

Knowing God's Love
Questions for Study and Reflection

The questions at the end of each chapter are to assist in processing and digesting what you have read. Work through them for your own study, talk them out with your spouse, or study them in a small group setting, “for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20) May God bless you on your journey.

Chapter 1 MEETING JESUS

In Chapter 1, Meeting Jesus, God orchestrated several events to open my eyes to the need for improving my relationship with my heavenly Father. As I sought God for help in loving Him, He answered my requests, just not as I expected.

1. What was your salvation encounter with God like? Write a few sentences or a paragraph detailing those moments. Whatever your experience, acknowledge it.

2. Can you identify with Steve's statement, “No matter what I did, I felt driven to do more....I thought I would never quite measure up and kept trying to do more to please Him”? Explain.

3. Why do you think believers struggle so much with thinking that God loves us more if we do more for him? Explain how that idea has manifested itself in your life.

4. Read these verses aloud slowly and thoughtfully: Deuteronomy 6:5-7 aloud slowly and thoughtfully. What do you think God wants to convey to His children here?

5. Read Ephesians 3:14-19, by yourself and/or with others. Ask the Lord to help you love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Pray these prayers consistently for a few days, weeks, or months.

Chapter 2 SURPRISED BY GOD’S GOOD NEWS

In Chapter 2, *Surprised by God’s Good News*, the scales continued to fall off my eyes as the good Spirit expanded my understanding of the gospel. I received new insights into the grace of God and the depth of the good news in not only taking away my sin, but in making me pleasing in His sight.

1. There are an abundance of scripture passages in this section. Which one(s) did the Spirit impress on your heart? Write out or meditate on this truth for a few days.

2. This chapter emphasizes righteousness as God’s gift to you: “in Christ, we have become the righteousness of God.” Picture two contrasting images. One person is saved and focuses on doing everything possible to please God. Every day s/he prays, “God help me to do something for you today. Help me to reach out and touch others.” The other person is also saved, and rejoices every morning, “God, You have made me righteous and You like me! Help me love You, bask in Your love, and share Your Love.” What differences do you notice? With which person do you most identify? Explain.

3. Spend a few minutes meditating on the phrase Jesus cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Try to put yourself in Jesus’ sandals, and feel what it must have been like to be separated from his Dad, close-knit as their relationship was.

4. Think and write about what it means that “You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Jot a list of the righteous acts that Jesus did here on earth and how they apply to you, since your life is hidden with Christ in God. Discuss it with your group.

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5. Is the message of this chapter, “righteousness from God that depends on faith,” old news to you, or new news? Explain how.

Chapter 3 AS THE FATHER LOVED ME

The verse which has meant the most to me on this journey, and which we will explore in **Chapter 3, As the Father Loved Me**, is John 15:9, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” I must have read that chapter at least thirty-five times over the past third of a century, but I had missed this verse. As much as God the Father loves Jesus the Son, Jesus the Son loves you and me. Amazing.

1. “Of the references made by Jesus to His Father, listed in this chapter and Appendix A, which are most meaningful to you? Rewrite them in your own words, paraphrasing them. Consider looking them up on www.biblegateway.com and copy several other translations or paraphrases of the same verse(s).

2. Think about your relationship to your Heavenly Father. Do the things mentioned in these verses pertain to you and God?”

3. Ponder how you relate to your earthly father. Has your relationship with your dad influenced how you relate to God as your Father?

4. “There were probably a lot of early morning walks along the Sea of Galilee, or quiet evenings spent on a lonely hillside, where the Father and the Son communed.” How and where do you make space for communing with God?

5. Consider asking God to give you an idea for how to establish one. Ask Him to give you a hunger and desire to be still and wait on the Lord, pouring out your heart to Him, and listening to Him.

Chapter 4 THE IDENTITY OF THE SON OF GOD

In Chapter 4, *The Identity of the Son of God*, we discuss the baptism of Jesus. There, His Father in heaven spoke, “This is my beloved Son.” When we are adopted into the family of God through the sacrificial death of Jesus, His Spirit witnesses to our spirit, that we are children of God. Knowing that we are not only followers and disciples of Jesus, but adopted children, significantly changes our perception of God as our Father.

1. How did Satan attack Jesus’ identity, and how did Jesus win against his enemy’s lies?

2. Knowing your identity in Christ is a crucial part of fulfilling God’s purpose for you on earth. Therefore, Satan will do everything he can to bring doubt and uncertainty to your identity in your mind and heart. How do you combat the enemy’s lies, according to this chapter?

3. Do you have a favorite verse or verses? Write them on notecards and consider posting them on your mirror

4. Which passages would you like to have memorized so you could effectively wield the sword of the Spirit?

5. “You are no longer a slave, but a son...” Think about the differences between a slave (or servant) and a son. What sets them apart? List some ways. How do those differences apply to YOUR relationship with your Heavenly Dad? How do some ways you behave fit into the “slave” category? The “son” category?

Chapter 5 ILLUMINATIONS AND KNOWING GOD

“You do not have, because you do not ask.” (James 4:2) A similar thought is expressed in John 16:24, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” In 2009, I began asking the living God to help me comprehend His love. I regularly thought about Ephesians 3:14-19 as well as verses like these two from James and John. As I asked, God illuminated biblical truths to me in such a way that the eternal verities of the word and the character of God came to life in a new way.

1. “I didn’t simply learn about God, I was enabled to know the living God myself.” What does this statement mean to you? Can you explain the differences between learning about God, and learning to know God? Can you identify some ways you have learned ABOUT God, and some ways or times you have actually grown in KNOWING GOD Himself, that is, experiencing God?

2. Knowing God is a “very present help in trouble,”(Psalm 46:1) have you received any divine illuminations during a challenging time in your life?

3. If possible, exchange stories with a friend or study partner, that you may be mutually edified and encouraged! We comprehend the love of God “with all the saints” (Ephesians 3:18).

4. Think about one person you’ve struggled to like in the past. What about them do you NOT like? Do you agree with Steve’s statement, “It is our own pain that hinders us from loving and connecting with others”? Invitation Point: Prayerfully, consider how this person brings out the pain and brokenness in you. Ask God for healing in that area of your life. Ask Him to reveal His Love for you, and His Love for that person.

5. Consider these divine illuminations: I Miss You Too, A Stone House, Sharing in His Sufferings, My Friend the Spirit, His Father Saw Him and Felt Compassion, and He Sees Me. Which of them strikes a special chord in YOUR spirit? Spend a few minutes thinking about why it draws you. What is God’s invitation to you regarding knowing Him in a new way?

Chapter 6 ABIDE, DWELL, LIVE, AND REMAIN IN MY LOVE

Throughout 2012, God gave me several tastes of His love. But the call of John 15:9 is to not merely taste and see that God is good, but to “abide in His love.” I discuss abiding in **Chapter 6, Abide, Dwell, Live and Remain in My Love**. To abide is the call of God to not simply have special forays into experiencing His affection, but daily living and abiding at a different plane. I have found this takes work, the work of abiding.

1. What does this statement mean to you: “I am to make His love a permanent place of residence”? Or as Jude phrases it, “Keep yourself in the love of God.” Can you think of other comparisons, or pictures, of God’s love?

2. “It is the nature of religious leaders, not only the Pharisees, to add to the simple doctrine of Jesus which is to love God with everything in us, and to love others as we have been loved.” Have you been instructed or encouraged by church leaders or your family or friends to believe that God thinks more of you, or loves you more, if you work hard for Him, or “do hard things” for His Kingdom? Which scriptures can you meditate on in order to combat those ideas?

3. Compare the phrase “You cannot give what you do not possess” with what Steve proposes, “The more I comprehend the unconditional love of God, the better equipped I am to give this same kind of love and fulfill the new commandment... ‘that you love one another: just as I have loved you’” (John 13:34). Can you think of some ways this truth is evidenced in your life and in the lives of others? Are you equipped to love others as Jesus has loved you? If not, what can you do to change that situation?

4. If you are hungry to move more towards becoming a “human being” rather than a “human doing,” how could you order your day to spend some time, even a few minutes to rest in the Lord, be still, wait on Him, abide in His love?

5. Choose a few verses in this chapter to on which to meditate, read aloud, chew on, or memorize. help these truths sink in. See if you can personalize them by putting your name or “I, me, my” in the verses, as you speak them aloud while your Heavenly Dad is listening. Remember He LIKES you!

Chapter 7 KNOW THE TRUTH TO BE SET FREE

Chapter 7, *Know the Truth to Be Set Free*, addresses transformation and truth. Jesus told a group of religious people that the truth would set them free. They protested that they already were children of Abraham and did not need any help. I too thought I knew a good bit, but as I immersed myself in scripture, the truth indeed transformed my thinking and set me free from unscriptural beliefs that I was still embracing.

1. “We each have default patterns of thinking that govern our behavior,” Steve suggests in the beginning of this chapter. What is one of your default patterns? Fill in the blanks: When _____ (a person) says/does _____ (these words/an action), I respond by _____ (another action).

2. If you are willing, think about your earthly parents. Respectfully but honestly examine which words or actions of your earthly parents affect how you view your heavenly Dad. How can you go about “letting go of old ways of looking at truth” and “embracing new insights God is revealing to you?”

3. Steve shares a story of how God spoke encouraging words to him after Steve felt that he disappointed God by not getting up early to meet with Him. Describe the words or actions here, and talk to God about them. Ask Him to shed light on how He truly feels about you. Ask your Heavenly Dad to change your “default settings” to reflect His TRUTH.

4. Why is the devil seeking to destroy your relationship with God and your accurate comprehension, or grasp, of grace?

5. Choose one or more of the “call to worship” sets in the chapter and in Appendix B. As you are led, find a way to incorporate them into your day. Could you read them while cooking dinner or in the bathroom. Maybe you could record the sets of verses on your phone or iPod and listen as you drive. “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable!” (2 Tim. 3:16)

Chapter 8 FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF CHRIST

Believing that God loves me takes effort and intentionality. I have much less trouble believing that God loves my wife and children. I have little difficulty believing that He loves my brothers and sisters around the world. The battle of faith, is having assurance that He loves me. Thanks be to God for giving us His inspired word, for “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17) In **Chapter 8, Faith Comes By Hearing the Word of Christ**, we will examine several passages that will strengthen our faith.

How is faith like a muscle we need to exercise? Explain why it is “important work” to believe.

2. What unique ways has God provided to develop faith in your life?

3. What hinders your faith?

4. Can you identify with Steve when he says that he has a tendency to doubt that God forgives him, and doubt that God loves him?

5. Think about times when you have sinned or done wrong things. Discuss how your feelings get in the way of believing God’s promises about forgiveness and love.

Chapter 9 COMPREHENDING WITH ALL THE SAINTS

This is a portion of Paul’s inspired prayer, “may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.” (in Ephesians 3:18-19) Each blood bought believer is a part of the body of Christ. We each supply something of value to the other members. We need each other’s help grasping and comprehending the incredible dimensions of the love of Christ. I have been helped by wonderfully gifted people the world labels disabled. I am happy to share what they have taught me about unconditional love in **Chapter 9, Comprehending With All the Saints.**

1. Think about your view of some passages in the epistles. Do you read them as to you (singular) or to you (plural)? Choose a passage from an epistle that uses “you” and read it aloud, thinking about it being addressed to your church body. How does it change your perspective and interpretation of the passage?

2. Do you know any “special emissaries of love”? If so, describe them briefly here.

3. How do they express love?

4. Think about how easy or hard it is for you to express love. Do you have a revelation of how much God loves you? Ask Him for that revelation.

5. In light of the great commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, should we make this a matter for regular, even daily prayer?

Chapter 10 THE GRACE OF JESUS

One Sunday, as the main service was coming to a close, the pastor had us bow our heads for the benediction. I often miss these words as I am distracted thinking about who I am going to speak to after the service or what I am going to do after I get home. But that day, his words came to me in a powerful way. The pronouncement was taken from the last verse in 2 Corinthians. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14) I had been comprehending the love of God, but I also recognized I had been receiving new insights into the grace of Jesus.

1. Imagine you are talking to a young believer in Christ about grace, or writing a children’s book about grace. How would you describe grace in your own words?

2. “God’s steadfast love and mercy are not tied to my behavior but to God’s character, which never changes.” How is this statement a game-changer for YOUR day-to-day life, in the place where you live right now?

3. Which verse(s) touched your heart and made you want to reread them?

4. Besides meditating on scripture what else can we do “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)?

5. What words in the Old Testament are used to render “grace”? Which one or more of these verses gave you additional insight into the concept of grace?

Chapter 11 SPIRIT OF GOD

The last phrase of 2 Corinthians 13:14 also was brought to life “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Other versions read, “the communion of the Holy Spirit.” Because of this inspired phrase and other mentions of the Spirit in conjunction with understanding eternal truths, I have entered into a new understanding and relationship with the Spirit. Upon further study, I believe Jesus was helping to fulfill His destiny with the fellowship of the Spirit, and I know I need His presence and power to be who God designed me to be. I am happy to share what I am learning about my new friend, the Comforter and Helper, in **Chapter 11, Spirit of God.**

1. What is the Holy Spirit’s role according to Romans 5:5? Consider looking it up in other translations to receive a fuller sense of the meaning.

2. What is Steve’s favorite appellation for the third person of the Trinity? Copy the verse where he got this from in your own handwriting. Think about it as you write.

3. Steve speaks of the Holy Spirit is as a Person, not a Thing. Which attributes of the person of the Spirit stood out to you? You may want to create a chart with two columns, one entitled “What the Holy Spirit is NOT” and the other “What the Holy Spirit IS.”

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4. Think about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, especially while Jesus lived on earth. Summarize their relationship, using a list of bullet points to record each observation you make.

5. Describe your relationship or how you have experienced “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” as recorded in the last phrase of 2 Corinthians.

Chapter 12 LET GOD LOVE YOU

Many times I have attended a service where the preacher will knock on the podium and say something like God is knocking on the door of your heart, but it is up to each of us to open the door and invite Him to come in. The verse which is quoted is found in the letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:20. The assumption is that God is calling non-believers to receive Jesus as their savior.

In truth, the passage is written “to the angel of the church in Laodicea.” It is possible for believers to let Jesus remain outside the door and not allow Him to come in and share a meal with us. We have the ability to keep Jesus at arm’s length. I have found God desires a close walk with me, but it is up to me to let God love me to open the door.

1. What three examples from Scripture does Steve use when describing God’s love? Name the Scripture reference and answer these questions: who, where, what is being said and/or done, and what is the significance?

2. How do you feel when you draw near to God? Do you see him smiling? If not, ask the Good Spirit to reveal why, and show you more about how God feels toward you.

3. If you have a story about communing with God, share it here in a few sentences or a paragraph.

4. Why did Steve have difficulty waiting on God, enjoying His presence, and communing with Him?

5. Do you enjoy the prospect of being still and letting God love you?

Chapter 13 GOD IS TREATING YOU AS SONS

We all recognize we live in a culture which has warped and twisted the way people look at love. This is perhaps an over-generalization, but parents are told to give their children every desire to show their affection. Yet in the divine economy, God reveals his love by disciplining us. This process, while not enjoyable, is nonetheless extremely loving and for our good in the long run. May God give us eyes to discern the heart of God while enduring the hard experiences of correction and discipline. God is love, and He never changes.

1. Steve shares that on the other side of the deepest valley he has ever known, he is able to give thanks in all things regarding that experience, because “God is Lord of all and He has divinely orchestrated the whole symphony.” Think about the valleys you’ve traveled in your journey. Is there one in which you can look back on with thanksgiving, knowing God did a good work in you?

2. What word or phrase drew your attention as you read Hebrews 12:4-11 in the ESV and The Message?

3. Why does that phrase strike a chord in your spirit? Unpack your thoughts, and record them, as much as you are able.

4. Can you connect with the image of God as Father? Do you believe He disciplines us in love and for our good?

5. In what ways is this possible or not possible for you to believe in your life right now? Explain why.

Chapter 14 POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPORTANT CHAPTER

Chapter 14, *Possibly the Most Important Chapter*, delves deeper into the power of the gospel. As much as non believers need to hear the good news of salvation through Jesus the Christ, so too do those who are already believers. In this section I will be relating incidents and obstacles to receiving grace and my need for more good news! Perhaps there are obstacles keeping me from accepting the truth of His unconditional love. Maybe I am too hard on myself and unable to receive forgiveness. I have asked God to search me and know my heart and reveal areas of need which keep me from comprehending the truth.

1. What is the impact of the finished work of Christ on your behalf? Or, another way to say it, how does the Good News affect you on a daily basis? See if you can write a summary of the Gospel in your own words (try to avoid “Scripture-ese”! ☺)

2. Think about your Christian life. Are there one or more things you think you HAVE to do, for God to accept and like you? Dig deep. There might be more of this under the surface than you realize.

3. Describe the difference between conviction and condemnation. Which do you feel more often? Why?

4. Describe the difference between guilt and shame. How does Satan use lies to crush and cripple people under feelings of shame? If you struggle with feelings of shame, meditate and ponder the truths of Psalm 139.

5. What are some ways you can “work diligently to abide in His love”? How do we engage in spiritual warfare with the devil?

Chapter 15 WHY KNOWING GOD’S LOVE IS IMPORTANT

I will explore more about what it means to be rooted and grounded in the love of God. I also discuss many positive fruits I have experienced as a result of abiding in His love and burrowing deeper into grace.

1. What can “reset our motivation engine”?

2. Is there any person you depend on for your identity? What relationships or what job titles or functions is your identity based on?

3. Are you looking to someone or something to meet your emotional needs which only God can satisfy?

4. Which fruit that Steve experienced as he walked and lived in God’s love would you like to experience more fully?

5. List as many fruits of Knowing God’s Love, as you can from this chapter. After you are finished, go back and select the one you would like to experience more fully.

Chapter 16 THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The Love of God Leads to the Knowledge of God is about the wonderfully surprising yet unlooked for fruit of being loved by God. The more I comprehend the divine affection of my Dad, my Brother, and my Friend the more I am learning about their character and personality.

1. Listen to your prayers. Are you more often thankful for what God does, or for who He is?

2. What motivated Paul, and Moses?

3. According to Jeremiah 9:23, what does God delight in?

4. What is Steve’s dream for followers of Jesus?

5. Do you believe it is God’s will for you to know in your heart of hearts that He loves and likes you for who you are? Then ask Him to write these truths on your heart, based on my favorite prayer scripture: “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.” (1 John 5:14-15)
