

The Yada Factor: Knowing God

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By Dave Butts

Are you satisfied with your Christian life? If we answer honestly, most of us would say, "no." We instinctively realize that there is something more in store for us. There is a level of commitment, an inner peace, a closeness to the Lord that we know is possible, and yet somehow eludes us. The elusive factor that would make all the difference in the Christian life is what might be called the Yada Factor.

Yada is simply the Hebrew word for "to know." It is the word used in the Scriptures to describe the physical intimacy within marriage. The exciting part for Christians is that the word "Yada" is not only used in reference to married couples, but also to describe the relationship that should exist between God and His people.

Daniel 11:32 says, "And by smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action." These are the people who Yada (know) their God, and have developed an intimate relationship with Him.

When we think of intimacy with God, prayer comes to mind, because prayer is essential to intimacy with Him. Someone has defined prayer as a love affair with God. Think what a difference it would make in your prayer life and indeed, your entire Christian life, if you approached God with the goal of intimacy in mind. There are four factors that are important in order to achieve this kind of intimacy with God in prayer...if we are to ever Yada (know) our God. These factors are:

availability, quality, integrity, and loyalty.

Availability

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me’” (Isaiah 6:8). Isaiah’s attitude and response needs to be the model for every Christian who desires to develop a closer relationship to his Lord. God wants people who will be available whenever and for whatever purpose He wishes to use them.

How can you make yourself available to God? It is not something talked about as much as something you become through a passionate pursuit of Christ. You will recognize people available to the Lord by their depth of consistency and reliability. For example, men and women of prayer will always be accessible to God. Look to Abraham as another example in Genesis 22:1-14, the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham was a consistent and reliable friend of God (James 2:23). He, like Isaiah, said in a sense, “Here am I...and the son You gave me as well. Whatever You say, Lord. You know I’m always available.”

It’s not always the great acts like Abraham’s that indicate availability. Look at the story of the widow and her giving in Mark 12:41-44. She was available to God and gave out of her poverty. No great gift...but great sacrifice. You may feel that you don’t have much or that you aren’t very talented. God consistently uses people in the most humble of circumstances. He simply asks you to be available to Him when He needs you. That is why it is so important to set aside a part of every day for prayer. It is a primary way to say each day to the Lord, “Today is Yours. Whatever You want, whenever You want, I’m available to You today.” Our willingness to be available is essential to intimacy with the Lord.

Quality

Time spent with the Lord should always be filled with quality. Psalm 119:2 says, "How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart." We can look at quality as meaning excellence or superiority or with the idea of total attention. Both aspects are important in prayer.

How often have you begun your prayer time, only to be distracted by everything going on around you or by wandering and distracting thoughts? At times like this, we become aware that we are not giving Him our total attention...our whole heart.

If we are to have a quality time with the Lord, there must be a depth of intensity and sensitivity. Look at the prayers of the early Church. As you glimpse into the prayer life of a man like the Apostle Paul, you see one who was often moved to tears as he prayed. That's intensity! When was the last time you wept as you prayed? Prayer needs to be that passionate for us. Then, as we pray, we must be sensitive to that still, small voice as He responds and answers.

Perhaps one of the best things we can do to improve the quality of our prayer time is to establish a prayer covenant as Israel did in 2 Chronicles 15:12,15: "And they entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul...and all Israel rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart and had sought Him earnestly, and He let them find Him. So the Lord gave them rest on every side." Can we commit ourselves as individuals, and perhaps even as a whole congregation, to seek Him with our whole heart? Quality time with the Lord each day is essential to intimacy.

Integrity

Your integrity will greatly affect your prayer life and intimacy with the Lord. By integrity, I mean moral soundness... the quality of your lifestyle. The old adage, "What you are

speaks so strongly that I cannot hear what you say," can perhaps be applied to the Christian's prayer life.

Jeremiah says, "...through deceit they refused to know me" (Jeremiah 9:6). Again we find the word "Yada" (know). Without integrity you cannot build intimacy. In order to build integrity there must be a depth of honesty and sincerity...not only with God, but also with others. "In your integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever"(Psalm 41:12). In this passage we see that coming into the presence of God, becoming intimate with the Creator Himself, is closely connected with personal integrity.

We can see the importance of honesty by looking at human relationships. You typically do not become close or intimate with one whom you do not trust. Intimacy depends upon honesty, both in human relationships and in our relationship with God. It is essential to intimacy with the Lord that we maintain our integrity.

Loyalty

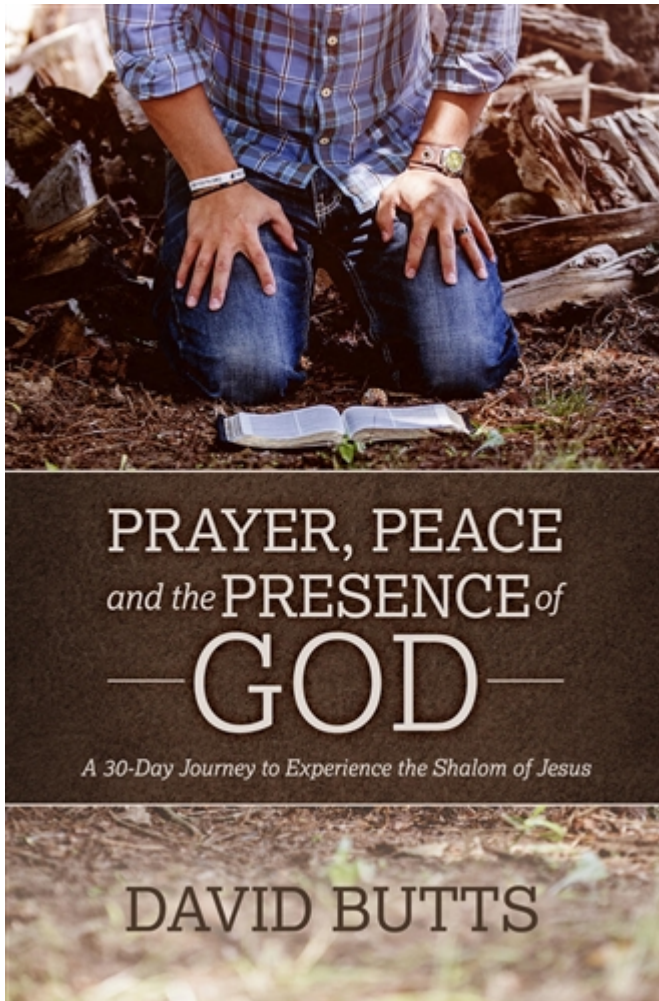
When you think of intimacy with God through prayer, loyalty does not often enter the mind, but it is an important factor. Loyalty signifies manifest devotion. It implies a close personal relationship that is steadfast. One of the great stories of loyalty found in the Bible is in 2 Samuel 15:13-23. There we find Ittai the Gittite, following David in his flight from Absalom's rebellion. Even though he had no stake in the fight and David released him from following, Ittai replied, "As the Lord lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be."

There must be a depth of fidelity and dependability if our intimacy with the Lord is to grow. We need to be saying, "Lord, I commit this time to You every day, and You can depend on it." Loyalty is the very nucleus of intimacy.

Here are some practical suggestions for a life of intimacy with the Lord in prayer:

1. Set a particular time of day for your prayer time.
2. Set a specific length of time to pray each day.
3. Find a place to get away for your praying.
4. Pray when you don't feel like it.
5. Be specific in your prayers.

The Apostle Paul had this great desire for intimacy with God. In Philippians 3:10 we find him expressing the desire, "I want to know Christ..." Once again we find the "Yada" phrase, though in Greek rather than in Hebrew. Paul is saying that nothing will truly satisfy him but knowing God on an intimate level. Nor will we find our satisfaction, joy, or peace in anything this world has to offer. It is in knowing God that we have eternal life. It is in knowing God that we begin to experience all that God has in store for us in this world as well. May growing deeper in your intimacy with Christ become a passion for the rest of your life!



PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

The author, David Butts (1953-2022), started writing this book and 10 days into it he got word that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God allowed him to live in a greater way for five additional years of full-strength ministry. Dave has challenged readers in *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* to seek after His best life, no matter what it holds.

His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you that you, too, can experience and walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what circumstances you are walking through.

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