

DEEPER

(Experiencing A Deeper
Relationship With God)



“We love because
He first loved us.”

1 John 4:19

Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries

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Introduction

I have written a four-part series based on what I believe is our calling as Christians:

"We are called to grow into Christ-likeness and experience our true identity in order to live life for others and experience a deep relationship with God."

The series is called: ***Growing Up-Growing Out-Growing Deep***. Below is an overview of the study.

Growing UP – What it means to grow into Christ-likeness and to experience your true identity.

Book One - Growing Into Christ-Likeness

Book Two - Experiencing Your True Identity

Growing OUT – the overflow of Christ-likeness through you to selflessly live your life for others.

Book Three - Living Life For Others

Growing DEEP – Understanding the depth of God's love for you and how to experience a deeper relationship with Him.

Book Four - Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God

This booklet, DEEPER, is a summary of Book Four – *Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God*. I hope that, as a result of what the Holy Spirit reveals to you in this booklet, you will continue on by going through Book Four. More details are at the end of this study.

Chapter One

God's Plan To Restore What Was Lost

"Where Are You?"

One morning as I was sitting with the Lord, He took me back to the Garden of Eden before the Fall to think about the relationship between Adam, Eve, and Himself. As I was meditating on this, I began to imagine the free-flowing love that must have existed between them.

All three had an unquenchable desire to be in each other's presence. Adam and Eve experienced the love relationship and perfect intimacy they were created for. Can you imagine the intensity of their continuous experience of God's unconditional love? How would you describe their relationship with God? (I encourage you to take a moment to think about this.)

We don't know how long this perfect intimacy lasted, but in one moment of their making a sinful, disobedient choice, that intimacy was broken and so was God's heart. Not only were Adam and Eve no longer in perfect union with God, their desire and heart for God had died as well.

Have you ever been in a situation where you lost a loved one, or loved ones, to death? Wasn't your heart grieving because you could no longer hug them and tell them you love them? Wasn't there a hole in your heart because they were gone from your life?

Have you ever thought this was likely God's heart when Adam and Eve sinned? Take a moment to think about God's feelings at that moment. Can you picture God weeping and grieving over the loss of this love relationship with His precious creation? It was a grief we can't possibly imagine.

Adam and Eve were lost which is why God's first question to them after the Fall was:

"Where are you?"

This was not a question God was asking about their physical location because He knew exactly where they were. He didn't ask this question out of frustration or anger. Rather, He was asking this question through tears caused by a broken heart because they had left this perfect relationship with Him.

Can you imagine if your young son and/or daughter went missing? Wouldn't your heart be breaking not knowing where they were? Wouldn't you do anything and everything to find them and get them back? This is exactly how God felt about Adam and Eve and this is how He feels about you.

God's heart and divine PURPOSE from that moment on was to PURSUE man's heart and RESTORE the LOVE relationship that was lost.

God's Plan To RESTORE The Lost Relationship

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve made a sinful choice to disobey God that led to spiritual death. God is grieving because His creation chose death over a deep personal relationship with Him. Is it possible that God felt rejected?

Think about it. He provided a perfect environment for them to live in forever. No sin and no conflict. He provided for and met every spiritual, physical, and emotional need Adam and

Eve had. There was nothing they had to do to meet their needs because He provided it all. Why did God do all of these things?

Because of His ETERNAL, IMMEASURABLE, and UNCONDITIONAL love for them.

God created man for a mutual love relationship. That relationship was compromised when Adam and Eve sinned. However, this did not stop God's pursuit of that relationship. He was determined to win His creation back to Himself.

Therefore, God put a plan in place to restore the relationship that was lost. From the Fall of mankind until the end of this world, God's heart and plan is to bring us back to Himself. Paul tells us this in Ephesians 1:5:

"His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure."

God was not surprised by Adam and Eve's sinful choice. He had an eternal plan in place and that plan was to restore the mutual love relationship that we were all created for. His plan was put in place and from that moment on, out of God's eternal desire to experience a relationship with you, He began seeking you the moment you were born and drawing you to Himself.

Chapter Two

How Do We Know How Much God Loves Us?

Part of God's pursuit of us was to prove to us what lengths He will go to in order to prove how much He loves us. That will be the focus of this chapter. As you go through this section, seek the Holy Spirit to persuade you of the depths of God's love for you.

God Has Loved You For An ETERNITY

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.”

Ephesians 1:4

Think about how long God has been loving you. He has loved you and will love you forever. His love for you is eternal. With that in mind, can you imagine God's anticipation for you to be born? Do you know how excited He was the moment you came into this world? You thought your parents were happy. Their happiness pales in comparison to how happy the Lord was (and still is) the day you were born because the stage was now set for Him to start bringing you to Himself to reveal and express His eternal love for you.

Does this make a difference in how you feel towards God knowing that He has loved you eternally?

He Chose The “YOU” Version of You To Be Born

You may not know this, but there are 500 million genetic possibilities at conception. God loved you enough that out of 500 million possible genetic combinations, God chose the “you” version of you to be born. Think about it. He did not

want 499,999,999 other versions of you. He wanted you! David confirms this in Psalm 139:13-16.

“For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb.14 I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Think about these words, “fearfully and wonderfully made.” “You knit me together.” God is telling us that the “you” form of you was personally chosen by Him and hand crafted to be exactly the form of you He desires. All because He wants to love you and no other form of you.

As you read this, do you sense the Holy Spirit persuading you that God loves this form of you and no other? How might that change how you see yourself if you believed you are fearfully and wonderfully made by God for God?

The GREATEST Expression of His Love

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friend.” John 15:13

Would you spend a few moments meditating on three words in this verse? “*No greater love.*” What Jesus is saying here is “There is no greater expression of My love for you than going to the cross for you. It was a horrible, painful death but I love you enough that I laid down My life for you – even if you were the only person who ever lived.” The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit so wanted to restore the lost love relationship that when there was no other choice to be made

than a sacrifice, Jesus said to the Father and the Holy Spirit, “Here I am, send me.”

Even though our finite minds cannot comprehend the height and depth of His sacrifice, we must continue to seek the Spirit to take us deeper in our understanding of what happened on the cross because it wasn’t Roman soldiers who drove the nails into His hands and feet – it was His for love you that chose the nails.

Do you believe that the only thing God needed to do to express His love for you was to go to the cross for you? The answer is “yes,” but He didn’t stop there. He did much more to persuade us of His love for us.

You Are God’s BELOVED Son or Daughter

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and **beloved...**” Colossians 3:12*

The word “beloved” is an adjective that refers to “someone who is dearly loved and cherished.” What person do you dearly love the most? Multiply the love you have for that person by eternity and that is how much God dearly loves you.

If you have come from a home of unloving or even abusive parents, the word “beloved” may be hard to receive. If this is true of you, please know that your heavenly Father will spend the rest of your life persuading you that you are His very own beloved son or daughter. Another one of the Greek words for “beloved” is “favorite.” You may not know this but you are God’s favorite.

How would it change how you see God if you understood how beloved you are to Him?

God Loves You As A PERFECT Father (Abba)

“and I will be a (perfect) Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.”

2 Corinthians 6:18

Depending on what kind of a father you had, God saying, “I will be a Father to you” can be well received or troubling since we tend to put our earthly father’s face on our heavenly Father’s face. Regardless of how loving or unloving a home you came from, we all have (or had) imperfect fathers (and mothers). What God will do as we continue to seek Him, will be to reveal to us what a perfect, unconditionally loving father looks like.

He will bring us to the same place of intimate relationship where Jesus was when Jesus calls His Father “abba.”

*“And He was saying, ‘**Abba!** Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.’”*

He Put Himself In UNION With You To Love You At The Deepest Level

*“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because **we are united with Christ.**” Ephesians 1:3*

God so wants to love you at the deepest level that He put Himself in union with you. The word “united” in Ephesians 1:3 means “in union with.” When God entered into union with us, He restored us to the same union relationship He had with Adam and Eve before the Fall. Why did He do this? So that we, like them, could experience a love relationship with God at the deepest level. Think about it. God cannot get any closer to you than He is right now.

Chapter Three

How Does God Feel About You?

Now that you know what lengths God has gone to prove His love for you, have you ever thought about how God feels about you? If you struggle believing what you read in this chapter, ask the Holy Spirit to persuade you it is true.

God EXULTS (Leaps For Joy) Over You

“The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior.

***He will exult over you with joy, He will quiet you
in His love,”*** Zephaniah 3:17a

We see in this verse that God exults over you with joy. We all can experience human joy from time to time but think about the kind of joy God experiences for you. An eternal, continuous, unending joy. Not only that but one of the definitions of “exult” is to “leap for joy.”

Can you visualize God leaping for joy over you? We can imagine children leaping for joy but for many of us, it is hard to grasp the eternal God of the universe leaping for joy over us. Why would God be so joyous over you? Because you are His personal creation. One of a kind, created to be loved by Him. The truth is you bring Him great joy by being you. And no sin you commit will ever change that.

God Is HAPPY With You

***“And as a bridegroom is happy in his bride, so your God
is happy with you”*** Isaiah 62:5 - The Message Bible

Have you thought about God being happy? He is because the word “blessed” in the verse above means “happy.” God is

not only happy in and of Himself – He is openly happy with you. We know human happiness for one another will ebb and flow based on how someone behaves but God’s happiness is not based on your behavior. Rather, it is based on the fact that He created you and you bring Him great joy. Think about the following quote:

“We are what God pulsates for. We are what He longs for. We are what He waits for as His inheritance. If we could only see who we are because of Him. I am the one He loves. I am the one He died for. I am the one He longs for.”
Mike Bickle - The Pleasures of Loving God

How might it change how you see God if you believed that He is continuously happy with you?

God LIKES You

*“For the LORD **takes pleasure in His people....**” Psalm 149:4*

God not only loves you, but He also likes you. Many people have said that God loves them but when asked, “Does God like you?” they hesitate because they are not convinced God likes them. We do this because when we look at other people, we base how much we like or dislike them based on such things as their behavior, their personality, or their beliefs. However, unlike people, God likes you regardless.

Can you envision a God who really likes you? He likes everything about you: your face, your smile, your personality, your interests. Everything. Why? Because you are His creation—unique, one of a kind (even if you are an identical twin). He could hardly wait until the day you were born. At the time of your birth, visualize God elbowing the angels and exclaiming with great joy, “There is my boy/girl!”

You Are His FAVORITE

Have you ever thought about this truth? You are God's favorite.

You may be asking, "How can I be God's favorite in light of the billions of people who have walked the earth?" When we think of a favorite person, they stand out among all the rest. We typically have favorites based on how much they like you or that you are attracted to their personality. However, God, being God, sees you as His favorite because you were uniquely created by Him and for Him according to Psalm 149 above.

Have you ever thought that you are God's favorite? Not because you are favored more than someone else. Rather, because you were exclusively created by Him and for Him.

God Is SINGING Over You

We now know from the first part of Zephaniah 3:17 that God is leaping for joy over us. However, it does not stop there. Look at the last part of Zephaniah 3:17:

***"...He will rejoice over you with loud singing."
Zephaniah 3:17b***

Not only is God leaping for joy over you, but He is also singing over you as well. Is it possible that God has not only written a song just for you but He sings it over you as well? Can you imagine what the words of that song might be that apply to you and you alone? If you have read this verse before, have you stopped to think what it must be like for God to sing? What a beautiful, heavenly voice He must have. However, not only is He singing over you, the verse says He is singing loudly. How loud must His singing be over you? Loud enough that all of heaven can hear?

How does God singing loudly over you change how you feel about Him? How does it change what you believe about Him?

He Longs To Be GRACIOUS To You

*“Therefore, **the LORD longs to be gracious to you**, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.” Isaiah 30:18*

As a result of everything you have read in this lesson so far, God longs to be gracious to you. The words “longs for” in the original language means “to greatly desire something.” In this case, God greatly desires to pour out His grace to you. As we know, grace comes in many forms: answered prayers, needs being met, or transforming us to experience Christ-like characteristics such as love, peace, or compassion, etc. The key is that God is not struggling to be gracious to you – He longs to pour out His abundant grace on you.

Chapter Four

God's Greatest Desire

What God Wants Most

God's greatest desire is this:

A MUTUAL love relationship with YOU.

Stop and think about this for a moment. This amazing, majestic, all-powerful God who does not need us, created us so that not only can He love us but we will love Him. He pursues us not only for Him to love us but for us to love Him with that same love. This is why Jesus said the greatest commandment is this:

"...love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37

God wants more than a one-way relationship. His greatest desire is for you to love Him. Think of a lovesick man who is pursuing the woman he so loves and wants to marry. At some point, his desire is for her to stop running from him and turn around and fall into his arms. What a beautiful analogy of God's pursuit of man.

His heart is that the pursuit of you will be over because you will stop, turn around, and fall into His arms. Why? Because in that moment your unbelief turns into belief that God so loves you that your greatest desire will be to love Him. At that point, you won't see Matthew 22:37 as a command. Rather, it will become your one and only desire.

When you finally SEE and UNDERSTAND the depth of God's love for you, your GREATEST desire for the rest of your life will be to love HIM.

This is where God is taking us. This is why He pursues us because one day we will have spiritual eyes to see His greatest desire is for us to love Him in return.

We Only Love God Because...

*"We love because He **first** loved us...."*

1 John 4:19

This verse is so significant because it confirms the truth that we can't love God apart from His first loving us. We have talked in a previous study about God being the initiator and we are the responders. We see this in Philippians 1:6:

*"For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began [initiated] a good work in you** will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."*

Remember this key truth from those previous studies:

The truth is we cannot INITIATE anything towards God. We can only RESPOND to His initiation.

God initiates everything in us and towards us. He draws us to Himself for salvation; He puts His life in us; and He gives us the desire to depend on Him, obey Him, and be transformed by Him. When it comes to His love for us, He initiates by pursuing us, revealing His love for us, and giving us the desire to respond to His love.

This should be good news because it means it is not up to you to initiate the desire and willingness to love God. Not only that, we are off the hook to “try,” in and of ourselves, to produce the love for God that is impossible for us to produce. Now that you understand God’s desire, it leaves one final question to be answered:

Will you CHOOSE to respond to His initiation and His DIVINE invitation into a mutual love relationship?

“He deeply yearns for your affection and this is why He invites you into an intimate relationship with Him.”

S.J. Hill – Enjoying God

God Is INVITING You

“God is continually calling to that deep place within the human heart as He seeks to manifest Himself to those He Loves. There is a place within you - a deep place - that only God can touch. It is in that place that God’s echoing invitation emerges and penetrates your spirit. It’s the invitation not only to experience Him but also to enjoy Him.

This call comes out of an even deeper place, a deeper longing, in the heart of God. As much as you may want Him, He wants you more.” S.J. Hill – Enjoying God

Do you remember getting an invitation to a party, a wedding, or a gathering like a family reunion? It was an invitation that you very much wanted to accept because you would be with close friends or family. In like manner, God is inviting you into a mutual love relationship. It will never be retracted but it does require an RSVP. Will you or won’t you accept God’s invitation? Think about this before you answer

this question. Why wouldn't you accept the invitation knowing the One who sent it – the One who:

- Loves you unconditionally?
- Wants to be your best friend?
- Can't wait to spend every waking moment with you?
- Wants to spend eternity with you?

If we can see the priceless, unfailing love that David experienced in the following verse, there is no doubt we would accept His invitation.

“How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.” Psalm 36:7

Why Are We Able To Accept His Invitation?

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 11:19

We see in this verse that the moment we trusted Jesus for salvation, He gave us a new heart. Why was that necessary? For two reasons. First, the heart we inherited from Adam was dead to God, alive to sin, and incapable of loving God (Ephesians 2:5). Second, the new heart would be the same as Adam and Eve's hearts before the Fall, giving us the same capacity to love God as they had.

The ultimate purpose of God giving us a new heart is to restore the intimate love relationship that existed in the Garden between Adam, Eve, and God. God intended everything—beginning with salvation, imparting His life in us, giving us a new heart, and transforming us—to be about only one thing: returning the same love to God that He has towards us.

We see this in Jeremiah 24:7:

*“I will give them **a heart to know Me**, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.”*

The new heart we received at salvation is designed for us to intimately “know” God. Not merely to know about Him because God wants more than theologians and biblical scholars. He wants lovers. Divine lovers who seek Him to know Him intimately. Please pause a moment and think about the following statement:

***Within every Christian is a new heart whose
ULTIMATE desire is to know and love God at the
DEEPEST levels.***

Chapter Five

God's Heart

How Would You Describe God's Heart?

That is a great question and on one level impossible to answer because we can't possibly know the full extent of His heart. However, I want to share with you my understanding of God's heart.

When you think of God's heart what comes to your mind? Some might say that His heart is His essence (i.e., His eternality, sovereignty, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc.). For me, these words describe God but don't really reveal to me His heart. As I meditate on God's heart, my mind keeps going back to the last part of 1 John 4:8:

"... God is love."

So far, the answer I've come up with to describe God's heart can be summed up in one word: **love**. Why love? Because it is the core of His essence. And everything else that flows from God to you flows from His love. Let me use the human heart to explain.

Your human heart contains and pumps physical blood into the rest of your body. Similarly, God's heart contains "spiritual" blood (i.e., His love, joy, grace, passion, compassion, grieving, patience, selflessness, intimacy, etc.) that flows out of God's heart into yours.

When I think of God's heart, it is like a water pitcher with His heart of love being the pitcher and the water being poured out His love. We see this in Romans 5:5:

*“... the love of God **has been poured out** within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

Think about this. If God’s heart is being poured out for you and me, then everything that God does for us, in us, and through us is born out of His love.

His Heart For You Doesn’t Change When You Go Prodigal

Considering my new understanding of the heart of God, I see the prodigal son story in a very different light.

What is interesting about this story is that it does not tell us what the father was doing or thinking while his son was in the far country. I had never thought about this until the Lord revealed it to me one morning.

The Lord revealed that when the father gave the son his inheritance and the son walked away, the father began to grieve and weep over the son’s decision. The Lord asked me this question, “Can you imagine the pain and heartache the father was experiencing for his son?” Not only was the father grieving, he knew his son well enough that he understood how this would likely end. He saw in his mind’s eye the needless pain and suffering his son would have to go through.

What drove his deep grief was his immense love for his son. His tears flowed because of the depth of his love. He couldn’t stop his son from making this mistake but his leaving did not anger his father. Just the opposite. It created a deep longing to have his son back. His love for him never wavered.

Can you imagine the prayers the father prayed over his son? Have you prayed similar prayers over a “prodigal” loved one in your life? Have you thought about this being how your

heavenly Father feels about you and how He prays over you when you go prodigal?

Believing the truth of what the Lord revealed to me, I can understand the incredible joy of the father when the son returned. The beauty of this story is that he did not wait until the son knocked on his door and begged to come in. Rather,

*“... while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. **Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.**” Luke 15:20*

The father not only ran to his son – he did it filled with love and compassion. I can only imagine the thoughts running through the father’s mind: “My son is back. I no longer have to love him from a distance. I can now embrace him, tell him how much I love him and how much I missed him.” With that kind of love, think about the party his father must have thrown for him. I wish I could have been there.

How does this story apply to you? Just as the son received his physical inheritance from his father, you and I, as spiritual sons and daughters, have received a spiritual inheritance from God according to 1 Peter 1:3-4:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an **inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.**”*

The son ended up squandering his inheritance by loose living. In like manner, we, as Christians, squander our “spiritual” inheritance when we choose to live in our prodigal pigpens of independence and sin against God.

Like the son, when you go prodigal, you may think God is upset or angry with you or that He is ashamed of you. The truth is He is grieving over your leaving and weeping because not only does He know the pain and suffering that living in the prodigal pigpen will cause you, but more importantly, how your sin distances you from the intimacy He so desires with you.

We know that we are in inseparable union with God, but we can still choose to live as our own source (in our “flesh”) independently from Him. When we do, it grieves Him because in the relational sense, His life is not complete without you. (We know He is complete in the Trinity but when it comes to His relationship with you, He does not feel complete when you go prodigal.)

God will not coerce you to stay with Him. He will let you walk away but can you imagine how He prays over you when you do go “prodigal”? How He longs for you to “come back” so that He can put His spiritual arms around you and kiss you and do everything He can to persuade you to never “leave” Him again.

How would it change your heart towards God if you realized that when you choose to live in the flesh, God is weeping over you, praying for you to “come back” to Him in order to continue (or begin) the intimate relationship He so desires with you? Could you take a minute and think about that? Ask the Spirit to confirm in your heart what I shared.

Our Relationship With God Is Like Marriage

*“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and **His bride** has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7*

The Bible tells us that we, as Christians, are the bride of Christ because of our union with God. Our spiritual union is like a human marriage in that we can choose to live in love and harmony or we can choose to live in our flesh. If a couple chooses to live in the flesh, even though the harmony of the relationship is negatively impacted, the couple is still married.

Similarly, when you seek to live independently of God, you are still spiritually connected to Him because of your union and loved by Him because of His nature. But you forfeit experiencing the intimacy of your love relationship with God until you turn back to Him.

As much as I desire my physical marriage to be one of harmony, my greatest desire is for a loving, harmonious relationship with the Lord.

[Note: The difference between a human marriage and my union with God is that any disharmony or disruption in my relationship with the Lord only comes from me because His love towards me is constant, unconditional, and unchanging. Plus, He is always working to bring me into harmony with Himself.]

Chapter Six

God's Desire For Intimacy

What Does Intimacy With God Look Like?

I want to share with you my definition of intimacy and then look at what it means practically.

INTIMACY

A MUTUAL love relationship with God that is based on knowing and experiencing Him on an emotional, experiential, and spiritual level.

[**Note:** Before I go on, I know the word “intimacy” is typically a harder word for men to relate to than for women. Most men would agree it is not a word we use that much in our vocabulary except in the context of sex. I understand, but I pray if you are a man reading this, you will eventually come to embrace this word because it is the best word to describe the kind of relationship God wants with you.]

Much like writing about God's heart, writing about intimacy is a challenge to put into words. We know that God loves us and we are supposed to love Him back. However, I must admit that until recently I didn't realize that loving God and falling in love with God are two different things. I say this because now I see intimacy with God as a love affair between God's heart and mine.

What kind of love are we talking about? Jesus answers this question in John 17:26:

*“... and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that **the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**”*

Jesus is saying that in us is the same love that He, the Father, and the Holy Spirit have for one another. It is selfless, unconditional love that goes beyond needing God just for what He can give, but desires and loves Him for who He is.

Again, the best human analogy I can think of to explain this is when I first fell in love with a wonderful lady who later became my wife. All I could do was think about her. I ate, drank, and slept thinking about her. All I wanted was to be with her 24/7. I wanted to hear her thoughts and explore the depths of her heart. I wanted to laugh, cry, and have fun with her. Just being with her even if we said nothing was enough. If I could sing, I would have sung songs to her.

My point is I wanted to know her and share my life with her. I wanted to know her heart and she wanted to know mine. In short, I was head over heels in love with her (and still am). I share this with you because I know this is how God feels about you. However, as with any loving relationship, God wants a two-way relationship. We see this mutual love relationship with David when he said,

*“Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
how I praise you!” Psalm 63:3*

Let's end this section with this key truth:

***God has put it in each of our hearts to DESIRE
and LOVE Him and we will never
be fully SATISFIED until we do.***

Is Intimacy With God Conditional?

Someone recommended that I read John Eldridge's book, *Get Your Life Back*. Little did I know when I started this book what the Lord had in store for me. One day as I was reading, I came to the part where Eldridge says:

***God's love and acceptance are UNCONDITIONAL
but intimacy with Him is CONDITIONAL.***

Those words jumped off the page because I had never thought that intimacy with God was conditional. I had always just assumed that since we are in union with God, we couldn't get any closer to Him than we already were. While that is true, what I was going to find out is that being in union with God does not necessarily result in "experiencing" intimacy with Him. To make his point, Eldridge cited James 4:8:

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...."

I had read this verse many times, but I finally realized that intimacy with God really is conditional. Eldridge compared intimacy with God to our human relationships. Human intimacy is based on the depth of mutual, reciprocal love. We can unconditionally love people that don't like us or even hate us. However, we can only experience intimacy with someone we love who responds with love towards us.

***"I love those who love Me; And those who
diligently seek Me will find Me." Proverbs 8:17***

[Note: Even though this verse sounds like God loves us conditionally, we know that is not the case because God's essence is love (1 John 4:8) and He continually loves us with an unconditional love. This verse is referring to intimacy with God which requires a reciprocal love on our part.]

Chapter Seven

Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God

My Personal Journey To Experience Intimacy

*“Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those who
seek the Lord rejoice. **Seek** the Lord and His strength;
Seek His face continually [longing to be in His presence].”
1 Chronicles 16:10-11 (AMP)*

I hope by now you see God’s heart, God’s desire for intimacy with you, and your need for intimacy with Him. You may be well on your way in this journey, but if not, I want to share some of the things I have done to cultivate my relationship with God. The most vital role you can play in growing your relationship is to intentionally engage God by faith. In the context of this journey, I define “intentional” as:

***A DELIBERATE and FOCUSED pursuit of God
to reveal, persuade, and draw you into a
deeper intimacy with Him.***

I would like to share with you some practical suggestions on what it looks like to experience a deeper relationship with God. Please do not look at this as a “to do” checklist. These are simply some practical things that may help you in your journey.

Meditate On Scriptures Concerning Intimacy

*“My eyes are awake throughout the night watches that I
may **meditate on Your word.**” Psalm 119:148*

What does it mean to meditate on God's word as it relates to loving God?

Meditation is engaging the Holy Spirit to CONTEMPLATE or think DEEPLY on God's Word so that the HOLY SPIRIT can work through it to TEACH you, APPLY it to your life, and TRANSFORM your heart to become a LOVER of God.

A good practice is to begin making a list of the scriptures that focus on loving God and being loved by God. Here are some thoughts on what meditation on God's word looks like practically.

- Come with an open and receptive heart to what the Holy Spirit wants to reveal to you in a passage.
- Seek the Holy Spirit to guide you to words or phrases in a passage that He wants you to focus on.
- Listen for what He might say to you concerning those words or phrases.
- Ask questions of the Spirit such as:
 - What is it You are saying to me personally through this verse(s)?
 - Is there something You want to reveal or uncover in me through this verse?
 - Is there some false belief or area of unbelief that I am believing that You want to transform?
 - How does this verse apply to experiencing a love relationship with God?

Pray Through Scriptures On God's Love

In addition to meditating on scriptures that portray God's love, pray through them as well. Here are some thoughts concerning what that might look like.

- **Simply make a biblical prayer your prayer such as Isaiah 26:9 below.**

*"My soul **yearns** for you in the night, in the morning
My spirit **longs** for you."*

- **To better understand key words in a verse Google the biblical meaning.**

For example, let's look at the biblical meaning of "yearning" and "longing" in Isaiah 26:9 above.

Yearning: to desire, wait longingly for, to crave

Longing: great affection for, to strain after, to greatly desire to have something or someone

Using these definitions, you might pray, "I wait longingly for you; I have great affection for you; I strain after You."

- **Pray the Holy Spirit will transform you through a scriptural prayer.**

For example, look at Psalm 73:25:

*"Whom have I in heaven but you? **I desire you more than anything on earth.**"*

Example prayer: "Lord, continue to persuade me that there is nothing on heaven or earth that compares with loving You and

being loved by You. Give me a deep and abiding desire to know You, love You, and walk with You throughout the day.”

Read Books That Focus On A Relationship With God

There are several great books that focus on a mutual love relationship with God. I have a list of those at the end of this booklet. Rather than reading these books just to gain information, I asked the Spirit to stop me wherever He wanted to reveal what intimacy with God looks like. Here is a great example from my favorite book, *Enjoying God*, by S.J. Hill:

“God is continually calling us to that deep place within the human heart as He seeks to manifest Himself to those He loves. There is a place within you—a deep place—that only God can touch. It’s in that place that God’s echoing invitation emerges and penetrates your spirit. It’s the invitation not only to experience Him but also to enjoy Him. This call comes out of an even deeper place, a deeper longing, in the heart of God. As much as you may want Him, He wants you more.”

When I came to this part of the book, the Spirit stopped me to “marinate” in what the author said. As I meditated on quotes like this and others, I would engage the Spirit who would ask me questions like this:

- “Bill, is this true of how you feel about Me?”
- “Does this create a deeper hunger and thirst in you for Me?”

Spend Time In Stillness Listening To The Lord

“A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak.” Ecclesiastes 3:7

“Be still and know that I am God....” Psalm 46:10

One of the hardest things for Christians in our culture to do is to be quiet and still in God's presence. And yet, I believe it is an essential part of experiencing intimacy with God.

I had read Psalm 46:10 many times before, but one day as I was meditating on it, the Spirit put this thought in my mind: "What is the converse of this verse? If you are not still, you won't know." The more I meditated on this thought the more I realized that while we can know God on some level without stillness, there is a deeper level of intimacy with God that can only come from being quiet and still before Him.

We know life is moving at warp speed. The problem is that constant "busy-ness" keeps our souls in endless turmoil. With thousands of thoughts running through our minds all the time, we all seem to have ADHD, chasing after one thought and then another.

The good news, though, is that as you cultivate the holy habit of stillness, those thoughts come under control of the Holy Spirit and you become still both physically and soulfully (i.e., your thoughts come under control).

It is out of this stillness that I hear God best. It is not an audible voice. Rather, it is thoughts that the Lord inserts into my mind that turn into a conversation between us. This is how we dialogue and commune with one another.

When I share this with people, they first tell me how hard it is to be still and then they say how difficult it is to actually hear the voice of God. I understand because when I initially sought to be still, my thoughts ran wild and my endless "to do" lists replayed in my head. However, as I stayed with it, over time, my soul began quieting down more quickly and my thoughts more easily became focused on the Lord.

People warn me all the time that hearing God's voice can create pitfalls, especially if it isn't really the Lord speaking. I understand and agree, but I also know the deeper I go into my relationship with God, the easier it is to distinguish God's voice from all others.

As you enter into this practice and become concerned about whether or not you are hearing God's voice, you can always stop and ask the Spirit if that was Him talking through your thoughts or someone else. Over time, you develop a clearer sense of when it is God speaking to you. As Jesus says in John 10:27:

*"My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me."*

My communion with the Lord is by far the sweetest experience ever now that we dialogue all the time (not just when I am being still before Him). However, it is in the stillness that I feel the closest to Him. That is where, free from distractions, I can keep my total focus on Him and hear Him most clearly.

Communing With The Lord During The Day

*"You will show me the way of life, **You fill me with joy in your presence** with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

Psalms 16:11

Is there anyone you really enjoy spending time with because they make you feel loved and valued? There is no one who can do this better than the Lord Himself. And the beauty of it is He is in you and with you every moment.

As I grow in my intimacy with Him, my desire to commune with Him throughout the day grows as well. I find myself talking with Him while I am walking or driving. When I am

with someone and they are sharing a personal struggle, I seek the Lord to give me a word of encouragement or hope to speak to them.

I must admit that as much as I want to spend every moment with Him, my mind gets distracted, or I get caught up with what I am doing. Not that I can focus on Him every moment, but I would like to focus on Him as often as possible. Since the Lord knows my mind is prone to wander, I continually ask Him to bring Himself back to my mind.

Even though each of our journeys is unique, I hope some of what I have shared about how the Lord has directed my journey of intimacy with Him will also help you. The key to everything I have shared with you is this:

Continue SEEKING and PURSUING Him because as you do, you will FIND a God who loves you and desires you more than you could possibly imagine.

Chapter Eight

The Results of My Personal Journey

What I am about to share is evidence of what God is producing in me as a result of drawing closer to Him.

The Lord Is Becoming More Irresistible

*“When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You,
‘Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.’” Psalm 27:8*

I want to return to this verse to share that once, as I meditated on it, I began to imagine what was behind David’s words. The Bible doesn’t tell us how David felt when he wrote them but knowing the heart of David for God, I believe David found God’s words “Seek My face” irresistible.

When the Lord told David to seek His face, it was like a divine magnet that he couldn’t resist. David immediately responded with yes, Lord, I will seek your face. I understand because the deeper I encounter the Lord, the more irresistible He becomes. Not only that, but the more I pursue Him, the more my walls of resistance are being torn down. As my walls are destroyed, I experience a greater capacity and desire to love God.

I Am Satisfied and Yet I Want More

There is a restaurant I love to go to that offers 35 different cheesecakes. Being a certified “chocoholic,” my addiction of choice is the Chocolate Tuxedo cheese cake. It truly is a slice of heaven but it is so rich, I can only take a few bites at a time. When I finish one bite I am satisfied, but I am left wanting more. This is how I feel about my relationship with the Lord.

Like a two-sided coin, I am fully satisfied with God's love on one side, but I am thirsting for more of Him on the other.

Look at how David expresses this. On one hand, David is satisfied:

*"You **satisfy** me more than the richest feast.
I will praise you with songs of joy."
Psalm 63:5*

And yet David wants more:

*"I lift my hands to you in prayer. **I thirst for You**
as parched land thirsts for rain." Psalm 143:6*

There Is A Deeper Experience of God

*"O **taste** and **see** that the Lord is good...."
Psalm 34:8*

I have already shared with you what "seeing" looks like when it comes to God's love. However, seeing is one thing but "tasting" is another. In the context of our study, I define tasting as experiencing more of God and His love for me.

Experience in our spiritual journey is an essential step in growing in the Lord. We can know about God's truth and even believe God's truth yet still not experience it. We call that walking by faith.

However, there is a place for feelings and experience as a spiritual confirmation of what God is doing in our lives. In my walk of faith, I first had to "faith" it before I experienced it. The same is true of this new journey into intimacy. I had to believe it by faith early on but now I am experiencing and feeling God's love. I do not always feel His love but the times that I do are like a rich (chocolate) dessert.

I am not an emotional person but in my pursuit of the heart of God, the Spirit is touching me in places of my heart that were once unfeeling. Now when I read certain passages that describe the heart of God or David's thoughts about God, I sometimes choke up or even weep. (That has happened a number of times as I have written this book.) These tears are confirmation of God's working to soften and transform my heart at the deepest spiritual level.

I don't try to hold back any tears when I am talking to someone about my loving Abba. I let them flow because they are an outward sign of His deep inward work in my heart.

Part of my deeper experience of God is a greater awareness of His presence. Some days I experience His presence very strongly and some days less so. But, as I grow in my dependence on Him and my love for Him, I am experiencing His presence in ways I never thought possible.

I Have A Deeper Heart of Praise and Thanksgiving

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His **praise** shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1

"Sing to the LORD with **thanksgiving**; Sing **praises** to our God on the lyre." Psalm 147:7

As a result of tasting and seeing His love, I find myself praising and thanking God more often for the depth of His love, His non-stop pursuit, and His eternal desire for our mutual intimacy.

I must admit that my desire to praise and thank God in the past was not what it should have been; but now, all I have to do is think about what I am experiencing with my loving Abba and I can easily break out in praise and thanksgiving.

My Love and Concern For Others Grows

As you begin to seek God to be able to respond to His invitation and grow in your love towards Him, the inevitable overflow will be your ability to love others with His love.

For me, I am experiencing a greater love for others as my love for God grows. I find myself loving the unlovable people in my life. I am not only loving others more, I am also experiencing a greater awareness of how and where God is working in the lives of others and a greater sensitivity to the Spirit concerning how He wants to use me in the lives of others.

My caring, empathy, and compassion for others has grown exponentially. This is so encouraging to me because I am not naturally an empathetic or compassionate person.

In addition, the Spirit is replacing my judgmental and critical attitude with His love. My growing love for others is directly proportional to my growing love for Him and my experiencing His great love for me.

*“But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to **full expression in us.**” 1 John 4:12*

God not only wants to love us, but He wants us to become the full expression of His love through us to others.

I Am Living More In The “WOW” of God

One morning on one of my retreats, the Lord directed me to start writing down words that describe Him. I call it my divine “Wow” list. These are the words the Lord put on my heart:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| Great | Wonderful | Loving |
| Satisfying | Awesome | Marvelous |
| Glorious | Precious | Beautiful |
| Powerful | Exalted | Splendid |
| Sublime | Incredible | Majestic |
| Magnificent | Extravagant | Exquisite |
| Resplendent | Spectacular | Phenomenal |
| Immeasurable | Unspeakable | Unimaginable |
| Inexpressible | Incomprehensible | Astonishing |
| Amazing | Stunning | Thrilling |
| Exciting | Exhilarating | Fascinating |
| Captivating | Heart-stopping | Breathtaking |

When I finished the list, I realized why God had me make it because as much as I wanted to feel these things about God, I wasn't. I wanted to but at that point many of these were just words on a page. I later realized these words were a divine road map to where the Lord was taking me. They were my own "preview of coming attractions."

As I have grown in my relationship with God, these words are no longer just words on a page. I find myself increasingly believing and experiencing these words. I call my list the divine "Wow" because the more I experience this magnificent, captivating, heart-stopping, and breathtaking God who lives within me, all I can say is "Wow!" Here is a verse that sums it up:

"O LORD my God, you have performed many wonders for us. Your plans for us are too numerous to list. You have no equal. If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds, I would never come to the end of them." Psalm 40:5.

Final Thoughts

Each day I have a growing excitement and anticipation of being with Him, listening to Him, and experiencing the awe and wonder of His presence. I am beginning to get a glimpse of what David experienced in beholding the beauty of the Lord. As a result, I only want to experience more. More of His presence. More of His love. More of His heart.

If what you have read is tugging at your heart, that “divine” tug is the Lord inviting you to know Him more deeply for who He is and to realize just how much He loves you. It is an invitation for you to experience a level of relationship with Him you never thought possible.

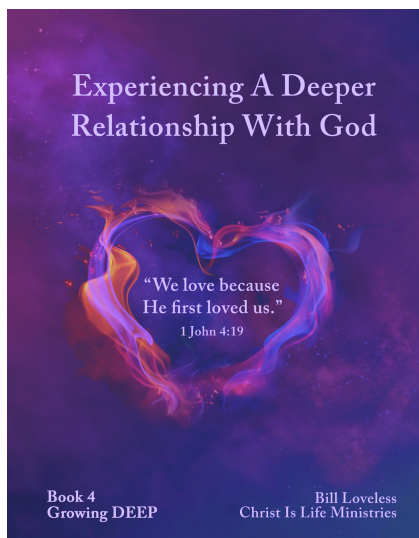
The truth is we are all on the runway called “life.” Whether you are young or old, you have no idea how long that runway is. So please don’t wait another day. Today, seek the intimacy God offers and you were created for. Don’t wait until you get to heaven to discover what the Lord is offering you right now.

Let’s accept His invitation and live in the awe, wonder, and beauty of His love because when intimacy with God becomes your pearl of great value, you will experience the divine purpose for which you were created—to be a man or woman after God’s own heart. Nothing less will satisfy. When you do, David’s words will become yours:

“I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” Psalm 9:1-2



Would You Like To Know More?



I hope you were encouraged by this booklet. I have written a curriculum called *Experiencing A Deeper Relationship With God* which will take you deeper into the topics in this booklet and more.

You can download it for free or purchase on our website: www.christislifeministries.com

Recommended Books

Here is a short list of books on experiencing a deeper relationship with God that I highly recommend you read:

S.J. Hill, *Enjoying God: Experiencing Intimacy With the Heavenly Father*, Relevant Books, 2001.

Mike Bickle, *The Pleasures of Loving God*, Charisma House, 2013.

Martha Kilpatrick, *Adoration*, Seed Sowers, 1999.

David Ravenhill, et al., *Catching God's Heart; the Wisdom and Power of Intimacy*, Destiny Image Publishers, 2020.

John Eldridge, *Get Your Life Back*, Thomas Nelson, 2020.

Ruth Hayley Barton, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*, IVP Books, 2010.

Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Baker Books, 1989.

Chris Tiegreen, *Feeling Like God: The Emotional Side of Discipleship – and Why You Can't Fully Follow Jesus without It*, Saltwater, 2008.

Jeanne Guyon, *"Experiencing The Depths of Jesus Christ."* Christian Books Publishing House, 1981.

If you have any thoughts concerning what you have read that you would like to share or if you have any questions about what I have written, please email me at the address below.

If you want to learn more about our ministry, I encourage you to visit our website listed below. We have a number of written discipleship materials as well as free videos you can watch online. You can either download our written materials for free or purchase them online.

Blessings in Christ,

Bill Loveless

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(3-12-23)

DEEPER

Two of the greatest struggles many Christians have is receiving God's love and loving God in return. Since we were created for relationship, God's greatest desire is to draw every one of us back to Him to experience a mutual, love relationship. Therefore, in this booklet we look at key truths that will reveal what God's heart is for man and how to be men and women after God's own heart.

- How our concept of God impacts our relationship with Him.
- God's plan to restore a mutual, love relationship with man.
- What God is doing to persuade us of His love for us.
- How God really feels about us.
- What it looks like to be a man or woman after God's heart.
- How we experience a deeper relationship with God.

*"You satisfy me more than the richest feasts
I will praise you with songs of joy." Psalm 63:5*

"O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1

"When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.' Psalm 27:8

May the Holy Spirit use this study to reveal to you in deeper ways the height, length and depth of God's love for you and what He has done and is doing to draw you into a mutual love relationship.



Bill Loveless is the director of Christ Is Life Ministries (CILM). CILM is a non-profit, non-denominational ministry that focuses on discipleship. We teach Christians that Christ is our only Source for living the Christian life and what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness and be drawn into a deeper intimacy with Him.

For further information and to see the other materials being offered, please go to our website:
www.christislifeministries.com

