

# **Intimacy:** **A 100-Day Guide to** **Better Relationships**

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*Douglas Weiss*

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## INTRODUCTION

# Searching for Genuine Intimacy

**G**enuine intimacy is the cry of our nation. Many individuals search through multiple marriages trying to find the vital connection their souls long for. Still louder shouts the silence of the man or woman who has been married for decades and feels alone in that partnership. Many feel they have done everything right at home and with their spouses, yet there is little or no intimacy.

Far too many partners feel like roommates—as if they are just getting by emotionally. If fulfillment is promised, then why is it that few couples enjoy that impassioned connection? What do a few sparkling relationships have that seems to escape the larger population? These questions and more are what this book will review and answer.

I have lived in the laboratory of other people's marriages for many years. In addition, I myself have journeyed from the inability to be intimate to a place of deep intimacy and great fulfillment with my wife, Lisa.

Early in my married life I had the feeling that I was surrounded by walls. I desperately wanted to step out from behind those walls but could not find a way to connect to my wife. God in His graciousness drew me into the field of marriage and family counseling where I gained much understanding. Still, no one explained, “These are the steps to intimacy: 1, 2, 3.” The mystery of intimacy and the skills required to build and maintain it continued to elude me—as it does so many others in my field.

It is in the laboratory of real marriage, real crisis, real love and genuine desire for intimacy that we will solve the mystery. Part of the solution can be discovered in a series of principles that can be applied daily. I’ve counseled couples whose relationships were so distant that they had not enjoyed sex for more than a decade. When these same couples applied the principles in this book, within six weeks not only had they rekindled their sexual relationship, but they actually started to like one other again for the first time in years.

Intimacy is really not a mystery at all—it is a process. Intimacy is the fruit of being in this process. Allow me to explain it another way: Wealth is a process. You work. You save. Maybe you invest. But to those who follow the basic principles of wealth and apply them, regardless of how they feel about them, wealth happens to them. The same applies to your health. Under normal circumstances, the process of eating right and exercising keeps you healthy. Those who do what they want, eat what they want or spend what they want often do not achieve optimal health or wealth.

The same is true with intimacy. Those who do what they want emotionally with their spouse do not achieve optimal intimacy. The following pages will guide you into the process and the practical application of intimacy. Since intimacy is a process, I strongly believe that after one hundred days of applying these skills you will reap such dynamic and satisfying benefits that you will never want to abandon these

principles of living and the deeply satisfying intimacy with your spouse that they can bring—ever!

I have practiced these exercises in my relationship with my wife. Lisa and I have been married for fifteen years, and as we have applied these principles to our marriage we have continued to grow closer and stronger together. I believe the greatest gift to our children is a strong, vibrant and lovingly intimate marriage. I wouldn't ask you to do something that I don't practice myself. Throughout the years, these principles have given life to my wife, to many of my clients and to me. As you practice the power of intimacy, I pray that you and your partner will experience the abundant life that Jesus has promised each of you in your most intimate relationship—your marriage.

Intimacy is really not a mystery  
at all—it is a process.

The next one hundred days can breathe life back into your marriage, but you must work at it. Determine to spend this time mastering the basic skills necessary to enjoy satisfying and enduring intimacy with your spouse.

## ONE

# The Awesome Power of Spiritual Intimacy

**T**he most uniquely powerful picture of spiritual intimacy on earth is revealed in the oneness of the Godhead, glimpsed through Scripture. The Word (Jesus Christ) and God were one in complete harmony, unity and accord from the very beginning of time. That same oneness and togetherness are a part of God's will for us in our marriages.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

—JOHN 1:1

I love reading the Bible and feeling the very keen sense that the Author, the Holy Spirit, has intimacy as a personal objective for its readers from beginning to end. God made man and woman in the garden not only to fellowship with each other but to fellowship as a couple with Him.

In the beginning God walked with Adam and Eve daily—until sin severed the union. Imagine as a couple having God

the Father teaching you to love, commit and feel equally loved and understood. But the Holy Spirit does not leave us only with the picture of how God intended intimacy to be. He also pens a great word picture of Christ and the church.

The picture is of the hero and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved and died for His bride so that she might be with Him forever. This word picture closes with Jesus coming back for His bride and hosting a great banquet to celebrate their eternal intimacy.

God is a romantic, and He is definitely interested in the issue of intimacy. That is why it is so important that we begin this study about intimacy by reflecting on the scripture, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” Without God, intimacy is short-lived and incomplete. Even if it were possible for a husband and wife to achieve emotional and physical intimacy, their lives would feel incomplete without spiritual intimacy—living as individuals and as a couple in relationship with the all-loving God.

My personal spiritual journey started with the love of God being poured into me through the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without His consistent love and gentleness, I would know of nothing to write on these pages about intimacy. He is my greatest teacher on giving and receiving love and intimacy.

The scripture that declares this message loud and clear to me is Psalm 127:1: “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” This can be no truer than for the couple who desires intimacy within their marriage without actively involving God in the process. As this scripture indicates, they would definitely be laboring in vain.

You may be a born-again Christian believer. But you may be someone who has never accepted the love of God into your life.

If you have never encountered God personally, I encourage you to take a moment and ask Jesus Christ to show you His

love and His forgiveness for all the sins that have separated you from Him. Only then will you experience true intimacy from the master of intimacy Himself, Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, spiritual intimacy is not an automatic attribute of all who believe. I have spent countless sessions with believers who don't understand even the basics of spiritual intimacy. Some individuals and couples struggle painfully with the concept of intimacy with the Father.

God is a romantic, and He definitely is interested in the issue of intimacy.

In this chapter, I will outline some of the basics of spiritual intimacy for individuals and couples. In addition, chapter 9 provides a very practical application of this information to help you and your spouse experience spiritual intimacy in your day-to-day lifestyle.

### ***HONESTY IS THE ONLY POLICY***

Honesty is so basic to spiritual intimacy that I must address it as the first issue. Intimacy can never be increased where dishonesty and deception exist.

Many individuals have what I call an “image relationship” with themselves. They work at crafting their image so much that they themselves buy it hook, line and sinker. Such image crafters usually focus on the wonderful parts of themselves, such as their gifts or shining qualities. Their self-styled image may be charismatic, outwardly displaying wonderful virtues such as caring, sincerity, spirituality and intelligence. They often appear nearly perfect.

When I was a young Christian in Bible college I couldn't even walk out of the dorm room unless everything matched. I was quite an image to behold—a young, clean-cut, well-dressed Bible school student and choir member. Nevertheless,



I only had an image relationship with myself. I was completely unaware of my real heart condition or even how I truly felt. I appeared righteous and was always ready to convince anyone that I was OK. The only problem was that I wasn't real. I was well schooled in all the religious rhetoric; I could spout off dozens of memorized Bible verses to fit the moment, but I couldn't have a relationship to save my life.

Honesty about how you feel,  
honesty about your perceptions  
and honesty with who you are is  
central to spiritual intimacy.

What does this have to do with spiritual intimacy? Everything if you're a Christian desiring intimacy. In truth I was a hurting human being who used religion to protect my heart, and it took God years to tear down that self-image so that I could begin to experience genuine intimacy.

Self-honesty is very important. Not one of us human beings is perfect or even close to it. If you take any one of us away from the normal comforts of daily life and place us in an unusually stressful situation, such as an all-day layover in an airport or being stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, less than wonderful things will often come out of our hearts.

It's absolutely wonderful to be human, isn't it? We are imperfect by our very design. If we could be perfect, then we wouldn't need a Savior, would we? Growing beyond false religious images and discovering who you really are is just the beginning of spiritual intimacy.

Are you thinking that this really doesn't apply to you? Try this exercise to find out. Think of your three greatest flaws. Now take a minute and come up with seven more. I find that in doing this, many of us can come up with one or two—but ten? Who even imagines that he could have ten faults? Take a