



LIFE GROUP STUDY MATERIAL

Every Home a *Discipleship Centre*

Session #4

Intimacy: The Foundation of
Influence

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INTIMACY: THE FOUNDATION OF INFLUENCE

LESSON AIM

To understand how intimacy strengthens discipleship and build grace-filled relationships that create greater influence towards Jesus.

VIDEO LESSON

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/YbnQMeL-Plg?si=bTdNQRPOeDdi1h1C>

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 3:14

14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach

Mark 3:14 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to discipling our loved ones at home, intimacy is foundational. The principle is this: the closer the relationship, the greater the influence. We may live in a world that is more connected than ever, yet many people still experience deep relational distance. It is possible to live under the same roof, attend the same church, or even spend regular time together and still not truly know one another.

Jesus' model of discipleship was different. Before He sent His disciples out to preach, teach or minister, He first called them to be with Him. Relationship came before instruction, and presence came before mission. In the same way, if we want to influence those God has entrusted to us, whether our children, family members or disciples, we must first build genuine relationship with them.

In this session, we will explore God's design for intimacy, how sin distorts and damages it, and how the gospel restores the kind of grace-filled relationships in which true discipleship can take place.

A. THE DESIGN: GOD IS RELATIONAL

Intimacy reflects the very nature of God. Even before creation, there was perfect relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and when God created humanity He made us in His image, with a deep need to know and be known, to love and be loved.

We see this relational design reflected in the way Jesus disciplined His followers. Mark 3:14 tells us

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be **with him...**

Mark 3:14 ESV

Before He sent them out to minister, intimacy preceded instruction, and relationship came before responsibility. Jesus did not simply give His disciples information from a distance; He invited them into His life.

In the same way, discipleship in the home cannot be reduced to teaching truth, giving advice or correcting behaviour. Relationship is not the reward of obedience; it is the soil in which obedience grows. The quality of our relationship often determines the weight of our influence, which is why building genuine intimacy with those God has entrusted to us is foundational to discipling them well.

B. THE DISTORTION: SIN DESTROYS INTIMACY

Although God designed us for intimacy, sin distorts our relationships and causes us to hide from one another. We see this immediately after the fall, when Adam and Eve became ashamed and hid themselves from God.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife **hid themselves** from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:8 ESV

Sin produces shame, shame causes us to hide, and hiding destroys intimacy. The fear underneath it is often, "If you really knew me, you wouldn't love me."

This can also shape the atmosphere of our homes. In a performance-based home, children can begin to believe that acceptance depends on their behaviour: if they obey, perform or meet expectations, they will receive approval. As a result, they may learn to hide their struggles, pretend everything is fine, or eventually rebel against the standards placed upon them. Rules and correction still have an important place in discipleship, but rules without relationship can lead to rebellion. A grace-based home creates a different environment: "You are already loved and accepted; now let me disciple you." Intimacy is not the reward for obedience; it is the context in which transformation can take place.

C. THE DELIVERANCE: CHRIST RESTORES INTIMACY

The good news of the gospel is that what sin has broken, Christ can restore. Although sin causes us to hide in shame, Jesus makes it possible for us to be fully known and fully loved by God. Romans 5:8 reminds us that God did not wait for us to clean ourselves up before loving us; Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Because we have received this kind of grace from God, we can extend the same grace to those we disciple. We can create homes where people feel safe to be honest, where failure does not lead to rejection, and where confession can lead to forgiveness and restoration. This does not mean ignoring sin or avoiding correction, but it means that love is never withdrawn when someone fails. The gospel frees us from the pressure to pretend or perform and teaches us to move towards one another with grace. As we experience the patience, forgiveness and acceptance of Christ ourselves, we become better able to offer that same grace to our children, family members and disciples, creating the kind of intimacy in which genuine transformation can take place.

8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 ESV

Conclusion

Intimacy is not simply about having a closer family; it is about creating the kind of relationship through which discipleship can take place. You're not just raising good children. You're discipling worshipers for eternity. If you win their heart, you shape their future. If you lose their heart, someone else will shape it for you. This is why intimacy matters so deeply in discipleship: the closer the relationship, the greater the influence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Instructions for group facilitators: Every group is different. You may modify the discussion questions to suit your group and you do not need to use all the questions in the group discussion.

Question 1: Who has had a strong influence on your life, and what made you trust or listen to them?

Question 2: What helps turn a relationship from simply being connected to genuinely being close?

Question 3: What can make it difficult for people in a family to feel fully known and fully loved?

Question 4: In what ways does the principle, "the closer the relationship, the greater the influence," challenge the way you think about discipleship at home?

Question 5: What are some signs that a home is becoming performance-based rather than grace-based?

Question 6: Are there any ways a performance-based culture may be developing in your home, where people feel pressure to hide, pretend or earn approval?

Question 7: What is one practical step you can take this week to help “win their heart” and increase your influence towards Christ?

NEXT STEPS

Take some time this week to reflect on the quality of your relationships with those God has entrusted to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where distance, busyness, hurt or performance may be getting in the way of genuine intimacy. Look for one practical way to strengthen or restore that relationship, whether by spending intentional time together, listening without judgement, expressing grace, asking for forgiveness, or simply being more present. Remember, the closer the relationship, the greater the influence. As you pursue their heart, you create greater opportunity to point them towards Jesus.