

Video clip 3 What path are you on?

I'm not sure if you know this or not, but when a baby is born, it cries a lot. Because it has no other way to communicate, no other way to say what they want or need, they cry. Kyle Idleman writes: "When my children were babies and they were crying, I never knew what was wrong. I could never figure it out. I mean I was trying. I tried to understand what they needed, but I just didn't know. And when I didn't know, I would try everything. Process of elimination, right? I'd pick them up and hug them, give them the bottle, change the diaper—38 seconds flat is my best time. When their cries got especially desperate, I would turn the channel from SportsCenter over to Teletubbies. In the end, though, I didn't know what to do.

"But my wife just knew. She would listen to the cry and say, "Oh, she's tired." Sure, enough, the baby needed a nap. Or she'd say, "Oh, she's hungry," and so you'd give the baby a bottle and all was right with the world. My wife would hear another cry and she'd say, "Oh, she needs her diaper changed. She wants her daddy to change it." At that point, I figured that my daughter wasn't really asking for me to change the diaper, but you don't argue with the baby whisperer."

Mothers tend to have an intimate, intuitive connection with their babies. In fact, there's almost no relationship more intimate than a mother and her baby. Because a mother is able to know and understand her child's wants and needs in a way that no one else can. Until you've witnessed or been in that kind of relationship, you won't know what intimacy is. I could read you the definition, explain where the word comes from or how the word is used, but you wouldn't really know what intimacy is. You would just know about intimacy.

### **1) God Knows You Intimately**

Probably the best Biblical word for intimacy is the word "know." It is first used in the context of relationships in Genesis 4:1. Genesis 4:1 simply says this: that Adam knew his wife Eve. That's from the King James—we're going old school, here. And the Hebrew word for "know" here is the word "yada'." The definition for yada' is "to know and to be known completely." But the NIV translates the word a little differently, because it puts it in context of what's happening. So your Bible probably says, Genesis 4:1: "Adam lay with his wife Eve..."

You get the picture. That is our context for yada'.

But don't giggle and brush past this. This is a yada' moment between a husband and a wife. It's this intimate connecting on every level. To know, to be known. I think it's a beautiful picture. There's something to be said for the sacredness of sexual intimacy that when we first read about sex in the bible, it's about intimacy, not about physical pleasure.

There are other Hebrew words that could have been used, words used later in Scripture referring to the physical act, or even procreation, but here it is this intimate connecting. One Hebrew scholar calls it, “A mingling of the souls.”

It’s hard to understand this until you see the difference between a brand new couple and a couple who’ve been together for a long time. Idleman tells the story of a date he went on with his wife a few months ago. “Whenever we go out” he says, “I’m not allowed to face the TV in the room, otherwise it’s not really a date for my wife. It’s just her watching me watching whatever’s on. I just can’t help myself. So because I’m not allowed to watch the TV, I found myself watching these two tables near us. Two different couples sit at each table. One table had a young couple. They might have been newlyweds, but I bet they were still dating. This couple was all over each other. Snuggled up close, talking to each other rapidly. They were making jokes, interrupting one another, their food was getting cold. But they didn’t care. They just kept talk, talk, talk, talking.

“Next to them was this elderly couple, and I’m guessing they had been married for decades. It’s possible they’ve spent over half their lives together. They didn’t say a word. Nothing. I watched as they just sat there in silence, not saying anything. I finally pointed this out to my wife, and I said, “Look at that. Isn’t that kind of sad? It starts off this way, with this couple just talking, talking, talking, so much to say, so much to share, and then decades later you have this elderly couple just sitting there in silence, and it’s sad.”

“And my wife said, “I think it’s kind of sweet.” I kind of nod in silence, trying to be agreeable, but I had no idea why that’s sweet. Why is it sweet for me to sit here quietly? I don’t understand. And then it hit me. It’s sweet because they are communicating in silence. They’re connecting in silence. For them, just being together is ample space for connection. They’re able to communicate without saying anything. I don’t know what they were saying to each other—maybe, “Why is that guy staring at us over there?” But they sat at their table, and they were able to connect because they share an intimate bond.”.

Now, you may not think that couple was actually able to talk to each other without speaking, but you understand their connection. You understand what it means for a woman and man to have intimacy, to yada’ each other. But what I’m about to tell you will seem a little bit strange to some of you, a little bit weird. We’ll work through some of the weirdness, but just be ready for it, ok?

If you trace the usage of yada’ through the Old Testament, you’ll find that over and over again, this is the same word that’s used to describe God’s relationship with us. Over and over, yada’ is the word that’s used to describe how God knows you and how He wants to be known by you.

Weird, right? The same word, the same connection used to describe a man and a wife is used to describe how God wants to know you. This completely changed the way I saw my relationship with God. Thinking of the day-in day-out connection that my husband and I have, I'm embarrassed to look at how my connection with God compares. I wasn't connecting with God the way I connect with my husband. But learning this taught me something: my relationship to Jesus is not a weekend fling. It's not a casual encounter. It is yada', a deep knowing. It's intimacy.

David uses the word yada' about six times to describe how God knows us in Psalm 139. He writes: O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord.

You know, You know, You know. David speaks to God in this intimate way. It says, "God, You know how I feel, You know how I hurt, You know what I'm thinking."

## **2) God Wants You to Know Him**

While it's crazy that God knows us that deeply and intimately, it's even more crazy to me that God invites us to know Him. God wants His soul to mingle with ours. For some wild reason, the Creator of Heaven and Earth has offered an invitation to you and me. He's opened his heart and said, "I want you to know me more closely and minutely than you know anyone else. I want you to know my heart, to connect with me on a level that can only be reached through the most vulnerable intimacy. I want our souls to come together, for both of us to know the other deeply and wholly."

Reading that from a real person, wouldn't it kind of make you blush? It's almost too much, right? You feel almost claustrophobic when you get done reading it. That's ok. Many of us have a hard time knowing how to deal with intimacy. We can do pretty well at avoiding it, but when it's right in our faces, some of us kind of lose it. Then it's not surprising one of the most common responses to unavoidable intimacy: fear. You could understand that, right?

Honestly, intimacy can be pretty scary, because it involves allowing yourself to be vulnerable. And many people fear intimacy with others and with God because they know that vulnerability and pain go hand in hand. So many people have experienced a betrayal, or a crushing blow from someone close to them. They opened up, they made themselves vulnerable, and then someone let them down.

And when we make ourselves vulnerable to God, we know He's going to find some things that we're not proud of. Think of the woman in Luke 7. A woman of ill repute, she knew she had sin in her life that made her unworthy to touch the

Messiah. And because we've all fallen short, we know that God's going to look into our lives and find things that He doesn't condone. So it kind of makes sense that many people would be afraid of that vulnerability.

But followers know that there's so much more gained from intimacy with God, because then we know that He's there with us through any pain we endure. That comfort, knowing that God's with you, can only come through intimacy.

### **3) Fans Choose Knowledge, Followers Embrace Intimacy**

In church, we've often failed to embrace that kind of intimacy with Jesus. Instead, we've created a system focused around learning. Admittedly, our default setting is knowledge, not intimacy.

Think about it: We love having Bible Studies, many of which include some kind of workbook that includes a curriculum for working through a particular book of the Bible. Sermons are accompanied often with an outline members can fill out or follow. A great number of preachers read their sermons, which makes their presentations, by definition, a lecture. Private Christian academies have been established all over the world, ranging from grade school to graduate studies, all of which offer different courses that study God: theology, exegesis, Greek, Hebrew, etc.

Don't get me wrong: studying and learning from God's Word is invaluable. Jesus referenced, read, and quoted all kinds of passages from the Old Testament, ample proof that he had studied God's Word with great care and diligence.

However, we can't expect knowledge to replace intimacy, even though we often try to. And I think we try to substitute knowledge for intimacy because knowledge is so much easier. It's easy for us to say, "Well, I know about Jesus," but He wants to know us. That's where we find Simon the Pharisee. He knew a lot about Jesus and his teachings, and he wanted to learn more. He calls him Teacher, emphasizing that he's most interested in learning from Jesus, not opening up to Jesus.

Simon wanted to keep things shallow, and he defined his relationship by not washing Christ's feet, not caring to kiss him, not being willing to anoint his head, but this woman was willing to open up to Jesus. She made herself vulnerable, being totally willing to open up and let Jesus know her.

So will you let Jesus know you? Will you embrace the close and intimate relationship He wants to have with you? Because with that intimate relationship comes forgiveness and yada', something only followers truly experience.