

You and God— Getting Personal

*Discover How You can Develop a **Relationship with God**
and Know Him More Intimately*

Workbook

By Krystal Kuehn, MA, LPC, LLP, NCC
www.KrystalKuehn.com

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** Special thanks to my sister, Violet James, for writing all the prayers in this book. And special thanks to my close friend and mentor, Dr. William S. Arnott, for editing this book. I am forever grateful for all your work, support and prayers. Thank you both!*

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By Krystal Kuehn, MA, LPC, LLP, NCC

www.KrystalKuehn.com

www.ChristianWalk.net

Maximum Potential, LLC
35725 Beattie Drive
Sterling Heights, MI 48312
www.FavoriteEbooks.com

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*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”*

--Revelation 3:20, NIV

*Draw close to God,
And God will draw close to you.*

--James 4:8a, NIV



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Introduction



Every single person has the opportunity to experience and know God by having a personal relationship with Him. Through the redemptive work of Christ, we have been reconciled to God. We are no longer separated from Him by sin because Jesus died in our place to forgive us our sins. As a result, our relationship with God is forever changed.

When we accept Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Lord and Savior, a spiritual change takes place in our hearts. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus begins living within us. Our nature is renewed and we experience the absolute power of God in our lives.

We begin to change from the inside out and our understanding grows as we mature in our relationship with Him. Our desires and will conform to His desires and purpose for our lives. He knows what is best for us and His love leads us into a life of fullness in Him.

The very foundation for living the abundant life that God intended for us to live is to know Him in a personal way. Though we might know Him as our Creator and Savior, how many go through life also knowing Him as their Heavenly Father, closest friend, and first love?

We can know Him intimately as we learn of Him, learning His Word and spending time with Him in prayer and worship. We can live our lives growing in our relationship with Him—knowing who we are as His children. This is our God-given gift and opportunity. Developing a relationship with our Heavenly Father is the foundation on which to build a life of meaning and purpose with true joy and happiness.

He is the One who is always with you and promises to never leave you; the One who gave His life so you could live eternally, walk in freedom, experience inner peace, and enjoy your life. And He is the One who loves you more than you could ever comprehend. He wants to be your first love.

It's up to you. You can live your life independent of God and make it on your own, or you can live the life God has planned for you. The Bible tells us that

His plans are good because He is good, faithful, loving, and just. We need to understand who He is and who we are in Him in order to walk the victorious Christian life.

Jesus came to give us eternal and abundant life through faith in Him. It is the kind of life that begins at the moment of salvation when He comes to reside in the believer by His Spirit. Once we begin to live in Him, we can walk in the abundant life He promises to each of us.

Jesus said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus came to give us life, His life. He offers us abundant life. We don’t have to try to find it in others or in power, prestige, material gain, etc. He is more than enough. For in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

To have life in all of its fullness doesn’t necessarily imply a problem-free life with no hardships or trials. Nor does it mean having all of ones wishes and desires granted. When Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20) he was talking about the exchange of his old life for his new life in Christ. Paul lived the abundant life. He said, “Christ gives meaning to my life (Christ is my life)” (Colossians 3:4a, CEV). To know Him, to seek His presence, to experience His amazing love and grace, to delight in doing His will, to witness His power and strength...these are the things that brought fullness and meaning to Paul’s life.

Life in Christ is a life of joy. Joy is to be distinguished from happiness which is dependent on circumstance. One cannot be fully happy when there is cause for distress, grief, or sadness. However, joy can coexist with distress, grief, sadness or trouble. Joy is not dependent on anything outside of the Spirit of God. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Fruit of the Spirit are manifested in the believer’s life as a result of living in Christ and growing in faith.

Having anything in abundance means having more than enough, more than you need, an ample supply. When Jesus gave us His life, He gave us more than we would ever need to live a fulfilling life. In Him we are empowered to love the way He loves unconditionally and give selflessly. In Him we experience unspeakable joy and peace. In Him we have purpose, hope, and meaning in life.

It is God's will that His children walk in wholeness and joy, living the abundant life. To live the abundant life, we have established the importance of having a relationship with God as foundational.

In this book we are going to explore several areas that will help us gain insight into our faith in God. We'll look at what the Bible says about who God is and the role He plays in our lives. We'll look at our understanding of who we are as His children. And finally, we will discuss our level of devotion and commitment to Him.

The questions in each section will help you to identify areas in which you may need to learn more about God and your relationship with Him. They are intended to help you grow in and apply God's truth to every area of your foundation of faith. This is the solid base on which to build a fulfilling life, growing in and walking with the Lover of your soul, the One who wants to bless you, guide you, strengthen you and be in fellowship with you.

Enjoy the journey!



Krystal

www.KrystalKuehn.com

CHAPTER ONE:

**Faith in God *and*
Identity as a Child of God**

1. Do you believe that God exists? Explain.

The Bible tells us that **“From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see His invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God” (Romans 1:20, NLT)**. The Bible also says: **“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the heart of men; yet they can not fathom what God has done from beginning to end...I know that everything that God does will endure forever, nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it” (Ecclesiastes 4:11-14, NIV)**. What kinds of excuses would you or others have for not knowing God? List and describe.

God has made himself known to man in many ways. We see Him in nature: **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament show His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1)**. He is revealed to us in our consciences. The Jews had God’s law. They were taught God’s commands. However, the Bible tells us that those who didn’t have the law are also accountable because the law is written in their hearts.

God has given us all a conscience. **“When outsiders who have never heard of God’s law follow it more or less by instinct, they confirm it’s truth by their obedience. They show that God’s law is not something alien, imposed on us from without, but woven into the very fabric of our creation. There is**

something deep within them that echoes God’s yes and no, right and wrong” (Romans 2:14-15, Msg).

We come to know God in the various ways He reveals Himself to us. He has made us capable of knowing Him and receiving Him. We are encouraged to seek Him. **“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).**

When believers come to God, they come to Him in faith believing that He is real. **“Without faith no one can please the Lord. Anyone who comes to Him must believe that He is real and that He rewards those who truly want to find Him” (Hebrews 11:6, NCV).** Do you truly want to find Him and know Him? What keeps you from believing in Him?

2. Do you believe that God cares about you and wants you to have a personal relationship with Him? Explain.

Many people wonder if God really cares about them in a personal way; cares about the details of their lives and the simple things. In Matthew 10:30, Jesus said that **“the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”** He was assuring us that we are so valuable and important to God. He even cares about the simplest details of our lives. And He knows them with so much more precision than we do. Do you know how many hairs you have on your head? What areas of your life can you entrust to Him, knowing that He understands and know everything about you?

You are so special to God. He made you unique, one of a kind, precious in His sight. He loved you and cared about you before you were ever born. King David wrote, **“For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my**

mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:13-14).

You have been reconciled to God so that you can have a relationship with Him. He wants you to know Him and love Him. Jesus said, **“He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John 14:21).”** To manifest is “to make visible, clear, known; to uncover, lay bear, reveal (Vine’s Expository Dictionary). Other translations of this Scripture passage express it from Jesus’ desire as: show you what I am like, reveal myself, make myself plain, and disclose myself. Are you obedient to God’s commandments in your life? Do you ever tell Him you love Him? How do you show Him that you love Him?

Jesus told His disciples, **“I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me” (John 15:15, NLT).** Those who have experienced good friendships know how much they are to be cherished. Friendships can provide support, love, encouragement and enjoyment in life. Jesus calls us His friend. He is the best friend we could ever have. Jesus said that **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).** Jesus loves you so much that He died for you. Have you made Jesus your friend? Describe your friendship with Him. How does it differ from your other friendships?

3. Have you ever wondered whether you have to be “good enough” in order for God to accept you? And that you are saved by the good things you do or in trying to be a good person?

There is nothing you can do to make God love you more than He already does. God loves the sinner. Because we inherited the nature of sin from Adam, we are all born in sin. **“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).**

God is perfect and holy, and sin separates us from Him. There is nothing in and of ourselves that can save us. We may try to earn God’s love and acceptance with the good things we do; however, even our very best efforts are what the Bible calls filthy rags. **“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6, NIV).** In what ways have you tried to earn God’s love, acceptance and approval?

Because of God’s love and mercy, He did not leave us hopeless and eternally separated from Himself. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place for our sins. His sinless sacrifice restored our relationship to God the Father. There is nothing we can do to deserve God’s favor. It is by His grace that we are saved. **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).** Salvation is a gift of God. We can’t earn it or take credit for it. All we can do is receive it by faith.

4. Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? Explain.

There is a famous painting of Jesus standing at a door and knocking. The door represents the door to your heart. If you’ll notice, the door doesn’t have a handle on Jesus’ side. The handle is only on the inside of the door. Only you can open it. He won’t ever force it open. He’ll just keep knocking. You can hear His knock through the blessings in your life. You can hear it in His mercy and grace. You can hear it in His comfort and love. And He keeps knocking until you let Him in. He said, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me”**

(Revelation 3:20). When have you heard Jesus knocking at the door of your heart? Did you decide to let Him in?

Sometimes people wait until they feel they are ready to let God into their lives. Being ready means different things to different people. Some feel they have to get their lives in order before God will accept them. Some fear that they'll have to change the way they live and let go of things in their lives that they don't want to let go. Others wait until the gospel makes some sense to them.

There may never be a time when you feel completely ready to ask Jesus into your heart. However, He is always ready to meet you right where you're at—with all your imperfections, problems, fears, and doubts. He promises that if you will simply come to Him just as you are, He will not turn you away. He said that **“those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them” (John 6:37).** He doesn't want to lose you, and that is why He never gives up on you. **The Bible tells us that “God is patient, because he wants everyone to turn from his sin and no one be lost” (2 Peter 3:9b, CEV).** Is there anything that is keeping you from receiving God into your life?

It comes down to the matter of the will—asking yourself, “Will I, or won't I?” It's a decision you make. Once you acknowledge that God is real and that **“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16),** you have a choice. You can receive His gift of salvation. You can have eternal life. You can be a new creation in Christ. **For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).** You can call upon His name today and you will be saved. The Bible says **“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9,10).** Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord? Do you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead so that you could have eternal life—be justified?

5. Do you know you have spiritual heritage as a child of God? What do you think this means to you?

We were once separated from God. Our sinful behavior and thoughts kept us far from Him. But God made peace with us through the Cross, bringing us into His presence as “holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:21-22, NLT). Dying for our sins in our place, Christ made us acceptable to God. He **“had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God”** (2 Corinthians 5:21, NCV).

It was God’s plan to restore our relationship with Him and make us a part of his family. **“His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure”** (Ephesians 1:5, NLT).

God wants us to know Him as our Heavenly Father. He wants us to have a personal, intimate relationship with Him as His children. As believers we can know that we are children of God because **“God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”** So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (Galatians 4:6-7, NIV). The Bible says that you are no longer a slave, but a child of God. How do you think being a child of God changes your life?

As children of God, we are heirs to the promises of God. He promises to give us eternal life. He promises to never leave us or forsake us; to be our strength and shield, our peace. He promises to guide us and give us a life of purpose. He blesses us with goodness and love and joy. In Him we have all good things. For He has **“blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because**

we belong to Christ” (Ephesians 1:3, NLT). As a child of God and an heir you have an amazing inheritance. Are you living like a child of God? Is there anything keeping you from receiving God’s blessings and walking in your inheritance?

Prayer...

Dear Heavenly Father,

You are worthy to receive glory and honor, for You created all things. By Your Word You formed the heavens and earth and created man in Your image and likeness. Thank You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made and precious in Your sight.

Lord, You said that those who seek You with all their heart will find You. You stand at the door of my heart and knock. Lord, I hear You and open the door of my heart. I ask You to come into my life and be my Lord and Savior, my best friend.

I confess that I am a sinner and come short of the glory of God. I repent and ask for your forgiveness. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He was raised from the dead for my justification. And I confess Him now as my Lord and Savior.

Thank You for sending Jesus, Your Son, to die for my sins that I may have a personal relationship with You. It is the desire of my heart to draw close to You and to know You personally as my closest, dearest friend, Lord and Savior, Abba Father.

Thank You for blessing me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because I belong to You.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

CHAPTER TWO:

Image of God

1. Describe God as you know Him. What is God like to you? (Use adjectives.)

The Bible tells us that God is Spirit (John 4:24). He is “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God” (1 Timothy 1:17, NIV). We are made in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). This refers to our personhood. That is, we share with God the capacities to think, feel and choose as well as the capacity to have relationship with Him and with each other.

Let’s explore some of the attributes of God. God is faithful, just, and forgiving. In 1 John 1:9 we read **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** David wrote of God’s grace and compassion. God is merciful and slow to anger. **“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth (Psalm 86:15).** The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Do you see God as a loving God? How else does the Bible describe God?

Our earthly fathers have a strong influence on how we understand a father to be. We tend to have certain expectations about how a dad is to care for and love his children. Although there are fathers who exemplify God’s love and care, not everyone has these experiences growing up. Some dads are not around. Some are abusive, uncaring, or distant. When this is the case, it may be difficult to perceive our Heavenly Father in a favorable way. Our Heavenly Father understands this. It is by His Holy Spirit that He helps us to receive His love and trust that which the Scriptures tell us about Him. How would you describe your earthly father? What was your relationship like with your earthly father as you were growing up?

2. Do you believe that God is good regardless of what happens in your life and in the world?

People often question God’s goodness when they look at the state of the world with all its suffering and injustice. They wonder how a loving and just God could allow for it all. It’s not what God wanted for man. Everything God created was good and blessed. However, God created man with a free will. Man can choose to obey Him or disobey Him. And in man’s disobedience, sin entered the world. Man was forewarned of the consequences of sin. **“And the Lord commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Genesis 2:16).** The death referred to here is spiritual death or separation from God. In His goodness, God sent Jesus to pay the price for our reconciliation with Himself. We are no longer separated from our God. Yet, all creation still suffers the consequences of the Fall of man.

The Bible tells us that God is good and does only good (Psalm 119:68). A loving God can be none other than good. We’re encouraged to **“Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8).** All blessings and goodness come from Him. **“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).** God’s goodness doesn’t change like shifting shadows. He isn’t good to you only some of the time when things seem to be going well. He is good in the bad and difficult times as well. Do you recognize God’s goodness in your life at all times? Or do you think His goodness waxes and wanes?

When bad things happen, it seems God’s goodness comes into question. If our perceptions question his goodness, it’s simply because we don’t yet know or understand His attributes. As we grow near to Him we will learn of His goodness and grow in His grace. Once we understand that He is good no matter what happens in our individual lives or in the world, we will begin to really know Him. What distorts your concept of God as good?

In Jeremiah 29:11 it says that God has good plans for your life. **“For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope”** (TLB). Do you believe that God has good plans for your life? Why or why not?

3. Is it difficult for you to trust God and His promises? Why?

Trust is a “firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, etc. of another person or thing; faith; reliance” as defined by Webster. We place our trust in many things every day. We trust that our car will start up when we turn the key in the ignition. We trust that our kitchen chair will hold us when we confidently sit down on it. We also place our trust in people. We trust that our friend will keep a secret. We trust that our spouse will be faithful. Now if something happens that shakes our confidence, we can work to reestablish it, or we can lose our sense of trust in that person or thing to some degree or altogether.

The Bible tells us, though, that **“Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8)**. We can rely on His love and goodness knowing He keeps His word and promises. We can trust in Him knowing He is true and honest and just. He never changes, but we do.

We can trust God with our lives. Our times are in His hands (Psalm 31:15). And we can trust God to lead us every day. **“Trust in the Lord with all your**

heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-7). He promises that we can put our trust in Him and He will guide us on the best paths for our lives.

What keeps you from trusting God with all your heart?

4. Do you ever think that God is disappointed in you? Angry with you? Given up on you? Explain.

There is a famous parable in the Bible about a wayward son referred to as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24). One day the son asked his father to give him his share of the estate. He wanted it *now*. So his father divided it between him and his older brother. The prodigal packed his bags and moved far away to another country. It wasn't long until his money was all gone. He had wasted it on wild and foolish living. Then famine hit the land and he began to starve. He ended up finding a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry that the pods he fed the pigs looked appetizing to him. At this point he had an awakening and realized what he had done. He was hoping his father would at least take him back as a servant if he humbly pleaded with him. What a surprise there was in store for him! His father had deep compassion for him. He saw him coming and prepared a celebration for his return. When his son arrived, he was treated like royalty. The father joyfully proclaimed, “For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (v24).

Jesus shared this story to illustrate the love and compassion of our Heavenly Father. There's nothing we can do to make Him turn us away. He joyfully receives us when we humbly come to Him in repentance. He is a forgiving God so full of grace and mercy. He cares about you even when you feel you are not worthy of His love. You are of infinite worth and value to Him. What does this parable teach you about God?

Prayer...

O Lord my God, You are clothed with honor and majesty. You are patient, always faithful and ready to forgive. You are full of compassion and love. You are an awesome God!

Lord, no matter what I am going through I know that You are always with me and that You are a good God. You have good plans for my life. In You I put my trust and confidence. You are my God.

Thank You, Lord that You are forgiving and full of grace and mercy. Your mercies are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. I can come to You and know that You will embrace me with Your everlasting arms and unfailing love. I can rest assured that nothing can separate me from Your love because Your love never fails.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

CHAPTER THREE:

Love and Devotion to God

1. Would you say that you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? Explain.

When one of the religious teachers heard Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees (Jews who believed people did not rise to life after death), he was impressed with the way Jesus answered their questions. So he thought he'd ask Jesus a question himself. He asked **"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"** Jesus replied, **"The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these'" (Mark 12: 28-31).** The Message Bible (*see italics*) translates how we are to love God this way: with all your heart (*passion*), all your soul (*prayer*), all your mind (*intelligence*), and all your strength (*energy*). Is there any area with which you struggle with the most? Is there any area in which you need to develop?

Jesus said the second commandment is just as important as the first. That's because we would not steal from or want what our neighbor has if we truly love our neighbor. We wouldn't be unfaithful in our marriages, and we wouldn't take anyone's life. If we really love someone, we wouldn't do them any harm. So in loving God and loving others, we fulfill God's commandments. The Bible tells us to **"Owe no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment,**

are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8-10).

People can say they love the Lord with all their being, but it is expressed most clearly in their love for others. In John 4:12, it says **“No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.”** Do you know that you can’t love God and hate your brothers and sisters? The Bible says that you would be a liar if you were to say you loved God, yet hated your brother (1 John 4:20). What makes it most difficult for you to love others?

2. Are you living a life of righteousness and obedience to God? Tell how, or how not. Explain.

Jesus said, **“If you love Me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).** It is in our obedience to God that we demonstrate our genuine love to Him. And in keeping His commandments we abide in His love. Jesus said, **“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father and remain in his love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!” (John 15: 9-11).**

You sometimes hear people say that living the Christian life is difficult because doing the right thing isn’t always easy or the most desirable path they would like to take. But here, Jesus tells us the reward to living our lives in obedience to Him. We will remain in His love and in doing so we will be filled to overflowing with His joy! It seems it would be more difficult and less desirable to live our lives any other way but in obedience to Him. And the way we live in obedience to God is to submit our will to His will. It’s a matter of our will—our wants and desires. It is about making choices. We can’t serve both God and the world. In Matthew 6:24, we read **“No one can serve two masters. The person**

will hate one master and love the other, or will follow one master and refuse to follow the other. You cannot serve both God and worldly riches.” In what ways do you find it most difficult to obey God?

David wanted to live his life in obedience to the Lord. He knew that was the only way to true happiness. He prayed, **“Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord. As long as I live I’ll wholeheartedly obey. Make me walk along the right paths, for I know how delightful they really are. Help me prefer obedience to making money! Turn me away from wanting any other plan than yours. Revive my heart toward you. Reassure me that your promises are for me, for I trust and revere you”** (Psalm 119: 33-38, TLB).

God would rather have us obey Him than make sacrifices to Him. Sacrifices could include giving of our money, belongings, or anything we value. There is a place for sacrifices, but even they come out of our obedience to God. In the Old Testament they sacrificed their best animals to the Lord in worship. Saul was in disobedience when he thought he was doing the right thing in sacrificing the best of the sheep, oxen, and loot. However, Samuel said, **“Has the Lord as much pleasure in your burnt offerings and sacrifices as in your obedience? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. He is much more interested in your listening to him than in your offering the fat of rams to him (1 Samuel 15:23, TLB).** What has kept you from fully obeying God for your life?

To live in obedience to God is to live a righteous life. In the Beatitudes, Jesus said **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).** Those who want to do right and obey Him are called blessed. They will be fully satisfied. They will be joyful.

3. How much devotional time do you spend with God? Describe.

There is nothing you can give or sacrifice to another person that would be more valuable than giving your time. When you give your time, you give a part of your very life. That's because you can never get it back. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. You can get more money and things. But you have only so much time to give. Giving time is like making an investment. When you spend time practicing the piano, you invest in developing your talent and refreshing your spirit. When you exercise, you invest in a healthy and fit body. When you invest in people, you invest in relationships. God created us for relationship with himself and others. Good relationships are God's gift and blessing to us with life-lasting benefits and rewards. How do you invest your time? Are there any areas in which you feel you need to invest more time? Less time?

David started his day with prayer to God. In Psalm 5:3, David said, **“My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.”** David believed that God heard him when he prayed. As he waited upon the Lord, David trusted that He would speak to his heart. He knew God was always with him and that he could call upon the Lord at any time and God would hear Him. David wrote, **“Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17).** How do you start you day? When does God become a part of your daily thoughts and prayers?

David loved the Lord. He was called a man after God's own heart. He delighted himself in the Lord. David said of the godly, **“But they delight in doing everything God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on His laws and thinking about ways to follow Him more closely” (Psalm 1: 2).** David was devoted to God. He spent time daily in God's word. He had God's word hidden in his heart. When we spend time with God in prayer and devotion, and study of the Scriptures, we are investing in our relationship with Him. We grow in fellowship with Him and are changing into the likeness of His Son. The rewards are eternal and our lives are filled with His love, peace, and joy.

4. How would you describe your relationship with the Lord?

When we think about the closest relationships in our lives, our families usually come to mind. We love and value these relationships and place them at the highest priority in our lives. But Jesus wants to come first in our lives. We are to love Him above anyone else, more than we love our very own lives. He said, **“If you want to be my follower you must love Me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be My disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow Me” (Luke 14:26-27, NLT).**

If Jesus is our first love, we will follow Him. This requires a commitment to “take up our cross.” That means we will follow Him even when it gets tough. It’s not the easy way, but it’s the only way that leads to life. Jesus said, **“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it” (Matthew 7:13-14, NLT).** How important to you is your relationship with God? Do you consider yourself His disciple?

Paul described our new life in Christ in Galatians 2:20: **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** When Jesus becomes the Lord of our lives, He lives His life in us. Our desires and values change. Our will conforms to His will. We come to learn that nothing is greater than knowing Him. No person, position, power or wealth can fill our lives with meaning and purpose like He can. Paul was a proud Pharisee, a man of prestige and power before he came to know Christ. This is what he said after Christ came into his life: **“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain**

Christ (Philippians 3:7-8). Would you say that you know Christ? What keeps you from knowing Him?

The Bible tells us to “**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you**” (**James 4:8a**). People often turn away from God rather than draw near to Him when they fear that they disappointed Him in some way. Adam, for example, tried to hide from God after his disobedience. There’s nowhere we can hide where God won’t find us. Jonah found that out the hard way. God knows where you are. He wants you to draw close to Him at all times. That includes when you’re afraid and hurting and ashamed. He wants to draw near to you and bless you with His goodness, comfort you with His presence, and strengthen you with His power. You can draw near to God and know that He will draw near to you.

Prayer...

Dear Heavenly Father,

I love You, Lord, with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength. You are my heart’s desire. You are the lover of my soul.

Lord, may my life reflect a life of obedience to You. As David prayed, I also pray, that You would tell me what to do and I will do it. As long as I live I will obey You and walk in Your truth. For I know Your ways are right and good and I delight in them.

Lord, may I always be a person after Your own heart. May I hunger and thirst for righteousness and humbly seek Your face. More than anything else, my heart’s desire is to draw closer to You and to get to know You intimately.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Additional Questions

The following questions are intended to inspire more thought and reflection about your understanding of God and your relationship with Him.

- What is your religious family background?
- What were your early childhood beliefs about God?
- Have you ever had any non-Christian spiritual experiences?
- Are you secure in your salvation? Do you ever doubt your salvation?
- Do you believe your image of God the Father is accurate? Explain.
- Do you believe that God has not been fair to you or punishing you?
- Do you feel it is okay to be angry with God? Why or why not?
- Do you believe God is always with you?
- Do you ever feel that God has left you on your own, abandoned or rejected you?
- Do you believe that God is looking out for you?
- Do you believe that God loves you? Accepts you as you are?
- Do you spend time studying and meditating on the Word of God?
- Do you pray on a consistent basis? Describe your prayer life. Do you pray over little things or mostly in desperate times?
- What kind of influence does your relationship with God have in your life?
- Do you have a reverential fear of God? Why or why not?

CHAPTER FIVE:

For Further Study and Reflection

You can learn more about God and how to grow in your relationship with Him.

To learn more about:

Faith in God and identity as a child of God, read:

- *Ephesians 1:5*
- *Galatians 3:26-29*
- *Colossians 2:13-14*
- *Jeremiah 31:34*
- *Psalms 103:12*

To learn more about:

The **image of God**, read:

- *Isaiah 9:6*
- *Psalms 62:11-12, 86:15, 97:9*
- *Deut. 33:2*
- *1 John 4:19*
- *Romans 5:8, 8:38-39*
- *John 3:16*

To learn more about:

Love and devotion to God, read:

- *Psalms 5:3, 119:34*
- *Matthew 6:24*
- *Deut. 6:5*
- *Hebrews 11:6*
- *John 14:15*

Appendix

**Are You in Christ
and Is Christ in You?**



Jesus Christ has made the Father God known to us: *“I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that I Myself may be in them”* (John 17:26, NIV). God wants us to receive His love. In doing so, we will be in Christ and He will be in us.

First, it must be understood that God’s love is freely given to us in His Son and His love holds no conditions. There is nothing you can do to *EARN* God’s love. It doesn’t matter how many times or how hard you try to be a good person or live a worthy life. *“For by GRACE you have been saved through FAITH, and that not of yourselves; it is the GIFT OF GOD, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Eph. 2:8, 9; *emphasis added*). Salvation is a gift of God. It is not our reward for doing good things on earth.

Secondly, we must recognize that we *“all fall short of God’s glorious ideal”* (Romans 3:23, TLB). We *ALL* have sinned and there is punishment for sin. God doesn’t want us to face the eternal judgment for sin and that is why He sent His Son to die in our place. Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins and He redeemed us with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19). In order to be saved, we must acknowledge our sin and repent.

The Bible says that you can choose to be in Christ. You can choose to go from eternal death (separation from God) to eternal life. *“If you **confess with your mouth** the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Romans 10:9, 10).

If you want to know that you are in Christ and that He is in you, pray this prayer to God:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins so that I may have eternal life and a personal relationship with You. I confess that I am a sinner and come

short of Your glory. I repent and ask for your forgiveness. I understand that it is by grace that I am saved through faith, and there is nothing I can do to earn salvation. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He was raised from the dead for my justification. And I confess Him now as my Lord and Savior. The blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me from all sin and now I am a child of God and I am saved. Thank You, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

See John 3:16; Romans 3:23; 10:9, 10; Ephesians 2:8, 9; 1 John 1:7; John 1:12.



About the Author

Krystal Kuehn, MA, LPC, LLP, NCC is a psychotherapist, author, teacher, and cofounder of New Day Counseling (www.NewDayCounseling.org). Krystal and her sister, Violet James, are cofounders of the award-winning Web site, www.ChristianWalk.net. Krystal is featured in numerous newspapers and her many articles, pamphlets, and books are read world-wide. Krystal's best-selling ebooks including *Live to Love: 10 Powerful Ways to Communicate and Experience Love* can be found at www.FavoriteEbooks.com.

