

Becoming One: God's Biblical Design for Marriage

The Gift of Intimacy

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Becoming One: The Gift of Intimacy

Malachi 3:6–12 NLT

“I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

“But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’

“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!

“But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’

“You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

Genesis 2:21–25 NLT

So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’ ” This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

Biblically, intimacy in marriage is the experience of being fully known and fully accepted within covenantal faithfulness.

Hebrews 4:12–16 NLT

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable. So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Growing in biblical intimacy is bidirectional. We grow vertically with God and horizontally with our spouse.

Intimacy = [Honesty + Security + Selfless Love (Agape)] Demonstrated Consistently Over Time

James 5:16 NLT

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

1 Corinthians 13:4–7 NLT

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

John 13:34–35 NLT

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

Colossians 3:13–14 NLT

Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Small Group Guide: The Gift of Relational Intimacy

Opening Question:

What comes to mind when you think of the word “intimacy?”

When we talk about intimacy in marriage, most people think first of the physical side, which is important and beautiful as God designed it. But intimacy is much more than physical closeness. It's about deep relational connection—the kind of knowing and acceptance we desire in marriage. It's about being fully known and fully accepted by your spouse, without fear or pretense.

This kind of intimacy is what Adam experienced with Eve in the Garden of Eden, when the Bible says they were “both naked and felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). That openness and security is what God intends for marriage and includes being known deeply and loved fully.

Interestingly, this intimate connection is not only found between husband and wife, but it is also a picture of our relationship with God. Hebrews 4:12-16 reminds us that God knows us completely, even our innermost thoughts and struggles, yet we can come boldly before Him because of Jesus. We are fully known and fully accepted by God through the cross, and that same eternal covenant foundation is what our marriage is built on.

So, biblical intimacy includes:

1. Honesty: Being vulnerable, truthful about who you really are without hiding anything. This means confessing struggles, sharing emotions, and walking in integrity. It requires courage but creates real connection.

2. Security: Feeling safe in the relationship - knowing your spouse will not reject you or run when things get tough. This security comes through covenant commitment (not just feelings), faithfulness, protecting your spouse's dignity, and building trust that lasts through trials.

3. Selfless Love (Agape): Loving your spouse with grace, forgiveness, patience, and empathy. This is not based on feelings but on a choice to give without strings or conditions, reflecting Jesus' love for us. Selfless love empowers intimacy to grow by creating a strong bond over time.

Together, honesty, security, and selfless love **demonstrated consistently over time** build the deep intimacy every marriage needs. As we grow closer to God (vertically), we increase our capacity for intimacy with our spouse (horizontally). This becomes a journey of becoming one – soulfully, spiritually, *and* physically.

For Discussion:

1. Why do you think it's sometimes hard to be truly honest and vulnerable, even with your spouse?
2. How can the covenant commitment in marriage build security in a relationship, especially when feelings are unpredictable? Have you experienced or witnessed how security promotes deeper intimacy?
3. How does growing in your relationship with God help you develop intimacy in your marriage?