

Home Study Material – Session Three

Unmending the Veil Companion Study

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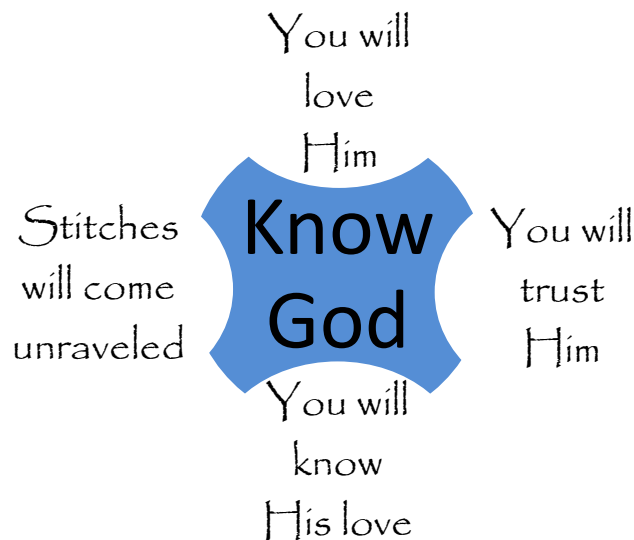
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Day One – Circular Reasoning

Today, we will cover the critical concept of how knowing God is the intersection of all the roads we desire to travel. I call it Circular Reasoning because it seems that all things circle back around to one thing, knowing God. Remember, not knowing facts and such, but knowing Him, His love, and His voice. As believers, don't we all want to receive the abundance God offers us? For many Christians, however, they receive less than all, closer to little. Most every believer will say that they want to draw near to God, to know, love, and trust Him. But few do, not completely anyway, with that "all in" mentality. It seems, based on the results of many Christians' lives, they participate in godly activities, but they may have never truly invited God to be part of their everyday lives. They are saved in the eternal sense, believing that what they have is really all you get. Still, they are settling for less than what God offers. I spent many years with that "this must be all there is to it" mentality. I thought work and service at church was the extent of knowing God. Because I had it so wrong, I eventually gave up, at least for a terribly rocky season I did.

Circular Reasoning



For the four outer elements surrounding *Know God* on the diagram, over the next few days, we will view how knowing Him is critical in achieving each goal. Ultimately, in order to experience the abundant life Jesus offers, you must know His love, love Him in return, and know Him well enough that trust follows. Our stitches, those things that can prevent us from getting to know God, will become less of a hindrance the more we do know Him. Again, circular reasoning is the best term to explain it all.

Knowing His Love

As you get to know God through His Word, the one common theme throughout Scriptures is God's love for His children. It is seen throughout the Old Testament and carries over into the New. He pursues us, woos us, is jealous for us, and as the verse in the margin assures, loves us with an everlasting love. His love cannot be compared to that of the human experience. It is looking through the lens of human eyes that we underestimate His love for us. And while He often uses father/child, husband/wife relationships in Scripture as a basis of comparison of His love for us, we still can never seem "...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." Eph. 3:18.

In this season which way do you most relate to God, in the Father/child relationship or Husband/wife? _____

You have heard He loves the world. You have most likely even personalized John 3:16 and whispered, trying to convince yourself, "For God so loves me..." But still, if you have not spent time getting to know Him intimately, you have not likely *experienced* that love to such an extent that it has altered your life. Because when you do begin to *experience* His love in your everyday life, nothing can ever be the same. It's this love, His love, which infiltrates our hearts and causes our other goals of loving and trusting Him to become reality. Simply put, until you take hold of this love and receive it deep into your belief system, you cannot love Him fully, and you certainly will not trust Him, even barely. Knowing and receiving are such different things. I *knew* but I had never fully received.

In what ways have you experienced God's love in your normal, everyday life?

How has He pursued you? What evidence have you seen?

Above, I used the word *experience* twice. It's experiential love that seeps into you. 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 stops you in your tracks. It ultimately becomes this 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. He is pursuing you. I am not exaggerating when I say; I could fill an entire book on the love of God. It was the "game changer" for me. Little things He did for me, little things He showed me, these signs of affection from



"The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying, 'I have loved you with an _____; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.'"

Jeremiah 31:3



Him crept into my heart, softening it toward Him, causing me to dare to believe that such love could actually exist. When the flood actually opened and my heart was completely filled, I can hardly remember the time specifically. But I remember it seemed sudden, like I went from this woman who desperately needed love to a loved woman. I felt complete in a way I had never known before. Let's finish out our verse from Ephesians. Continuing, it says, "...and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." 3:19 This love that surpasses knowledge that the verse expresses – we can be certain of this – His love for each of us is so vast and beyond human perception that, once we even catch a glimpse of it, there comes with it an immense filling of what is said to be the fullness of God. That is when we finally feel complete.

Do you ever feel that emptiness of heart and wonder if you will ever feel full or complete?
In what ways have you tried to fill your empty heart?

Contrary to what your deceptive heart tries to convince you, what you have always wanted and needed can only be found in the Person of Jesus Christ, in intimate relationship with Him. During Robin's season of drawing near to God, she discovered something monumental, something she had never comprehended. As early as thirteen, the time when she allowed Mike to become her god, Robin was convinced that her deepest need for love and worth could be found within the bounds of a human relationship. That lie was the first stitch in the veil that blocked her true view of God. We, as empty-hearted women, do the same. We have accepted the world's view that ultimate love is human love. Not so! Ultimate, completing, fulfilling, and unconditional love can only be found in Jesus.

Loving God

We _____
because he
first

us."

1 John 4:19

Experiencing the love that I described in the previous section is the *cause* of us loving God. The scripture in the margin is so familiar, you will not likely have to look it up. Actually, I believe I have already quoted it in your Home Study Material before. But bottom line, that sums it up. Once you see and experience God's love for you, you cannot help but love Him more than you ever dreamed possible. And remember, I'm not talking about that head knowledge that He loves you. I'm talking about the "in the middle of your business" kind of love that He demonstrates. There is nothing more natural than loving Him in response to His love for you. Actually, you will find that the more He pours out His love into you, the fuller of love you become toward Him. There comes this point where you are

certain you will explode with love. It is that overflow that spills over into love for others. That is why the second command comes second. Our love for others is a by-product of our love for Him – the first commandment.

Trusting God

Just as with our ability to love God, our ability to trust Him is just as dependent upon experiencing His love for us. Until we receive and believe this love He has for us, we can hardly trust. Aw sure, we say we do, but deep down inside, we wonder what He might do to us if we really trust Him. What if he takes a child? Isn't that the kind of terrifying thoughts we pretend doesn't cross our mind? What if I trust Him and He makes me prove that trust? What if He sends me to Africa to deal with the AIDS crisis? All sorts of worries plague us when we begin to dabble with the frightening concept of trusting God. It becomes a question of control. Who will control my life, and if I hand over control to God, can I trust what He'll do with it? As if we have control – that's just a figment of our imagination.

For me, trust came last, well after love. And as I am working through this journey of publishing a book and writing study material, I see it is the most critical element in becoming who He has created me to be. In order to take my place in the kingdom, I have to trust that where He leads is safe to follow. There is a tremendous amount of rejection that comes along with the publishing process. So, very often I have to say, "I don't see it yet, but if You say so, I'll trust You." I chose to trust and take another step, knowing I'll not be put to shame.

Let me assure you, you can love Him without trusting Him. I loved Him without question. Trust comes, at least for me, as you walk with Him closely and on a daily basis. It comes when you know Him more intimately. It comes slowly for some, especially for those of us who have lived a life that has caused severe disillusionment with people. For us, we have to see Him work on our behalf time and again before even the slightest bit of trust emerges.

"... and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 1 Peter 2:6

Where are you right now? How would you gauge your level of trust? On the line below, mark where you see your level of trust.

Weak and Waning

Strong and Growing



Let's take a look at two verses regarding trusting God. Look up Romans 15:13 and write it in the space below.

What are you filled with as you trust Him? _____ and _____

Based on what I have experienced, joy and peace do come along with trusting Him. Without that trust, of the two, peace especially is practically impossible. When you do trust Him, peace is prevalent. Peace becomes your new normal.

Do you currently know peace in your everyday life? *Yes or No*

When trouble comes does peace prevail? *Yes or No*

If not, how do you react in times of crisis or conflict?

I use the verse from Romans as a warm and fuzzy example. Sure, we all want joy and peace. Isn't that why you go to church? For most people it is. I would be remiss, however, if I did not use the following verse.

Write Matthew 27:43 on the following lines.

In context, in this passage Jesus is hanging on the cross. The accusation, "He trusts in God" is meant as an insult. It is hurled at Him as if to say, "Bet You don't trust Him now." What do you think Jesus felt at that point? He knew the cross was the only way to redeem the world He loves. He knew what the kingdom plan required of Him, and He knew He was the only One who could satisfy the penalty. He was obedient, trusting in the ultimate kingdom plan. Did He hurt? Without question.

Now, let's revisit our questions from above. "What if I trust Him and He does this or that?" Honestly, He may. Whatever your fill-in-the-blank was, He just may. I can't say for sure He will or won't and neither can you. I have struggled with the "What if He takes my child?" questions. Now, I can only be certain, if He does, I still know He's good. I still know that His heart is filled with love for me. I know He will carry me through the "what ifs". And even attached to such a question as *what if He takes my child*, there is peace within me. I could not have said that a handful of years ago.

Many of you are thinking you could never be okay with that. You could never let go of someone you love and live or that you could never take such a step of faith. That's a lie. The fact is, with trust comes joy and peace. His Word assures us it does. It is supernatural, something beyond our human ability to explain.

Stitches Unravel

Finally, unraveling our stitches. Funny, since this entire week is supposed to be about loosening our stitches, it should have come up long before now. Actually, compared to what we have discovered in this section of our study, not much needs to be said. In fact, once you work through knowing and receiving God's love, learning to love Him in the process, and coming to trust Him, most of your stitches have silently disappeared. It is *in* the process of getting to know God that those stitches are being worked out of the veil.

Even though I said in early sessions that your stitches prevent you from drawing near, the fact is, drawing near is what causes them to disappear. So technically, they do not prevent you from drawing near, as in ability, but rather they prevent you from drawing near, as in desire. Many of the stitches we have discussed prevent you from drawing near because they make you believe it's not worth it, or possible, or even necessary, when in fact, there is nothing more necessary for a believer than to draw closer to God. No matter how close you are presently, there is always room to draw closer still. As close as I thought I was last year, I feel tremendously closer to the Lord today. Next year at this time, I should be able to say the very same thing. If not, then my growth has been somehow stunted. Complete the verse in the margin.

“And we all, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with
_____ - _____
glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18

Compared to where you were this time last year, where you are in your walk with the Lord? Do you feel closer to Him, about the same, or further away? Indicate below and explain your answer. What proof do you see?

With this new information you have about knowing, loving and trusting God, how might your own stitches be loosened by growing in the true knowledge of Him? Give examples.

Focal Passage: *Ephesians 3:18 “...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Reminder: *We love because He first loved us.*

Something to consider: *Knowing and receiving God’s love are two different things*

Day Two – Getting to Know God

I apologize in advance for the length of today's reading. Because it is such a text heavy day, I am providing you with the verses you will need. However, as you read a verse supplied, if it is something that touches your heart, open your Bible and underline it or circle it. Do something to make note of its importance to you.

In getting to know God, there are no shortcuts!

In order to draw near, and subsequently get to know God, you have to read His Word and then apply what it says to your life. Do you believe that to be true? _____

If you were going on a long trip with someone you did not know well, you would spend that time getting to know them and allowing them to get to know you. For most of us, we have this desire to be known. I don't mean *famous* known, but rather, we want someone to understand us, to know what makes us tick. At the same time, and rather ironically, we fear people knowing what is at the deepest level of our souls, but still, we long to be known and understood.

*“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”
1 Corinthians 13:12*

Prior to proving my point in Scripture, which will be the end of the matter, I can prove the human's desire to be known with three little words, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. We know way too much about way too many things in our friends' lives. Hello! Don't care what you are eating for dinner unless you are inviting me over to eat. Now that, you can post.

For real proof though, I return to a passage we looked at during our study of the *Love Is* traits. At the end of the passage it says, “I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” There will come a time when we will come face to face with Jesus, and at that time, we will truly know Him. He will reveal Himself to us in a way we cannot possibly know Him here on this earth. But what stands out to me is that it ends with, “even as I am fully known.” The thought struck me as I began to write this, since God tells us in Genesis that we were made in His image, is this desire we have to be known merely an illustration of us being made in His image? Does our desire to be known reflect His desire to be known? We know that God has

gone to great lengths to make Himself known and to reveal Himself through His Word and through His Spirit. But the fact that He gives us a heads up that we will someday be fully known, as if that might be a comfort to us, may indicate that He placed that desire within us. Why would that matter? To me, it is actually quite thrilling to know that this desire to be known is merely a trait of His. Certainly He already knows us inside and out, so in an eternal sense what could that mean, “even as I am fully known”? Maybe it has more to do with us finding out who we really are, who He created us to be, the us without earthly baggage and sin and flaws. Just conjecture on my part. Another verse to consider is: “But the man who loves God is known by God.” 1 Corinthians 8:3

So, what does this have to do with getting to know God? First, we have to conclude, just as it is important to us to be known, it is not only important to Him that you know Him, but it is vital to you that

you do. And I sincerely believe He does not hide himself away, playing some cat and mouse game with you.

Now that we have agreed that getting to know Him is what He wants for us, how then do we go about it? If getting to know Him → leads us to know His love → which leads us to love Him → which allows us to trust Him, then it's safe to say we have to figure this thing out.

Ways in which we get to know God:

His Word

This is never the answer a believer wants to hear. They've heard it and have yet to see it work. Still, I'll say it. You have to get to know God through His Word. There are no substitutes. It must be you and Him and His Word – and also the Spirit Who is present within you. We will discuss this further on Day Five. For now, settle the matter in your head – you must get to know God through His Word. No matter what you have experienced in the past, something new awaits you as you read His Word and begin to get to know Him through it. Consider the verse in the margin.

“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

Through Relationships

Second only to the way I have gotten to know God through His Word, I have gotten to know Him through the relationships in my life. Through my relationship with my husband and children especially, God has helped me to get to know Him. Before I give you examples, please know, if you do not currently have a husband or children, He will speak primarily through other relationships in your life, such as your relationship with your parents, siblings, friends, nieces and nephews, and coworkers. So don't discount what I am about to tell you, since the principles are similar even when the relationships differ.

Through my husband – Even as I begin to type, I'm anxious to see what the Lord will lead me to write. I suppose you should know first that during our eighteen year marriage, we were on the verge of divorce for the first twelve. Sadly, that's no exaggeration. We were two broken people who came together to form a very broken union. On top of that, I brought a young, troubled child into the marriage. Exhausting is one of the first adjectives that comes to mind when I consider the first years of our marriage. Now, the first word that comes to mind is friendship. We have become tremendous friends. Both of us agree; we would rather hang out with each other than any other person on the planet. There is great comfort in that.

What changed? I did. After a time of separation and coming back together, that is when I began seeking God. I mean truly seeking Him. Early on, in prayer, I would tattle on Kelly, the hubs. Every time he did something I thought was wrong, rather than argue with him, I'd take it to God. Most always, I had a strong case. But never did He smite Kelly as I thought he should be smitten. Instead, the Lord would shine the light on me. Questions would come, “How can you react better?” “Why do you think you reacted the way you did?” What I discovered during this process, was secret stuff about me. *My motives were exposed. My lack of trust in God was exposed.* This was the season God weeded me of bitterness and anger.

Read John 21:20-22 and fill in the blanks below.

“Jesus answered, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, _____
_____? _____ must follow me.’” v 22

You cannot possibly imagine what this verse meant to me during that time. It was one of the clearest ways in which God spoke to me through His Word early on. As I read it, He made it very clear; I needed to stop tattling on Kelly. I needed to stop fretting over the things he did and said, and I needed to focus solely on myself and my relationship to God. It was the “*you*” must follow me that was finally seared into my heart. No matter what others around you are doing, it is your sole responsibility to determine who you will be before God. We will all stand before Him as individuals. We can’t say, “But he made me...” It’s all on us.

Ultimately, as I said, I changed. And I did so without changing Kelly. All those years I thought that change in him was what would fix *us*. It was never just him. The amazing part is this, as God was changing me, He was also making changes in Kelly. Quietness in me resulted in a bit less argument in Kelly. Kindness in me brought more kindness in my husband. Peace in me ushered in peace in our home in general.

What followed became a biblical marriage, one of respect and honor, of submission and compassion. We are light years beyond the *in love* feeling of newlyweds – and I mean that in a good way. That early love is still plagued with self, where later love becomes about the other. Basically, we went from he and me to we. Nothing, even our children are not allowed in between us. Before I move on, let me tell you, the above paragraphs were the result of a few years’ worth of effort. I never said it was easy, but I will guarantee it was worth it. Kelly would readily agree. Let me also assure you, it was not an effort apart from the Word of God.

So, how does this apply to getting to know God? Through the marriage relationship God taught me about submission to my Bridegroom. He taught me about the protective nature of a Husband. He taught me how to follow my Leader. Many of the analogies that God uses in the Bible to demonstrate His relationship with His Church, with us, His bride, He used within my marriage to help me see Him and know Him better. Without taking pages of space to be specific and give you examples, I can only give you this abridged version of Him showing Himself to me through my relationship with Kelly.

“In that day,” declares the Lord, ‘you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’”
Hosea 2:16

Through my kids – Raising an ADHD child who turned out to be a bipolar teen and now young man, you can believe God has had ample opportunity to show up through my relationship with my son. Adam’s last years at home were some of the most difficult I have ever experienced, but during that time, I caught glimpses of God in a way I never had before. It was that season that was the beginning point of what I feel is now a vibrant relationship with God the Father.

When Adam would do something outrageous, something that would devastate me, something illegal, something to get kicked out of school, nearly every time, I would hear God ask me, “Do you still love

him?" I'd reply, "Of course I do." To which He'd remind me, "That's the way I love you." On and on this season went. It was if He allowed that season for the specific purpose of hammering His unconditional love into my heart. Nothing Adam did or does could ever change the fact that I love him unconditionally. I suppose I needed to know the same thing about my Heavenly Father. My past is horrendous. Ultimately, my problem all along had been that I could hardly believe that a Holy God could really love a dirty girl like me. But He poured out His love in buckets, saturating me and making me clean. Now, I not only feel loved, I feel complete. I am no longer that empty-hearted woman longing to be loved. So now, you see how a relationship between a parent and child can lead to such knowledge of God. It was what finally ushered me into His presence. Prior to that, I would have never attempted to enter His presence. I needed to know I was loved and accepted with all my flaws and past and mess. That was my heaviest stitch by far, but once it was removed, I drew closer and closer day by day.

The following is one of my favorite verses:

For those who have seen a mother nursing a child, one could hardly imagine her forgetting that child. God says, that mother is more likely to forget that baby than He could forget you or me. And

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me." Isaiah 49:15-17

the part that says, "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands," that part causes my heart to melt. I know when the Lord Jesus looks at the palms of His hands, He sees my name hammered permanently into His flesh. He remembers me. He remembers you. Now that's love.

Although I often share personal stories, I don't like to fill so much space with them usually. But as I try to explain the topic, I don't know how else to share without giving some specifics. Hope I did not bore you with the details.

From the relationships in your life, do you see how you can get to know God more intimately? Now, I want you to think of some of your own relationships. For any relationship that applies to you, how might you encounter God or His characteristics through it?

Relationships with:

Your Husband: _____

Your Children: _____

Your Parents: _____

Siblings: _____

Nieces/Nephews: _____

Your Friends: _____

Your Coworkers: _____

Through Nature

As I was never a gardener prior to the weeds-around-the-pool season, I had no experience in gardening. But by the obvious leading of the Spirit, I became an avid gardener. I say avid in the context that I did it a lot, not that I ever really got any good at it. I made such a mess early on in my back yard that I'm still trying to dig up overgrown things that were placed in the wrong spot. Every weekday during those early spring and summer seasons, I was out playing in the dirt. I weeded and watered and planted. God taught me so many things that I eventually began to keep a gardening journal. It was through nature that He spoke most to me early on, likely because I was willing to meet Him there.

As I say I got to know Him through nature, what I really mean is that I got to know His nature more. As I gardened and as I met with Him, I found Him faithful, tender, intense, determined, all sorts of things about His character and personality, if that word can be used for Spirit. He was a constant in my world for the first time during that season and has been ever since. And while I rarely garden anymore, I can hardly look out my back window without recounting something new He taught me about Himself and me.

What are ways in which God has spoken to you through nature?

Or what have you learned about Him by observing creation?

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”
Psalm 19:1

Through Listening

In addition to reading God's Word and spending quiet time with Him, listening to preachers and teachers is a tremendous source of getting to know more about God. Notice I said, about God. They are telling you things they have read or things they have learned. You are hearing what they know about Him, which can help you as you are getting to know Him yourself. But never presume that what they are offering is intimate knowledge. Only we can hold our personal, intimate knowledge of God. It's not something we can give away. There is a quote by Oswald Chambers that says, "Remember that you can

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him." Psalm 34:8

never give another person what you have found, but you can cause him to have a desire for it." (My Utmost for His Highest) From this, I am reminded, others' passion can cause me to desire more of God, but I can't know God because of what someone tells me. I need to experience Him in my own life. Still, listening to those who are passionate can spur us on. Just don't ever allow your total "diet" to come from what another has experienced with God. You must have your own daily bread. Taste and see...

Focal Passage: 1 Corinthians 13:12 *"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."*

Question: *What is my primary source of getting to know God?*

Conclusion: *In getting to know God, there are no shortcuts.*

Day Three – Wonderful Counselor

After Chris' death, Robin met with God alone. She did not go to friends and family, only to God. This season you are about to enter is one of private counseling sessions with Jesus.

"I will _____ you and _____ you in the way you should go; I will _____ you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

So finally, it is time to begin to work on our stitches. In most cases, God, your Bible, and your quiet place are all you need. For some past traumas, a qualified Christian counselor may be necessary. But for the majority of what may be keeping you from experiencing God fully and knowing His love can be dealt with through time with Him. His Holy Spirit within you is your Wonderful Counselor. He knows you more intimately, inside and out, than you could ever possibly know yourself.

Who do you normally go to or call to discuss serious issues in your life?

For this season, ask the Lord if He is calling you to share your burdens with Him only. Pray about this in the quiet place. And then wait for Him to reply.

Consider this verse:

As tempted as we are to continue to go to others for guidance and support, we need to remember that it is only God who can answer the deepest questions of our hearts.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

As I faced this season, His instructions to me were clear. I was to go solely to Him with my questions and my hurts and desires. He met with me faithfully each and every morning, and one stitch at a time, He began the process of unminging the veil that prevented me from seeing Him. At the time, I felt rather isolated, but in hindsight, I now understand how vital it was that He became my Counselor and my only source from which to draw. The following verse is one that still makes my heart flutter a bit. It is the verse that I felt He used to call me into this time of private counseling with Him alone.

"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her." Hosea 2:14

I can think of no better way to describe that season with Him other than to restate the verse above. He did indeed speak tenderly to me. During those early months, it was as if I left the ordinary, everyday world and entered a private world within my spirit and heart. It is the place I still dwell with Him all these years later. Now, when I am speaking to Him or listening to Him in prayer, it is as real as any conversation I have in the physical realm. It will be that way with you as well.

“...to bestow on them
a crown of _____ instead
of _____...”
Isaiah 61:3

The most vital thing for you right now is to get to that place of comfort in speaking openly to Him, of opening up your heart, telling Him the good, the bad, and the ugly. Each of us has all of those things within. As the Lord counsels you, He will highlight the good and help you see your strengths and abilities. He will help you admit the bad, the things that deserve no place in your life, and as for the ugly, he will take what seems like ashes and give you beauty for them.

What area or stitches do you feel He is leading you to work through?

What ways have you felt that leading? Examples: while reading your Bible, during prayer time, things that others have said, or even a combination of several.

Now that you have determined what stitch you are to work through, begin each morning with Him and His Word, anticipating that He will dispel lies and replace them with truth. Keep this stitch ever before Him in prayer until you know that progress is being made. Allow Him to show you why you are choosing to hang onto this stitch (attitude, fear, sin, or unbelief).

Prior to Chris’s death, he suggested another counselor for Robin. He told her she needed the Wonderful Counselor. We all do. Depending on what you are going through in your life, you may need God as something entirely different.

For now, as you work through these stitches, you may need Him as your:

- Counselor Help you overcome past hurts and current hindrances to experiencing Him fully.

God first met Robin as her Counselor. Robin thought – *“Healing was beautiful and painful and undoubtedly worthwhile. The moments she spent with her Lord were similar to surgery at times, when there was a cutting away of what deserved no place in her heart, such as fear and unbelief. At others, it was comparable to sitting in soothing waters, warm and comforting, when He simply tended to her wounds.”*

Or, if you are not necessarily working through painful issues, you may need to know Him as your:

- Beloved To know His love and the sacred romance He offers you
- Protector See Him as Mighty to save in difficult times
- Shepherd To guide you along life’s treacherous path
- Father Gently loving you as His little girl

- Best Friend Be there when no one else understands
- King Finding your kingdom purpose

From the list of characteristics of God above, which do you need to see Him as most in this season? Or if you can think of another characteristic, write that in.

Though you may seek Him first as your Counselor, it is likely you will encounter many of His other attributes as well. He will show His love for you as Father, Bridegroom, and Friend. As you are getting to know Him and as He shows you more about yourself, your stitches are coming unraveled. Without much conscience effort on your part, He is removing many of the wounds and scars you may have suffered from a life of heartbreak. Also, as you get to know Him, He begins to take away the chains that bind you, whether it is chains of addiction, worry and fear, a feeling of unworthiness or shame. He will release you.

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”
Romans 12:2

This process happens as you read the Bible, replacing the lies you have come to believe throughout your lifetime with His truth. Romans 12:2 (in the margin) says to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. We have covered this verse before, but it is one that bears repeating. Until you replace your old thoughts with God’s Word, you will continue to be bound. The more you read, the more He will supernaturally replace your thoughts with His.

Does He speak to you? Record below a time when you were certain God was speaking to you through:

His Word

During prayer

Through another believer

Through circumstances

Write Jeremiah 33:3 in the space below.

Do you believe He means what He says in this verse? _____

Some people spend their entire Christian life NOT believing that God will speak to them personally and intimately. That is why they read their Bible with a less than an enthusiastic attitude, if even at all. Over the next two days of study, we will focus our attention on the Word of God and your approach to it. For our final assignment today, let's end with the following prayer:

Father, I invite you into my life to be my Wonderful Counselor. I ask, as we meet together, show me those things which eclipse my view of who You really are. These sins and wounds are burdensome and Lord, I simply desire to rest in You. Now, beginning today, I am willing to go away into that wilderness place alone with You. I ask that you speak tenderly to me as You offered your people through the words of Hosea. More than anything, I want to hear you speak into my heart, into my life, and into my circumstances. As we go forward, I invite You to be in the middle of my business. I ask You to be big in my life and to help me know You by experience. Mostly though, I ask You to give me a heart to love you above and beyond all things. I know with a heart after your own, all things will fall into place. In Jesus' name, Amen

Focal Passage: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go: I will counsel you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

Question: Am I called into the wilderness for a season alone with God?

Anticipate: Throughout the process, He will show His love for you as His child, His bride, and His friend.

Day Four – Seasons

This day is called Seasons because that is the new way you should begin looking at or segmenting your life. This season is your season of counseling and healing. Or, maybe this is a season when you are learning some new concepts to help other wounded believers. Either way, you are entering a new season. Even for the most mature believer, I would have to guess that you have a stitch or two that God has brought to mind that must be removed in order to help you draw nearer to Him. As far as I've come over the years, I still find that I'm such a work in progress, I can hardly imagine the day when He'll be done with me. I suppose that will be the day He takes me home to be with Him in heaven.

I'll open up and tell you, while I am writing this study, many of my stitches seem to be trying to work their way back into my life. There has been such an onslaught of a feeling of unworthiness that has come over me, that at times, I'm sure I can't write another word. This all seems so much bigger than me, which it is, that I find unbelief surfacing. The other day, I was so panicked that I felt as if I were going over the edge. I'm not sure the edge of what, but since I had to have a friend talk me down from the ledge, I must have been on the edge of something. All I know is that I was texting her these crazy messages, when I received: "Be strong and courageous. The spirit of fear is not of God. Don't let the enemy discourage you." See what you get with a godly friend? Girls, find yourselves one or two godly friends, not ones who will feed the crazy.

My point in this admission is this: No matter how far you travel with God, you will still have seasons when you need Him to remove barriers the world places between you and barriers that your own fears and anxieties create. I was so full of fear, but my sweet friend's reminder caused me to pause and turn to Him and pray. After that, I was right back on track.

So now, let's turn our focus to reading God's Word.

If you truly believed God was going to talk to you specifically and individually through it, would your Bible daily?

Yes or No

If you are told that, if you persevere in reading, if you keep at it, God will begin to speak into your life and your circumstance, would you be willing to read and seek Him daily?

Yes or No

He does speak! He wants you to know Him. He wants you to know His will for your life. He loves you too much to give you the silent treatment. This is one of those times when you will have to *believe* and *act* on that belief. Faith forward movement. Even if you read for a week or two and still do not *feel* as if you are hearing, press on. Your spiritual ears need to become acclimated to the voice of God. Give it time. And too, if you are seeking God fully, it is important that you are careful what you are allowing into your mind. We allow so many competing voices into our lives that sometimes it is difficult to hear that gentle whisper. (1 Kings 19:12b)

Recently, even as I am working on this study material, a month of injury and sickness came to visit our home. My husband injured his hand, requiring surgery, and then the flu arrived. It was a month of rare down time and TV watching. Finally, once I was back on my feet and trying to take some steps forward on this project, I found that I had allowed so many competing voices in my life, especially through hours of absorbing TV, that God seemed unusually quiet. He revealed to me during my quiet time with Him that His voice had been drowned out. Once you do hear Him daily, when you don't, you notice! And once He revealed why, you can believe I adjusted my attention back toward Him and away from the onslaught of media and madness I had consumed. And so you know, His revelation was not accusatory but rather observational. He simply showed me what had cluttered my mind.

Remember, what you hear from God will always be gentle – sometimes stern but gentle. He will never be condemning, but rather convicting. There is a clear difference. One says you are not good enough (condemnation) the other says you are missing the mark (conviction). When He speaks He will usually be leading you to your next place, the next step with Him. He never contradicts His Word. He often shows you something new about Himself or His character.

In our story Robin had this new understanding of how involved God was in her life. *“The realization that God actually hand-picked a man such as him (Chris) to bring comfort to her, proved His love for her, His active ‘I’m in the middle of your business’ kind of love. The stitches in the veil began to unravel the very moment of that revelation.”*

If you haven't noticed, God is actively “in the middle of your business” right now. Through the book and this study material, He is drawing you closer to Him. He says you have been far away for far too long.

Think of other times when you have seen God right in the middle of your business.

Do you have that sense now? During this relationship with Him?

If yes, then how will you choose to proceed after the study ends? Are you willing to continue to walk with Him through this journey of removing your stitches?

As you begin to draw nearer to God, you will see sin and difficult attitudes in others merely as symptoms of lovesickness. You will understand that the stitches in their lives are preventing them from seeing God for who He really is. In that case, will you be willing to share your journey with others? *Yes or No*

As you grow closer to Jesus, He will burden your heart for those who are stuck where you once were. This dirty little secret in the church, our inability to know God's love and to truly love Him in return, is decimating the church. We are becoming weaker rather than stronger in such dark days. The enemy wants to keep us bound in this way. The only means of bringing light to this secret is to share it with others. Because of embarrassment, it would be easy to keep this to yourself. If you have not felt for God

what you should have all along, it may be difficult to admit it to others. But for the sake of the kingdom, you must share what you learn. Even if you wait until you are well on your way, commit to share your journey with someone. Who knows, the person you share with may need exactly what you are finding. In that case, you can share the steps you are taking and this free online Bible study resource. I'm not trying to sell more books. Loan your friend the book. I am, instead, trying to reach more hearts for Jesus.

Removing your stitches, the things that prevent you from seeing God for who He is, will remain a lifelong process. To see God in all His glory and greatness would take many lifetimes. There will always be issues to arise, even if in the form of our "lesser" sins like worry and fear. So be prepared to do this for the long haul. Be ready to meet with Him each and every morning on His terms. He may want to work in an area



You have searched me,
Lord, and you

_____."

Psalm 139:1



where you do not think you are ready. But if He says it's time, then it's time. We work on His clock. You can believe, if He is calling you to work with Him in a particular area of your life, rest assured you will make no progress in other areas until this one is accomplished. Example: I was not able to work on the difficulties in my marriage until bitterness and forgiveness were settled within me. There is a logical process, logical from His standpoint that is, one that must be done in the proper order. He is the God of order. Allow Him to set that order into motion, and then trust Him when He shows you the next area. Complete the verse in the margin. He knows what you need long before you do.

Who Am I to Him?

Besides taking you through seasons of who He is, God will take you through seasons of who you are. He knows you better than you even know yourself.

There is a question that can be applied to this season. Who am I in light of what God's Word says?

Example: We began the study with the verse that says you must love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. From there, the question of *Who am I in light of what God's Word says* is the introspective process you are traveling through. You are searching within to see if you have this kind of passionate, submissive, and focused kind of love for Him. Next you are asking, "If not, then how do I get there?"

Another example: God's Word says to be in the world but not of it. You were to ask yourself what needs of yours you are meeting by looking toward the world.

So already, you are using this method of *Who am I in light of what God's Word says*. For the remainder of your life, as you continue to grow with God, these two questions perpetuate the growth process:

- ❖ Who is He?
- ❖ Who am I in light of what His Word says?

Never stop seeking answers to these two questions. When you read His Word with these questions propelling you forward, you will stop reading with the mindset of "this is about Bible characters and stories." Instead, it will become about Him and you. That's it. You can ask, "What is He telling me about Himself in this passage?" And "Who am I in light of what I am reading?"

In our previous day's study, we focused on Him taking you through seasons of who He is. You will come to know Him as Counselor, Father, Shepherd, Beloved, Friend, etc. As you get to know Him in these varieties of ways, He will help you identify your stitches, the roots that caused them, and who you really are to Him.

This is the Supernatural part. He digs deep within to help you see why you cling to the things you cling to and why you feel the way you feel. During your quiet time with Him, He shows you things about yourself that even you never knew. He exposes motives, shows you why you have become who you are, and how to be who He intends for you to be. The cutting away of things that have no place is His job. You need only to be still and allow it. This is the surgery that Robin referred to in our passage on day three. He replaces the lies you believe with His truth...through His Word and His Spirit.

Seasons in Reading

Another area where you will face seasons with God is in your reading of His Word. You may find you read something in a chapter of the Bible that you do not fully understand. If you feel as if you can keep moving on, it is most likely not something you need for the current season He has you in. If the verse stops you, if you feel as if you can't go any further or that you can't seem to get the verse off of your mind, you may need to pause and allow Him to explain it to you. Once, years ago, I was constantly wondering about a verse. It literally went on for years.

"What a person desires is unfailing love;
better to be poor than a liar." Proverbs 19:22

This verse drove me crazy once a month. At the time, I was reading through Proverbs one chapter per day all month long. I did this month after month (Gleaned great wisdom, btw.) Okay, look at this verse. Individually, these statements make perfect sense. But combined as they were, it did not make sense. That little ";" there in the middle was what threw me off. That symbol usually means that these two thoughts are so connected that they should not be two separate sentences. But why would they go together? It was not so long ago, a couple of years maybe, that I was drying my hair. He revealed what it meant to me and why He had caused me to ponder it for so many years.

I, Lisa, needed unconditional love, a love that would never fail me. (We all do.) Only He is capable of loving me unconditionally. Next statement: Finally, after years of being a pretender, I admitted my poverty of love for Him and stopped being a liar. I admitted I wanted to love Him, and without knowing it at the time, invited Him to show me unconditional love.

That may not make a bit of sense to you, but that is how He spoke to me personally through it. He will do the same with you by using various verses, but remember, not every verse is for every season. Keep reading, and He will begin to speak into your heart, life, and circumstance.

Can you think of a verse that has spoken directly to you, one in which you knew God was clearly speaking to you through His Word?

As great of an influence as it is to listen to pastors, Bible teachers, friends, and even to read faith based books, none are a substitution for reading God's Word. He has a word specifically for *you*, one that He will not often give to another for you. When you listen to others, remember, what you are hearing is what God said to them. Listening to others may confirm what He has already said to you, which is that tread of revelation we covered in an earlier session, but you need a fresh word of your own, directly from Him. Be nosey, find out what God has to say specifically to you.

"The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."
Psalm 119:130

The verse in the margin could not describe me any better. I'm simple – minded anyway. I would imagine my husband would describe me as complicated. But when it comes to living out this life the way God intends, I am simple minded. I need clear direction. I need to know His path. Just as the verse above says, His Word unfolds slowly and deliberately, giving just enough light for me to take the next step or two. I like that about the way God leads. He doesn't overwhelm me with vast steps to take, just a small one here and another small one there. It unfolds just as I need it.

Don't allow what seems to be the complexities of God's Word and the debates that people have over it cause you to shy away. Read and listen. He will speak to your heart and your life just as you need it.

Focal Passage: "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me." Psalm 139:1

Question: Am I reading God's Word, actively listening for Him to speak?

Conclusion: As God takes you through seasons of who He is, He will also show you who you are to Him.

Day Five – Anticipation

During the Session One Home Study I listed several ways to maintain a normal flow of reading. I hope you have chosen one of them.

In what way do you read your Bible every day? Which chapter are you currently reading?

Remember, you need a daily plan. No hunting and pecking.

“Trying to keep a normal flow of reading was the key. If she had questions, she learned that looking for the answer could lead her to frustration. It was too precarious to find a verse that seemed to be the answer to a question or concern she faced and then try to apply it to her circumstance. Instead, she found that if she simply placed her question or care before the Lord in prayer, then read in her usual manner, the answer would come. While it may not be that day or even within several days, an answer always came. It was the anticipation, the excitement that kept her reading and studying His Word daily. He always showed up, and to her, that was one of the first real and significant truths she learned about the character of her God. He is faithful.”

In our text above, Robin has learned a valuable lesson about continuing a normal flow of reading. You think I’m trying to be funny by using the term hunt and peck, but I can think of no better way to describe how some people approach the Word of God. Below, mark all that apply to you.

- I rarely look at my Bible at all, but I have one
- My Bible is read in times of trouble, but not regularly
- I take my Bible back and forth to church, but that is the only time I pick it up
- When I do read, I just open to whatever and read a few chapters
- I lay the Bible on the coffee table or next to the bed as a reminder to read, but rarely get around to it
- I have a set place where my Bible is read regularly

The importance you place on your Bible is in direct relation to your nearness to God. It is also the one link to true transformation in your life. During our session on “real deal” people, we considered the fact that some people do not *feel* as if they experience what the Bible promises, which leads them to doubt that they ever will, which leads to giving up. Deep inside, I am convinced that every believer wants that *something* to happen, that moment when they see God show up or when He speaks directly to them. But when it doesn’t happen, they stop looking. There comes a time, when secretly, they become fairly

apathetic toward the Word of God. Sure, they are still convinced that the dos and don'ts are correct. There is, however, no anticipation or excitement over reading it.

Let's continue to dissect our text from the novel.

"If she had questions, she learned that looking for the answer could lead her to frustration. It was too precarious to find a verse that seemed to be the answer to a question or concern she faced and then try to apply it to her circumstance."

When faced with a concern or question in your life, aren't you told to pray about it? Sure. Then though, how do you hear the answer? I mean, if I ask, "Should I take this job offer." How can I hear God's response?

For one, I may hear Him in my Spirit. What I mean by that is that I feel this sense of peace one way or the other. And I do mean peace, not the leaning of one way or the other because it is what I *want*. When I say peace, I absolutely *know* it is what God wants for me. Without that, I keep seeking the answer. How I hear Him through the Word is just as Robin describes. I don't go looking up *job choice* in the concordance. For one thing, I'd probably be directed to Job and his choice to curse God and die or to live in faith. Sorry, a little Bible humor there. So then, if I pray, "Lord, do I take this job?" How can He possibly answer through a book whose writers wrote thousands of years ago?

Those who are receptive, the ones who want and expect to hear, do hear.


In this case, all I can say is supernaturally. He does it to me all the time. When I say all the time, I really do mean all the time. You should be hearing from Him that way too. Does that surprise you? Think only preachers and teachers hear from God on a daily basis? Think God only has a word for the spiritual elite? If that is true it is only because those who consider themselves to be less spiritual do not hear because they think they shouldn't or won't hear. I believe it boils down to one word, receptivity. Those who are receptive, the ones who want and expect to hear, do hear. When I ask direction of Him, He answers. And He speaks when I don't ask. Honestly, through His Word, He has given me direction I really did not care to hear. But I knew He spoke. And because He spoke, I listened and obeyed; admittedly sometimes dragging my feet, but I did obey.

Back to our text:


"Instead, she found that if she simply placed her question or care before the Lord in prayer, then read in her usual manner, the answer would come. While it may not be that day or even within several days, an answer always came."

When I ask a question or raise a concern, I don't necessarily watch for Him to answer. If I did that, I might easily make what I'm reading mean what I want it to mean. Did that make sense? That's the precariousness of watching for the answer. I am so good with words that I can easily distort God's Word and make a verse imply what I want to happen.

For example: Say I want to buy a new house,
and I read the inserted verse:



**“I will settle them in
their homes, declares
the LORD.”
Hosea 11:11**



I can think, “Wow, the Lord knows my heart and that I want a new house. He wants me to be settled” I use this one as an example because I've done this exact thing with this exact verse. Come to find out, what He really meant was that He would settle me into this home, my current one. I'm still trying to pray my way out of this house after about five years. I'm finally getting the message.

This is the home He has for us at this current time. This house saga is a long, ongoing story, one He allows me to teach about discontentment from often. Remember, I said I'm in process. Don't judge!

Having learned that I can't *watch* for the answer, as in making things mean what I want, I instead simply ask and then go on about the business of meeting with God. I read what I normally read. Whether it is my devotionals or my homework for whatever class I'm taking at the time, or through that normal flow of reading I keep harping on, I just read. Eventually, He answers clearly and in a way I know that I *know* it is His answer.

When I say that I *know*, I have come to find that certainty comes with God's answer. It is such a deep level of certainty that even if things do not go the way I hope they would based on what I believed to be God's answer, I still know it was the answer. I then have to hold on to the knowledge that I acted on my firm belief and what I truly saw as God's answer. There is blessing in obedience.

Finally, we come to this:

“While it may not be that day or even within several days, an answer always came. It was the anticipation, the excitement that kept her reading and studying His Word daily. He always showed up, and to her, that was one of the first real and significant truths she learned about the character of her God. He is faithful.”

Robin approached the Word of God with anticipation and excitement because she knew He would speak to her. She knew He had crucial things to reveal to her. God Almighty, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had something to say to her. How can you not approach reading the Word of God with anticipation and excitement when you *know* He will speak to you? The only way you can read the Word of God without this kind of enthusiasm is if you have never heard Him speak. No matter what you have experienced, He does speak. He will speak to you. You must acclimate your ears to hear Him.

Here is one of my favorite ways to share how God once spoke to me. While He speaks to me in very clear ways, sometimes what is clear to me may not be as clear to you. He speaks to us individually. This one is so blatant, however, I have even had a youth group blown away by such obvious direction from God.

One Saturday, I had nothing to do and was skiing stations. I stopped on a show called Madmen. I had seen the previews for it, but had never viewed the show. I stopped and watched the remainder of the episode. It was a good show. Set back in the sixties, the men were sophisticated in their suits, and the women were feminine in their dresses. It is a well written show to say the least. So captivated was I by it, that I went to the On Demand feature of my cable and watched back episodes. The ones I watched were all good shows, and compared to shows set in current times, seemed very clean. Yes, there was a storyline where a man was having an affair, but from what I watched, it was not being glamorized, rather, it was showing the destruction it caused a family.

(Obviously, this is the long version of the story.)

Anyway, on occasion I would catch the show On Demand. Once though, something happened, a scene in which something terribly graphic was implied but not actually shown. Well, with my writer's mind all I needed was the implication. My mind was filled with graphic images off and on the remainder of the night. When I woke the next morning, those images happened along pretty quickly. So during my quiet time, I said, "Lord, I don't know if I should watch that show (Madmen) anymore." Notice I did not say, "Lord, I *will not* watch that show anymore." As a matter of fact, I would have most likely talked myself easily into watching again with the assurance that nothing like "that" usually happened, and after all, the show is well written – and clean from what I had seen so far. That was until the Lord spoke!

Now I am able to use the term again, "normal flow of reading" since that was exactly what I was doing. I began that morning reading in Jeremiah, exactly where I left off the day before. I began in Jeremiah 48 and quickly I came to verse 2, which contains, "You too, O Madmen, will be silenced..." I nearly threw my Bible – no kidding. I had just said maybe I should not watch Madmen and the Lord tells me that Madmen will be silenced. And notice, it was capitalized, just as the show is. It happens to be a Moabite town which sounds like the Hebrew for *be silenced*. If that was not God speaking then He doesn't! That was God! That was my Father in heaven telling me that particular show is not His best for me. Ask me if I have ever watched it again. Nope, never. And I won't. Now ask me if I want to. Yes, honestly I do. But I won't. I still see commercials and wonder what's going on. Guess I'll never know.

But do you see He spoke? Out of over seven hundred thousand words in the NIV translation of the Bible, God used seven words to tell me not to watch a TV show. Is that a coincidence? I wish I knew how to type the sound for that motor boat noise you make with your lips, so insert that here. No way is it a coincidence! If you have ever wondered how God can speak to current day circumstances through men who wrote thousands of years ago, I say, "Pretty clearly."

If that were my only example, then I would not be so quick to tell you that you should be hearing from Him all the time. It is far from my only example. I tell you such a drawn out story to share my excitement and passion over the Word of God. Please believe me, He does speak and He wants to speak to you.

Going back to our verse from Day Three, try to fill in the blanks from memory.

“I will _____ you and _____ you in the way you should go; I will _____ you and watch over you.” Psalm 32:8

Do you believe that God can teach you His Word without you constantly asking or depending on others to tell you what His Word means?

Yes or No

He has spoken to me through His Word in other extraordinary ways, some, if I were to share them, they would not make sense to you. Because He speaks to us individually, based on where we are at the time, what may make perfect sense to me on a matter would not register the same with you. The more you read, the more you get His thoughts into your mind, the more clearly you begin to understand when He speaks. I believe He is speaking to us all along, but because our minds are cluttered with the things of this world, we are unable to hear.

How does He speak?

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, _____; walk in it.” Isaiah 30:21

This is where it takes getting to know the sound of His voice. Once you know it, He will guide you every step along the way. You never have to guess again. He wants you to know the way and is willing to lead you. Since this is a process, just like getting to know someone in the physical realm, it takes time and communication. The key though is repetition. Meet with Him every morning. Read His Word daily and pray. This investment in your relationship with Him will pay dividends in ways you can never anticipate.

Can you imagine being able to ask God direction in a matter and Him actually answer? Do you realize that is what He has wanted for you all along? Never has He intended for you to wander through this world stumbling along not knowing your way. Because our world is so loud and busy, our spiritual ears have become deafened to that still small voice. If you will allow Him, God will help you to hear Him.

What does He sound like?

“And after the fire came a gentle whisper.” 1 Kings 19:12b

In my experience:

- His voice is always gentle – can be stern, but still gentle
- Never condemning - you have to understand the difference between conviction vs. condemnation
- Usually, it will be leading you to the next place
- He never contradicts His Word
- Often shows you something new about Himself

Getting to know the sound of His voice simply takes time.

If you are participating with a group study, you will need to read Chapters 15-18 prior to your next session.

Weekly Recap:

***Day One:** We love because He first loved us.*

***Day Two:** In getting to know God, there are no shortcuts.*

***Day Three:** “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go: I will counsel you and watch over you.” Psalm 32:8*

***Day Four:** As God takes you through seasons of who He is, He will also show you who you are to Him.*

***Day Five:** The importance you place on your Bible is in direct relation to your nearness to God.*