

This coming weekend literally millions of people will go to church. There will be thousands of churches who will offer a smorgasbord of religious activity. Most people who go to church will leave the church thinking they are the better for it. They will leave church thinking they are much closer to God. Most will leave feeling good about themselves and good about the church. But who is it that is really close to God? Who does have close, intimate fellowship with the Lord? Just because a person goes to a worship service does that automatically mean he is closer to God? If a person says he is a believer does that automatically mean he has intimate fellowship with the Holy God of the Bible?

King David wrestled with this very question. There were people all around him who claimed to be right with God, who were anything but actually right with God. These people had a religious look about them, but they did not have any real spiritual depth in them. So in this psalm, David takes up this very theme.

Verse 1 asks a question, “Who may abide in Thy tent ? Who may dwell on Thy holy hill ?” The “tent” to which David is referring is the tabernacle tent in Jerusalem, which was the place to worship God and the place which featured the presence of God (II Sam. 6:10-12, 17). The “holy hill” is a synonym for the temple mount in Jerusalem (Ps. 24:3; Dan. 9:16, 20).

The tent was the place of worship and the holy hill was the place where the tent was located . Combined, these two concepts present to us the picture of one who is going up to the temple to worship God and to fellowship with God in a very personal way. So David is asking who actually has the right to go to the place where God is worshipped and will be authorized to have fellowship with God.

Now we know that during the Millennium, **Jesus Christ will physically be reigning as the righteous King of Kings and His headquarters will be Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zech. 14:9-11). We also know that not everyone who is in the Millennium will be permitted to have intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ and free access to Jesus Christ (Ezek. 44:10-16; Zech. 3:7).** So this psalm presents all of us with a question—who is it that will be able to go to the temple of Jerusalem and have intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ?

The answer to this question is presented in Psalm 15:

THE ONE WHOM GOD WILL PERMIT TO HAVE INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND WHOM GOD WILL PERMIT TO WORSHIP HIM IS ONE WHO LIVED HIS LIFE WITH A RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER IN SPEECH AND ATTITUDES.

Before we examine the psalm, let me point out something very important—in order to potentially have intimate fellowship with God, the individual had to go to the tent. He had to go to the holy hill which was the place chosen by God and dedicated to the worship of God.

In our time, let me suggest that in order for a person to have intimate fellowship with God, he must be involved in a local church. Many times you will hear someone say, “I don’t need church to be a good Christian.” That is not true; yes you do need church. In fact, without a strong commitment and involvement to the local church, God will not classify a person as a good Christian.

Someone was once asked whether or not he needed to join a church to be a good Christian. The person responded and asked, “Can you be a good student without a school? Can you be a good soldier without a military? Can you be a good citizen and not pay your taxes or not vote? Can you be a good sailor without a boat? Can you be a good parent without children? Can you be a good athlete without a team? Perhaps you think you can in your mind, but not in the real world.” So it is in God’s world. In your own mind you may think you are a great Christian without the church, but not in God’s real world of spirituality.

Now the ability to worship God is a granted ability that comes from God. In this psalm David points out eleven character traits of one who goes to God’s place of worship and actually does have intimate fellowship with God:

CHARACTER TRAIT #1 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who walks through life with integrity. **15:2a**

The word “integrity” is one that means to live life in a way that is whole, complete and sound. Such a person has a conduct that is blameless because it lives life in a whole, complete and sound way (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 867).

The person of integrity is one whose life is being lived in full and complete obedience to God. This does not mean he is sinless, but it does mean that he has a well-developed, mature spirituality that makes the person a complete person of God.

CHARACTER TRAIT #2 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who does what is righteous. **15:2b**

One who has intimate fellowship with God is one that conforms his life to the righteous standards of the Word of God. The word literally refers to that which is right and straight in accordance to God’s Word (*Ibid.*, p. 702).

One who has intimate fellowship with God is one who lives life in accordance with the Word of God. He is not only a man of integrity, but a man of obedience. Having a life that is right with God requires a walk and a work. Intimate fellowship with God requires a working righteousness; not talking it, thinking about it or hearing about it. It requires working at it.

CHARACTER TRAIT #3 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who speaks the truth in his heart. **15:2c**

The person right with God has nothing hidden in his heart. There will not be any deception or lies in the heart of one who has close intimate fellowship with God. Notice it is not the external that determines spirituality; it is the internal. There are many hypocrites in religion and in churches. They go to church, but their hearts are filled with deception and lies. They are not really doing honest business with God and no one will ever have intimate fellowship with God with a heart like that.

CHARACTER TRAIT #4 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who does not slander with his speech. **15:3a**

Someone has wisely said that one reason why people love dogs so much is because dogs wag their tails and not their tongues. Charles Spurgeon said all slanderers are wind instruments of the devil. Undoubtedly many will miss having a close relationship with God because they cannot control their mouths.

The Hebrew word “slander” is one that literally refers to movement of the feet; one who goes someplace by moving the feet (*Ibid.*, p. 756). David is saying that one who slanders is one who moves from person to person, place to place and verbally walking on and treading down people. This kind of person is one who goes here and there verbally assaulting others, walking over a person’s character and reputation.

The poison of a viper is no threat to you until you have been bitten and then you will realize that poison is designed to kill you. A slanderer is out to kill you and when you are hit with the venom, you quickly realize it.

Dr. Chuck Swindoll gives some great practical insight to this verse when he writes: “This is an excellent time for me to pose a direct question. Does this describe you? Are you a gossip? Do you inwardly enjoy hearing or passing on some juicy tale that colors another’s reputation? It is interesting that in the list of seven things God hates (Prov. 6:16-19) three have to do with the tongue. Several years ago I was given wise counsel regarding the use of my tongue. I hope it will help you as much as it has helped me. Before you pass along information or comments about someone else, let it first pass through four gates for approval. If all four give you a green light, share it without hesitation:

Gate #1 - Is it confidential? (If so, never mention it.)

Gate #2 - Is it true? (This may take some investigation.)

Gate #3 - Is it necessary? (So many words are useless.)

Gate #4 - Is it kind? (Does it serve a wholesome purpose?)

(Dr. Chuck Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind*, Vol. 1, p. 52)

CHARACTER TRAIT #5 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God does not do evil against his neighbor. **15:3b**

What good is one's relationship with God if it cannot function in its neighborhood? One right with God is one who is nice to have as a neighbor.

There was a woman years ago who professed to be right with God, who could never get along with her neighbors. In fact, she actually moved on one occasion because she did not like her neighbors. When she got into her new house, it was just a matter of time until she was calling the police on her new neighbors, when the neighbors hadn't done a thing to her. Instead of trying to reach the neighbors for Christ, her neighbors viewed her as some nut. A person right with God can be put into almost any neighborhood and will be a good, kind neighbor to have.

CHARACTER TRAIT #6 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God does not take up a reproach against his friend. **15:3c**

A wicked person has no sense of loyalty to a friend, to a mate or to a church. The word "reproach" is one that refers to one who scorns or one who considers one of little worth. This may be done by attitude or by speech (Gesenius, p. 307). A person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who is loyal in relationships and friendships.

CHARACTER TRAIT #7 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who will despise a reprobate. **15:4a**

The word "reprobate" refers to one who despises and rejects the things of God (*Ibid.*, p. 445). The Niphal stem of the verb indicates that the "reprobate" is one who has decisively and actively turned himself in rejection of God and His Word.

This is not speaking of "average" sinners. People who are right with God will despise certain people, and those certain people are those who despise and reject God and His Word. We cannot have intimate camaraderie with God and at the same time have intimate camaraderie with reprobates. Even in this N.T. Grace Age we are supposed to "abhor what is evil" (Rom. 12:9). People in fellowship with God despise certain things and certain people.

CHARACTER TRAIT #8 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is one who will honor those who fear God. **15:4b**

People who are right with God love to be around other people who are right with God. Notice being right with God demands a healthy fear of God. Dr. Unger called this a "godly reverence." Believers who hang around other believers who are spiritual air-heads, who do not fear God or have a reverence for God, do not have close fellowship with God. People in fellowship with God love other people who reverence Him and His Word.

Frankly, there are many churches that have no fear or reverence for God and their only desire is to increase numbers regardless of what they have to do to accomplish it. These kinds of people will never have intimate fellowship with God.

CHARACTER TRAIT #9 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God is not one who will go back on his word. **15:4c**

A person right with God is a person of his word. Even if it costs him or hurts him, he will not go back on his word or change a promise he made. People who go back on their words are fools. J. Vernon McGee said a spiritual man will not change his story even if it protects him or makes him look better. He will tell the truth and be a man of his word (*Psalms*, Vol. 2, p. 692).

CHARACTER TRAIT #10 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God does not lend his money to the needy for interest. **15:5a**

A person who will have close fellowship with God will be a person who used his money to help people. According to the O.T. Law, God's people were commanded by God not to lend money to a needy brother and charge interest. The person with the money was to lend generously and unselfishly and God would bless him for that (Deut. 23:19-20; Lev. 25:35-38). Frankly, one's attitude and handling of money does say much about one's spiritual life.

CHARACTER TRAIT #11 – The person who has intimate fellowship with God does not take a bribe against one innocent. **15:5b**

One right with God will not color a judgment against an innocent person for anything, especially money. Many churches have done this very thing. They allow one with money to get away with things simply because of their money. That is not right.

Now notice the conclusion at the end of **verse 5**—if we do these things we will never be shaken. In other words, our relationship with God will always be sound and secure. God will see to it that such a person is as solid and stable as a rock.

When we come into the sanctuary of God, let us purpose to enter as people who have these character traits in our own individual lives.