

IN THE DAY TO DAY

*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;
abide in My love.” (John 15:9)*

True love isn't a feeling; it's an experience. Love is action. Love is listening. Love is there for you and cares for you. Love is a thousand little things. We live in a physical realm where spiritual things often remain hidden. After looking at the world around you and experiencing disappointment, rejection, and heartbreak, your eyes must adjust to the inner life of love you live with Jesus.

A verse has recently taken my heart captive. Jesus says in the Book of John that He and the Father would come and make their home with us (14:23). Consider that. The Father and Son are at home with you: in you, around you, beside you, before you, holding you. You are at home with the Person who is Love. You live out your life—all aspects of it—with God at home with you. No matter where you are or what you're doing, you can talk to Him. You can call on Him. You can reach for Him.

Instead of cohabitating with God, most settle for weekend visitation with Him at church on Sunday. For any kid from a divorced home, that feels all too familiar. We are comfortable with weekend visitation since we grew up with that life. Our experience has told us that is what it's supposed to be like with a dad. Since the divorce rate is around fifty percent, half the people who read this will know exactly what I'm talking about.

For those who have grown up with a dad in the home, you still may compare God to the distant dad you grew up with. And by the way, this isn't beat-up-on-your-dad day. Earthly parents get it wrong at times no matter their best intentions. It's just an observation that our minds are taught by our experience and sometimes, our perception of what we have experienced. Then we act out what our minds believe.

The point is this: relationship requires investment, serious investment, on our part. There is an investment of time required in any relationship you value. Whether it's a marriage relationship, parent/child relationship, or even a friendship, you have to give of yourself and of your time in order for the relationship to grow. We invest in education, careers, and entertainment, but not in the Savior who came to save us.

*The time you spend in pursuit of the Beloved is in direct
relation to your closeness to Him.*

After years of women's ministry, what I hear most is that women don't have time to devote to Bible reading and prayer. That's not true. They don't make time. There's a difference between having and making. Check on any one of those women's social media pages and, chances are, you'll find them pretty active. I'm not bashing social media. Just don't lie to yourself if you're using time as an excuse for a distant relationship with Jesus.

If you truly have no time to spend with God, then you have something on your plate God didn't put there. He would never order your life in such a way to where you couldn't spend time with Him. What father would do that?

Until God's love is experienced in the living out of your life, it won't feel real. It's in the everyday walk that love is proven. We give mental assent to the fact that God so loved the world that He sent His Son to die for us. But for some reason, we can't grasp the concept that God was just as intentional about sending His Son to *live* out His life through us. Jesus, by His Spirit, is living in us and in our midst. He did die, but now He continues to live. Embrace that reality.

His love is ever present. It's something you can feel and see and experience if you're paying attention. The morning God spoke the words *You. Are. Loved.*, I could actually grasp His love for me in a real and intimate way.

Here's the key as to why many miss His day-to-day love: They look for Him in the big things but not the little. I watch for Him in nature and through His Word. I listen up when a preacher is preaching or a teacher

is teaching. God's touch in my life comes in many ways. I'm ever watching and waiting, even encountering Him through a TV commercial that sang His love over me.

Even if you have convinced yourself that God is present in your life, have you come to know that He is present in your day? Those are totally different thoughts.

In my life is the big picture.

In my day is the minutia of life.

We sing about Him being with us in the fire and in the flood, in the valleys and on mountain tops. When will we sing, "You're here with me while I wash dishes, sit in traffic, and fold laundry"? It's experiential love that transforms you, not head knowledge. It's seeing Him show up day after day. It's finding Him merciful when you blow it in the worst ways that assures you of His unconditional love. It's His whispers through His Word that stop you in your tracks. It ultimately becomes a staggering realization that God, the Almighty God that the Bible reveals, has shown up and is sitting next to you, giving you strength to face the day and peace to overcome the chaos. That's love! The One who is there, always, no matter if you woke up on the wrong side of the bed or if you are so weak and worn out you can hardly take another step forward. He's there. Love is pursuing you.

Question is, are you pursuing Him? That's what He wants, you know.

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being..." (Acts 17:26-28)

Notice it says He made us all so that we should seek Him. God is all about relationship with you. If you only knew the extent of relationship available to you, the difference it would make in your life, you would turn from chasing after the wind and chase after the Almighty!

If you do not currently devote time to this pursuit each day, it's time to begin. What you will find in His presence is worth more than all you currently devote your time to. Empty arms reach for the things of this world by default when not embracing Jesus. I don't even mean the bad things of this world. If you aren't full of Jesus each day, you will drink what the world offers.

I mentioned before about time being an issue for many believers. Is that the case for you? Do you struggle with setting aside time to spend with God? _____

Often, when someone says they don't have time, they underestimate the value of even fifteen to twenty minutes. If you set your alarm fifteen minutes earlier, you could read a small devotional and a few verses. That's a start. Or, if you're a night person, carve out a few minutes before you lay your head down.

I have to believe if you're reading this book that you want something different. You are longing for more out of your walk with Jesus. You need exactly what I said before, to walk with Him in the cool of the day. You want to feel loved. You want to experience closeness with Him. In that case it's time to change your approach. If you don't already meet with Jesus, starting tomorrow, find time. That's a loving directive from your sister. I don't care who in your family that inconveniences. Lock yourself in the bathroom with cotton balls in your ears if that's what it takes. That's a great mental image: you sitting in the tub with your coffee, Bible, and rubber ducky. Just do something. Make the first move.

The cool of the day for me is morning. I need strength to face the day ahead. I need the Bread of Life to nourish me. I need Living Water to face the parched world I live in, but schedules differ. You may be a night owl who needs to wash off the yuck of the world when you get home or before bed. What matters most is that you are actually setting aside that time. You won't likely know rest and peace if you don't. A strong truth is this: If you are at rest or at peace in this world without intimately walking with God, something is wrong. You can't know peace apart from God.

Ask yourself the following questions, not with condemnation, but just to take an honest inventory of your time.

How much time do you spend a day online and on social media? (Answer in minutes.)

Facebook _____ TikTok _____

Instagram _____ X (Twitter) _____

How much time each day do you spend on your phone? Texting, talking, surfing, and playing games?

TV time _____ Reading _____

Hobbies _____ YouTube _____

We are all guilty of spending too much time on things that aren't necessary at the expense of that which matters most. Your time alone with God has to be a priority, or you will be stunted spiritually. I'm not creating a check list for you to do so that you become bound by legalism. I'm telling you a fact.

Time with God is how you get to know Him intimately. Time alone with Him is where love grows. You can't know you're loved if you don't know Love in the person of Jesus Christ.

If it were possible, I would come to each and every house and pull you out of bed, set your Bible in your lap, then pat you on the head and leave you in peace. It's what you need. Sadly, the enemy has fed you lies. He says you're too busy. He convinces you that fifteen extra minutes of sleep is better than walking with the God who created you. He deceives, and you eat. Nothing is more important than your walk with God. Nothing!

I remember a time in my early walk of faith when I didn't know what to do when I sat down to spend time with God. The Bible was intimidating. With so many concepts that seemed foreign to me, I was overwhelmed. Once I began structured Bible studies at my church, that helped. I learned how to navigate around the many books of the Bible. I was asked questions that made me look up answers and fill in the blanks. In the absence of a study, what do you do?

It's as simple as: Read and Pray and Listen. For all the days of your life, these three things are how you communicate with God. He speaks to you through His Word. You speak to Him in prayer. He often speaks to you through His Spirit. Your part is to set aside time and have a willing heart, one that will listen.

If having a quiet time is new for you, here are some helpful hints:

- Maintain a normal flow of reading. Where you end one day, begin there the next.
- Each day read one chapter of Proverbs. For example, on the fifteenth of the month, read Proverbs 15, on the next day Proverbs 16 and so on. The wisdom contained in this book will slowly seep into your belief system, and before you know it, you are making better choices based on what God says is wise living, not what the world says.
- Read through the Psalms.
- Start in Matthew and read through the New Testament.
- Try "red letter" reading. While the entire Bible is by and through Jesus, *the* Word, intentionally and slowly read the red-letter words Jesus spoke while on earth. Even when the stories seem familiar, reading Jesus' words specifically can take on a new dimension and speak to you in an entirely new way. Rather than your mind defaulting to the assumption that His words are directed toward others, you can feel them focused on you. Be advised, you may need to back up a sentence or two to gain context, but just as it sounds, you will pretty much stick to the red letters. Sometimes, as I read in this

way, the realization washes over me: Jesus Himself is speaking to me, teaching me through the Holy Spirit. It's supernatural!

- Begin at the beginning. Decide to read through the Bible. I would advise you, though, to move slowly. Avoid plans that require too many chapters or verses per day.

The goal is to have a place to begin each morning or evening. You will be surprised how He will speak to you as you read this way. Just read, even on those days when you "feel" as if you are not getting anything out of it. Commit to reading. Seeds are being planted. Remember, this is a marathon, not a sprint. Read small enough portions that you can study and allow the Spirit to speak. If you read more than a few chapters, you will not likely retain anything.

Some days, after a verse or two, I can't seem to move forward, which tells me that He has something for me to learn in those few verses. So I try to ponder and study on what I read, making sure I understand it or learn what He is trying to show me about Himself through it. Other days, I may take in several chapters. Sometimes I may not fully understand what I am reading at all or how it applies to me. In those times I have to believe that what I am reading is simply not for me in my current season. Then, years later, when the time is right, understanding comes as I read those same verses. The way He leads and teaches each of us may look different. For us all, though, there is one common denominator: we all have the need to meet with Him each day through His Word.

Other helpful tools:

- I use some kind of devotional almost every day. My favorite, the one I find myself going back to year after year, is *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. I can't tell you the number of times it has spoken to my current need. It's deep, often way over my head, but I have found over the years that greater understanding comes as I have matured spiritually. There are loads of other daily devotions online and at local bookstores, but I advise caution since many may contain concepts that seem biblical on the surface, but are promoting false doctrines.
- Journal things you learn, things that stand out to you. Simply keep a spiral notebook near your Bible. When something really speaks to you, make a note of it. As you do this, you will begin to see common threads that the Lord is weaving into your heart. I promise, years later you will look back and be able to see your spiritual growth and trace the blossoming of your deepening relationship with Jesus. I also use my journal as a method of prayer. I find it helps to keep my prayers focused and on topic.
- Write favorite verses on index cards and keep them handy. I have stacks of verses that have meant so much to me during specific seasons.
- Apply what you learn. That is where growth and change come, the application of a truth to your life. You can read every day, but until you learn to apply what you are learning to your daily life, you have accomplished little.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
(Matthew 6:33)

The enemy speaks to you from his book of lies. Know the Book of Truth. The means of seeking God and His righteousness and kingdom is diving into Scripture for yourself. A pastor or teacher can never impart what your High Priest and Teacher can reveal. Replace lies with Truth and be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

Remember, if one thing doesn't work for you, don't give up. Keep trying. We all have to find our own groove when learning the dance of intimacy.

CHAPTER TAKEAWAY

Key Point

True love isn't a feeling; it's an experience.

- 1) In your earthly relationships, can you trust what you “feel” to determine your love for others or their love for you? Why or why not?

- 2) Read John 4:23-24. Have you found it perplexing to understand how to love God and worship Him “in spirit and truth”?

- 3) How can experiencing disappointment, rejection, and heartbreak in the physical realm lead you to expect the same in the spiritual realm?

Key Point:

Home is where the heart is, where Love is.

- 4) Read John 14:23. Have you ever considered that God the Father and Jesus the Son literally live with you in your home?

- 5) How could the thought or imagery of God cohabitating with you affect or alter how you live your daily life in your home? Might it change how often you talk to Him?

- 6) Did you have a dad in your home growing up? For either answer, express how having or not having a dad at home shaped how you grew up.

- 7) How can the presence of Jesus the Son in your home, your Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, and Great Physician, affect to whom you go first when in need and how you walk out your daily life?

Key Point

Relationship requires serious investment on your part.

- 8) How much time do you now devote to Bible reading and study? Would you call this quality time? Remember, even if it's only fifteen minutes, if it's focused and meaningful, that builds relationship.

- 9) What other ways do you spend time building your relationship with God besides reading and studying the Bible, such as prayer, listening to and singing praise and worship music, walking in nature, etc.?

- 10) If your time with God is limited, would you say you don't have time or don't make time for building your relationship with Him?

You can never know love from or intimacy with Someone you don't make time for in your life. He's not the Sunday Jesus. Don't be the Sunday you and only focus on Him one day a week.

Key Point

It's in the everyday walk that love is proven.

- 11) Even if you are convinced that God is present in your life, have you come to know He is present in your day? How can that change the course of a day as you look and listen for Him?

- 12) In the smallest details of life, how have you most often noticed His presence? Are you able to share a recent example of when you just knew He was with you?

- 13) Have you ever considered that Love is pursuing you? If not, then how can that understanding now alter the course of your relationship with Jesus? How might that change the way you want to pursue Him?

Key Point

Your time alone with God must be a priority, or you will be stunted spiritually.

- 14) *Read. Pray. Listen.* Does one of these come easiest to you? Which, if any, is the most difficult sometimes?

- 15) As you've grown in your walk with God, is there an area in your quiet time that used to frustrate you, but now you have peace about? For example, have you believed that you must read a certain number of chapters every day or must spend a certain amount of time with Him to please Him?

- 16) Do any of the quiet time suggestions from pages 42-44 inspire you? Is there one or two you would like to try for the first time or perhaps try again if it's been a while? Remember, if one thing doesn't work for you, don't give up.
