

Hi friend. I am so thrilled that you've chosen to work through this bible study. For you to join me here each week means something so amazing for your life as you long for even greater intimacy with our God. True intimacy with God is something that has been the desire of many hearts since the creation of the world. It's what followers of Christ long to experience more than anything else in their lifetime and that's a true, close, growing intimate relationship with the Lord. However, true intimacy goes so much deeper than just our feelings. True intimacy begins in our souls and is ultimately observed by the watching world in our behaviors and actions.

But how does real intimacy with God actually begin? One of the first verses that comes to mind when I think of intimacy is James 4:8 that says, "*Come near to God and he will come near to you.*" Just those two words, *come near*, implies more than a *desire* for intimacy with God, but it is speaking of a *decision* in our saying yes to His will for our life. To come near is an active decision in *saying* yes to righteous living; in *saying* yes to trusting and obeying Him, no matter the cost.

As I've been reading about living in intimacy with God, I found these words \*online and thought I'd share them. As you read them, take the time to look up the verses that are in parenthesis. And as you read, hold a pen in your hand, and when you come to a word, or a word phrase or even an entire sentence, underline it if it seems to capture your attention. Don't be afraid to mark up the pages of this study. Underline, circle, put stars around, highlight, whatever you choose to do to interact with what you read is encouraged.

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*Jesus is, in fact, the model of intimacy with God because He and the Father are one (John 10:30), and no relationship can be closer than that oneness with the Father that Jesus experienced. His relationship with the Father was characterized by love and obedience. In love, Jesus came to earth to do His Father's will. He did nothing on His own, but in all things did the will of His Father (John 5:30). This was most evident in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. Suffering the agony of anticipating what was to come, Jesus asked that the fate He was about to suffer might be removed from Him, but He ended the plea by saying, "Yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Here we see a perfect example of true intimacy reflected in obedience as Jesus yielded His will to that of His Father.*

*If we hope to attain true intimacy with God, Jesus must be our model. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:10), and we prove our love for Him by obeying Him. Jesus told His followers, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). When we obey Him and keep what He has commanded, He promised that we will remain in His love, just as He remains in the love of the Father by doing the Father's will (John 15:10). There can only be intimacy with God when we are in good fellowship with Him through obedience. Then we can know the joy and peace that comes from trusting Him and yielding to His will, just as Jesus did.*

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The purpose of this bible study is simple - to build you up in your walk with the Lord as you desire greater intimacy with Him.

For you to receive all that God has for you these next several weeks, here are seven things I'd like to ask you to do:

**1) Before you begin into each week's lesson**, spend time first in confession and worship. Find a Psalm to read out loud to the Lord as an expression of how you are feeling. Thank Him for whatever may be on your heart. Praise Him for what He has done in your life recently, and worship Him for Who He is. Sing a hymn or a song of worship if you'd like, or take a moment to go outside or look out a window and allow time for your heart and your mind to draw near to God. Cleanse your heart through prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes so that you may see wonderful things in His Word. (*Psalm 118:19*). But each week's lesson is meant for you to walk through for the week, so please take your time. It's not written for you to "do" in one sitting. It's written to draw you closer to the heart of God and allow Him to set the pace of His grace as He reveals to you and speaks to you through His Word.

**2) When you come to a passage of Scripture**, read slowly, attentively and more than once. Enjoy the written word of God and become familiar with how God speaks. When you can, read more than the selected verses, read more of the full context because when you do the more you will begin to understand about God and about the relationship you have with Him.

**3) Every word of the Bible is meant for you.** So be sure to start into your reading with a clean heart. Be sure to not bring into your time of reading, what other people may have said or what you believe is there for you because it's what you've been taught in the past. Come clean and come open to His presence with you in that time of 'reading listening' in His Word.

**4) Be sure to mull and meditate over each word of Scripture.** We live full lives - full of busy to-do's, full of other noises and voices all day long, and full of our own thoughts. It can be a challenge to quiet all the ruckus and just think WITH God. But when we read and read again, and meditate on what we are reading and allow our minds time and space to ponder, we actually become more familiar with God's voice and that is where greater intimacy roots in our very lives.

**5) Did you know that God absolutely longs to talk with you?** He does. He desires dialogue with you that involves listening and talking. Has God brought into your life a challenge lately? Then tell Him how you feel, but stay aware to what He asks. If while you are reading in Scripture, you read something you aren't sure what it means, tell him that. Ask Him about those words in Scripture that you're not sure about. He is kind and delights in increasing your capacity for more of Him. As you pray, fill up your prayers with Scripture. And if you spend time with God and you are not saying a word, and you are not

hearing a word from Him, that's ok too, because you are learning that to draw near doesn't always mean active communication. It can simply mean resting in His presence, and that is as much communicating with God as vocalizing prayer.

**6) To read God's Word and to give undistracted thought to His Word and to pray God's Word is only the beginning to greater intimacy with God.** Most importantly, we're to take it in as part of our life and allow it to do what His Word is intended to do - we act on His Word. *"There will come a time when God takes you to the end of yourself then asks you to go further. He wants you to put yourself at His disposal, to go and do what He asks, even the impossible. When that time comes, you will need the Word He has seared on your heart to give you comfort and strength."* - Eugene Peterson

**7) Just you and God.** Those four words are to sum up your time in His Word. The bible study lessons are written to help you learn to listen to what God may want to say to you through the Word of God. I want to encourage you to write in the margins or on additional notebook paper what words or word phrases stand out to you **EACH DAY** in the Scriptures. Don't feel you need to force this. Simply read and read slowly and read more than once if time allows and let the Spirit surface a word or word phrase off the page to you. Write whatever that word or words are down in your binder. Let the Spirit guide your thoughts, and as you walk through each's day entry, be reflective. Think about what you've already read and what He has already shown you. Resist any attempt in reading from a strict scholarly stance; wanting to break it down doctrinally. Instead, this bible study is intended to draw you into the heart of God through reading, thinking, and praying with God in His Word. To enjoy the greater intimacy with Him that always comes as you seek Him through His Word and prayer, and as you enjoy *doing* what He says. Throughout the study, take time to look back at what you have written in the previous few days, talk with God about what you are noticing and any themes you are seeing.

In other words, this study is written to encourage you to seek to know God, not only know more about Him. But to *experience* Him more intimately.

It's my prayer that this bible study will serve as a spiritual marker in your life - a time when you grew in greater intimacy with God and are living that *abundant* life of a growing intimacy with Him that Jesus prayed you'd experience - *"A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance."* John 10:10

In Christ's Love,  
Lisa

After dropping my purse and work tote onto our laundry room bench, I made my way to our family room and plopped down on our sofa. Not in the middle, but on the far left side so I could nestle down in-between the arm of the sofa and the edge of the cushion. I literally sat there grabbing hold of the side arm of our sofa and I just let it all go. Tears streaming down my face, all I could do was sit there in the most completely exhausted state and pray to God only three words, but they were three of the most sincere words I'd prayed in a very long, long time.

Two weeks before praying that three word prayer, I had spent a couple of hours in my doctor's office undergoing several tests. I didn't know what was wrong, but all I did know was *something* was wrong. My doctor talked with me about some personal changes he wanted me to make and assured me that when the tests and blood work came back he would let me know 'what next.'

It was only little over a week later, when the phone rang and it was Dr. Wooley informing me that my test results had come back. I was ready for whatever he said because I was more ready for the treatment. I needed to feel better, so I'd already settled in my heart to do whatever he suggested was next to restore my health. The tests, he said, confirmed what he felt all my symptoms were stemming from - living an overworked, overstressed and overwrought life, plus being at the oh, so fun age for most women - in my 50's! My blood showed a real fall in estrogen, adrenal glands were in the red, and I had a thyroid condition called hypothyroidism along with high cholesterol. Hypothyroidism is when you have a low functioning thyroid, and that typically brings about feelings of fatigue, mood swings, weight gain, and it can even trigger mild depression. The fall of estrogen is because I'm 51 years and I'm praising my way through an unavoidable season of a woman's life - Perimenopause. And the high cholesterol was treatable with diet and exercise. Once Dr. Wooley broke it all down in how my body was sending me "time to slow it down and take care of yourself" signals, I listened.

One way I listened was I took it all — every bit of my feelings, my body malfunctions, my fatigue - all of it and plopped on my sofa that day. I was so tired. Tired of much more than the physical go go go I was living. Tired of more than all the physical conditions I was now treating with medication, diet and exercise. I was tired of a debilitating spiritual condition and I knew my heavenly Physician was using all the physical setbacks to get my attention. I sat on the edge of that sofa and cried out only three words,

"Here I am."

Here I am. In those three whispered words, I was presenting myself to my Father in total trust and abandonment. I was done. I was done with the pace of life that I felt I needed in order to be living the servant life. I was done with the work I'd set out to do, and for His glory mind you, that I had zero passion in doing. I was done with the constant thoughts I'd have from time to time that only surfaced sadness. I was tired in being someone I felt

certain people expected me to be, without having a clue who HE said that I was and most importantly, who I was *to Him*. I was physically whipped and felt like a spiritual wreck. So, I sat right there on that sofa and there's really no other way to say this but, I wanted to be found.

I wanted to be found.

But just as I was.

And I needed to know *from* Him that it was ok *for* Him to meet me ... there.

I wanted to be found out. If there was any offensive way in me, I wanted it brought to the forefront of my soul. If there was something I had been thinking that was creating acute disabilities in my use to His kingdom, I wanted my mind to be made new. If there was any area in my life that I had not confessed, I was ready right then and there to confess and repent. If there was a habit, an area of my life that wasn't lining up with His plans, or a desire in me that wasn't His best, then I was there to come clean, and I do mean clean. I wanted such a white-washing in the power of the Holy Word of God. But as I knelt my heart before Him, I can remember what it was that mattered more than any thing or any person ...

To be fully *seen by* and *surrendered to* my Father.

No secrets. No gaps between us. No distance. No pretending or masking. I wanted my Father to set His eyes on me (on *all* of me), and take over. Nothing else mattered than giving my entire self to His attention. As I cried out that three word plea of absolute total surrender, it was my body language that entered His throne room of prayer - as I found my way off the sofa and onto the carpet, weeping those words to Him over and over gain because as they were all I had to say in that moment, "*Here I am. Here I am.*"

I wanted nothing but Him. Nothing but wanting Him to take all of me. I didn't want anything else. Nothing else. No possession was arresting my heart in that moment, but only one Person - Jesus! Jesus having *all of me* was the only desire that whispered from my places of need and made its way out of my mouth, "*Here I am.*"

As I said that prayer of surrender, I had no idea that throughout the Old and New Testament, men of God used of God called by God and anointed by God also said those same three words right before a specific calling on their life. Those three words were also the beginning to an even greater intimacy with God for them, too. When I prayed those words, all I knew was those words summed up all I thought to say. But then as I've gotten on 'this side' of these past seven months, now I've learned that those same three words actually have strong meaning in Scripture. Those same three words are said by people whom God was drawing into a greater intimacy with Him, for a greater capacity of His Spirit in answering a call on their life.

Let's take a moment to go to our Bibles and read about a few of these people and notice where they were in life, what their circumstances were when they, too, said, "Here I am."

**Read Genesis 22:1-15** - In the space, write down what thoughts come to your mind. There are no right or wrong thoughts, so please feel the freedom to write what you're feeling, thinking, and maybe wondering as you read such an account of total surrender.

There is a powerful word in Hebrew that sums up three words in English. The word is Hineni (הִנְנִי), which means "Here I am!" But you've got to watch out how you say it, because it is a way of expressing total readiness to give oneself – it's an offer of total availability. But that's not the only way that word is used in Scripture. It also means, "look at me! See me! Turn your attention to me! Behold!" "Here I am" is used to call attention and to *answer a call*.

When Abraham said, "Here I am" all three times, he was saying the Hebrew word that fully communicated to God, *"Look! Here I am! See me! I'm here to ready to do whatever You instruct. I'm listening."*

**Read Genesis 31:10-21** - If you need to read the full context to understand more of what is happening, read Genesis 31:10-55. But in verse 11, we find the angel of the Lord calling to Jacob and Jacob's reply was the same Hebrew word - Hineni. Jacob responded to the calling of his name with one word, saying, "Look! Here I am! I'm right here ready to do whatever you instruct. I'm listening." Are these words you want to say to Him now? You can. Write them out if it's the longing of your heart. Just write out those three words and nothing else.

**Read Genesis 46:1-7** - Here we find a much older Jacob. He's fathered many sons, one who is in Egypt serving as Pharaoh's right hand man, Joseph. The Lord calls Jacob's name twice, as He did when we read Genesis 22:1-15, where He called out, "Abraham. Abraham," right before he was to plunge the knife into his only son.

Here in Genesis 46: 1-7, we find He calls out, “Jacob! Jacob!” Why is that? Why do we find in Scripture, the Lord God calling out a person’s name twice?

Repeating a person’s name is a Hebrew expression of *intimacy*. When God speaks to Abraham at Mount Moriah, as Issac lay bound on the altar, He says, “Abraham, Abraham.” Or when God encourages Jacob in his old age to take the trip to Egypt, He says, “Jacob, Jacob” (Genesis 22:11, 46:2).

**Read Exodus 3:1-15** - Moses had been shepherding sheep for forty years before God called to him from the burning bush. But because we see that God called his name twice, we know that during that 40 years, Moses grew intimately close with his God. What thoughts are you having so far as you’ve read these scriptures of God calling and the response is such a door to deeper intimacy with Him, “Here I am.”

**Now read 1 Samuel 3:1-10** - I can’t begin to tell you how much those words, “Speak, for your servant is listening” was the language of my entire soul this past January. I didn’t know at that time that Satan was going to be given permission to sift me as wheat, but all I did know was I had no thoughts of my own, no plans, nothing but wanting to listen to the Lord. I didn’t want to speak, because I honestly didn’t have anything to say other than, “Speak,....” Speak,....”. Have you ever been at that place in life? Write about it best you can.

Now, consider David’s cry of agony, “Absalom, Absalom,” in 2 Samuel 18:33, and Jesus’ cry of desolation on the cross in Matthew 27:46. When Jesus confronted Martha, when He warned Peter, and when He wept over Jerusalem—in each case we find the name repeated for intimacy’s sake. (Read Luke 10:41; 22:31; Matt. 23:37).

Write your name down twice, and say it out loud realizing that that is how your heavenly Father speaks your name.

And now, if you're ready, say back to Him with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength, "Here I am." If it helps, kneel before Him. Or maybe you want to go outside, find a quiet shade tree and say to Him, "Here I am," while enjoying being utterly alone in His presence with only the sounds of nature. Whatever place or position you choose is completely between you and God, but here's the most wonderful news I can tell you - you will be saying a three word prayer that *will* begin opening your life to such a greater intimacy with God as you surrender yourself completely to Him.

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Look back through all the verses you've read and in your binder tab titled, "My Scripture," please put the date at the top of the page and write out the verses that have been highlighted in your heart this week. If it's only 1 or if there have been several verses, either is perfectly good because you want honesty on that page. So write out the Scriptures that you know are for you *right now* in the season of life you are currently experiencing. And after you write them out, place a star or a smiley face or a cross or something out beside the verses that you have a sense of certainty that God is speaking to you in them. You may not know today what it is He is wanting for you through those verses, and that is totally ok. But if it is a verse that you keep going back to, (no matter what it is), then I'd like to ask you to read it daily. Each day this week, continue going back to those verses and reading them while listening for the Spirit's guidance. Read them with your heart, not just your mind. Let those verses marinate in your heart and mind this week and enjoy how the unfolding of their purpose will become clear to you.

I'm praying for you, and if you have any thoughts or questions please reach out to me or post them in comments below. I'd love to hear from you.

In the Grace and Peace of Christ,  
Lisa