking the actions toward the other person that you listed in this same question increase the depths to which you feel known and loved in that relationship?
17. Yesterday we talked about how we are able to show love, because God first showed his love for us through his Son, Jesus. In his book, *The Marriage Builder*, Larry Crabb writes, "The central truth that serves as the platform for Christian marriage—and for all Christian relationships—is that in Christ we are at every moment eternally loved and genuinely significant." How would you describe God's love toward us?
18. Read Ephesians 5:25. How does the Bible describe God's love for us?
19. While there are many ways to describe God's love, you cannot describe it accurately without using the term sacrificial. What does sacrificial love look like in our modern-day relationships?
20. It is truly life-giving to feel seen and known deeply, and to offer that same gift to someone else. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, pray that God would show you how you can offer to others the gift of being known and loved by you.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

21. Look again at 1 Corinthians 1:4-10, 18:18-30. How did God call his people to treat each other? How do you think Christians are doing as a whole?
22. How have you seen the divisions in the church impact those outside the church? Try to use a specific answer.
23. What is the impact on our society when people can't get along and we are divided?
24. It's easy to see the impact on our society; gridlock happens and work does not get done. Thinking along these lines, how are smaller groups of people impacted by divisions? (Think families, friend groups, co-workers, etc.)
25. Our emotional state impacts every area of our life. We aren't meant to do life alone. In *The Power of the Other*, Dr. Henry Cloud says, "Ask many people about their greatest accomplishments and challenges overcome, and you will find one thing in common: there was someone on the other end who made it possible." In your life, who has helped you succeed? How would you describe your level of intimacy with that person? How has that relationship impacted you?
26. Read Hebrews 6:19-20. What is the benefit of this type of intimacy?
27. With greater unity, more things are accomplished. With greater intimacy, people are changed. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you see the new life and opportunities deeper intimacy can create.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

28. Researcher Brené Brown says, "One of the greatest barriers to connection is the cultural importance we place on 'going it alone.' Somehow we've come to equate success with not needing anyone. Many of us are willing to extend a helping hand, but we're very reluctant to reach out for help when we need it ourselves. It's as if we've divided the world into 'those who offer help' and 'those who need help.' The truth is that we are both." Which side of the line are you more comfortable with? In other words, how easy is it for you to accept help from someone else? Explain your answer.
29. Think about a time when you asked someone to help you with a challenge. What was the impact on your relationship?
30. One of the downsides of going it alone is that we often stop getting to know others on a deeper level through working through challenges together. Thinking again about your previous example, what did you learn about yourself during that process?
31. In his book, *Shattered Dreams – God's Unexpected Path to Joy*, Larry Crabb says, "I find it much easier to counsel than to be counseled, to reach out to a friend in my small group who is feeling insecure than to reveal my own

insecurity. The truth is we don't much like being dependent. We don't enjoy admitting how desperately we long for someone's kindness and involvement. It's so humbling." Why is asking for help often humbling for us?

32. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-11. Who is actually the one to be pitied?

33. Now John 15:12-14. How does Jesus us call us to live?

34. If we are to grow in love for one another, we must both give and accept the help of a friend. As you finish your final FIFTEEN this week, ask God to help you avoid the trap of complacency that can so easily occur in our closest relationships.