

VIDEO-BASED
6-SESSION
STUDY JOURNAL



The Quest

AN EXCURSION TOWARD
INTIMACY WITH GOD

BETH MOORE

The Quest

AN EXCURSION TOWARD
INTIMACY WITH GOD

BETH MOORE

Published by LifeWay Press® • ©2017 Beth Moore

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to LifeWay Press®; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0152.

ISBN 978-1-4627-6660-4

Item 005796350

Dewey decimal classification: 248.843

Subject heading: CURIOSITY / DISCIPLESHIP / SPIRITUAL LIFE

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™ Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (HCSB) are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible® Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used with permission by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.lockman.org. Scripture quotations from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

To order additional copies of this resource, write LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234-0113; FAX order to 615.251.5933; call toll-free 800.458.2772; email orderentry@lifeway.com; order online at LifeWay.com; or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.

Printed in the United States of America.

Adult Ministry Publishing, LifeWay Church Resources,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0152

Contents

6	START HERE
8	ONE
44	TWO
84	THREE
124	FOUR
166	FIVE
208	SIX
210	LEADER GUIDE
218	ENDNOTES
219	QUESTIONS FOR YOUR QUEST

Dedication

To my Living Proof Live worship team -

Nia Allen, Alexis Cruz, Kevin Jones, Lici Flowers,
Julie Goss, Tammy Jensen, Albert Kiteck,
Kevin Perry, Stephen Proctor, Seth and Nirva Ready, Wes Willett,
and, of course, your incomparable leader,
Travis Cottrell, and his bride, Angela.

Come rain or shine, come hail or high-water, in hard times and in ease,
in sickness and in health, with kidney stones and poison ivy,
laryngitis and post-nasal drip,
in fellowship halls, sanctuaries, arenas, gyms, and locker rooms,
there you've been.

Year in, year out.

Faithful. Christlike.

Hilarious.

Mischievous.

Unreasonably gifted.

Some of the most memorable miles on my quest are accrued
walking, running, singing, strumming with you.

Good grief, I love you so much.

Beth



About the Author

BETH MOORE is a best-selling book and Bible study author and a dynamic teacher whose conferences take her across the globe. Beth lives in Houston, Texas, where she leads Living Proof Ministries with the purpose of encouraging and teaching women to know and love Jesus through the study of Scripture.

Beth and her husband, Keith, have two adult daughters and three delightful grandchildren. They are devoted to the local church and have the privilege of attending Bayou City Fellowship in Houston, Texas.

Beth's life is full of activity, but one commitment remains constant: counting all things but loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, the Lord (Phil. 3:8).



Go to [LifeWay.com/TheQuest](https://www.lifeway.com/TheQuest) for downloadable social media images to share what you're learning from this study with your friends.

The Quest

STARTS HERE

Hey, Fellow Traveler!

I'm so happy to have you on this quest. I'd love to tell you a little bit about what to expect because I'm excited about it and anxious to give you a glimpse. What you're holding in your hands is not an in-depth Bible study like the ones I've had the joy of writing on the patriarchs of Genesis, for example, and on books of the Bible like Daniel, Esther, James, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and 2 Timothy. *The Quest* is a temporary detour from my usual approach in order to focus entirely on one colossal goal: to offer an excursion packed with Scripture and set up specifically to increase an individual's intimacy with God.

You'll be invited to multiple settings in Scripture, spotlighting conversations that can readily kindle your own dialogue with God. How can we mortals dialogue with an unseen God? When He speaks to us through His Word, we can learn to speak back. This practice transforms Bible reading into what God wants most: reading that generates relationship. Even the simplest form of dialogue can make a world of difference. "Lord, this verse is confusing to me," or "Please keep me focused in my Bible reading, God," or "Jesus, open my mind to understand the Scriptures just as You did for Your first disciples" (Luke 24:45). As you

practice voicing your inward response, you're continually reminded that Bible reading doesn't occur in a vacuum. You are in the actual presence of the One who inspired every word onto the sacred page. When relating with God becomes an integral part of reading His Word, boredom moves off the table and dining takes its place.

Because nothing creates dialogue like a question, the Scripture segments you'll encounter each day include or incite an inquiry of some kind. Often, after viewing the question in its context, you'll get an opportunity to consider your own answer. When the inquiry is addressed to God and



it's one you have wished you could ask, you'll also get to see eye-opening evidence that He is rarely offended by earnest questions.

This quest is about you and God. My role each day will be twofold: to set the compass and to spark the query. The compass is meant to send you a direction in God's Word that stimulates dialogue through the query. I'll engage with you in the compass section, but once you get to the query I'll drop out, and it's entirely between you and your God. There's a familiar name for what you'll be doing in the query: *praying*. My deepest hope is that someone who has struggled with prayer for years will discover how captivating, satisfying, and fruit-bearing it is.

The most frequent request I've received from women of all ages over the last two years is for help in developing a prayer life that would keep them awake and engaged with Christ and effective in Him. This series is a response to that request. It will fall woefully short of a definitive word on prayer because prayer is not a discipline we can master. I deeply hope *The Quest* will, however, kindle embers into flames and take each person one step further into the realization that all the frills and thrills on earth cannot compare to time spent with Jesus. He truly is life.

To get the very most out of this series, combine this workbook with the video sessions we taped to coincide

with it. I taught the introduction (Session One) and conclusion (Session Six) in a group atmosphere much like I've done in earlier studies. However, I purposely went off road for Sessions Two, Three, Four, and Five, making them much briefer and more intimate. Ideally you'll get a chance to view all six, but if you can only watch one please prioritize the introduction. I lay out the concept far more comprehensibly in that session than I can do in this written introduction, and it will give you optimum traction to begin your journey. It's also fun, and I'm not opposed to fun. I hope you're not either. It makes life a little easier.

You will never know what it means to me to walk next to you in your journey of faith for a season. I do not take this privilege lightly. Such grace of God is unfathomable to me. He used His Word to completely transform my life and rewire my mind so I never tire of trying to talk people into Bible study. I have no greater passion than to see people come to love God lavishly because they came to know and trust Him through His incomparable Word. I pray Jesus meets you on every page.

WITH ESTEEM & AFFECTION,

Beth Moore



One



The high hopes of the excursion
before us are these:

- To _____ enough _____ to invigorate a _____
_____.
- To _____ each _____ into _____
_____.

quest \ 'kwɛst \ noun

1. A: a jury of inquest

B: investigation

2. an act or instance of seeking:

A: _____, _____

B: a _____ enterprise in _____
_____ usually involving
_____ ¹

Distinctions that help shape the concept of quest:

1. A quest is _____.

jour•ney \jer-nē\ noun

an act or instance of _____ from _____
_____ : _____ ²

2. A quest carries _____ of _____.

3. A _____ is no _____ without _____.



Read Genesis 3:8-11, John 1:38, Matthew 8:26, and Luke 11:13.

A proposal of five _____:

1. _____? (Genesis 3:9)
2. _____? (Genesis 3:11)
3. _____? (John 1:38)
4. _____? (Matthew 8:26)
5. _____? (Luke 11:13)

Read Matthew 7:7-8.

_____.

_____.

_____.

4. A _____ on a quest is _____.





1.1

The miles ahead of you on this excursion will take the shape of curves, straight lines, gaps, and points. Were you to trace each of those shapes with your finger in order—curve, straight line, gap, point—you'd create a map with pathways carved out of question marks. In the context of this excursion, that's how you'll know you're on the right track. Your journey begins where the assumption ends that questions mean you're on the wrong track. To make this trip, you will need to be willing at times to face gaps from the teetering edge of what appear to be cliffs or, worse yet, dead ends. You'll be challenged to embrace the fact that squinting toward indefinable silhouettes in the distant horizon can still qualify as vision through the eyes of faith.

In every generation of Christians, the authority of the Scriptures gets questioned, but the paradox is that all those questions heaped in one pile would look like a molehill next to the mountain of questions within the Bible. Since neither the ancient Hebrew of the Old Testament nor the Koine Greek of the New Testament included punctuation, we don't have the luxury of dogmatism concerning the exact number of questions. Something about it escaping our certainty seems fitting, doesn't it? Scholars estimate, however, that the Bible is home to somewhere around thirty-three hundred inquiries depending upon the translation. Here's the particularly impressive part: each of them is scrupulously God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). Premeditated. Author J. L. Hancock took on the burly task of meticulously locating and listing every question from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 in the King James Version tallying an astonishing sum of 3,298.¹

The queries are multifarious. Hundreds of questions are exchanged laterally between humans, as you would expect. But you'd also find a smattering of brow-raising inquiries between humans and animals, humans and angels, humans and demons, between God and Satan, and between Jesus and demons. The road ahead will wind around a handful of those, but the ones that will most profoundly shape our landscape will be vertical: questions man asks of God and those God asks of man. The number of those kinds of questions is staggering and beyond the mileage of this six-week excursion. However, I pray and believe the ones on this map will be enough to drive a willing traveler to behold the divine quest.

One monumental difference between traveling on foot and riding on wheels is how much you can pack. The miles ahead of us will accrue on the soles of our feet, so a wise traveler will lighten the load from the start. Do yourself a huge favor by throwing off the hindrance of overfamiliarity. If you've been in enough Christian circles, studies, services, and events to accumulate it, shed it like a snakeskin, or it will insulate you from feeling the elements. The elements are crucial to this trip. You don't want a windshield on a walk with God unless it's God Himself. You need to be able to brook the heat and the icy cold, or the prospect of extreme elements will continue to intimidate you. Nobody savors a spring breeze like the one with a face chapped by winter winds. Developing overfamiliarity with Christian terms and practices isn't hard to do, but a vital distinction must here be drawn: It's impossible to become overfamiliar with God. Mastering God is an oxymoron at its highest for "His greatness no one can fathom" (Ps. 145:3, NIV). Forsake the stale rut of tidy definitions and get out there where the dust flies.

**It's impossible
to become
overfamiliar
with God.**

The metaphors of walking and running in reference to a mortal's relationship with God are consistently brush-stroked on pages of both testaments. Fascinatingly, the human isn't the only one doing the walking in the metaphor. Glance at each of the following verses and record who is described as walking and, if specified, where or with whom.

- Genesis 3:8 _____
- Genesis 5:22-24 _____
- Genesis 6:9 _____
- Leviticus 26:12 _____
- 2 Corinthians 6:16 _____

It's a walk we're on here. So imagine being on an extended backpacking trip with someone where ground rules were set for complete freedom of conversation as long as no one asked any questions. Talk your tongues dry but no inquiries allowed. Not even a basic, "How are you feeling?," or "You getting hungry?" An interchange of statements would go well enough for a while, but, sooner or later, you'd no longer be talking with one another. You'd simply be listening to one another. That's not dialogue. That's diatribe. After enough diatribe, even the best listeners stop listening.

Unless routine has lulled us into sleepwalking, to walk with God is to be on a quest. And a quest is no quest without questions. The component of mutual inquiry is nowhere more fascinating than in a relationship with God. For starters, He doesn't answer us aloud or write across the sky like we wish He would when we ask Him a question. He has, however, written across the scroll more answers than we can absorb in a lifetime.

Turn the tables on the conversation for a moment and consider the peculiarity of God in the role of inquirer. Document specifics about God's knowledge based on these verses:

- Psalm 33:13-15 _____
- Psalm 147:4 _____
- Matthew 10:29-30 _____
- 1 John 3:20 _____

Why man would have questions for God is obvious. We want to know what we don't know. We want things explained that aren't. But why does God ask questions of man when He already knows the answers? List every reason you can imagine.

In the opening video session, we established five divine questions that, dare we answer, have the potential to recalibrate and reignite a walk with God that has gotten off track, stuck in a cul-de-sac, or has lost steam or our interest. Start today memorizing these questions. Get them so far down in the quick of your brain that you could list them in your dreams. The first two are asked by God the Father, and the last three are asked by Jesus the Son. Some are abbreviated for easy memorization.

"WHERE are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

"WHO told you that?" (Genesis 3:11)

"WHAT are you seeking?" (John 1:38)

"WHY are you afraid?" (Matthew 8:26)

"HOW much more ... ?" (Luke 11:13)*

Circle each word that appears in all caps. Though you will encounter numerous other inquiries on the road ahead, answering these five will establish a baseline you can look back on for reflection and evaluation at the end of this trek.

Your first five days will be preoccupied with these five questions. Here's the thing. The effects of this excursion will not exceed your honesty. They will go exactly as deep as you are true. Nothing is off limits in the next six weeks except dishonesty. It will break the ankles of your walk with God.

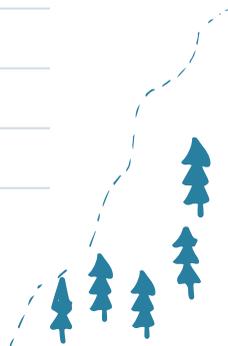
God already knows your heart anyway. He can already read your thoughts. And when you're finished with the study, you can shred this journal if you want or burn it into ashes, but between now and then, it's the real you with the real Master of the universe. You see, what I'm proposing is this: There's something you want more than answers. You want revelation. You were made for it. So was I. Remember when I asked you earlier why on earth God would ask man questions when He already knows the answers? Perhaps He will one day offer dozens of explanations, but over and over Scripture suggests this: God, our Maker, Savior, Redeemer, and King, wants interaction with His prized creation even in all our flaws and frailties and doubts and failures. And not just interaction. He wants engagement. And not just engagement. He wants intimacy.

With you. Not who you wish you were or act like you are in front of spectators. You.

**CSB, KJV, NASB, and The Message conclude Luke 11:13 with a question mark, while ESV, NIV, and NKJV use an exclamation mark for emphasis.*

Truth be told, maybe you wish you could ask God the same question: “Lord, where are You? Where have You been recently?” or “Where were You when ... ?” Perhaps you know the answer biblically and theologically. Your head knows the Scripture promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you, but your heart presently feels like He is nowhere to be found. You really can ask Him where He is or, if it pertains to a previous season, where He was. Read Jeremiah 2:1-13, and then Job 23:1-10. One scenario depicts distance from God caused by man’s idolatry. In the other, man was utterly innocent of blame. Let either or both of these prompt this section of your journaling to God.

Conclude your journaling today with Psalm 139:7-10, either borrowing the exact words of the psalmist or penning his expressions in your own words.





1.2

Among the six investigative questions, one stands in complete distinction from the rest, upright on the page and usually on two feet. Only one assumes an answer with a pulse. One alone obliges personage and, in the strictest sense of the word, *personality*. One alone is an intentional hand-off to an answer with opposable thumbs. Few other questions get more of our undivided attention, adoration, ire, and fascination than those that begin with the word *who*.

Leave the question *who?* out of the equation and you may still have a quest of some sort, but it's a companionless hike on a desert island at the furthest pole from intimacy with God. It's like going it alone with a canteen of saltwater when we've been offered the company of One who can turn water into wine. Intimacy is cast in complete dependency and remarkable transparency on the question *who?* In the divine quest, intimacy is most often born in what seems from a human perspective so subtle a shift that it's rarely memorable. Somewhere along the way those coming to know God veer in their inquiry from, "Who is the Lord?" to "Who are You, Lord?" That which was sought about Him begins to be sought from Him. In spiritual terms the shift is tectonic and sufficient to rattle the gates of hell.

Authentic intimacy requires the quest for both identities. In terms of intimacy with God, the oceanic question "Who are You, Lord?" writes another in the wet sand of its high tide: "Who am I, Lord?" To hold to the mentality that the second question has no place at all can be noble in its humble intent, but it is not biblical. God expended wells of ink on the parchments of Scripture to answer a question that, while it may be a distant second, it is second nonetheless. That He often uses the second question—who am I?—to bring people to the first—who is God?—is a testimony to His sheer mercy and patience. In that self-centric order, however, the question of who we are must be wholly reconsidered once we begin grasping truth about who He is. Who we believe God to be does not change Him one whit, but our identities and destinies hinge all their hopes upon

it. The little we believe He can do does not make Him one ounce less able, but it makes us woefully incompetent.

These two questions—who are You, Lord? and who am I?—are imperative in the divine quest toward intimacy with God. But they are by no means the only *who?* inquiries weaving their way into our walk. *Who are others? Who is my neighbor? My friend? My authority? Who are my fellow sojourners?* And, crucially, *who is my enemy?* Identity questions reveal undistorted answers beneath the towering limelight of the Bible’s overarching Q&A: Who is like the Lord? Nobody.

Take a good look at Deuteronomy 33. What does the chapter contain?

Our heritage of faith treasured up in the Old Testament is a bank account of riches impossible to overdraw in a lifetime of study. We have the privilege of living on the completed side of the redemptive work of Jesus, the Lamb of God, foreshadowed by every Old Testament sacrifice. When we place our faith in Jesus, we go under the new covenant rather than the old covenant of ancient Israel. The church, the collective body of Jesus followers, is not synonymous with Old Testament Israel, but we share certain eloquent commonalities as the people of God. Blessings, for instance. While Deuteronomy 33 showcases twelve tribes of Israel with separate pieces of the prophetic pie, by Christ’s grace we inherit “every spiritual blessing in the heavens” (Eph. 1:3).

With potential similarities in mind, read the prologue and epilogue in Deuteronomy 33:1-5,26-29, bookending the blessings of the twelve tribes. (Jeshurun is a poetic name for Israel meaning “upright” or “straight.”²)

Perhaps no concept is more familiar to us than the one expressed in the first few words of Deuteronomy 33:3. However, there’s also no concept more beautiful or transforming to those who believe it. Write the first portion of Deuteronomy 33:3.

These two questions—who are You, Lord? and who am I?—are imperative in the *divine quest* toward Intimacy with God.

What imagery does Deuteronomy 33:26-27 paint of the otherness of God?

Compare Deuteronomy 33:26 and 33:29. What stunning common characteristic is intimated?

Let this sink in from the surface of your belief system down to the roots: because there is no one like our God, there is no one like His people. This is true under both covenants. The Old Testament Israelites were naturally born into the family of God while we are reborn into it by the Spirit (John 1:11-13; 3:3). Neither birthright was about superiority. Both were about salvation. Both were dependent on grace.

Note the concept in Deuteronomy 33:29. "How happy you are, Israel! Who is like you, a people _____?"

In her fascinating book *Grit: the Power of Passion and Perseverance*, author and psychologist Angela Duckworth shares her findings from years of research on the secrets of outstanding achievement.

"Identity influences every aspect of our character, but it has special relevance to grit. Often, the critical gritty-or-not decisions we make—to get up one more time; to stick it out through this miserable, exhausting summer; to run five miles with our teammates when on our own we might only run three—are a matter of identity more than anything else. Often, our passion and perseverance do not spring from a cold, calculating analysis of the costs and benefits of alternatives. Rather, the source of our strength is the person we know ourselves to be."

ANGELA DUCKWORTH³

For people of faith, our source of strength is far more impressive. It's who we know God to be. However, if we never connect His identity with ours, the pipeline built by the cross connecting us to divine power stays mostly clogged by unbelief.

OK, now let's take a different turn with the question *who*? Throughout this opening week, you are familiarizing yourself with five recalibrating questions which I've proposed, if earnestly answered, have the capability to land you back



on track in your journey with God no matter what got you off course or put you on pause. Your query on Day One circled around the first question.

Record it here.

Record the four words to the second question.

You are staring in the face of one of the most powerful and provocative questions ever posed to a mortal.

Go back to its original context and read Genesis 3:1-13. Trace the answer to the question "Who told you that?" to find the question's original source. Who told them something deceptive that led to sin?

Who you increasingly believe God to be and, in His light, believe yourself to be is not only fundamental to intimacy, it is fundamental to victory. Reread Deuteronomy 33:29 and you'll see the cords of victory and identity firmly tied together. Only because of the shield and sword of their God would they tread upon the backs of their enemies.

The similarities for New Testament believers in Ephesians 6:10-17 are gorgeous. Tie them together here:

Every defeat of a child of God in battle can be accounted to one of two causes: 1) what we have not yet learned or 2) how we have been deceived. Our victories and defeats are driven by our beliefs. So is the depth of our intimacy with God. Every time we choose sin, we are acting on a lie that usually goes like this: The world is a giver and God is a taker. The Bible is our sure footing for what is true about God, about ourselves, our pasts, our futures, about others, about our enemies, about this world and the next. To walk in truth as a child of God and be able to spot a well-spun lie buffed to a shine by the serpent, start quizzing your beliefs with this test: *Who told you that?* God equipped the body of Christ with pastors, shepherds, and teachers. They are gifts to us and we're meant to flourish



under their instruction. However, they are dependable to the degree that what they say lines up with what God says. A sample interview to clarify the point:

Who are you now that you've come to Christ? I'm a new creation.

Who told you that? My pastor.

Who told him that? God, I think.

Excellent. Where did God tell him that? 2 Corinthians 5:17.

We obviously don't learn our identities from pastors and teachers alone. Our identities are also shaped by parents, siblings, peers, coaches, law enforcement, schools, experiences, environments, and fears. Another sample interview:

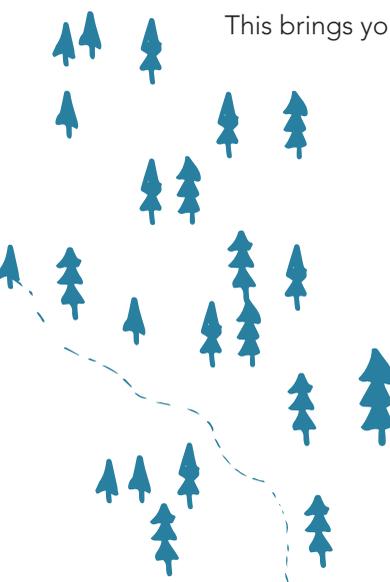
Tell me a few things about yourself. Well, I'm stupid. I have the worst luck. I'm fat. Sloppy. I'm terrible with money. Homely. I'm unlovable. Plain. I don't have any common sense. I'm a failure.

Who told you that? My mom.

Or was it your ex? Your classmates? Your lay-off? Your loss? Your illness? Your own self-talk?

To walk in truth with healthy bones, every "Who told you that?" needs tracing back to God in Scripture, and, if it's incongruent, it needs tossing. Adam and Eve fell for a lie and lassoed humanity back to dust with them. Their defeat was swift and severe and all for the sake of a false identity. Deception is always a thief.

This brings you to your query. All dialogue now shifts to you and God.





Each verse below expresses at least one dimension of God's complete otherness. In the space provided, profess to God what sets Him apart.



Exodus 15:11

Deuteronomy 3:24

1 Kings 8:23

Psalm 89:6-8

Isaiah 45:18

Isaiah 45:21

A large grid of small dots for writing, consisting of 10 rows and 20 columns.

Maybe you've studied Scripture enough to know who you really are and what that means. But it may be that what abides on the surface of the page differs from what broods deep down within you—shaping and forming your perceptions, perspectives, and attitudes and propelling your decisions, actions, and relationships. No shame. Truth liberates. Dig past the talk way down into the depths of your core beliefs.



What do you truly believe about yourself? In the left-hand column express to God five beliefs that most impact your quality of life whether negatively or positively.

Offer an answer to God as accurately as you can for each item. May God use this twenty-five-day quest to replace any lie in those core beliefs with the truth.

GOD, I EARNESTLY SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT...	WHO TOLD YOU THAT?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Conclude by completing this sentence.

LORD, NOBODY BUT YOU ...



1.3

When I was a child swaddled in a church pew by the squirming bodies of my siblings, I'd lean forward during the hymns to spy on my grandmother and her friends. Their whole culture fascinated me. They had a certain formality about them, all widows, referring to one another as Mrs. So-and-So. Casual didn't come easy wearing pillbox hats and nylon stockings. But it was the way my grandmother cried during the singing that caught my maiden eyes. Having taken half the first stanza just to stand to their worn feet, they all held their hymnals wide open without giving them a single glance. Didn't need to. They knew the words by heart and lived the words by faith. *What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.*⁴

My grandmother's voice quavered as tears rolled down her cheeks, making their way in a wrinkled wilderness of pink rouge. Of course, I know now why she cried during the hymns, because I'm often her these days, all the way to my aging hands. The same phenomenon happens to me during worship at church when we do congregational Scripture reading from the screens. I often choke back tears because these confessions—both sung and read—become as dear to us over the tests of time as the air in our lungs.

The power of Scripture. The life in it. The breath of it. The mystery of it. Utterable words on human tongues proclaiming the Immortal Invisible whose voice is described at times like thunder. Pray with me as we open the Scriptures today that He will give each of us eyes to increasingly behold His brilliance and beauty and give us hearts and minds to love and crave His words more than our next meal. These are holy things. Supernatural things that come not by practice alone but by crying out for them in prayer.

John 1:35-51 sketches the first scenes and inscribes the first words of Jesus found in John's Gospel. If your translation has a caption before the section beginning with verse 35, write it here.



List each question found in verses 35-51, noting who asked (inquirer), what was asked (inquiry), and to whom the question was directed (addressee).

INQUIRER

INQUIRY

ADDRESSEE

Let all that squiggly punctuation pave a road to our thematic point: questions can have a hearty place in dialogues between God and man. Matthew 7:7-8 becomes a bulldozer in the thick, thorny brush in this twenty-five-day quest. According to Christ, receiving most often comes to the ones asking and finding most often comes to the ones seeking.

Glance back at John 1:45 where you'll find the word *found* (or a form of the word) used twice. Record how it is used.

What similar statements are made in verses 39 and 46?

The disciples responded to Christ's "What are you seeking?" (ESV) with "Where are you staying?" We can't say for certain why they responded this way, but give it some thought and offer your supposition.

I find it so delightful, it's almost hard to take sitting down.

The NIV translates Jesus' question in verse 38 point-blank. "What do you want?" We don't know the inflection Jesus used in this question, but if He emphasized "you," it didn't likely carry the disparagement we often assign to it. After all, He wanted them to follow Him and later in the same Gospel would tell them they had not chosen Him, rather He had chosen them (John 15:16).

When was the last time someone besides a waiter or barista asked you what you wanted? Sometimes an answer to the question of what we desire is on the tip of our tongues. Other times, for the life of us, we can't seem to spit it out. Maybe we don't know what we really want. Perhaps at twenty we thought we did, but life came along and pummeled it to dust. On the other hand, sometimes we're caught off guard by the question or too intimidated by who's asking it for our immediate response to be our truest answer.

For those two disciples scuffling through the mud on Jordan's banks, no truer answer existed in so few words. In that one return question—Where are you staying?—they summed up a hundred answers. Here's a few:

What we want is to go with You. To be with You. To learn from You. Our teacher told us no one is like You and that You are the One we've been waiting for. The One he prepared us for. Wherever You're going is where we want to be. So, You ask us, "What are we seeking?" Rabbi, we are seeking You. What we want is YOU.

But here's the thing. It may be that we wish Jesus was our supreme desire, but, truth be told, sometimes He's not. And, if this quest is about anything at all, it's that truth be told. When God's immutable, unflappable truth is invited to invade our truthful estate, somebody notify the prison warden there's about to be a breakout.

Glance back at Christ's words to Nathanael in John 1:47. What did He say about him?

The ultimate wordsmith crafted a play on words. The patriarch Jacob's name meant *cheater, schemer, supplanter*, each of which requires a liar, and he more than qualified. God later changed Jacob's name to Israel, but more on that later in our quest. One commentator offered a more obvious wordplay of Christ's greeting to Nathanael: "an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob!"⁵

Our inner Jacob's got to go if we want to get where Jesus longs to lead us. We've viewed two of our five recalibrating questions: 1) Where are you? and 2) Who told you that? Our third question is the one Jesus asked in John 1:38: "What are you seeking?" He's unimpressed when we respond to Him with what we think He wants to hear. Imagine His play on words in sad reversal, "A Jacob in whom there is no Israel!" In other words, a schemer in whom there is no honest wrestling. Jesus is perfectly capable of handling our honesty. He knows when the real answer to the question, "What are you looking for?" is "trouble." Or money. Or security. Or sex. Or substance. Or human flesh and blood to fill a grand



canyon of emptiness. Sometimes the most powerful testimony can be, "I was looking for _____ and found Jesus."

The Samaritan woman in John 4 didn't come to the well wanting Jesus. She came wanting water, so He introduced her to living water. She wasn't rejected for wanting the wrong thing. Jesus used what she sought to bring her to what He knew deep down in her heart she thirsted for most: a Savior who could stop the madness, forgive her sins, and give her dignity. The Messiah who knew the real version of her story and wouldn't buy her savvy diversions.

**You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.
So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.**

JOHN 8:32,36

Likewise, Jesus was the last thing Saul thought he wanted when he ran into Him on the road to Damascus. He wasn't hunting for Jesus. He was hunting down Jesus' followers. You see, askers receive even if what they receive differs from what they asked. Seekers find even if what they find differs from what they sought. Doors open to the ones knocking even if an unexpected host turns the knob. At first blush, Jesus may sound like a Jacob: a supplanter who baits and switches. In reality, He sees beneath our temporal desires and foresees what we will have wanted most when we step across that finish line. Isaiah 46:10 captures a concept of titanic proportions in our quest: God knows the end from the

I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.

ISAIAH 46:10

beginning. Those seven words are game-changers in this Olympic race. They put trust in the breast of the quester.

God knows the underlying questions driving our quests. He formed the human soul to be more compelled by desire than need except in matters of survival. Need will only carry you until the pressure is off. It's want that will keep you running come rain or shine, sleet or snow. It's want that keeps your heart in the race. When God does

not give you the desire of your heart, give it time and trust and see if He ends up giving you something deeper: the heart of your desire. You may plead to have children, for example, and God may answer your prayers exactly the way you pictured. Then again, you may realize somewhere down the road that He gave you hundreds of sons and daughters in the faith as you poured out your heart for years in student ministries. He also knows when we've given up on desire altogether and we're trying to make a life out of nothing more than doing the right thing. Nothing makes you feel deader than the death of desire. If yours is dead, you're on the cusp of a resurrection and some holy desires that can thrill you without killing you and can delight you without derailing you.





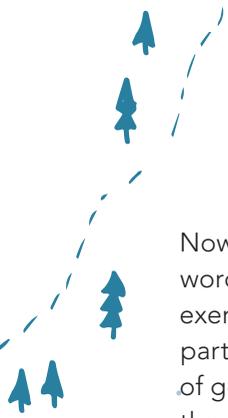
What desires stir deepest within you? What are your longings? Which of those have gone enduringly unfilled? Write to God and tell Him all you long for. What you crave. Tell Him what desires drive you. You may soon realize that God planted some of those desires in your heart with His own hands.

Tell God what you keep seeking in people. Thank Him if you've found some of what you were looking for. And, then, by wildly courageous faith, thank Him for the times you haven't.

Offer Jesus the space everybody else has left empty.

Now have the courage to ask Him to exhibit His preeminence in the full spaces. In your own words, request Christ's merciful, healthy presence to be Lord in your highly esteemed relationships so that no one becomes a false Christ to you. This is protection for both you and each person in whom you've found what you were looking for. Be thankful for them but don't be intoxicated by them. Every false Christ fails.





Now, it's your turn to ask God what He wants from you and for you in any wording you wish and in any situation most pertinent. This may seem like an exercise in futility since His voice won't likely thunder from heaven. But a crucial part of the quest is discovering the power, freedom, and stirred-up affection of getting to ask. You also stand to be amazed if He chooses to reveal some of those answers in coming days.

.....

.....

While Jesus has individual things He wants from and for you, you can eavesdrop on the wants He presented to His Father in John 17:24-26 regarding all who belong to Him.

Write those three verses in this space but personalize Christ's intercession by replacing "they" and "them" with your first name.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Read the words of Psalm 38:9 aloud to Jesus as you conclude. Meditate on them. Memorize them. Let this truth be a tent you can rest in as you continue your journey.

Lord, my every desire is known to You;
my sighing is not hidden from You.

PSALM 38:9, HCSB

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





1.4

The mysteries of the incarnation are vast enough to tie the tongues of teachers, bleach the ink of writers, and dry the paints of artists. To describe it beyond the language supplied by Scripture is to automatically agree to elementary terms. How, after all, does God become man? How does a Creator adapt to hammer and nails? How does the Self-Existent adjust to hunger and thirst? How does the Knower of hearts keep company with native liars? How does the infinite squeeze into finite flesh when we who have given birth can't squeeze into our old jeans? "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ" (Col. 2:9). How does He who neither sleeps nor slumbers deal with drowsiness?

The answer: with a nap. Lest we over-identify, the same winds that rocked the boat until the bow nearly broke rocked their Creator to sleep like they were chiming "Lullaby Baby."

Read Matthew 8:23-27.

If your imagination is not wet-faced with lake water, if it is not weak-kneed, white-knuckled, or seasick, you may need to go back and read the segment again. Knowing a story turns out well can have a terrible way of taming it.

Knowing a *story*
turns out well
can have a terrible
way of *taming* it.

"Suddenly, a violent storm arose on the sea," the 24th verse says, *"so that the boat was being swamped by the waves."*

Violent storm. The kind that can kill you. The kind that can bring professional sailors to the end of their ropes and capsize a virile man's boat like it's a little boy's toy. Wind so loud you can hardly hear what the person inches from you is yelling. Waves crashing over the side, making a pool of the hull. The boat tilts severely to the left. Your feet come out from under you. Your shoulder slams into the stern. You make your way to your knees, but your drenched clothes weigh

you down like lead. Another wave. The wind punches the sails like the enormous fists of mythical gods, tossing you into your shipmates like a cosmic game of pick-up sticks.

And Jesus is sound asleep.

Matthew's choice of language interprets the storm as "an earthquake ... in the sea."⁶ Somehow we never think to expect the earth to quake in the sea. Note the full momentary rebellion of three terrestrial layers: earth, sea, and wind.

"Lord, save us! We're going to die!" One day they'd realize death has no power to un-save the saved, but it was not this day.

He
asked the
question
then
calmed
the sea.

Notice the peculiar order. Jesus didn't calm the sea first then ask the question. He asked the question then calmed the sea. The most baffling juxtaposition of their postures may be that He didn't bother to get up to ask the question. He asked it, then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea.

His question to the disciples is our fourth recalibrating inquiry. Record it here in the short form we established on Day One.

Part of changing our view of the landscape on the faith-quest is dealing with fears that threaten to paralyze us or roll us up on the roadside in the fetal position. Our fears may differ, but it's likely no one is afraid of nothing. We can even be afraid of being afraid. How scared we anticipate being can keep us from ever doing. However, in some strange ways fear's relentlessness can backfire. The realization that fear, if accommodated, would know no bounds can either push us down or push us into pushing back like a small kid punching a big bully in the gut. I know this subject intimately because nothing in my life has harassed me like fear. Had I let fear have what it wanted, I'd be curled up in a far corner behind a barricaded door. So, in many ways, by the power and call of God, I pushed back. I've come close to making a life out of doing what I'm scared of.

God's words to Cain in Genesis 4:7b have a familiar ring: "Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." Fear crouched at my door. Sin did, too, of course, but perhaps our first step to freedom is becoming cognizant of copious sins that stem from our fears. Fear's desire was for me. The word *welcome* on my doormat began to take on a question mark. What would I welcome in? What would I refuse? Fear crouches, ready to pounce. Will we let it eat us alive?

For God did not give us a spirit of fear.

Our fears often change as we grow up, but we're still afraid of the dark. Of the unknown. Of what lurks in the shadows. We're afraid of going to bed alone or sometimes afraid of who's crawling in bed with us. We're afraid we won't sleep or afraid we will with nightmares that seem real. We're afraid of realizing we're not asleep at all and what we hoped was a nightmare is real.

Fear is the consummate robber. One technical distinction between a thief and a robber is that a thief works by stealth and a robber works by threat. A pickpocket, for example, is a thief. At the time of the crime the victim is oblivious. A robber, on the other hand, confronts and threatens. He wields a weapon, be it literal or psychological. Sometimes the robber follows through on the threat. Other times he doesn't. But what he's banking on is the success of the threat. Likewise, fear. We keep thinking that what we're afraid of is all there is at stake. Meanwhile, fear is robbing us blind of our joy and drenching the fire of our callings.

Write 2 Timothy 1:6-7 in this space.

Fear is also a glutton. If we let it eat away at us, it will consume us entirely before it ever gets full. Trying to eliminate all our reasons for fear is an exhausting waste of energy. On the other hand, filling up the space it's vying for is sweet revenge.

Read the following passages and write your own summations of the relationship between fear and faith (also called belief).

Isaiah 7:4-9

Mark 4:40

Mark 5:36

Biblically speaking, fear and faith fight for the same space. Each is territorial. To illustrate the concept through metaphor, think in terms of your soul being a house and Fear and Faith are knocking at your door. Each desires to occupy expansive square footage in the house of your soul. How about some gloriously good news to those of us who have given much ground to fear? Any square foot or inch where Fear abides in your life is the precise ground Faith exists to occupy.



Fear and Faith cannot be roommates. They will not coexist. The one assigned authority automatically elbows the other off the space. Fear can't stand on a carpet of faith.

Shift the same concept from a house metaphor to that of a field. The same soil that has been fertile for fear is fertile for faith. If you can find your fear, you can always know where to send your faith. No, faith is not as easy to come by as fear, but it is colossally easier to live with. What faith costs you in tenacity, fear up-charges you in misery. Write a question mark at the end of the welcome on your doormat then decide what gets to come into your house.



As a follower of Christ, allow His question to His disciples in Matthew 8:26 to echo in your chest. "Why are you afraid?" Tell Him until the well of those fears—at least for now—runs dry.

With your own pen, ask Jesus to take every square inch where fear resides and replace it with faith.

God's most frequent exhortation to His people in Scripture is, by no coincidence, "do not be afraid." His wording may differ from verse to verse and translation to translation, but the urging to fearlessness is brilliantly consistent. The sheer frequency—clocking in at well over 350 times—conveys not only His gracious reassurance and bold insistence but also the divine affirmation that this terrestrial soil is fertile ground for fear. Translation: you don't have to imagine things to think this world is scary. It is scary. And being a follower of Jesus in a world increasingly



hostile to the gospel is also scary. In each verse below, God bids His follower to give no place to fear, but His reasons differ gorgeously in each selection. In the space provided, record His exact explanation why not to fear. Take them personally.

Joshua 1:9

Isaiah 41:10,13

Isaiah 43:1

Isaiah 44:8

Isaiah 54:4

Luke 12:32

John 14:27

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

.

To conclude, please write Psalm 23:4

as a confession of faith.

.

.

.

.

.

.



1.5

You will land today on the fifth recalibrating question. Many other inquiries lay in wait for you on this twenty-five-day pilgrimage, but these five unroll a wide scroll for journaling your starting point. Where? Who? What? Why? How? The inquirer in each question is God Himself, the only One in existence who knows all of the answers before He asks. Don't lose sight of the majesty of this mystery for a single moment. The Creator is the Searcher—the initiating Seeker—who does not seek in order to learn. Omniscience leaves no gaps to fill or caves to mine. The lens of our telescopic understanding is tantamount to looking at the Milky Way through a straw. However, this truth shines star-like in the vastness: God seeks, at least in part, for the pure pleasure of knowing those by whom He longs to be known. Simply put, the Revelator loves revelation.

Read Luke 11:5-13. How would you state the theme of this segment?

Do Christ's bold assurances in these verses stir up any questions in you? Ask them here. Freely express any confusion.

The HCSB makes the present verb tenses in the Greek obvious: "So I say to you, keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you" (v. 9).

Why all the emphasis on the keeping, do you think?

We're beating on these three drums—asking, searching, knocking—because they invite participants into the parade of faith instead of fostering distracted

spectators who stick to the sidewalk with gum on our shoes. The action verbs set an animated rhythm to our pilgrimage songs because they train us to expect something ahead. What our Maker knows, our mouths may find hard to admit: The human soul was fashioned to prize discovery above luxury.

Anyway, spirited pilgrimage songs are the best kind. It's hard to keep your heartbeat up in a dirge. Don't misunderstand. Lament has a crucial place on the journey, and you'll find the practice in these pages. But if the playlist over your life becomes an endless lament, your gaze will fix on your feet and evaporate your vision.

Look back at Luke 11. Verses 11, 12, and 13 each includes a pair of contrasts. List them here:

v. 11 _____

v. 12 _____

v. 13 _____

Fish and snakes are both cold and slick, but one is food and the other has fangs. A scorpion can roll itself into a ball, but it is a woefully far cry from an egg. What father worth his title would put a biting snake or stinging scorpion in the palm of his child? He loves his child and treats his child well, tenderhearted to his wants, impassioned to her pleas. An affectionate father longs to say yes. The absurdity that an infinitely gracious God would do less is illustrated almost cartoonishly through the evil parent who gives good gifts.

Our fifth recalibrating question is tucked right in the middle of verse 13. Write all five questions here and, when you come to the fifth, pen it in all capital letters. We've abbreviated it to three words.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____





In the first four questions, God holds the lantern for the mortal to search himself in relationship to God: Where are _____? Who told _____ that? What are _____ seeking? Why are _____ afraid? In radiant contrast, the question *how much more* will always take the gaze of the truth finder out of the murky deep of self-focus to the horizon where the sunrise spray-paints the sky.

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give ... ?

LUKE 11:13a

Christ gives away the answer through the rhetoric of the question:

How much more?

So much more.

That three-word question and answer always unleashes an overflow of hope. It will never be the herald of bad news.

A comparison between Luke's wording and Matthew's wording in this slice of Christ's teaching is fascinating. Read Matthew 7:7-11. You'll see an additional contrasting pair in Matthew 7:9. List it here:

Record the difference between Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13.

What do you make of that?

According to early church fathers Jerome (circa AD 400) and Eusebius (circa AD 300), Luke was from Antioch.⁷ A long-time traveling companion to the apostle Paul, Luke is assumed to have been a Gentile, probably Greek, since Paul did not list him among those "of the circumcision" who were his fellow workers (Col. 4:10-11). That Luke was a physician is particularly striking (Col. 4:14). The timing of his arrival in Paul's missionary journey may well suggest he

originally joined him to provide medical assistance. The third Gospel was not Luke's only contribution to the canon. He also wrote the Book of Acts.

Peruse Acts 1:1–2:18, and count the number of times Luke mentioned the Holy Spirit.

By the closing words of the Book of Acts, Luke had referenced the Holy Spirit more than fifty-five times. How does Acts 10:45 hold particular significance?

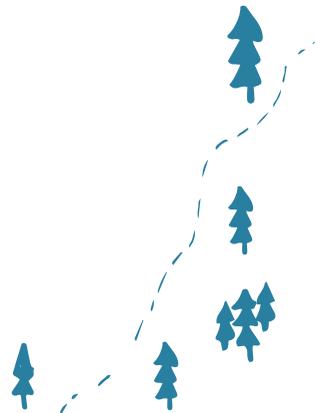
After all Luke had seen, heard, and experienced, no wonder under the inspiration of God his Gospel reads, "how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (Luke 11:13). He knew with every scrap of his being that there was no gift on earth like the Holy Spirit. Imagine a doctor who'd built a career from systematized knowledge of scientific methods standing back and watching the Holy Spirit defy explanation and laws of nature. Luke was no gullible fool. He was adept at testing effects to determine causes. He'd seen innumerable manifestations of the Spirit through word, healing, and deed and had been employed by God to inscribe permanent records of miraculous encounters and escapades brought on by the selfsame Spirit. A second century prologue to the Gospel of Luke provided this epitaph for the good doctor: "He served the Lord without distraction, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of 84 he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit."⁸ How perfectly fitting.

Remember, God is a giver. In the riveting words of Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (ESV). We could testify to temporal gifts God has given us until our voices are hoarse, but the sum of them pales in comparison to the supreme gift of Christ's own Spirit. In this one present, we spend a lifetime unwrapping endless others: His comforts, His joys, His appointments, His empowerments, His directions, His affections. To these there is no end.

In the words of Christ to the Samaritan woman,

**"if you only knew the gift God has for you
... you would ask me ..."**

JOHN 4:10, NLT





Read Exodus 35:30-35 and recount to God the kind of unction He gave through His Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 9:31 and be bold enough to ask Him to multiply the church similarly today.

Return to Luke 11:13 in conclusion. Note the one glorious condition to receiving the "how much more" God is willing to give of the Holy Spirit: ASK. Hear His words fall upon your ears like they fell upon those of the Samaritan woman. "If you only knew the gift God has for you ... you would ask Me ..." (John 4:10, NLT). Ask Him, Beloved. And tell Him why you want Him and where you need Him.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
2 CORINTHIANS 13:13



ASSESS YOUR QUEST

Take a moment and reflect on your quest so far. Look back over each day of study and journal a brief note about what spoke to you, what you learned, and what course corrections you need to make. Then, spend a moment in prayer, writing from your heart to the Lord as you move forward on this quest.

DAY 1

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 2

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 3

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 4

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

DAY 5

Truths I encountered:

What I learned about myself and Jesus:

Course corrections I need to make:

Lord, as I move forward ...
