

Seeking God

how to
develop an intimate, spiritual relationship

*"helps us understand the heart of God
in a powerful, more personal way."*

Joni Eareckson Tada

Richard Mayhue

'The goal of any believer is to know God and to know Him intimately. This goal is Dr. Mayhue's life passion – in *Seeking God* he leads us on that wonderful path through scripture to help us understand the heart of God in a powerful, more personal way.'

Joni Eareckson Tada
Author and artist

'The most important category of truth is that which relates to the nature of God. One's view of God is the single greatest central element in spiritual experience. Nothing is more important than seeking to know Him. Dick Mayhue surely understands this and charts a course that will lead the reader to a true understanding of God which will dramatically change his life.'

John MacArthur, Jr.
Grace Community Church,
Sun Valley,
California

Seeking God

The Pathway of True Spirituality

Richard Mayhue

Christian Focus

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PREFACE

This book on 'spirituality' has blossomed over the last twenty-five years in the context of preaching, teaching, and discipling. It is designed to address the major elements in a close walk with God and to take into account the wide scope of Scriptural content for every topic. Each chapter provides an overview which lays the groundwork for the reader to pursue deeper and wider studies later.

This volume is primarily intended to be used as a tool to disciple a new believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, it could also easily be employed to point an unbeliever to Christ as the only Saviour. Other endeavours might include the restoration process of a repentant Christian, the refreshment and strengthening of a weary saint, or just the daily encouragement of any Christian who needs to be reminded of these grand truths.

This book could also serve as a text in a local church or Bible Institute setting. Christians of all ages should find it a helpful tool to learn what the Bible teaches about 'spirituality'. Seeking God can be studied individually or in a group. While basically designed to be followed in the order of the chapters, this volume can afford fruitful reading in any one of the parts or individual chapters.

Special thanks are in order to my secretary, Joan Osborne, and my personal assistant, Bob White, for their various helps in preparing this material. I am greatly indebted to Malcolm Maclean who encouraged me to put these studies in their present form.

May the Lord be pleased to glorify Himself through the study of this material and subsequent personal practice of godliness as the result.

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Whom have I in heaven but You?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:25-26

INTRODUCTION

'As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God' (Ps. 42:1). The psalmist yearned for God with the same intensity as the publican who cried out 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (Luke 18:13)—though each had a different reason.

One sought for a deeper relationship; the other, a new relationship. But both cried out for spiritual intimacy with God. Perhaps you can identify with one of them.

Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, 'There is a God-shaped vacuum in every man that only Christ can fill.' That's where spiritual intimacy begins, but it is by no means where it ends. It extends on in time and maturity until: we become God's friend like Abraham (James 2:23); we walk with God like Enoch (Gen. 5:22, 24); we enjoy intimate fellowship with God as did Job (Job 29:4, NIV); we, like David, grow into a man or woman after God's own heart (Acts 13:22, KJV); we know the high esteem of God similar to Daniel (Dan. 10:11, 19); or become a favoured one of God like Mary (Luke 1:28). Just like them, we have the treasured opportunity to become 'intimates of God'.

Spiritual Intimacy

An intimate relationship is marked by very close association, contact, or familiarity. Expanding on that, an intimate friendship includes warmth, tenderness, love, closeness, transparency, security, vulnerability, strength, commitment, knowledge, and understanding.

Our chaotic world breeds a brutal, self-seeking attitude devoid of intimacy. That is why marriages crumble, families disintegrate, and friendships fail. To a world that callously disregards even the dignity of human life, God calls out with a word of love (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8) and beckons us to become intimate with Him.

In our 'liberated' day, the intimate act of marriage has degenerated into cheap sex, both in and out of marriage. Mothers regularly kill their babies through abortion and children increasingly rebel against their parents in homes where family intimacy has long ago been abandoned. By ignoring God, society emotionally starves itself to death while all along God promises to love us forever and give us our fill of spiritual affection.

We live under continual threat of nuclear holocaust and experience daily, life-threatening violence. Newspaper headlines fill our minds with thoughts of euthanasia, infanticide, and genocide. These barbaric vulgarities can only be neutralized by spiritual intimacy with a

compassionate God who alone can do all things and never fails. Our generation's greatest need is to reclaim a dominant sense of intimacy with God which will reshape our souls and redirect our lives.

Portraits of Love

For most of us, the thought of being intimate with God defies our understanding since He is God and we, mere humans. So God in His Word uses three illustrations to help us understand the intimacy He desires with us.

A shepherd with his sheep. So close and so loving is the good shepherd to His flock that He is willing to die for their well-being (John 10:11). When the sheep hear the shepherd's voice, they know it well and follow Him (vv. 4, 16, 27).

A man and his wife. Nearer to most people's experience is the picture of marriage. God the Father stands as Israel's husband (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32) and Christ serves as the bridegroom for His beloved church (Eph. 5:25-32). With everlasting love and covenant faithfulness, the Lord intimately bestows His grace upon those who are His through faith in Christ.

A parent-child relationship. God is our Heavenly Father. As His redeemed children, it is our unique privilege to experience the depths of His love and call Him by the most intimate of endearments—Abba, the Aramaic equivalent for 'Daddy' (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). In Christ, we become little children (Matt. 18:3; 1 John 2:1). God knows us to the uttermost detail (Ps. 139:13-16) and reveals Himself in a knowing relationship that goes far beyond information—so far beyond that it results in eternal transformation (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

To balance out our thinking, we must not forget that a tension should always exist between responding in awe to the King of kings and coming in love to our Heavenly Father. Too much emphasis on kingship robs us of intimacy, while excess attention to our family privilege leads us to presumption. Our relationship with God must always be kept in focus as one between the human and the divine.

Our Pilgrimage

Does this confession sound familiar?

As a young man I must have tried a dozen techniques that people said were sure to guarantee a measure of passion that would transport me

Do you have Spiritual Progress, Spiritual Power, Spiritual Priorities, Spiritual Passions, Spiritual Pursuits?

How closely do we walk with, talk with and enjoy God's presence in our lives?

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Joni Eareckson Tada

"The most important category of truth is that which relates to the nature of God. One's view of God is the single greatest central element in spiritual experience. Nothing is more important than seeking to know him. Dick Mayhue surely understands that and charts a course that will lead the reader to a true understanding of God which will dramatically change your life."

John F. MacArthur

We would love to see our spiritual intimacy with God improve but an intimate relationship is one marked by close association, contact and familiarity. To expand it involves warmth, tenderness, love, transparency, security, vulnerability, strength, commitment, knowledge and understanding.

Is that the sort of relationship you yearn for?

The problem is that our chaotic world is characterised by independence - breeding a brutal, self-seeking attitude devoid of intimacy. This is why marriages crumble, families disintegrate, friendships fail and business turns ugly. Yet, God beckons us to be intimate with him.

The barbarity of the secular mindset can only be neutralised by spiritual intimacy with a compassionate God. Someone who is utterly trustworthy and whose plans are unable to be put off course. Therefore, our generation's greatest need is to reclaim a sense of intimacy with God, one that will re-shape our souls and re-direct our lives. This is what you will learn from Seeking God.

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Richard Mayhue is Dean of The Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California. His previous books include *The Healing Promise*, *Fight the Good Fight* and *How to Interpret the Bible*.