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Understanding  
Changes  
Everything  
(or does it?)

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1. It depends on what you are trying to change? What do we Christians need to change? We are not known by our loving behavior.
2. If simply “understanding” more about God’s love changed our behavior, I think we would have a more favorable report because so many people tell me they “know” God loves them. Paul prayed for us to “grasp” and “know” his love. Are there two types of knowing?
3. Neuroscience has a lot to say about how the brain learns or “unlearns” things. Sadly, I think overall we have not done our spiritual practices – primarily our time with the Bible, prayer, and community – in ways that really “transform” or change our minds and thus our behavior.
4. **Teaching vs Training:** There is a lot of teaching and study in the church. But what about training? *“The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch”* [Acts 11:26]. The “disciple” label implied being in a training relationship with a master teacher. Jesus said, “The student [literally “disciple” or apprentice] is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully **trained** will be **like** their teacher.” [Luke 6:40, NIV]
5. WHAT DID HE TRAIN THEM TO DO LIKE HIM? TO LOVE AS HE HAD LOVED THEM: John writes [John 13:1, NIV]: **“Having loved his own** (referring to chapters 1-12) . . . **he loved them to the end** (referring to chapters 13-21).”
  - a. “HAVING LOVED HIS OWN” – Imagine all the ways they personally experienced and observed his love – 3 years, 10 hrs. a day = 10,950 hours. John writes: “If every one of [the things he did] were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” [John 21:25].
  - b. “HE LOVED THEM TO THE END”: He humbly washed everyone’s feet; he loved them with encouraging words (chapters 14-16), by praying an amazing prayer for them (chapter 17), by suffering and dying for them; and finally, he loved them through resurrection appearances: “He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God” [Acts 1:3]. He lovingly interacted with Mary [John 20:11-18], Thomas [John 20:19-29], Peter [John 21:15-19], and others [Luke 24:13-49].
  - c. THE NEW COMMANDMENT: Based upon their experiences with him, Jesus said: “A NEW COMMANDMENT I give to you, that you ----- **LOVE ONE ANOTHER EVEN AS I HAVE LOVED YOU**, ----- that you love one another. **By this all men [“people”, ESV] will know that you are my disciples**, if you have love for one another” [John 13:34-35, NASB]. Presumably, they love one another as he has loved them.
6. JESUS LOVED THIS WAY: Jesus said, “Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you” [John 15:9, NASB]. Jesus specifically recalls the Father’s love for him in these verses [John 5:20; 10:17; 17:23, 24, 26].

7. HE DID IT BY THE SPIRIT: Luke writes, “Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, left the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness” [Luke 4:1; also John 3:34]. In Acts 10:38 he writes, “Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**” [Luke 4:14]. Peter said, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth [*the man*] with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”
  
8. GOD LOVED THEM THROUGH JESUS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL: *Jesus said*, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that **the Father is in me**? The **words** I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is **the Father, living in me**, who is doing his **work**” [John 14:9-10, NIV]. Paul writes: “**THE SON IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD!**” [Colossians 1:15, NIV]. God the Father speaks the new command: “**LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I, YOUR GOD AND FATHER HAVE LOVED YOU THROUGH JESUS BY THE SPIRIT!**”
  
9. WHAT IS “NEW” (“unknown, strange, remarkable”) ABOUT THE NEW COMMANDMENT? One has to \_\_\_\_\_ by Jesus first, in order to love \_\_\_\_\_ you!
  
10. HE ANTICIPATES OUR QUESTION OF “HOW DO WE GET LOVED BY YOU TODAY JESUS?”: **Jesus said**, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate [“helper”, NASB] to help you and **be with you** forever—**THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH**. . . and [HE] **will be in you**” [John 14:16-17]. He continues: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and **we will come to them and make our home with them**” [14: 23; also Romans 8:9-10]. **THEREFORE**, Jesus says, “Do not leave Jerusalem, but **WAIT** for the gift my Father promised [*the Holy Spirit*], which you have heard me speak about” [Acts 1:4-5, NIV]. **THE TRIUNE GOD IS IN US BY THE SPIRIT LOVING US THROUGH ONE ANOTHER!**
  
11. TRAINING IN LIKENESS IS STILL GOD’S/JESUS’ GOAL: Paul writes: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are being transformed into the same image** from glory to glory, just as **from the Lord, the Spirit**.” [2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB; Also Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19; Genesis 1:26]. This is the FAMILY BUSINESS: “*Yahweh and Son(s) and daughters: IMAGE-MAKERS - Transforming people to LOVE THE JESUS WAY.*” *Discipleship is a life-long, training relationship with God and Jesus, by the Spirit, to be like him, to love as he has loved us, in order to partner with him in his mission, the “family business,” until he comes.*
  
12. **The “LOVE VERSE” and “GOD-SIGHTING” practices** help us to experience God love us in a “physical” way as the disciples experienced through Jesus. By the Spirit, God loves us directly, Spirit to spirit [Romans 5:5; 8:16], and through the **Bible**, interactive **prayer**, and our loving interactions **in community**. **THESE PRACTICES HELP US TO ENGAGE HOLY SPIRIT AND OUR BRAINS IN A WAY THAT HAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE, FOR TRANSFORMATION BECAUSE IT’S EXPERIENTIAL (neuroscience).**
  
13. PRACTICE/ TRAINING TAKES TIME: When you think of spending time with God, what thoughts and emotions do you have? How often do you look forward to it with excited anticipation?

14. PERFORMANCE REVIEW: David writes: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me . . .” [Psalm 139:23-24, NIV]. Paul writes: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” [2 Timothy 3:16, NLT].
15. John writes: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. . . . because God is love. . . . We love because he first loved us” [1 John 4:7-8, 19, NIV]. God says, “*Come to me who is love, from whom love comes, and let me love you first and then, because of experiencing me love you, you will love me and others because I first loved you!* SO COME! I AM WAITING WITH EXCITED ANTICIPATION FOR YOU!”
16. God says, “When you get up and come to me your heavenly Father, [*whether you’ve sinned or not, verse 18*], while you are still a long way off and I see you, I am filled with compassion for you; I run to you, throw my arms around you and kiss you [*and celebrate over you, verse 23*]” [Luke 15:20, NIV, personalized]. He continues: “I WAIT WITH LONGING FOR YOU! AND WHEN I SEE YOU, I RUN TO YOU. I DON’T WAIT FOR YOU! I RUN TO YOU! I CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN US!”
17. God says, “I HELP YOU GRASP AND KNOW MY LOVE!” He continues: “In order to root and establish (“ground”, NASB) you more deeply in my love, I will give you the power (the “ability”, NASB) . . . **to grasp** (“comprehend”, NASB) how wide and long and high and deep is **the love of Christ [my love for you] and to know (experientially) this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of ME” [Ephesians 3:17-19, NIV, personalized]. In addition, “AS YOU UNDERSTAND AND EXPERIENCE MY LOVE, YOU WILL REVEAL ME, MY LOVE, TO ONE ANOTHER AND OTHERS, OUT OF THE OVERFLOW!”
18. God says, “I WANT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF MY LOVE TO SATISFY YOU (quench your thirst; appease your hunger), AND ALSO TO DELIGHT YOU LIKE GREAT FOOD!” He continues: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the **waters** . . . Why spend money on what is not **bread**, and your labor on what does not **satisfy**? Listen, listen to me, and **eat** what is good, and you will DELIGHT in **the richest of fare**” [Isaiah 55:1a, 2; NIV]. “**Taste** and see that [I] the Lord [*am*] good” [Psalm 34:8, NIV, personalized]. *FOOD IS NOT JUST FOR NUTRITION (knowledge of his love), BUT ALSO FOR PLEASURE (experiencing his love)*. [Umbilical cord illustration].
19. DAVID’S TESTIMONY AND MOSES’ PRAYER BECOME OURS TOO!: [David writes]: “Because **your** steadfast **love** is better than life, my lips will praise you. . . . My soul will be **satisfied** as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with **joyful** lips” [Psalm 63:3, 5, ESV]. [Moses writes]: “**Satisfy** us in the morning with **your** unfailing **love** that we may **sing for joy and be glad** all our days.” [Psalm 90:14, NIV]

[Note: At the beginning, like dry soil in a pot, you might absorb little initially.  
But stay under the flow daily and you will absorb more and more!]

# The God-sighting Practice

## Experiencing and Internalizing God's Acts of Love

1. **What is a God-sighting?** Experiencing God love us in a “physical” way by the Spirit as he did the disciples through Jesus.
  - a. John wrote: “The Word [God the Son] became flesh and made his dwelling among us. . . . No one has ever **seen God**, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” [John 1:14, 18, NIV; also John 14:9-11, “**seen me . . . seen Father**”]
  - b. John also wrote: “No one has ever **seen God**. But if we love each other, God lives in [among] us, and his love is brought to full expression in [among] us.” [1 John 4:12, NLT]
  - c. Listen to the Father's heart through Paul: “I, your Father of compassion and God of all comfort, comfort you in all your troubles, so that you can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort you yourselves have received from me. [2 Corinthians 1:3-4, *personalized*, NIV]
  - d. Notice how Paul experienced God comfort him: “For when we [Paul and Timothy] came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within. But **God**, who comforts the downcast, **comforted us by the coming of Titus**, and not only by his coming but also *by the comfort you had given him*. He told us about your **longing** for me, your deep **sorrow**, your ardent **concern** for me, so that my **joy** was greater than ever.” [2 Corinthians 7:5-7, NIV]
  - e. Paul also believed that his love was not just his own but Jesus' in him: “It is right for me to **feel this way** [joy, v. 4; love, v. 4:1] about all of you, since **I have you in my heart** . . . God can testify how I long for all of you **with the affection of Christ Jesus**.” [Philippians 1:7-8, NIV]

### 2. The God-sighting practice:

- **Remember with thanks**: We write about a loving interaction as a prayer of thanks.
- **Personalize**: We re-write our “thanks” with the Spirit’s guidance so that the Lord speaks to us and loves us through the content of our loving interaction as statements of “how much more.”
- **Vocalize**: We speak our “personalized thanks” aloud or listen to someone else.
- **Meditate**: We spend time replaying the memory, over and over, just as it happened the first time and also listening to his “how much more” statements and any other words of love from the Spirit.
- **Imitate**: We put our experience of his love into practice – we love as loved.

### 3. Remember With Thanks:

- a. Paul wrote: “I **thank** my God every time I **remember** you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with **joy** because of your partnership in the gospel . . .” [Philippians 1:3-5, NIV; see also Ephesians 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 1:4].
- b. Following Paul’s example, we review our day to **remember** our interactions with family, friends or other people. The interactions could be (1) **how someone loved us**, (2) **how we loved** someone, or (3) a loving interaction **we observed**. We then write **all the details of the experience as a prayer of thanks to God** – ours or their words, tone of voice, actions, emotions, facial expressions, and body language.
- c. “**Remembering**” is (1) a way to obey Paul’s appeal - “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, **keep your eyes on** those who live as we do” [Philippians 3:17, NIV]; and (2) a way to intentionally “behold,” “contemplate” [2 Corinthians 3:18, NIV] those moments when “God’s kind of love” manifests [see 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 John 4:9], becomes visible again, to or among us [1 John 4:12].

### 4. Personalize our “how much more” and vocalize it:

- a. We re-write our “thanks” with the Spirit’s guidance so that the Lord speaks to us and loves us through the content of our loving interaction as statements of “how much more.”
- b. This idea came from Jesus’ comparisons: “You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:9-11, NLT). About finding a lost sheep and coin Jesus said, “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them [or a woman loses a silver coin, v. 8]. . . . And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that **in the same way there will be more rejoicing** in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” [Luke 15:3-10]
- c. We trust the Holy Spirit’s guidance [John 14:26; 16:13]: Dallas Willard writes: “God’s gracious incursions into our souls can make our thoughts his thoughts. He will help us learn to distinguish when a thought is ours alone and when it is also his.” [Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, 102]. If you are unsure what you wrote is from the Lord, ask a friend or spiritual leader for feedback and check it against the Bible (“weigh” and “test”, 1Corinthians 14:30 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).
- d. **Vocalize**: We read our personalized “how much more” aloud or listen to someone else say it to us.

## 5. Examples from Mark's Journal:

### When someone loved him:

**NOTE:** Generally, we thank God in two ways: (1) giving thanks for how the person expressed their love, and (2) giving thanks to God for loving us through them that way. In this way, we acknowledge the person loved us and that our Triune God “manifested” his love to us through that person as well (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

**REMEMBERING WITH THANKS:** “Lord Jesus, thank you so much for Sam’s enthusiastic hug and words of affection—‘Bro, so awesome to see you. I’ve missed you. I am so grateful for this opportunity to be together.’ Lord, his excitement, warmth, and delight in me were so heartwarming. I felt deeply loved. Thank you so much for loving me through him!”

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** “Mark, if Sam embraced you with such a long, strong hug, how much more do I love and embrace you every time I see you and when we get together. If he missed you and loved being with you, how much more do I, Jesus, love connecting with you even now. I am so delighted to spend time with you, to listen to you, to enjoy you and process with you what is happening in your life. Share with me. I’m listening and eager to respond! His smile, his delight, that’s mine for you and so much more!”

### When he loved someone:

**REMEMBERING WITH THANKS:** “Father, thank you for the deep, deep love I felt in my heart for my daughters today. I found so much pleasure in hugging them, lavishing affection on them with kisses, tickling them, and speaking words of endearment—‘You’re awesome!’, ‘You are so special to me!’, ‘I love you soooooo much!’ Lord, I so badly wanted them to grasp how intense and great my love was for them that I squeezed them too tight (which they let me know). Lord, I just love them so much. I was frustrated by the limitation of words and actions to convey the depth of love in my heart for them.”

**PERSONALIZE with “how much more”:** “Mark, if you, beloved son, love this deeply, how much more do I love you as my own child. If you can find such pleasure hugging them, kissing them and tickling them, how much more is my pleasure in you and my joy in lavishing my affection on you. You are awesome to me, special to me, and I couldn’t be more proud to love you as my own. How effortlessly it is to speak my words of affection over you. I’m your number one fan! Can you even begin to imagine how deeply I want you to know what’s in my heart for you? If you, son, how much more, how much more! And how much more do I long for your girls to know my love as well.”

### When he observed a loving interaction:

**REMEMBERING WITH THANKS:** “Father, thank you so much for the joy of experiencing my friend John talk about his little girl today. He was radiant, proud, and could hardly contain his delight. He just had to share with me how special every little thing she was learning and doing meant to him. I couldn’t help but smile with joy and delight with him.”

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** *“Mark, if John felt that much delight in his little girl, how much more is my delight in you, beloved son. Even now I love to show you off to the angels. How much more do we, the Triune God, love to talk about you and how much joy you bring us. Our joy knows no bounds over who you are and who you are becoming. See it, know it, and revel in it—because we really love you!”*

## 6. Meditate:

- a. **Neuroscience:** “We quite literally *re-present*—make present again—our experience of the world when we have a memory. More technically, we reactivate the same network of neurons that were initially activated in our original experience, to some extent **experiencing the event all over again**. The re-experience or re-presentation will replicate the intensity of the original experience to the degree that our inner re-presentation is like the original experience—concrete, vivid, and with all our senses (55-56). . . . What matters to the neurons in our brains is not whether an event is external [happening presently outside of us] or internal [in our brains] but only whether or not the event is experienced as *real, concrete, and vivid*. . . . We take a *truth* [or truth-communicating event] and mentally experience it as *real*.” [Gregory Boyd, Al Larson, *Escaping the Matrix: Setting Your Mind Free to Experience Real Life in Christ*, 125-126].
- b. Therefore, after we write about our loving interaction, we want to replay the memory as vividly and concretely as possible, using all of our senses so that we can re-experience it with as much intensity as the first time. As we relive it, we also listen to the Lord’s “how much more” words, both internally and by speaking them aloud or hearing someone else speak them to us. We also listen for any other thoughts he wishes to share with us.
- c. “Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about [literally “ponder”] such things.” [Philippians 4:8, NIV]

## 7. Imitate:

- a. “And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.” [1 Corinthians 11:1, NLT; also 4:16]
- b. “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” [Philippians 4:9, NIV]

## ●On Days We Have No Loving Interactions●

Sometimes, when reviewing our day, we weren’t with people or, we realize that **we were not loved or didn’t love** in an intentional way. Days like these happen and are normal. Some options for these days:

1. Give thanks for his presence and protection from the evil one [John 17:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:3].
2. Give thanks for his provision and/or other ways (not through people) that he showed his presence and love.

3. Remember someone or several people you deeply love (family, friends, or even your pet). As you feel your loving thoughts and emotions rise for them, pause and hear the Lord say to you: “If you can feel such love for \_\_\_\_\_, how much more do I feel that way for you.” Also, you can replay a pleasant memory of when they loved you or you loved them and again hear the Lord say: “If they (or you) thought, felt or loved that way, how much more do I think, feel or love you.” Remember, the more vividly and concretely you engage in the memory, the more deeply you will experience it and be affected by it again as if it were the first time.
4. Looking for, but not finding, a moment when someone loved us helps remind us to be intentional to love others so they can experience a “God- Sighting.” Sadly, many people are often not loved for days because they don’t experience someone loving them. What about doing something right now for someone? Be intentional; it’s so worth it!
5. Occasionally, when reviewing our day, we remember how **someone harmed us** instead of loved us. We understand how painful that can be. We also acknowledge that forgiving someone is a difficult process. We use a process called *Memory Healing Prayer*. This process helps us to experience God love us in our pain and love us by reminding us of how much he forgave us first so that we can forgive as forgiven (Ephesians 4:31).<sup>1</sup>
6. At other times when reviewing our day, we remember when **we did not love people**. Resist the shame. Remember that God’s love for us is not based upon our behavior. The Triune God loves and values us based upon who we are to him and the value and love he chose to place on us. But be intentional to express a love-based apology: “I’m so sorry for the pain I caused you. What I did was wrong and is never ok under any circumstance. By God’s grace I will never do it again. I will do whatever is necessary to change and to help you heal and to restore your trust in me.”

## ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF THE GOD SIGHTING PRACTICE

### **When someone loved me:**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS:** While reviewing my day, I remembered that in the morning, I was sitting alone in the living room feeling very discouraged and had been crying. My wife had left for work but suddenly returned because she had forgotten something. She saw me and noticed my pain. She postponed leaving for work to sit with me, hold me, and pray for me. I wrote: “Father, thank you so much for coming and loving me through Robin. I thought she had already left for work. Lord, her tender touch just melted me. I felt so comforted. She spoke hope and comfort to me and then prayed such a hope filled, faith filled prayer for me. Her compassionate touch and soothing, faith filled words were just what I needed for the day. Thank you for her amazing love for me. Thank you again for loving me through her today.”

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<sup>1</sup> **The Memory Healing Prayer process abbreviated:** Depending on how severely we were harmed, forgiving someone can be quick and easy or it can be a longer process involving several steps. In Step One, we pour out our pain and anger to the Lord over the harm we experienced. He loves us with empathy, comfort, and validation. In Step Two, we invite the Lord to remind us that he loved us when we were his enemies and forgave us first of all our wrongs against him and others. We feel loved by him as we experience his mercy, grace and forgiveness afresh. In Step Three, we choose to forgive because he forgave us first. In other words, we no longer keep a record of it. We release the person from the debt they owe us and leave justice in the Lord’s hands, just as Jesus did (1 Peter 2:23). We need to do this as many times as it takes for the memory to be healed, when it no longer causes pain, anger or the desire to retaliate. (The full version of this process is included in FLM’s *Getting Along* curriculum).

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** “Mark, If Robin was so quick to stop and respond to your need, how much more am I attentive to and present to you in your time of need. Her love, her compassion was also mine and yet it’s so much more. I knew you were discouraged and so I came to you through her. Together with her, I loved comforting you, holding you, and speaking truth and hope into your soul. I loved her prayer. Her prayer expressed my heart so well. But I also ever live to intercede for you. You are always on my heart and mind. I will help you, strengthen you and uphold you. I am faithful. You are deeply, deeply loved by Robin. You are as well by me to that degree and more! Hold fast to that truth! Never will I leave you or forsake you.”

### **When I loved someone:**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS:** While reviewing my day, I remembered how I responded and what I felt when I saw my friend, Sam, have a bad fall. I wrote: “Father, thank you for the depth of love and compassion I felt in my heart for Sam when he fell. I felt such concern for him. I was amazed by how quickly I responded with care and comfort, holding him, helping him, and saying comforting words to him like, ‘Sam, its going to be ok. I’m here. I’ll take care of you. I love you brother. Hang in there.’ Lord it was such a joy to be your loving presence to him.”

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** “Mark, like yours for Sam, so is my compassion, love, care, and concern for you and so much more. How much more quickly and deeply do I respond this way when you are hurt or hurting son? I am always here to comfort you and support you because my love for you is like yours for Sam and so much more. And if you found such pleasure in caring for Sam, how much more is my pleasure in caring for you. Remember your comforting words and the way you said them. Listen to me say them to you: ‘Mark, I love you. I’m here. It’s going to be ok. I’ll take care of you.’ It’s true son! I love you like that and so much more.”

### **When I observed a loving interaction:**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS:** While reviewing my day, I remembered watching a first-time mom and dad look at, hold, speak to, and show off their newborn baby. I wrote: “Father, thank you for Joe and Jill’s expressions of love for their new-born baby - so proud, so affectionate, so caring. Lord, the delight on their faces was priceless. They were so eager to share their delight in their baby with me.”

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** “Mark, if they felt that way, looked at, spoke to their baby that way, how much more is my delight in you, how much more are my words of, sounds of, looks of affection, words of pride, and expressions of care for you. See and listen to my heart for you through their looks and words right now. Oh, I love you that much and so, so, so much more beloved son!”

## The GOD SIGHTING EXERCISE

Now spend some time alone with the Lord to do this practice. Remember to focus not only on his or her (or your) words and actions (including bodily gestures and touch), but especially focus on emotions, tone of voice and facial expressions. **Please write your personalized “how much more” legibly on another piece of paper so someone else can read it to you.** There is a blank page at the end of the workbook if you need to use it.

### **HOW DID SOMEONE LOVE YOU?**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS: Reminder:** Generally, we thank God in two ways: (1) giving thanks for how the person expressed their love, and (2) giving thanks to God for loving us through them that way. In this way, we acknowledge the person loved us and that our Triune God “manifested” his love to us through that person as well (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Remember to focus not only on his or her words and actions (or yours), but especially focus on emotions, tone of voice and facial expressions.

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** Let God express his love to you through the experience using the content from the “thanks” you just wrote above. Begin with your name: “ \_\_\_\_\_, if they . . . (emotion, action, etc.), how much more do I (emotion, action, etc.) . . . for you.” [OR] “That was my love for you and so much more!” Please write legibly here or on another piece of paper.

## **2. HOW DID YOU LOVE SOMEONE?**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS:** Remember to focus not only on your words and actions, but especially focus on your emotions, tone of voice and facial expressions [as you can imagine them].

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** Let God express his love to you through the experience using the content from the “thanks” you just wrote above. Begin with your name: “\_\_\_\_\_, if you (your emotion, action, etc) . . . how much more do I (emotion, action, etc.) . . . for you.” Please write legibly here or on another piece of paper.

### **3. WHAT LOVING INTERACTION DID YOU OBSERVE?**

**REMEMBER WITH THANKS:** Remember to focus not only on his or her words and actions, but especially focus on emotions, tone of voice and facial expressions.

**PERSONALIZE with “How much more”:** Let God express his love to you through the experience using the content from the “thanks” you just wrote above. Begin with your name: “ \_\_\_\_\_, if they (love, care, feel for that person) . . . how much more is that my (love, care, emotion, etc.) . . . for you!” Please write legibly here or on another piece of paper

## Worship: What's Love Got To Do With It?

1. How is the word worship primarily understood today? The two primary words for worship – prokuneo (to bow down, reverence) and latreuo (priestly activities) don't refer to music.
2. 1 Peter 2 – “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”
3. Worshipers bring sacrifices. Priests offer them. We are temple, worshiper, and priest.
  - a. Romans 12:1 “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”
  - b. Hebrews 13:15-16 “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”
4. God also distributes gifts for us to share, to express his love:
  - a. 1 Corinthians 12:11 “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”
  - b. 1 Corinthians 14:26 “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.” [May experience his love! 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 “...but do not have love, I am nothing.”]
5. Jude called the gathering a “love feast” [Jude 1:12]. I think this is how we “spur one another on to love and good deeds” [Hebrews 10:23-24]. This is a way that we are trained.
6. We see and experience God up close and personal [1 John 4:12].
7. So many times these moments become prophecy through actions, revelations of God's loving knowledge and care for us.

## **A Summary of FIRST LOVED**

Experience God love you, up close and personal,  
as he loved the disciples through Jesus!

Many of us have had the experience of attending a service or a seminar in which our hearts were filled with a profound sense of God's presence and power. We left the meeting with a joy-filled, overflowing heart! These dramatic explosions of grace really happen from time to time. God is full of surprises. But miracles still seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Many of the stories Jesus told regarding our personal spiritual growth were farming stories. Jesus often communicated that the message of his kingdom is like seed. We grow in our walk with God as we approach life like farmers—planting, watering, weeding, and waiting day by day.

Jesus also gave a new command: "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." We have to experience God [Father, Son, and Spirit] love us first in order to love as he has loved us. **FIRST LOVED** is an invitation to begin pouring the water of God's love on our heart's soil, day by day, until we begin to feel and experience God's loving kindness toward us.

### **1. Invite God to speak to you personally from Scripture texts that provide timeless revelations of his heart. We call this the Love Verse Practice.**

**Sample**—[Zephaniah 3:17, NIV, 1984]: "The LORD your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

**Personalize & Memorize**—"*I am the LORD your God and I am with you. I am mighty to save you, (Your name). I take great delight in you. I will quiet you with My love and I rejoice over you (Your name), with singing.*"

**Vocalize and Meditate**—Speak this personalized Scripture text to yourself, right out loud with passion. Speak it again and again, until the words—like water—begin to soften your heart soil. Invite a friend to speak these personalized words over you. Don't stop meditating (*i.e.*, marinating your soul) until you *feel* God's heart toward you through the very words of Scripture. When time permits, write out the verse using synonyms and antonyms to help his truth penetrate deeper into your heart. And listen to the Spirit to give further words of encouragement.

**Synonym/Antonym Sample** —"(Your name), I am the LORD, Yahweh, your God. I am always with you [son/daughter]. I am never detached or distant. I am here as a warrior to fight for you and to deliver you through the pressures you're enduring. Do not for a moment allow yourself to think that I don't care about you. The truth is I adore you; I delight in the relationship we share. I am eager to console you with my love, my kindness, and my affection. In fact, as I listen to you, I celebrate your life and your faith in me with a mighty, exuberant shout!"

**Imitate** – Share the verse with someone else to pour God’s love into their hearts. Be led of the Spirit to share any additional words of comfort and encouragement.

**2. Keep your eyes and ears open for daily *God-Sightings*: loving human interactions that provide windows on God’s tender love for you. We call this the God-sighting practice.**

**Remember & Give Thanks** for the joy you feel as someone loves you, as you love someone else, or as you witness others showing love. We really do experience God’s presence and joy in the loving presence of other Christians (I Thessalonians 3:9).

**Personalize and vocalize your gratitude** by *hearing* God say to you, “If you [or If they] can give, express, demonstrate that kind of love on a human level, imagine **how much more** I, your Heavenly Father, love you that way! I really do love you that much and so much more!” (Matthew 6:26-30; 7:11; 10:29-31; 12:11-12).

**Meditate on these comparisons and illustrations** of God’s love for you. Write them down in your journal as God invited his OT people to write down his promises and instruction on their doorposts (Deuteronomy 6:6, 9).

**Imitate:** Whatever you’ve seen or heard, put it into practice (Philippians 4:9).

**3. Decide not to come to church (or any gathering of Christians) empty-handed, to come only to have a *private experience in a public setting*. Sing, give, speak and serve with your whole heart** (1 Corinthians 14:26; 1Peter 4:10-11). **Prepare your gifts in advance** of the gathering. Remember, when you bring your gifts, God also distributes other gifts of the Spirit [1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 11] so that when a group of Christians gather, each one giving more than he or she takes, Scripture describes this experience as *a love feast* (Jude 12). **Remind yourself that every gathering is an opportunity to be loved by God and to share his love with others.** Make your gathering experience—from where you sit to whom you greet, from what you give to how you serve—all about expressing and experiencing God’s love with one another.

**4. Finally, join a small group.**

We need to be in safe, committed relationships in order to process the barriers that may surface in us that may prevent us from receiving and sharing God’s love as well as to share our Love Verses and God-sightings with one another. We have all had many experiences of being “unloved” by life and people or being “unloving” to God, others or ourselves. Sharing and praying with others can help to heal and remove these barriers. **ENJOY!!**

[www.firstlovedministries.org](http://www.firstlovedministries.org)