

96-17

Spiritual Intimacy

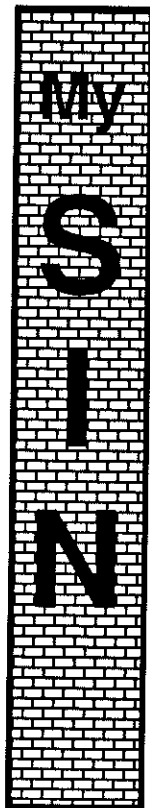
What To Do When God Seems Far Away

1 John 4:12-16 -----> 12) No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 13) We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. 15) If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. 16) And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. (NIV)

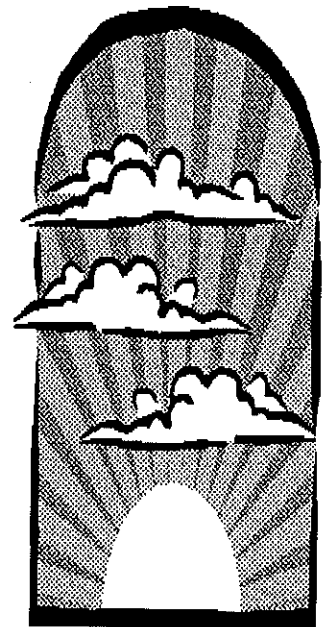
1. The Barriers (v.12a)



*Me as a
Non-
Christian*



*Me as a
Christian*



God

2. Dealing with the Second Barrier (vv.12b-16)

1. The Battle for _____ (vv.12b-13)

2. The Battle for _____ (vv.14-15)

3. The Battle for _____ (v.16)

Discussion Questions

These questions are provided to further your application of Sunday's message and to prepare you for PCC's small group discussions.

1. Though our passage this week in First John is directed toward Christians who have already dealt with the first and primary obstacle in their relationship with God (ie. "sin"), it is important for every person studying this passage to be able to affirm that it has indeed been removed in their own life. The biblical word is "reconciliation" and it means that Jesus Christ is able to take away the barrier that our sin created between us and God. Everyone who is a real Christian should be able to identify when this happened for them—they should be able to point to a time when they were convicted of this damnable problem (Jn.16:8), they repented of their sin (Lk.13:3), and they placed their trust in Jesus to save them from God's punishment (Phil.3:9). One should also be able to see a noticeable change after this experience that continually compels them to live for Christ instead of themselves (2Cor.5:15). When did this happen in your life? Describe this experience. (If this has not happened in your life, then do it now.)
2. The second problem that we encounter in attempting to relate to God is our "body"—or what is more accurately referred to as our "flesh". Our flesh is more than our skin and bones. In the Bible it refers to that fallen, corrupted humanity that we are still attached to this side of the grave. This, by the way, is what the resurrection is all about (see 1Cor.15:42-44)! Our flesh is constantly fighting us when it comes to developing the three areas mentioned in 1 John 4:12-16. Before we get into those, what has your experience been like in "battling" the desires of your flesh? How intense does this battle get?
3. John writes a lot about "love for our brothers" being a sure sign that the Spirit has truly taken up residence in a person's life, but that is just one of the many things that the Spirit will successfully fight for when He invades your life. Though not meant to be an exhaustive list, Galatians 5 gives us a bunch of things that come from God's Spirit in our lives. Write out this list from Galatians 5:22-23. Give a few examples of how the Holy Spirit is working these things out in your life in ways that you *know* could *not* be coming from you alone!

Write out the things that your flesh is fighting for (Gal.5:19-21). Right now in your life which of these do you need to counter the hardest with the help of the Holy Spirit? (Don't forget to ask Him to fight against these!)

4. Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth" (Jn.16:13). There were many people in John's day, as in ours, that were spreading false teaching about who Jesus was and what He expected from His followers. The Holy Spirit is fighting for truth in our minds by giving us understanding of His word and helping us to apply it (see Ps.119:125). Describe the Spirit's work in your life to help you understand the Bible and discern truth. How can you make the most of the Spirit's work in this area of your life?
5. One of the Spirit's titles is "the Comforter". Just before Jesus departed He promised that they would not be left as orphans because the Spirit's presence in their lives would compensate for His absence. How does the Holy Spirit help you "rely on the love of God"? What does it feel like when you are "relying on" God's love?