

LL60-What is Intimacy?

I'm Doug Weiss, and I'm Alvean Lyons, Welcome to Love Life

We've got kind of a provocative topic today and it has to do with the subject of intimacy.

Doug:

You know, that's a word that always perplexed me. Because it can mean everything from a kind of experiential sense of closeness to frankly just code language for sex. And I hear people use that word quite interchangeably. But I wonder in your practice, in your experience, what you see? How do people tend to relate to the concept of intimacy and what does it mean to them?

Alvean:

Well, I happen to really like the definition that was given by Van Moody, who was the author of the People Factor or I should say, is the author. What Van said about intimacy really broken down is that I am allowing you into a space that is now without armor; I'm not going to protect myself from you. I'm not trying to hide any element of who I am, I am going to lay it bare. I will be naked before you and trust that this thing is, worth the risk. I'm going to let you all the way in. So I see in relationships, the most effective are generally those where people are honest and sincere about what they're experiencing, what's going on internally.

Doug:

Well, I'm confused about intimacy, because I think its use has robbed it of meaning. I think that one the one hand there's a sense of closeness with another human being where you become more than the sum of two people. When you've connected on that kind of a level you have a sense of the other person that is transcendent. That to me, is intimacy. I realize I'm being entirely subjective in applying my own definition here, but I think that the casual use of that word and the confusion of that with the idea of sex is part of a bigger set of issues than perhaps society acknowledges. During the Victorian era, we were as a society very hung up on nuances. You know, people would drape piano legs because they considered them too suggestive. In our rebound from that towards the kind of casual way in which we talk and think about intimacy as it is portrayed on, in the TV movies in the arts in general, we blur the lines, you know, we try to intentionally conflate different stages of feeling.

In our conversation last week, we talked about true love. I think that also suggested the sense that some of these definitions are a little ephemeral, they're a little feathery. That allows us to equate what may be genuine with something that's less so. So what's the difference between true love and loving someone? I think we would agree there is a difference, but how do we define it. So, last week, when we talked about this you provided a definition, naked vulnerability. What's intimacy,

Alvean:

It really is very similar. Just to take it out of the clouds a little bit, it's just that you're really, truly plugged in with someone, and you can be both emotionally intimate. The state of intimacy is about stepping in to another person, which, quite frankly, is what sex is as well. It's the physical stepping in to another person. And that is a measure of intimacy, and one that has actually become quite cavalier in our society. I mean, people sleep with whoever they want to, as if it doesn't really mean anything, people do the one-night stand thing, which I must admit, I cannot wrap my mind around. I must totally admit, that is in my own generation, I, I don't get the one night stand. But I see it in the movies. I really think it should stay in the movies, personally. That is my own personal opinion, not to be forced upon anybody else. But I think that to step into another person, physically or emotionally requires a level of respect and understanding for the depth of what is literally taking place. Because intimacy, physically, is the only act by which life can be created. And intimacy, emotionally, is also the only act with which love can be created, both of them are the epicenter of the birth of something meaningful, which is not something I think that should be trifled with so casually.

Doug

So, I'm going to pull on that thread for a second, because that's really interesting. Can you really love someone and not be intimate with them?

Alvean

Whoo, that's a really intriguing thought. Okay, so here's the thing, I have had relationships with men, because that's what I happen to like. So I've had relationships with men that were emotionally intimate relationships. And I will tell you that I have loved them. Now, here we go, again, with the love thing, because it was never a love I would compare to the kind of love I've had with Matthew. I've loved them, but never been physical with them, although I have been tempted to be physical with them. I think that intimacy is designed to be physical, designed to be part of the process, the experience, so to speak, when words are no longer enough, when I don't want any distance to exist between you and me, when I want to step inside of you and step outside of myself to step inside of you, to truly become one. And I think that the danger sometimes of emotional affairs and emotional commitments and emotional investments in that it is hard to keep it at just an emotional place. Because where the heart goes, the body wants to follow.

Doug:

So, to get very personal about as a young man, and I wish I'd had the moral judgment and maturity otherwise but I had some one-night stands and they left me feeling empty. Almost to the point of tears. I felt, is that all there is to it? Why don't I feel anything more? Well, because I didn't really feel anything going into it, other than being physically attracted. And once I got a little bit older in life, a little more experienced, I realized that that experience was never going to be fulfilling. I think that's when I began to understand what intimacy was about. Unless I was truly connected to somebody, it wasn't going to end well.

Alvean:

It's just like junk food, you know. It takes care of the hunger momentarily. But you often once you come from that rebound, sugar high, you're even hungrier. The experience so lacks nutrition for your heart, for your spirit, that the rebound leaves you hungrier than you were going in. So, we are designed for real connection. The Bible says that it was not good that man should be alone, so I will create for him a help mate. We don't meet the maximum potential of our purpose until we exist inside of true connection. We were designed for connection, but we have reduced it in our society. Sometimes we have literally reduced it to its cheapest form and we spend our lives operating inside of something less than what we could be only to discover that had I had this revelation earlier the quality of the trajectory could have been so much richer. But we don't figure it out early enough. Do you think that's mature? if that's possible?

Doug:

Well, yes, I think it is possible to figure it out early, notwithstanding my own experience. But I wonder, if you've never tasted chocolate how do you know what it tastes like? How do you know whether you would like it or not, or whether it's good or not? If you never experienced real intimacy, then you don't know what you're missing. Sometimes figuring out what we don't want, or what we don't like is the first step in figuring out we do, so no experience is wasted. If we take the time to recognize what we felt and why, perhaps we can set ourselves on the right path.

Alvean:

I think often in relationships one or the other partner is uncomfortable with physical intimacy. It's often the byproduct of never having experienced real intimacy. Ask couples who have a really rich and healthy sex life I'm not just talking about you know, the highest fireworks but I'm talking about people for whom making love begins long before they step into the bedroom, because they make love to each other in the way that they communicate on a regular basis. They flirt with each other on a regular basis, they work to step into each other in symbolic ways on a regular basis, so that by the time they get together physically, it really is just a manifestation of all of the moments collected during the course of the day, the week or whatever that are just hitting a crescendo but it's been going on the whole time.

Doug:

it's been said before, and I'll repeat it. the mind is probably the most underdeveloped sexual organ. On that note, I hope we get some response to this subject. What's your sense of intimacy? Write to us at doug@lovelife.digital or alvean@lovelife.digital

We want to thank Kamaria Mason, our producer, Todd Washburn, our Recording Engineer and the entire Love Life family, including you, our listeners. We'll be back next week with another episode. Until then, have a wonderful week. Bye folks.