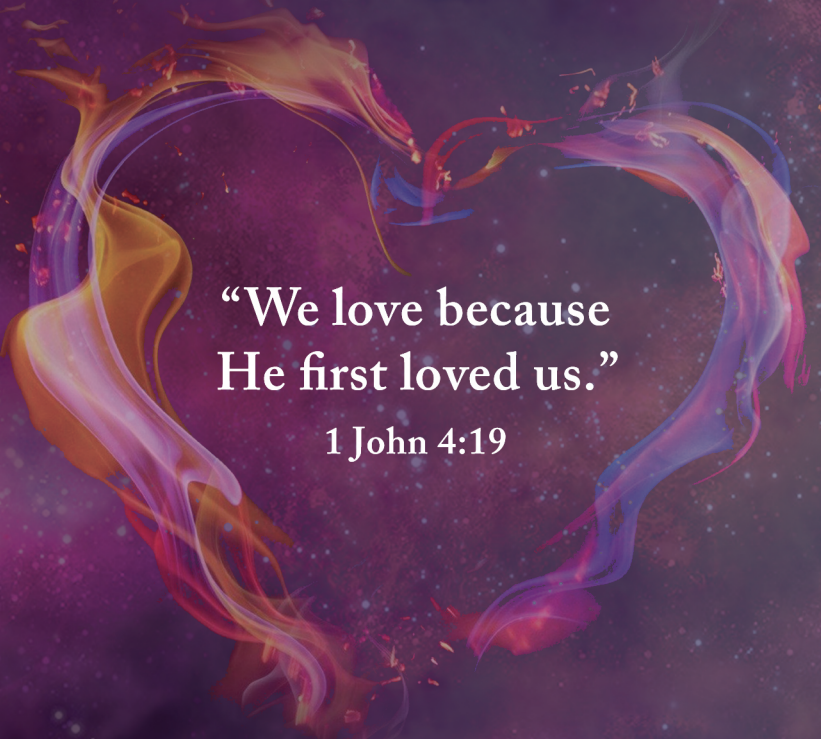


EXPERIENCING THE HEART OF GOD

(Are You?)



“We love because
He first loved us.”

1 John 4:19

Bill Loveless
Christ Is Life Ministries

Experiencing The Heart Of God (Are You?)

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Introduction

I want to begin by saying I have never before written a more personal or subjective book. I use the word “subjective” because what I will be sharing with you is my personal journey over the last several months. I will be using scripture throughout but not for teaching purposes. Rather, it will be to share with you God’s personal revelation and how He applied those scriptures to my life.

Since this book represents a new stage of understanding and experience for me, I will be writing to you from where I currently am at this stage in my journey. I am sure my experience will greatly expand in the future because I am still in the early stages of this new journey.

I encourage you to read what I will be sharing with your heart instead of just with your intellect. By this I mean for you to engage the Holy Spirit to affirm or deny in your heart what I am saying. This is a heart study that requires your being in tune with the Spirit as you read it. It is not designed to tickle your mind. It is designed to grab your heart at the deepest levels.

I define the “heart” as your human spirit and that part of your soul that connects with God’s heart at the deepest emotional, experiential and spiritual levels. A simpler definition of the heart is that part of us that knows, believes and experiences God’s heart. I will discuss God’s heart later in the book.

My desire and prayer are that you read this book as a “divine” invitation into a deeper revelation and experience of God’s heart for you, as well as His desire for your heart to be for Him. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, I know the Lord is always inviting you into a deeper

intimacy with Himself. If you accept His invitation, the Lord will move in your heart in new and amazing ways.

My Journey Into Intimacy

This new phase of my spiritual journey began when the COVID-19 virus shut down this country in mid-March, 2020 (we will never forget that time, will we). By the time that occurred, I had already made four out-of-state trips since January and had seven more trips planned through August.

I had just returned from Memphis when COVID stopped all my travel plans. I was very disappointed because I had some great trips planned to a number of churches. Little did I know that I was about to discover what was for me the “pearl of great value” that Jesus talks about in Matthew 13:46. Unfortunately, it took a pandemic for me to discover it.

Since I now had time on my hands, I began spending more time in stillness before the Lord. One morning when I was being still before the Lord, He sent this thought rolling across my mind: “Bill, when you get to heaven, I don’t want to hear these words, ‘Oh, so this is what intimacy is all about.’”

Those words impacted me like a baseball bat across my face. What I didn’t realize at the time was how much of a divine wake-up call this was! The Lord was revealing to me that there was another part of my spiritual journey I had yet to discover.

One morning, I was reading a book that quoted Psalm 27:8:

“When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You, “Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”

Even though I had read this verse many times, this time I realized God was speaking to me personally. As I meditated on this verse, the Lord put these thoughts into my mind, “Bill, I want you to seek My face which means seeking Me for who I am, not for what I can do for you.”

I must be honest with you. Before then I had never sought God for who He was. Don’t get me wrong. I would praise and thank Him for being God but most of my prayers were based on what He could do for me, for someone else or in some circumstance. I realized in that moment that God was calling me to know His heart. This revelation is what began my new journey to become a man after God’s own heart.

While my journey is unique to me, I am convinced that God is constantly inviting each of us into a deeper personal relationship with Him. I pray that as I share my journey, it will encourage you to step onto the path of seeking God’s heart. If you are already on that path, I pray God will give you a greater hunger and thirst for Him.

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 you would 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 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?"

God was not asking this question about their physical location because He knew exactly where they were. He didn't ask this question out of frustration or anger. 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 or daughter went missing? Wouldn't your heart be breaking not knowing where they were? Wouldn't you do anything and everything to 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 what was lost.

God's Plan To Restore The Lost Intimacy

From the Fall of mankind until the end of this world as we know it, God's heart 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."

Even though I have used and quoted this verse a number of times in my discipleship study, it wasn't until recently that God gave me spiritual eyes to see just how it sums up why God created man. It was to adopt you and me and to bring us into His family. As I was meditating on this, God brought to mind several "why" questions.

The "WHY" Questions

Think about what your answer to these "why" questions would be.

- Why did God choose you to be born out of 500 million genetic possibilities at conception?
- Why did He go to the cross for you?
- Why did He put His life in you?
- Why did He set you free?
- Why is He transforming you into His likeness?
- Why will you spend eternity with Him?

There are a number of Biblical answers we could give for each of these questions but the one answer that God gave to me to answer all these "why" questions was this:

***To EXPERIENCE what we were created for:
a deep, personal INTIMACY with God.***

This is why God's plan gave Him great pleasure. Think about it for a moment. God had you in mind "before the creation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). He chose you out of 500 million possibilities. He "knit you together" in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13). Can you imagine God's anticipation for you to be born and 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 for an intimate relationship.

Because of His eternal desire for intimacy with you, He began wooing you to Himself from the time you were born. First, for salvation so that you would spend eternity with Him. Second, so He could put His life in you to reveal more of His love. Third, to put His life in you to be able to remove every obstacle (false beliefs, unbelief, woundedness, etc.) so you would be transformed into His likeness and walk in the fullness of His love. Why? Because this is what you were created for.

I am so thankful I am saved and Christ is living His life in and through me. I praise Him for the amazing transformation as well, but as eternally wonderful and necessary as salvation and transformation are, the overarching reason the Lord is doing all this is to restore the intimacy that was lost in the garden.

Therefore, please take a moment to go back through the “why” questions and when you finish, I hope you can see what John saw in I John 3:1:

*“See how **very much** our Father loves us....”*

His love for us knows no bounds. He did and does all He does because He wants you to experience what you were created for: intimacy with Him.

Let me share with you my meaning when I talk about intimacy:

A MUTUAL love relationship with God that is based on our KNOWING and EXPERIENCING Him on an emotional, experiential and spiritual level.

More simply put, intimacy is the desire and experience of loving God and being loved by God.

Chapter Two

God's Pursuit of You

God's Pursuit Of Us Is The Heart Of The Bible

After the Fall of man, God knew we were incapable of pursuing God's heart which meant it was up to Him to pursue our hearts. I believe this pursuit of us is the heart of why God gave us the Bible.

Think about it for a moment. His word reveals His character and His promises for you. It reveals His life and power in you to make those promises an experiential reality. However, He did not give us His truth so we could simply know about God. He gave it to bring us back to Himself so we could experience a mutual love relationship.

As a result, I no longer see the Bible as only a collection of Biblical truths and promises. I now see it as a love letter from God's heart to ours (Ephesians 1:5). His written word is a love letter intended to entice you to get to know and experience Him at the deepest levels. He knows all about you and He provided the Bible for you to know Him and His heart for you.

If you haven't done this before, I encourage you to read the Bible as a love letter to you personally. As you do please keep this thought in your mind:

***All that God IS and all that He PROMISES
to do are designed to bring you to Himself so
you can enjoy the SAME love relationship
with Him that Adam and Eve enjoyed.***

The Pursuit Of You Is On

*“Surely your goodness and unfailing love will
pursue me all the days of my life....” Psalm 23:6*

The Bible is clear that God loves you, but did you know He also pursues you? “Pursue” in Hebrew means to run after. Can you imagine the God of the universe running after you like a loving parent who is having fun chasing his/her child?

He confirmed this idea of pursuing me not long ago. One morning as I was walking, the Lord put this thought in my mind, “Bill, you are always on My mind.” The thought of always being on God’s mind overwhelmed me because it was so personal. I had always thought He was too busy thinking about 8 billion others. My friends, the same is true for you. Try to imagine for a moment that God is thinking about you every moment throughout the day.

Even though God is pursuing you, He knows He can’t make you love Him just the same as one human being can’t force another to love him or her. Even though He is the almighty, omnipotent and sovereign God, He can’t (and won’t) coerce, guilt, or manipulate you into loving Him. All God can do is show you how much He loves you and reveal to you how loveable and worthy He is of your love.

The one overriding truth is regardless of what He does to prove His love for you, you still have the final word. Will you choose to love Him and seek a mutual love relationship with Him or not?

Rest assured, as long as you have breath in your body God is NON-STOP wooing, pursuing and trying to WIN your heart.

Stop to think about that for a moment. This amazing, majestic, all-powerful God can't help Himself. He wants you for Himself and He wants you to want and love Him. Why else did Jesus tell us in Matthew 22:37 that the greatest commandment was to:

"...love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind."

I remember when I pursued my wife before we were married. I can promise you I was in hot pursuit. The good news is that one day I stopped pursuing because she stopped, turned around and fell into my arms. What a beautiful moment that was. I share this with you because this is God's ultimate desire for us. He will run after us but at some point, He wants us to stop, turn around and fall into His arms. The moment I did, His pursuit of me was over and the pursuit by me of a deeper intimacy with God began.

God's objective is to CAPTURE your heart and because of His UNQUENCHABLE love for you, He will go to whatever lengths necessary to do so.

I encourage you to take a minute and ask the Holy Spirit to sink that thought deeper into your heart. I pray you will receive it and believe it.

Without God's Pursuit, We Can't Love Him

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

1 John 4:19

This verse is so significant because it confirms the truth that I can't love God apart from His first loving me. I think this is so important not only concerning loving God but for everything else involving our Christian walk. The truth is that God is the "initiator" and we are the "responders."

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

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."*

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 is always the initiator because He pursues us, reveals to us His love and gives 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.

This is why God has to be after your heart because if He does not initiate, then you will never be able to respond to

His love and love Him in return. As a result, He is pulling out all of the stops to love you in so many different ways that at some point you will see His love, experience it and seek the same relationship with Him that He has with you. I am just so thankful that the Lord is in this love-driven, non-stop pursuit of us. Aren't you?

The only way we can truly love God and love Him from our hearts is for Him to show us the DEPTH and ENORMITY of His love towards us.

S. J. Hill, in his book *Enjoying God*, says this about God's pursuit of us:

The lover of your heart was pursuing you even when you didn't realize it. He was working behind the scenes, proactive in the circumstances of your life, bringing you to a place where through His grace you could experience Him. This is both a humbling and profound truth. How can someone who is "blind" to the beauty of God have the scales fall from his eyes and his heart awakened to intimacy apart from the Lord touching and drawing him?

I want to leave you with this final thought:

Even though God is always initiating His love towards you, it is up to you to CHOOSE to respond to His initiation.

Chapter Three

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, there are two analogies the Lord has revealed to me. The first one is a water pitcher—

His heart of love being the pitcher and the water being poured out being all that flows from His love.

The wonderful truth about God's heart is that it is not like a jar with a lid on it meant exclusively for the three members of the Trinity. Instead, like a pitcher, the contents of His heart are constantly being poured out into our hearts. This is why Romans 5:5 has a new and more personal meaning for me:

*"... 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 (including His disciplining us. Hebrews 12:6).

My second analogy came one morning in my time with the Lord when He revealed to me that His heart is like a multi-faceted diamond. As we seek to know His heart, He will reveal different facets of it that we will never know any other way. I have been on a number of personal retreats and each time I go He reveals a different facet of His heart. Some of the facets He has revealed to me so far are that He laughs, He grieves, He rejoices, and He sings.

Each time He reveals a new facet, I see deeper into His heart which creates an even greater hunger and thirst in me to know Him more.

What Does God's Heart For You Look Like?

Since we are created in God's image, it is safe to say that God has feelings/emotions. You only have to look at Jesus while He was on this earth to know God has feelings. We see in John 11:35 that Jesus wept, in Matthew 20:34 that

Jesus was moved with compassion, and in Matthew 8:10 that Jesus was amazed. The truth is God has many of the same emotions that you and I do. The difference between our emotions and Jesus', however, is that even when he was tempted by His emotions, He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

If you know the Bible much at all, you have read or heard that God loves you. I knew this as a child when I sang "Jesus loves me this I know." The problem is that I knew it intellectually but not experientially. It wasn't until I was 48 that I began to understand and experience God's love for me personally. Since then, I have had a growing realization that He not only loves me, He likes me.

Can you imagine 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). Out of 500 million possibilities He chose you. There is no other, nor will there ever be, another you.

Your UNIQUENESS is what makes you SPECIAL to God.

Can you imagine the day you were born, God elbowing the angels and exclaiming with great joy, "There is my boy/girl!"

Can you picture God's so longing to be with you that He waits by your bed because He can hardly wait for you to get up in the morning to be able to talk with you (morning breath and all) and you with Him.

In addition, you bring God great joy. We find this in Zephaniah 3:17:

*“... He will **rejoice over you** with gladness.
With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will
rejoice over you with loud singing.”*

The word “delight” means to have great joy. You bring God great joy. Not by what you do or don’t do but simply by who you are. We find this hard to believe because we can’t truly fathom unconditional love. Since we are conditional lovers, we think we can do something to lose or change God’s love for us. Let me share with you what I share over and over with my friends, “God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it.”

Not only that, God is constantly singing over you. Not just singing, but loudly singing. I love people who can sing and I must admit I am jealous because all I can do is make a joyful “noise” (and not so joyful). The beautiful thing about singing is that it enables the heart to express deeply-felt emotions that mere speaking can’t communicate. Singing does what words can’t accomplish. With God, words are not enough to express how He feels about us. So, He sings over us all the time. I wonder what song He is singing over you right now?

In addition, God wants to be your best friend. I am blessed with several “best” friends. However, none of those compare to my friendship with God. Jesus calls us friends in John 15:15. But, if we don’t stop and think about it, we can miss (as I did) what it truly means to be the friend of God.

I want to encourage you to ask Him to give you eyes to see what friendship with Him looks like. As you do, you will

be able to experience God on a level like you never have experienced Him before. You, too, will soon begin to realize how much He “really” likes you.

If you struggle with the idea of God’s feeling these things about you, I encourage you to spend some quiet time with Him and ask Him if all I have shared about how He feels about you is true.

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

In light of 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 Him.

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 A 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 as a result 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 Four

Why We Struggle Loving God and Receiving His Love

I think you would agree that we all struggle on some level with loving God and receiving His love regardless of where we are in our journeys towards intimacy with Him. I want to share with you some of my personal struggles in loving God and receiving His love. See if you can identify with any of them.

We Tend Put Our Parents' Faces On God's Face

I believe our initial concept of God is shaped by how we were raised. I was raised by an angry, abusive father and an emotionally unavailable mother. As a result, I put my parents' faces on God's face and believed God was angry, cold, distant, unloving and judgmental. Can you imagine how this prevented me from seeing and receiving God's love?

It has taken many years of learning and experiencing the truth about God and His immense love for me to undo my distorted view of God. It was worth the journey, however, because having removed my mother's and father's faces off God's face, I now see only the face of this amazing, wonderful, loving Abba who lives in me, loves me and wants me for Himself.

What We Have Been Falsely Taught About God

In addition, what we've been taught about God can create an internal struggle in receiving and giving love to Him. Can you imagine hearing a sermon titled, "*Sinners In*

The Hands of An Angry God?” Just the title alone brings chills to my spiritual spine.

Unfortunately, I have heard too many sermons and read too many books that have reinforced my past false beliefs that God is angry or unhappy with me because of what I’ve done or failed to do. As a result, I wasted the first 30 years after salvation doing whatever I was taught to do to try to make God love me and be pleased with me. Despite my best efforts, I felt I could never do enough to please Him or earn His love. I came very close to walking away from church and religion altogether.

However, as I have sought the Lord to renew my mind and replace my lies with His truth, I now realize that He is not angry or unhappy with me and never was. Just the opposite. He desires me and wants me for Himself every moment.

Our Definition and Expectations of God’s Love

Have you ever said this or heard another Christian say these words: “If God really loved me He wouldn’t have (or would have) (fill in the blank).” When it comes to God’s love, I have disciplined many people over the years who tended to define His love according to their false understanding and expectations. Here are some examples:

- If God really loved me, He would not have let my father abuse me.
- If God really loved me, He wouldn’t have allowed me to get cancer.
- God can’t love me when I sin.

We expect God to love us in certain ways and when He doesn’t, we tend to say He doesn’t love us. I know because

I had expectations too and came to the same conclusion when He didn't meet mine.

What God has taught me over the years is that His love takes many forms. He did not love me any less when He allowed me to have a 40-year (and still counting) chronic health condition. I used to cry out for healing and felt He was being cruel and unloving by not healing me. I got angry with Him and wanted to walk away.

But what I didn't know at the time was He allowed this condition to keep me dependent. I now embrace my condition because it was necessary for me to become who I am today. It is clear to me that in His love, He allowed this condition.

There are a number of times on my journey when it took my going through adverse situations to realize later what God was doing in those circumstances. Only in retrospect, could I appreciate that God's allowing me to go through it was an act of love.

I know it may be hard to grasp especially if you are in the midst of a short or long-term struggle. However, if you continue to seek Him you will eventually look back and see that He allowed it out of His love for you in order to accomplish His divine purposes in your life.

Learning God's definition of love is a lifetime process but the closer I draw to Him the clearer His definition becomes.

God is not only CONTINUALLY loving us, He is continually revealing to us HIS definition of love.

Our Sins Are Too Great (It Is Too Good To Be True)

Many believers (including me at one time) evaluate their relationship with God based on the number and depth of their sins. When I used to do that, I would take a “sin” inventory and conclude my sins were too great for God to like me, much less love me. How about you? Do your sins cause you to feel the same way?

Staying focused on your sins is exactly what Satan wants you to do. Focusing on your sins is like being at the bottom of the Grand Canyon with no way out. Isn't this why we work so hard not to sin so that we can clean ourselves up enough to be worthy of God's love? Wouldn't you love to be free from that? You can be if you seek the truth and realize:

***Your sins can NEVER and will NEVER
change God's love for you.***

Why? When Jesus went to the cross, He died for all your sins—past, present and future. God has removed your sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and no longer remembers your sins (Isaiah 43:25). Now that your sin issue has been dealt with forever, God's point of reference with you as a Christian is love, not sin.

Because of what Jesus did, we no longer have to focus on our sins. We can now freely receive love from God and give love to Him. Since we are free from focusing on our sins, we are now free to love God. That sounds like real freedom to me!

Satan Will Do Everything He Can To Discourage You

Satan has a heart as well—a heart to steal, kill and destroy your heart. I tell people all the time that Satan knows the truth better than most Christians. He has read the Bible and knows how God feels about you and how much He wants a love relationship with you. Because of Satan's knowledge and his hatred of you, he will stop at nothing to keep you from experiencing the love relationship that God promises.

In addition, Satan also has your history stored on his hard drive and will use it, and all the strategies I just discussed, against you.

For example, Satan will try to keep you in bondage by:

- Continuing to persuade you to keep your father's/mother's face on God's face.
- Reinforcing the false beliefs about God you have been taught.
- Affirming you in your false definitions and expectations concerning God's love.
- Reminding you constantly of the lie that God can't love you because of your sins.

Just as God woos you to Himself, Satan will try and woo you to lovers other than God. However, these are false lovers (e.g., money, material things, reputation, pornography, etc.). Satan tries to persuade you that his false lovers will be the perfect substitutes for God's love. Busy-ness is another tool in his tool box to keep you from spending time getting to know God intimately.

Satan's accomplishes his destructive schemes primarily through our thought life. He is working non-stop inserting

false, lying, doubting, and discouraging thoughts into your mind concerning God's love for you. And his lies are inserted into your mind cleverly disguised as your own thoughts. In other words, those thoughts come in first person.

No strategy is too large or too small. As long as Satan can keep you from knowing, believing and experiencing the truth, you will never know the height and depth of God's love for you.

Nonetheless, God has not left us defenseless against Satan's schemes. Instead, He has given us 1) the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), 2) His word and the 3) Holy Spirit as our three filters to detect the lies and then take every sinful and fleshly thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). We no longer have to buy into Satan's lies because Jesus, the Truth, lives within us.

There are many other reasons why we struggle receiving God's love or giving Him love but I hope what I shared with you will be helpful. We will discover the good news in the next chapter because He gave us a new heart to love Him.

Chapter Five

We Have A New Heart

God Gave Us A New Heart To Love Him

*“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’s and Eve’s hearts before the Fall, giving us the same capacity to love God as they had.

I have taught for years that our new heart is our new identity in Christ. While this is true, I did not realize until recently that the ultimate purpose of God’s putting His heart in us was 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.***

If you are not yet aware that this is your heart's deepest desire, ask the Spirit to move you to that place.

What Does Intimacy With God Look Like?

I want to share with you again 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. As you will see later on, David not only embraced the word, he lived it.]

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*

I pray these words will become your words and your heart towards God because:

***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.”* I really enjoyed the book because it focused on unplugging from the busy-ness of the world and spending time in stillness before God. But 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 a part in the book 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 sensed this time the Spirit was revealing to me that intimacy with God really is conditional. As I further meditated on this truth, I realized that for many years I was seeking God for what I wanted or needed rather than seeking Him for who He is.

I felt I was much like the neighbor who only calls you when he needs to borrow something. It is hard to build a relationship based on that. Then I began to see that God wants us to know His heart because He gave us the heart to do so. It is our God-given longing. And it is our God-given privilege.

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. Why would it be any different with God? The Spirit led me to Proverbs 8:17 to further confirm this:

"I love those who love Me; And those who diligently seek Me will find Me."

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.

We see this with the apostle John when he declared five times in his own gospel account that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. This may sound prideful or even boastful, but that couldn't be further from the truth. What John meant was he did not want to be primarily remembered as a disciple or a writer of scripture. He wanted to be remembered for his immense love for Jesus.

How about you? Is that how you would like to be remembered?

Chapter Six

After God's Heart

Do We Need To Be AFTER God's Heart?

*"... the LORD has sought out for Himself a man
after His own heart...." 1 Samuel 13:14*

As we have said before, we are in union with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and because of that, we no longer live in separation. Some will say we are not like David since we have the permanent indwelling of the Trinity and, therefore, don't have to be "after" God's heart.

While this is true, we see throughout the Bible that not only is God pursuing us but we are to pursue Him. Like human relationships, there must be a mutual pursuit of each other in order to develop that relationship. This is why Jesus said this in Matthew 7:7:

*"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask
for. **Keep on seeking, and you will find.** Keep on
knocking, and the door will be opened to you."*

Jesus is echoing what God said earlier through His prophet Jeremiah:

***"You will seek Me and find Me when you search
for Me with all your heart."** Jeremiah 29:13*

Seeking and searching is based on a deep-seated desire not just to know about God, but to know God in the most intimate way. This seeking/searching involves a heart-search not merely an intellectual or theological pursuit of

God. This is why I define a man or woman after God's heart as:

One who PURSUES God to know Him on an INTIMATE level.

I pray wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you will continue seeking God to transform you into a man or woman after His heart.

David's Heart For God

I don't know how you feel about David but in spite of all his sins and struggles, God called him a man after His heart.

*"But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, 'I have found David son of Jesse, **a man after my own heart**. He will do everything I want him to do.'" Acts 13:22*

I have learned more about what intimacy with God looks like from David's life than any other biblical character. He expressed His love of God in so many ways. Here are a few verses that reveal his deep heart for God:

*"You **satisfy** me more than the richest feast. 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*

When you read these passages what feelings do they bring up in you?

For years, I read these passages without any feelings. I was happy for David that he felt that way towards God but I could not see that these verses were a preview of where God was planning to take me.

As a result of where the Lord has brought me, these words have become 3D. They are no longer simply words on a page. Now, when I read these passages, I sense David's joy, passion and deep love for God. They resonate deeply in my heart and my emotions. They create in me a deep and ongoing desire, longing, and thirst to know Him more deeply and intimately.

Before we continue, please take a few minutes to meditate on these verses. As you do, I encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit to sink these verses deeper into your heart so you can experience a deeper desire, longing, and thirst for God's heart.

Real Men and Intimacy

As I mentioned earlier, "intimacy" is not a word that most men use freely. I used to believe that it was anything but a "manly" word. However, I don't think any man would accuse David of not being manly. This guy was a man's man, a mighty warrior. He fought lions, bears, and giants in his youth, and, as king, led victorious armies against his enemies.

I can see David, coming back from battle, blood still on his hands, reaching out to God and saying these words:

*“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of
my life, **To behold the beauty of the LORD** and to
meditate in His temple.” Psalm 27:4*

David was not timid or ashamed to declare His affection for the Lord. If you are a man, when was the last time you uttered to God your desire to behold His beauty. Do you know why David said these words? Because of the depth of his relationship with the Lord, he saw the beauty of God’s heart. I am convinced that these words were not spoken matter-of-factly. They were said from the depths of David’s heart with great passion and emotion.

These words used to bother me but no more. Why? Because I now see what David sees. This amazing, astonishing and most beautiful God who loves us and wants us for Himself. Because David realized this, God called him a “man” after His own heart. Therefore, I believe a real man of God looks like this.

***Being a REAL man of God means being a man
who FERVENTLY and PASSIONATELY
seeks after the heart of God.***

Paul Was Also A Man After God’s Heart

I am afraid that many Christians—like I did for so many years—see the apostle Paul as more of a theologian than a lover of God. If that has been your thinking, take a look at Paul’s words in Philippians 3:8:

*"Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the **infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and **become one with him**."*

We know that Paul, early on, loved the law and hated Jesus and his followers. Look how far the Holy Spirit brought Paul when he talks about the infinite value of knowing Jesus and becoming one with Him. This was not just theology for Paul. This was Paul expressing his deep love of the Lord from the depths of his heart. His burning desire to know Jesus more is so great that he repeats himself in Philippians 3:10 when he says:

*"... that I may **know** Him...."*

The Greek word for "know" here has a much more intimate meaning because it is the word for the deepest form of intimacy between a husband and wife. God uses earthly examples of intimacy in marriage (e.g., Song of Solomon) in order to reveal the type of relationship He wants with you.

Can you imagine the emotions Paul must have been feeling for the Lord when he wrote these words? He may have been weeping because he knew how far the Lord had brought him. Jesus took Paul from being a murderer to being a lover. The amazing God that came to live within Paul did not stop pursuing him until He had captured his heart.

One thing I might add is that Paul grew in his intimacy with the Lord in the midst of being beaten, whipped, shipwrecked and stoned. The sufferings he experienced

are unimaginable and yet they drew him deeper in his relationship with the Lord.

Rather than becoming angry and bitter towards God, Paul used the most intimate and endearing word “know” to describe his heart for God even in the midst of his persecution. If you are in the midst of a struggle, I pray that this will not cause you to distance yourself from God. Rather, my prayer is that it will accomplish for you what it did for Paul and draw you nearer to Him.

One thing I have done recently is re-read Paul’s letters as love letters from God and an invitation to join Paul in growing in my “knowing” of God. I encourage you to do the same.

I pray you will meditate on David’s and Paul’s lives and seek the Lord to grow your desire to be a man or woman after God’s own heart in deeper ways.

*“Whom have I in heaven but you? **I desire you more** than anything on earth.” Psalm 73:25*

Chapter Seven

Engaging God To Walk In Intimacy With Him

My 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)

Everything I have shared with you so far originated with what the Lord revealed to me directly and through reading scripture or other books on intimacy with God. Discovering the heart of God has been a wonderful journey. I started this journey when God first revealed to me my need for intimacy with Him. When God first started meeting that need, I developed an increasing desire for intimacy. The result of that desire is a growing passion to not only live in intimacy with God, but to share it with others as well.

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 cultivating 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.***

As God revealed my need for intimacy, this hunger increased my resolve to seek a deeper relationship with Him. I would like to share with you what it looks like for me to engage God to experience intimacy. Please do not look at this as a “to do” checklist. These are simply some practical things that may help you in your journey.

I Read Books On Intimacy With God

The first thing the Lord did was lead me to start reading books by authors who focused on what intimacy with God looked like. The books I read were, for the most part, written from the perspective of the author’s personal journey. I have included a list of the books that have most impacted me at the end of this booklet.

Rather than reading them 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?”

I Meditate On Scriptures Concerning Intimacy

One of the key things I did as I read these books was to write down the scriptures that were significant to the authors. I would cross reference them as well. I built a treasure chest of verses that I referred to often and meditated further on, seeking God to make them true in my life. Here is an example:

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

When I would read a passage like this, I would engage God with questions like these:

- What is it you are saying personally to me through this verse?
- Would you transform my heart to a place where this is an experiential reality in my life?

I Sought God To Give Me A Yearning and Longing For Him

*“My soul **yearns** for you in the night, in the morning
My spirit **longs** for you.” Isaiah 26:9*

In the past I would read this passage without stopping to think about what David was feeling for God. But then one morning as I was reading this passage, the Spirit stopped me at the words “yearns” and “longs.”

I asked the Spirit, “Why these two words?” As I meditated on them, I could hear the Spirit put these thoughts in my mind: “This is what your heart wants more of. You want a deeper yearning and longing for intimacy and oneness with Me.” When He said those words, my spiritual eyes were opened, my heart was stirred, and I immediately began seeking the Lord to make them more than just words.

To give you some context, I thought I would share with you the English translation of these words from the original Hebrew:

Yearning - to desire, wait longingly for, wish for, want, crave.

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

While I wanted to have that same yearning and longing, at that point it was not true of my heart. As I reflected on the biblical definitions of these two words, every meaning became an enticement for more. “To wait longingly for, to wish for, to have great affection for, to strain after and to crave” all became the desires of my heart. How do these two words impact you?

I realized that even though there had been a yearning and longing for God since I discovered Life in Christ, this time when I read these two words, they took me to a whole new level.

This realization created a need in my soul that could only be satisfied by my intentional pursuit of the Lord. I sought Him to transform my heart so I would yearn and long for knowing more of His heart. I also asked Him to enable me to experience more of His love and a deeper awareness of His presence moment by moment.

You may not feel the yearning and longing for God you would like. If not, I encourage you to seek God to give you a heart that yearns and longs for a deeper intimacy with Him.

I Continually Ask The Lord To Give Me Eyes To See

I don't know if you have noticed but I have used the terms "see" and "eyes to see" several times. If you haven't studied the meaning of "see" in the Bible, here are a few of the biblical meanings: to discover, to understand, to discern or perceive.

One of my favorite verses to explain the word "see" is in 2 Kings 6:17. Do you remember the story of Elisha's servant who was terrified of the enemy's troops surrounding them but was unable to see the multitude of chariots of fire around the mountain tops? Because of that, Elisha prayed this prayer for his servant:

"Then Elisha prayed, **'O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!'** The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire." 2 Kings 6:17

Elisha's servant could not see with his physical eyes the multitude of chariots. The only way he would be able to see was if the Lord opened his "spiritual" eyes. Only then could he perceive they were actually there. In the same way,

unless the Holy Spirit opens our spiritual eyes to His truth, His character, and His love for us then we will remain blind and never understand all of who God is and what He has for us. This is why I continually asked God to give me eyes to see:

- His heart.
- His heart for me.
- His desire for me to have intimacy with Him.

Can you imagine how Elisha's servant must have felt when the Lord opened His spiritual eyes and he could see the multitude of fiery chariots? That must have been something to behold. My friends, that is exactly how I feel when God opens my spiritual eyes. As He does, I am in awe because what I am seeing is the height and length and depth of God's love for me and my need to love Him more.

This is why Elisha's prayer is my prayer as well because every day I want eyes to see in deeper ways how much God loves me, desires me and wants me to desire Him. I encourage you to make it your daily prayer as well.

I 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 get 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."*

Psalm 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 Journey Of Intimacy

Since each of our spiritual journeys is unique, please don't assume that what I will be sharing in this chapter about the results of my spiritual journey will be the same as yours. That said, I hope as I share where my growing intimacy with the Lord is taking me, the Spirit will use it to encourage you and draw you deeper into the heart of this breathtaking God who lives within you.

Keep in mind, as you read this chapter, that I did not initiate or produce these results. They are the result of what God accomplished in me. My part was to depend on Him to draw me to Himself and transform my heart. What I am about to share is my evidence of His work in my heart.

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 Have The Perfect Friend

I don't know about you, but I tend to like people who listen when I talk, affirm me from time to time and like being with me. I think that is only natural. I am very blessed because I have some great friends, including my closest friend, my wife.

However, there is one friend who is always listening, always affirming, and always loving. This friend will laugh (and sometimes moan) at my jokes. He is always there and, always ready to put His arms around me and comfort me. Even when I am throwing a pity party, He never condemns me, guilts me or shames me. His outpouring of love is constant and never ending.

Jesus likes to hang out with me, hear me share my struggles and bare my soul. It is not like He is hearing my struggles for the first time because I have shared them in the past. But now to share them with Him as a friend is a totally different experience than sharing them with Him in His role as a majestic, holy, all-powerful God.

How can you not love a friend like that in return? For me, it is impossible not to love my perfect Friend. That is why I would add only one word to the song "What A Friend We Have In Jesus" and that word is "perfect." In Jesus we have the perfect friend and the wonderful news is that perfect friend lives within you.

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.

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.

My Love and Concern For Others Grows

*"We love because He first loved us."
1 John 4:19*

As we discussed earlier, God is the initiator and we are the responders. If He does not initiate and draw us into a deeper love for Him then we can't love Him or others with His love. Be assured, however, He is always initiating and drawing us.

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 want to end this chapter by saying again that the only way I could write any of this is because God initiated and drew me and I simply responded. If He did not put the desire and love in my heart for Him and others, none of this would have happened. I pray that what I have shared will be part of God’s divine invitation to draw you into a deeper relationship with Himself.

Final Thoughts

I have so much more to share with you that I plan to expand this booklet into a book sometime in the near future. Before I end, I would like to share some final thoughts.

As I reflect on where the Lord has brought me in this new journey, I stand amazed. Amazed that before the end of my life, I found what is, for me, the pearl of great value in Matthew 13:45-46:

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on **finding one pearl of great value**, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

Before my journey into intimacy, the “pearl” had two meanings for me: salvation and life in Christ. But now, the pearl of greatest value is my growing intimacy with this captivating God who lives within me.

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

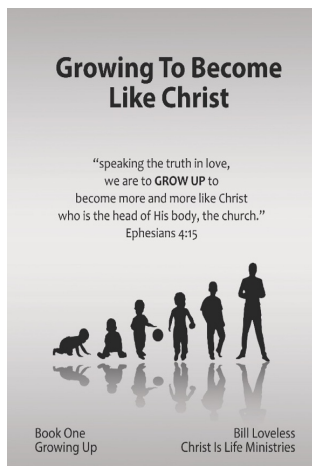
Amen!



Where Do I Go From Here?

At our website listed below, we encourage you to check out our four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep*** designed to teach Christians how to fulfill their purpose and calling. The first book in the series is called ***Growing to Become Like Christ***.

Book One covers the following topics:



- What it means to grow up spiritually to become like Christ.
- The difference between living “A” Christian life versus living “THE” Christian life.
- What it looks like practically to grow to become like Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances to spiritual growth and how we overcome them.
- How becoming like Christ transforms every area of our lives.

CILM DISCIPLESHIP MATERIALS

CILM has this series and many other studies, booklets and videos at our website listed below. To purchase ready-to-use copies from **Amazon or download for free** and do your own printing, copying and binding, please go to the **Discipleship** tab of our website. We hope you will take advantage of these materials.

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EXPERIENCING THE HEART OF GOD

In this book, I will be sharing with you my personal spiritual journey since COVID hit in March, 2020. Little did I know then the divine good God was going to accomplish in me during this very trying time. What the Lord has revealed to me about His heart has forever changed my relationship with Him and I pray it does the same for you.

These are some of the personal thoughts I will be sharing.

- How God really feels about you.
- What is the heart of God.
- What intimacy with God looks like.
- What it looks like to be a man or woman after God's heart.
- The results of seeking God's heart.

I hope you will join me on my personal journey into the heart of God.



Bill Loveless is the founder of Christ is Life Ministries (CILM), a non-profit, non-denominational discipleship ministry. CILM's focus is teaching Christians that Christ is their only source for living the Christian life, what it looks like to be transformed into Christ-likeness, and how to be drawn into a deep relationship with Him. Bill finished his earthly journey in 2024 and is now with the Lord he loves.

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

