

Chapter 3

SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

“Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.”

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT)

In the last chapter, the emphasis was on soul intimacy and the importance of sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires with your spouse, a process that can lead to understanding. The focus in this chapter is on spiritual intimacy which means “becoming one” spiritually.

Believing on Jesus Christ as your Savior and receiving Him into your life is the foundation for spiritual intimacy with God and your spouse.

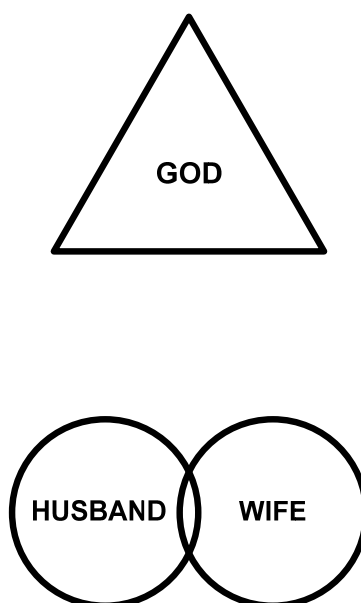
Q1. Does your marriage have this foundation? Explain.

“We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all.” **Ephesians 4:4–6** (NLT)

Marriage involves three persons, that is, God, a man, and a woman. The following diagram represents the marriage unit. The triangle representing God is at the top, showing that He established, created, and has a plan for marriage. The husband and wife are represented by the interlocking circles symbolizing two becoming one.

“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Matthew 19:6 (NKJ)



Devotion

In the first chapter, we discussed spiritual intimacy in terms of a common *devotion*.

Devotion means a commitment to living one's life for another. A spouse's devotion may be linked to his or her love for the other, the feelings involved, and thoughts that he or she is worth living for.

Q2. Did you start out your marriage with a devotion to your spouse?

Over time, that devotion may have broken down. The breakdown may have come due to some failures, faults, or imperfections. A spouse may begin to think this love won't last or may have thoughts that he or she isn't worthy of giving up his or her life for the other anymore.

Q3. Are you still devoted to your spouse? Explain.

The good news is that spiritual intimacy is about devotion to **God**. God is the only One worthy of everlasting love. He is worth living your life for. He will never let you down, He won't grow old, He doesn't get irritable, He never changes.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." **Hebrews 13:8** (NASB)

"The LORD will not reject his people; he will not abandon his own special possession." **Psalms 94:14** (NLT)

Human devotion is a good thing, but it won't necessarily last. God is truly worthy of your devotion. That's WHY it makes sense to devote yourself to Him. The question becomes WHAT does that devotion look like?

- Q4.** Are you devoted to God?
- Q5.** What is your devotion to God based on? His worth or something else? Explain.
- Q6.** If God is the source of your devotion, how do you show that devotion? In what ways?

Devotion to God

When a husband is devoted to God and a wife is devoted to God, their devotion, or intimacy, increases with each other. As you devote yourself or draw near to God, He will draw near to you.

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you..."
James 4:8 (NKJ)

This kind of marriage has an advantage over every other marriage because of this mutual *devotion* to God.

Devotion to God means you acknowledge God as God. It means you don't compete with Him and try to do what He does. It means you let Him be who He is.

"I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me..." **Isaiah 45:5** (NKJ)

Power to Control

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge His **power to control** the marriage and therefore control the people in the marriage.

Although He has the power to control, He never overrides the will of the husband and wife. The only one in the marriage who has the right to do whatever He pleases is God. Fortunately, everything God does is to benefit the husband and wife.

- Q7.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by allowing Him to control your life and the life of your spouse or do you try to control your life and your spouse? Explain.

"All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He has the power to do as he pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop him or challenge him, saying, 'What do you mean by doing these things?'" **Daniel 4:35** (NLT)

Right to Judge

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge His **right to judge** whether or not the people in the marriage are following His standards.

As author, He has set standards of what a husband does in a marriage and what a wife does. He has determined their respective roles. He compares the husband and wife to His standards and has the right to judge whether they are fulfilling their roles.

- Q8.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by allowing God to judge you and your spouse in the fulfillment of roles or do you judge yourself and/or your spouse? Explain.

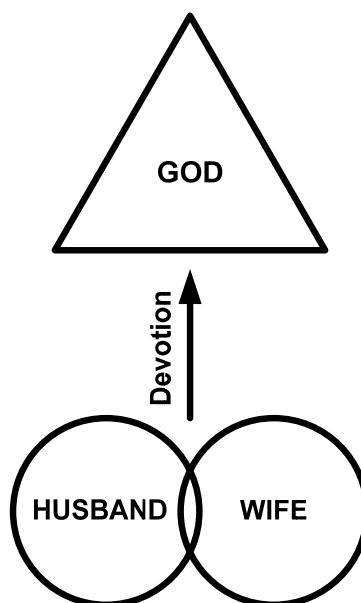
“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy...” James 4:12 (NASB)

Deserves all Praise

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge that He is worthy and **deserves all praise**.

- Q9.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by giving Him praise or do you seek praise for yourself or give it all to your spouse?

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” Revelation 4:11 (NKJ)



Husband and Wife Roles

We mentioned that God Himself has the right to set standards for the husband and wife in a marriage. These standards include establishing roles. The husband and wife roles are different. Though the roles are different, they are equal.

The husband provides **loving leadership** for the wife. The wife provides **loving support** for the husband.

Loving Leadership

- Q10.** How do you think a husband could demonstrate loving leadership in the marriage?

“And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her.” **Ephesians 5:25** (NLT)

The husband is to love his wife, sacrifice for her, listen to her concerns, take care of her, and be sensitive to her needs as though he was caring for his own body.

His role in the marriage is to provide leadership. He is to love, take care of, and not abuse his wife. He ultimately is responsible for making the final decisions for the family.

A husband can be loving, but not lead or he can lead and not be loving. Both are important.

Loving Support

The role God gave the wife is to provide **loving support** for her husband.

- Q11.** How do you think a wife could demonstrate loving support in the marriage?

“She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.”
Proverbs 31:12 (NASB)

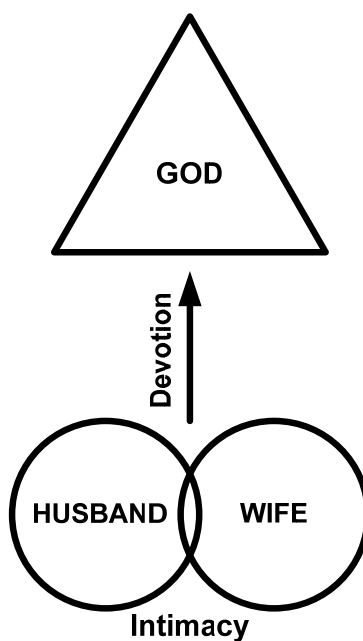
As a loving support, the wife respects her husband, acknowledges, and responds to his leadership, listens to him, is unified in purpose with him, and is a true helper.

Her role in the marriage is to value and support her husband and not resist, compete for, or rebel against the leadership role that has been assigned to him.

She can communicate her thoughts, feelings, and desires concerning decisions, then lovingly supports her husband when he makes the final decisions.

Intimacy

Spiritual intimacy takes place as the couple devote themselves to God by fulfilling their respective role and not judging the other on how well he or she is doing.

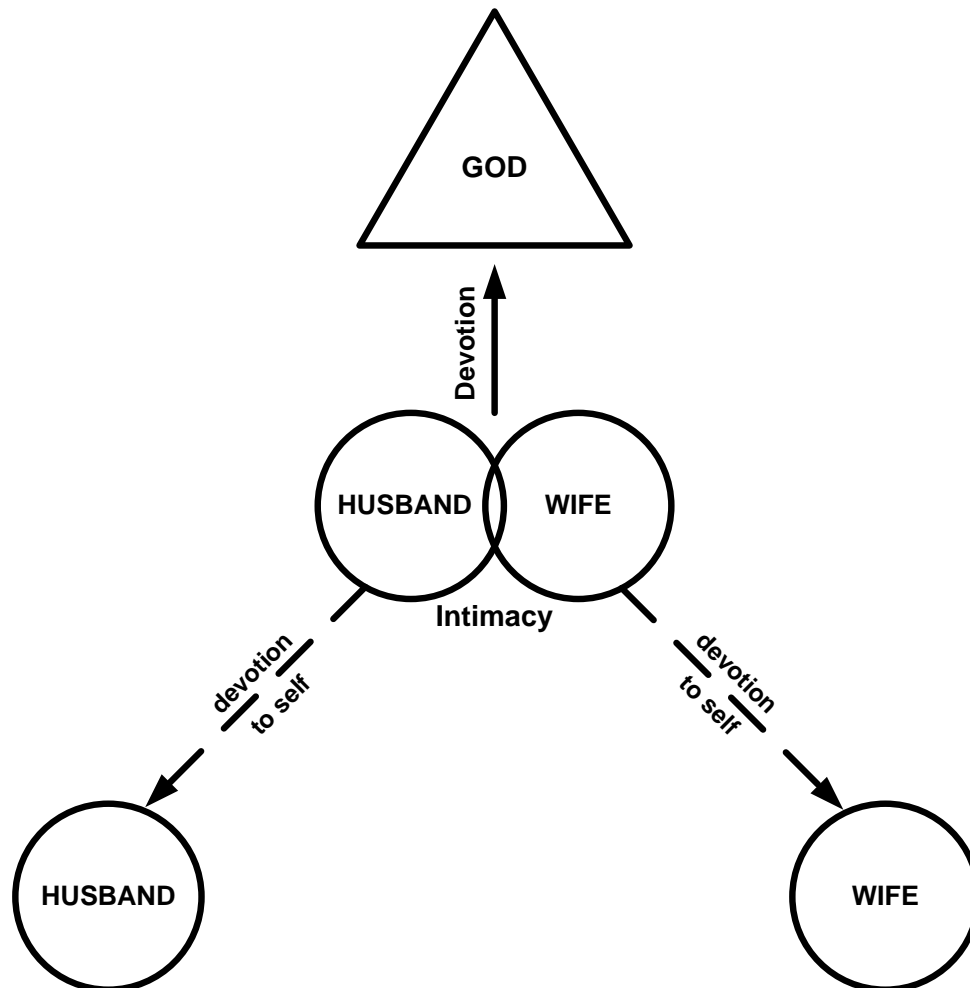


Devotion to Self

Q12. What do you think happens when you are not devoted to God?

It is replaced by a devotion to self. Devotion to self results in the belief that it is not a problem when you try to control, judge, or seek praise and approval from your spouse.

In the next diagram, the dashed arrows show that the husband and wife are trying to be like God. They are moving away from God and each other. Devotion to self breaks down spiritual intimacy. The person who is devoted to self is not functioning God's way but for his or her own satisfaction.



Control

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

- I don't like asking for help from my spouse.
- It bothers me when I'm not in control in my marriage.
- It bothers me when I can't do what I want.

Q13. If so, are you acting on the idea that you have the power to control your life or the life of your spouse? Explain.

“And further, you will submit [devote yourself] to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21 (NLT)

Judging

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

- It bothers me when my spouse doesn't do things right.
- I judge my spouse for not doing things right or looking good.
- I get uncomfortable when my spouse is having problems.

Q14. If so, are you setting standards for and then judging your spouse?

We aren't to judge, even ourselves, only God knows a person's heart and has the right to judge.

“What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone else thinks. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.”

1 Corinthians 4:3 (NLT)

Seeking praise

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

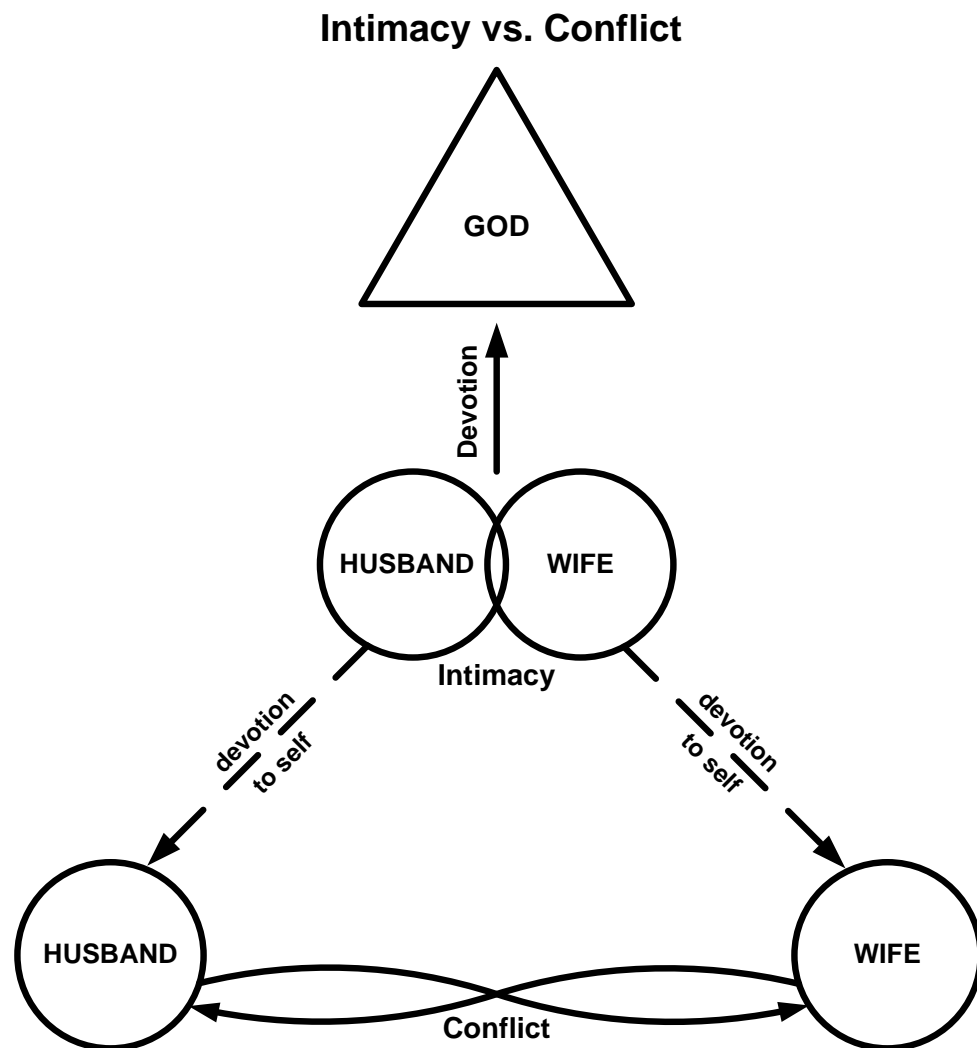
- I get upset when my spouse doesn't notice the job I've done, how much work I've done, or how nice I look.
- When I am rejected, instead of accepted, I reject back.
- I usually say and/or do what my spouse wants to keep him/her happy, not necessarily because it's what God wants.

Q15. If so, are you seeking praise and approval from your spouse?

"Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4 (NAS)

Conflict

Devotion to self leads a person away from God. If each spouse is devoted to self through the desire to control, judge, and/or seek praise, there will be conflict, which brings separation.



The diagram shows that there will be **conflict** in the marriage when the husband and wife are not devoted to God and therefore devoted to self.

Q16. Is there conflict in your marriage? Explain.

Q17. Have you thought about or talked about ending the relationship?

Q18. Are you ready to let God be God in your marriage and life?

*“When the **ways** of people please the LORD, he makes even their enemies live at **peace** with them.”*

Proverbs 16:7 (NLT)

Personal Application

Steps to restoring spiritual intimacy in the marriage:

- **Pray** and ask God to show you your sin.
- **Confess to God** any sin He shows you.
- **Repent** of that sin.
- **Humbly admit your wrong behavior to your spouse** without trying to justify or excuse what you have done.
- **Forgive your spouse** and seek his or her forgiveness.
- **Commit** yourself to devotion to God and to your spouse.

God has a plan for you, your spouse, and your marriage. You are perfectly designed to fulfill His plan. You will be the most content when you fit into the plan God designed for you.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” **Ephesians 2:10** (NKJ)

Intimacy vs. Conflict

Diagram

Notes