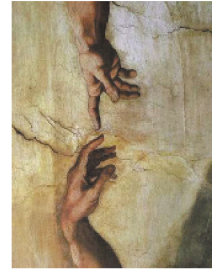


Your Inner Sanctuary

You are the Temple of God!



“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”
1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV

Have you ever tried to imagine this temple, this sanctuary inside you? It certainly is a mystery to think of God living in us. We know that God is spirit and no one can see Him. But I’m intrigued to envision what this temple environment within me might reveal. I’ve found that the reality of fellowship with the Lord is enhanced as I see with the eyes of my heart He and I connecting in this holy place.

We know that in the Old Testament, God met the high priest once a year in a place called the “holy of holies.” There was a thick curtain separating the rest of the temple from this most holy place. In the holy of holies, the shekinah glory of God resided. But when Jesus died on the cross, this curtain was ripped down the middle! Now, in the New Covenant, Jesus extends access into His presence to anyone who believes. Now, the temple of God is inside man. For this reason, in faith, I explore the unseen reality of intimacy with God in this temple within me.

Imagine God’s temple as a core place, the remotest, deepest place inside your being. Envision a room that is incredibly inviting and warm. This is the safest place on the face of the earth, the sanctuary of God. Imagine this sanctuary as a comfortable room where only you and God go. Here there is peace, safety, security. This is your favorite place to go. This is a sound proof room. There are two overstuffed, incredibly comfortable chairs. There is a cozy fire burning. Coffee or tea are brewed in your favorite flavors. Here you and the One who loves you most sort through life. Whatever you say in here stays in here. In this private place, God Himself speaks words of identity, worth, security, and significance into your soul. Here you learn the truth, and the truth sets you free. In here, lies from the “outside” are identified and replaced with truth. Here, you learn how to be your true self.

As I said, only you and God are supposed to enter this most holy place. But some of us allow others into our “identity determining core.” We desperately want them to give us life, value and meaning. But by leaning on any person for our identity, we give them god-like power over us. Allowing anyone to have this power over us is nothing short of idolatry. The only way to remove someone from your temple is to confess to God that you have created an idol, whether you meant to or not. You may need to confess to the person you allowed to have too much power over you. Then ask God to clean up the mess made by too many feet in your core sanctuary. Ask the Lord how you can partner with Him in redesigning your private core for solely you and the Spirit of God.

There are other people who have been hurt so deeply they found it necessary to protect themselves from further hurt. They build a protective shell around themselves. Instead of looking to others for identity, value and wholeness, they only look to themselves. Unfortunately, they not only protect themselves from the people who hurt them, but they shield themselves from people who would bless them too. And worst of all, they protect themselves from God and His love and care for them. In their inner sanctuary, they feel alone, even though God is right there.

God designed this inner safe place to work for us. When we have interaction with people, sometimes they say good things that bless us, sometimes they say hard things that challenge us, and sometimes they say mean things that hurt us. It’s more complex than that, but you get the picture. When we have one of these encounters with people that raises doubt, causes confusion, or deeply troubles our inner person, we can go into our inner private, sound-proof, safe place with God. Here we ask God, “What about the things that person just said to me?” God is there to help us sort it out. He is always ready to say, “Let Me tell you one more time the truth about you.” Perhaps some of what the person said was true, but not all of it. God will distinguish between truth and lies. And God never gets tired of reviewing this truth about who you really are in Christ.

Keep in mind that God’s Word alone is the authoritative source of truth that I am pointing you to. A. W. Tozer said, “A word of God once spoken continues to be spoken.” Perhaps that’s Tozer’s expansion on Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are.” ^{NLT} As you open God’s Word to read, study or meditate, you can receive it as the currently spoken Word of God. For that is what it is! When He speaks the truth into your soul, there is nothing more powerful. Let Him write His truth on the tablet of your heart.

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Consider David's agony expressed in Psalm 42. He's thirsting for God, yearning to come into the presence of God. His tears have been his food day and night. People taunt him, "Where is your God? Show us your God now!" His soul is in despair. He is on the edge of depression! But in this pitiful state of despair, David remembers key events when God was near. He tells himself to put his hope in God again! You might say, "He gave his soul a good talking to!" This kind of interaction with God took place in his core sanctuary where God and David fellowshiped alone. In the context of your safe, inner sanctuary, I recommend reading key passages like Psalm 139. Discuss with the Lord the parts of His beautiful description of your Master Design that you have a hard time believing and accepting. Ask Him to help you believe what He says is true about you. Read passages like Ephesians 1 and soak in the truth of who you are now that you are in Christ. If you are writing these thoughts in your journal, switch to red ink, receiving these thoughts as the very words of God into your soul.

The very first time I explained this core sanctuary concept to someone, we were enjoying a large, colorful mug of tea. Our discussion touched a deep place in their heart. I suggested they buy the most beautiful mug they could find to help them remember this truth. "Hold the special mug, filled with your favorite brew as you begin to pray. Focus on your inner sanctuary. Imagine that inside the cup represents the safe place where you and God go to talk. And let me suggest that God does most of the talking. As you drink from your cup, express to God that you want to fellowship with Him in this unseen, incredible, gorgeous place He has established within your inner being. Tell Him your struggles. Ask Him to clarify one more time exactly who He says you are. Ask Him to point out any half-truth or lie you may have adopted. Imagine your relationships with people as outside the cup, some close, others further away due to the level of vulnerability. Make a conscious effort to see only you and God going into the sanctuary to sort through the issues of life. No one else goes inside.

My second explanation of this picture was with someone who had been hurt deeply by a trusted close relationship. As a result, she had become a self-protector. Once she realized that God was offering this place of safety and intimacy, she wanted it desperately. I picked up a very small cup that fit inside the larger mug. The small cup represented her self-protective strategy with the Lord and with others. We weren't far into our discussion when she said she wanted to smash the small, protective cup! She no longer wanted to protect herself! She took the small cup outside and smashed it against the brick wall! She kept the broken pieces to remind herself that her self-protective shell was gone. She desperately wanted to move into this intimate, safe place with God.

What about you? Would it be helpful for you to buy a special mug to help you envision this amazing, intimate place for you and God to fellowship? As you reflect on the mug, imagine the level of intimacy and protection available to you in the Lord. Simply tell Him that's what you want in your core sanctuary. Receive from the Lord this amazing level of intimacy that He extends to all His children.

In Psalm 27:4-9 (in *The Message*), David asks God for this safe, private place in His presence...

I'm asking God for one thing, only one thing: To live with him in his house my whole life long. I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet. That's the only quiet, secure place in a noisy world, the perfect getaway, far from the buzz of traffic. God holds me head and shoulders above all who try to pull me down. I'm headed for his place to offer anthems that will raise the roof! Already I'm singing God-songs; I'm making music to God. Listen, God, I'm calling at the top of my lungs: "Be good to me! Answer me!" When my heart whispered, "Seek God," my whole being replied, "I'm seeking him!"

The "one thing" David desired is actually possible for us today! "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" We can actually experience the very thing David desired! We can enter our inner sanctuary anytime and experience new depths in our relationship with the Spirit of God! Go there often. Seek fresh new depths of intimacy as you express yourself to the One who loves you most. Listen to His thoughts about you as His thoughts are new every morning. They are greater than you can count or imagine!