CoMission

WORKBOOK

Love God for Who He Is

From fear and need to real love. Come to know the God who already loved you first.

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Print it, write in it, and take it to the group.

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Why do I come to God?

REMEMBER

> Do I need something from God, or do I need God?

WHERE PEOPLE START — MARK WHAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU

Most of us have more than one. None of these is a trick answer, and there is a line below for a reason of your own.

1. Fear	Out of fear of punishment, or of hell.
2. Help	Because I need God to help me with something.
3. Blessing	Because I want His blessing or His protection.
4. Knowing	Because I want to know Him.
5. Need	Because I have realised I need God.
6. Love	Because I love God and want to please Him.

Before this class says anything about God, it asks something about you. Not to catch you out. Just to see where you are, because you cannot walk a road from a place you will not admit you are standing.

Read these slowly, and answer them to yourself before you write anything:

Do I come to God for what I need **from** Him, or because I know I need **Him**?
Do I mostly seek God when I need Him to fix something?
What would happen to my relationship with God if He did not give me what I am asking for?

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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Loving one another

1 John 4:7-20

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   According to this passage, how did God show his love among us?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What fear does God's perfect love need to drive out of you?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Since God so loved us, whom will you love in a practical way this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you tell that love begins not with our love for God, but with his love for us?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, you loved me first and sent your Son when I could never earn it. Fill me with that love until it overflows to my brothers and sisters.*

This study online

Reflect and Discuss

1. Take out the two-column sheet from chapter 1. Under "I want to learn to come to God because He is...", what can you add now?

2. Write your own prayer to God, honestly, in your own words.

3. Which of the six practices from chapter 7 will you keep going with, starting when? Whom will you tell what this class has shown you about God?

NOTES

The hard question

The last question on this page is the one the whole class turns on. Take your time with it. Whatever you write is not a grade. It is a starting point, and God meets people wherever they start. Jesus healed people who only wanted to be healed.

The question is not where you started. It is whether you are still walking.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which of the reasons above sound most like you? Write them down, and add any reason of your own in your own words.

2. What did you notice about your reasons for coming to God?

3. If God could give me everything I want, but I could never know Him, would I be satisfied? Write your honest answer, not the one you think you should give.

NOTES

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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The one who came back to say thanks

Luke 17:11-19

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What is different about the one leper who comes back?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What good gifts from God have you failed to thank him for?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   How will you return thanks to God this week for what he has done?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you thank, and to whom could you tell what God has done?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, thank you for the mercy I so easily forget. Make me like the one who returned to give you thanks and praise.*

This study online

He loved us first

REMEMBER

> I don't have to force it. He loved me first.

THE VERSE UNDERNEATH THE WHOLE CLASS

> **1 John 4:19**
>
> We love Him only because He first loved us.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

A place to begin your prayer, if you want one: "God, I want to learn to love You for who You are. I admit that I've often come to You out of fear or for what I need. Today I want to know You..."

Here is the most freeing thing in this whole class: **you cannot force yourself to love God.**

You have probably tried. You have tried to feel more, pray harder, mean it more on Sunday. Love does not come from straining.

But here is what you *can* do. You can come to know Him. You can come near Him. And you can let knowing who He is slowly change the reason you come.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Where it all started

You may have come to God out of fear, or out of need. He met you there. But the deepest truth about you and God is not how you came to Him. It is that He came to you first, before your fear, before your need, and sent His Son for you.

Your love is never the starting point. It is the answer.

So the invitation of this class was never "love God more." It is this: *come and know the God who already loved you first.*

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Search me, God

Psalm 139:23-24

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *God, I am asking you to look where I would rather not. Show me what is there and lead me the other way.*

This study online

From fear to love

REMEMBER

> Fear brought me to God. Knowing Him is what keeps me near.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, THEN SAY IT BACK

> **1 John 4:18–19**
>
> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him only because He first loved us.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The road this class walks: Fear → Need → Knowing → Trust → Love. Nobody skips a step, and none of them is to be despised.

A lot of us learned our faith with a sentence underneath it that nobody said out loud but everybody understood: *if I don't love God, I go to hell.*

That sentence works, for a while. But you can obey someone you are afraid of without ever coming to love them, because fear keeps measuring the distance.

Notice what John does not say. He does not say fear is wicked. For many of us, fear is what first made us take God seriously, and that counts for something. But it is not where God means the relationship to end.

Look at the order

We love Him only because He first loved us. Love for God is not something you manufacture and hand to Him. It is a response. He moved first, before your fear, before your need, before you thought about Him at all.

So you do not have to produce a feeling. You have to come to know the One who loved you first. Where you are on the road today is simply where you are. The point is to keep walking.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Reflect and Discuss

1. When I am afraid, I come to God because...

2. When I have a need, I seek God because...

3. I want to get to the point of seeking God because...

4. Where would you put yourself on the road today, and what makes you say so?

NOTES

Reflect and Discuss

1. Take ten minutes. Write your honest answer to the question above. Nobody else needs to read it unless you want them to.

2. If you kept the two-column sheet from chapter 1, look at it again. Has anything moved? What?

NOTES

The question to sit with

REMEMBER

> God already loved me first. I can afford to be honest.

THE QUESTION — READ IT SLOWLY, MORE THAN ONCE

If God gave me none of the things I am asking Him for today, would I still want to know Him, walk with Him, and have a relationship with Him?

This chapter is short on purpose. It asks one question, and the work is yours.

Find a quiet place. Read the question in the panel slowly, more than once.

Watch this chapter

What this question is not

It is not a trap. It is not here to prove you do not really love God, or to make you feel like a fraud. If your honest answer is *I'm not sure*, or even *not yet*, you have not failed anything.

The question is like the "you are here" dot on a map. It does not judge the spot. It tells you where you are standing, so you can see which way to walk.

Why it is worth asking

You cannot grow from a place you will not look at. David wrote psalms of complaint. The man in Psalm 73 admitted he had nearly walked away. Their honesty was the beginning of their nearness.

And remember where this class started: *we love Him only because He first loved us.* Whatever your answer is today, His love for you is already settled.

NOTES

CoMission

No condemnation

Romans 8:1-2

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**
2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**
3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**
4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, there is now no condemnation for those who are in you. Quiet the voice that keeps re-reading my old record.*

This study online

Seeking God, or what God gives?

REMEMBER

> It is good to be near God.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, THEN SAY IT BACK

> **Psalm 73:25–26, 28**
>
> Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth, I desire nothing besides You. My flesh and my heart may falter, But God remains the strength of my heart and my portion forever. ... But as for me, it is good to be near God; I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge, That I may tell of all Your deeds.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Two prayers. Say them out loud and notice the difference: "God, I need you to help me with this." "God, I need You."

First, something people get nervous about: **it is not wrong to bring your needs to God.** He invites it. Jesus told us to ask, and most of the Psalms are somebody asking. A prayer request is not a sign that your faith is shallow.

The question is a different one. It is whether the relationship *ends* at what you want to receive.

A man who almost left

Psalm 73 was written by someone who nearly walked away from God, and his reason was about gifts. He saw the arrogant doing well, healthy and untroubled, and felt he had kept himself pure for nothing.

Then he went into God's presence and saw things differently. He did not get what the others had. He got God, and found that was the better portion.

You do not get there by pretending you want nothing. You get there by coming near, and finding, as he did, that it is good to be near God.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Obey

1 John 2:3-6

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   How does John say we can know that we truly know God?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   Where is there a gap between what you say you believe and how you live?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   What is one command of Jesus you will obey this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who could you walk alongside as you both learn to obey Jesus?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

Pray

> *Jesus, I want to know you, not just know about you. Help me keep your commands and walk as you walked.*

This study online

The one you can see

John is blunt. Love for the God you cannot see shows up in how you treat the people you can. More patience at home, slower to write someone off, more willing to help: that may be your love for God growing.

Not a scorecard

Do not turn this list into another reason for guilt. It is not a test to pass. It is a way to notice what God is already doing in you. Celebrate the small signs. They are His work.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Read the six signs slowly. Is any of them starting in you? Which one, and where have you seen it?**

2. **Which sign would you most like to see in your life?**

3. **Name one person you can see whom you find hard to love. What is one thing you could do for them this week?**

NOTES

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Think back over the last few things you said to God. Write down two or three of them, as near to your own words as you can.**

2. **Which of the two prayers do they sound more like? What do you make of that?**

3. **A portion is your share, the thing you end up with. What have you been hoping your portion would be?**

4. **The psalmist says, "it is good to be near God." When, if ever, have you found that to be true?**

NOTES

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Seek first the kingdom

Matthew 6:33-34

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Father, you told us to seek your kingdom first and not to borrow tomorrow's worry. Take the worry I woke up with.*

This study online

How do I know my love is growing?

REMEMBER

> Love for God shows up in how I treat the people I can see.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, THEN SAY IT BACK

> **1 John 4:20–21**
>
> If someone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And this is the commandment we have from Him: that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

1. Knowing	I want to know God more, not only get things from Him.
2. Pleasing	I want to please Him, not only avoid punishment.
3. Trusting	I am learning to trust Him when I don't understand.
4. Obeying	Obedience is becoming a response of love.
5. Loving others	I am beginning to love others as an expression of my love for God.
6. Wanting Him	God Himself is becoming my greatest desire, not only His blessings.

Feelings come and go. Some of the most faithful people who ever lived went through long stretches when they felt nothing toward God. If you measure your love by how warm you feel on a Sunday, you will be confused most of the time.

There are better signs. The panel lists six, and none of them is a feeling. You do not need all of them. Look for whether any of them is starting.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

— DISCOVERY BIBLE STUDY

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Love, obey, and receive the Spirit

John 14:15-21

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What does Jesus say those who love him will do, and whom does he promise the Father will send?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What does it mean to you that God's Spirit comes to live in you, not just near you?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   Which command of Jesus will you obey this week as a way of loving him?

4. **Who will I tell?**

   Who needs to hear that Jesus does not leave his people alone?

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Jesus, thank you that you do not leave me as an orphan but give me the Spirit of truth to be with me forever. Help me show my love for you by keeping your words.*

This study online

Hard to love a God you can't see

REMEMBER

> I come to love God by coming to know Him.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, THEN SAY IT BACK

> **1 Peter 1:8**
>
> And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy beyond words and full of glory.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Peter had walked with Jesus. The people he wrote to had not. He is not telling them to try; he is telling them what is already happening.

Here is a fair objection, and many people carry it quietly: *how am I supposed to love someone I have never seen?* You can hold your children. God is not in the room in that way.

How do you come to love someone you cannot see? **By knowing them.** You love a grandmother you only hear on the phone because you know how she laughs, what she cares about, what she did for you. It is the same with God. The relationship does not depend on seeing Him. It depends on knowing His character, believing His Word, and learning to recognise His work.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

Knowing about, or knowing

You can know many facts about God, the right answers and the verses, and still not know Him, the way you can know a man's height and address without ever having talked to him. What you are after is who He is: His character, what He loves, what He values, His faithfulness, mercy, justice and holiness.

People do not love a definition. They love a person.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Think of someone you love who lives far away. What do you know about them that makes you love them?**

2. **What does it mean to me to love someone I cannot see?**

3. **What do I need to know about God so that I can love Him more?**

NOTES

Obedience is one of the ways love grows

Look at the promise at the end of the passage: the one who keeps His commandments is the one to whom Jesus *reveals Himself*. Obedience is not only what love does. You do the next thing He says, and in the doing you come to know Him. That is not legalism; it is love in action.

Choose one

Do not try all six this week. Pick the one you will actually do, give it a first step, and give it a day. The answers will be small. Small is how it starts.

Reflect and Discuss

1. **Which one practice will you choose this week? Why that one?**

2. **My first step this week will be...**

3. **I will do it on (day), and I will tell (name) that I did it.**

NOTES

When you want to love God but don't know how

REMEMBER

I can't force love. I can come near, and obey the next thing.

SIX THINGS YOU CAN DO — CHOOSE ONE

John 14:15, 21

For if you love me, you will obey my commands. ... Whoever has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and reveal myself to them.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

1. Be honest	Tell God where you really are, and how you feel.
2. Read for Him	Read the Bible asking who God is, not only what to do.
3. Ask nothing	Spend time with God without asking Him for anything.
4. Remember	Recall what God has done, and what it shows of His character.
5. Obey	Do the next thing He says, even when the feeling isn't there.
6. Notice	Look for His work in ordinary days.

By now you may be thinking: *I want this. I just don't know how.* That is an honest place, and it is further along than it sounds. Wanting to love Him is already a kind of love.

You cannot force a feeling. But there are things you can *do*, and love tends to grow along them. The panel names six. Each one is small and concrete.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

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Living hope through trials

1 Peter 1:3-9

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

   What has God given us new birth into (v. 3)?

   Why do trials come, and what do they prove (vv. 6-7)?

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

   What trial are you facing that this living hope speaks to?

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

   How will you hold on to hope and joy in a hard place this week?

4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

Father, when trials come, hold my faith firm and fill me with the living hope I have in Jesus.

This study online

Knowing God changes why you seek Him

REMEMBER

First ask who God is. Then ask what to do.

A SMALL PASSAGE, AND FOUR QUESTIONS TO BRING TO IT

1 John 4:9–10

This is how the love of God was revealed among us: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

1. Who is He?	What does this passage show me about who God is?
2. His character	What does it reveal about His character?
3. What He does	What is God doing here, and what does that teach me about Him?
4. How He treats people	What can I learn from the way He treats people?

If love grows out of knowing God, the next question is practical: *where* do you get to know Him? In His Word. But many of us read it the wrong way round.

We open the Bible looking for instructions. *What should I do? What should I stop doing?* That is a good question, and the Bible answers it. But if it is the only question you ask, you can read for years and know many rules and very little about the One who gave them.

So before you ask what to do, ask who God is.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

But even if he does not

Daniel 3:17-18

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**
2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**
3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**
4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

God, they trusted you to rescue them and obeyed you either way. Give me that kind of obedience when the outcome is not promised.

This study online

Eat, then Digest

If you have done a Discovery Bible Study, you will recognise this. You *eat* the passage by reading it, re-reading it and retelling it in your own words. Then you *digest* it with the questions, and the first is always *what does this teach me about God?* This chapter asks you to slow down on that one. Grow is God's part, not yours.

You do not have to understand everything about God at once. Pick one thing about Him and watch for it all week.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Read the passage twice and say it back in your own words. Before thinking about what to do, write what it shows you about God.

2. Which of the four questions do you want to start asking when you read the Bible this week?

3. One thing about God I want to know better this week is...

4. Why would knowing that about Him help you love Him?

NOTES

Reflect and Discuss

1. Think of something you are asking God for right now, something real. I am asking God for...

2. If God's answer is "no", what would be hardest for me?

3. Can I keep trusting who God is, even if I do not get what I want? Write what is true today, not what you hope to feel.

4. Write one thing you know about God that would still be true if the answer were no.

NOTES

CoMission

The Lord is my shepherd

Psalm 23:1-3

1 Eat

Read the passage slowly, read it again, then retell it in your own words. If you can't retell it, read it once more.

☐ Read ☐ Reread ☐ Retell

2 Digest

Answer from what the passage actually says — stay in the text.

1. **What does this passage show me about God?**

2. **What does it show me about people — and about myself?**

3. **What will I obey this week? (a concrete step, with a day)**

4. **Who will I tell?**

3 Grow

Growth is God's part, not yours. Do the cycle faithfully and trust Him to give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6–7).

✦ Pray

> *Shepherd, you make me lie down and you restore what is worn out in me. I will let you lead today.*

This study online

When God doesn't give you what you want

REMEMBER

> I want the Giver more than the gift.

THE PASSAGE — READ IT TWICE, THEN SAY IT BACK

> **Habakkuk 3:17–18**
>
> Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there are no grapes on the vines; though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food; though the flock disappears from the fold, and there are no cattle in the stalls, yet, I will find joy in the Lord, I will delight in God my Saviour.
>
> The Open Translation Bible (OTB), openbible.uk, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The question this chapter asks: Do I love the Giver, or only His gifts?

When everything is going your way, it is easy to say "God is good." The job came through, the scan was clear, the money arrived just in time.

The real test of what you love comes on the other days, when you prayed and the answer was no, or *wait*, and the waiting has gone on for years. Those are the days that show what you were holding on to.

Watch this chapter

NOTES

What mature love says

Love starts to grow up when we learn to trust God even when we do not understand His answers. It sounds something like this: *"Even if I don't understand what God is doing, I still want to know Him, trust Him, and walk with Him."*

That is not resignation, and it is not pretending the loss does not hurt.

Habakkuk imagines the harvest gone, the animals gone, everything a farmer lives on. *Yet, I will find joy in the Lord.* Not in the harvest. In the Lord.

You may not be able to answer the third question with a yes yet. Being honest about it is the start of the trust.