

Volume 1, Day 1: WHY Would We Engage God?

It's been my passion to help people have their own deeply meaningful walk with God and know how to engage Him in deeply affectionate relationship. I still get occasional emails or letters from people that say, "I need something more of God. I want this! I'm convinced that it exists for me but I don't know how to connect with God in an intimately personal way."

Jesus died in order to grant you access to the Father so that you could have this conversation that God wants to have with you and begin to engage with Him in the relationship as He desires it. This is not as much about how you build a relationship with God. Rather, this is about how God wants to build one with you. These lessons are going to be encouragement for what you might do to help you engage that relationship and make it very personal and real.

The objective is that you engage God as simply and comfortably as you do your best friends, family and most significant others. Once you discover HOW you can connect intimately with God, you won't need to desperately search for His love any more. These are resources offered to help get you started. Feel free to reach out to me on the web pages of lifestream.org. The hope is it that you will experience this enormous love of God for yourself.

I had a young lady last year with whom I'd spent a weekend in a group discussing intimacy with God. In transit, just as we're approaching the airport, she says to me, "Wayne, you know what I'm thinking?" I asked, "What's that?" She said, "I'm thinking the reason this seems so difficult is because it's much simpler than we dare to believe."

Volume 1, Day 2: God Wants to Be at the Table

I think religion has made Christianity complicated. We think there is much we have to know, to do and to give up in order to make this relationship work. But God's been reaching out for a relationship with you since the day you were born. He's been calling your name, speaking into your heart. The relationship aspect of our faith got lost and twisted by the things that happen in the world we live in. And likely religion told us to perform **for** God rather than relating to Him. Yet the distinctive difference between all other religions and Christianity is that we insist that God desires relationship not bondages to creeds and doctrines.

Learn to relate to Him. Rather than gathering information about God, sit with others in a comfortable place exploring God's persona face to face. Relationship is all about togetherness. I hope that this message will help you start your journey into a deeply passionate love affair with God. You can encourage each other to pursue a genuine and deeply satisfying relationship with God. It's not about teaching. It's modeling a relationship which shows that intimacy with God is possible! It will catch fire.

This entire mutual mentoring program (two in partnership) is not curriculum you need to complete. I'm hoping somewhere in the process, your own time with God will become like a holiday dinner with family banter with God sitting at the table with the family. The good news is that, just as with our best human relationships, our relationship with God occurs at all times in all places. It is a heart connection that transcends time or distance. Relationship at its finest is saturation in affection for another which causes you to think of them frequently and with great pleasure.

Volume 1, Day 3: Breath and Fingerprints of God

Go to a place where you feel rested and peaceful. It might be a favorite chair, walking your dog, in a garden, or at the water's edge. It's not because God's there in a greater way. He's not. But we are more aware of God's presence with us. We see Him most clearly when our hearts aren't striving to learn or earn anything. This is about transformation, not gathering information. As you wake up each morning, ask Him to reveal Himself to you all day. Then keep your eyes, ears, heart and mind open throughout the day.

In a word, be **aware** of His affection for and presence with you. Notice what you hear. Look for His fingerprints on your experiences. This is when you'll begin to get familiar with Him. You'll see Him everywhere. This will endear Him to you. Your relationship will become relevant and genuine. The important thing is not the content of this program. It is that you engage God in your own life as naturally as breathing or loving another person!

As you ask Him to make Himself known to you, give Him enough time to do it. You can't rush courtship. Sometimes it takes weeks, months or even years for love connections to be realized. When you ask Him to do it and you consistently look for his fingerprints in your life, it will become as real as any human relationship you have. He has been trying to make Himself known by you. He does want you to know Him intimately and to feel a passion for Him.

Vol 1, Day 4: Why doesn't God do what I think He should

I received this email, "What does one do when you've lost all sense of God? I just don't get why history has played out like it has and God does not intervene. Even if He showed me, just to put me in my place, that would be better than His cold silence. Why doesn't He speak? And if He does, then why doesn't He make it obvious it's Him and not just in my head. Why does He make it so I have to believe in something that took place thousands of years ago or make it so I have to believe it by what I see in nature or relationships or other people's experiences? Why doesn't He do something obvious? And why does He seem to be so unfair?"

That's a lot of agony. We get the same thing in the Psalms. God, why are you ignoring us? Why do we plead our case with you? And it seems like the heavens are quiet and you don't do what we expect you to do." And if anybody's serious about engaging in a deeply intimate relationship with God, those are going to be the honest questions they have because we know life doesn't go the way we hope it would or think it should.

If God loves us and is involved in our life, then certainly He would make sure the painful things in our experience don't happen. Or so we might think. However, the reality is that God is making Himself known in a very selfish world. We each think that God should act in certain ways. But we fail to believe that He is wiser than us.

Even the leaders of God's defined religion, Judaism, wanted miraculous signs and sensibility to act in ways we see fit. Occasionally God does those kinds of incredible things. Jesus did myriad miracles. It is our own distrust that prevents us from seeing them. We think God should operate in our wisdom, which isn't all that great!

Volume 1, Day 5: God Isn't Majestic Enough for Me

How many times have you realized long after an event that God was there in it and had a good purpose for it. We mostly miss the obvious miracles because they are simply not majestic enough for us to see the miraculous in them. Further, God's expressions are simple and as quiet as the whispers of 'pillow talk.' He draws us into a relationship rather than impressing us with spectacular signs and wonders. And although we think we would finally be convinced by the grandest impressions, relationship is far more satisfying than miraculous or spectacular happenings.

God invites us to see beyond the misery, or in the misery how much He loves us. God wants us to dismiss the things we've been told about Him which are false or only partially true. God wants us to be in relationship with Him not in awe of Him. Most of all, God wants us to recognize that His purposes for us and for all mankind are different from our selfish, myopic purposes. Some things in my experience happen for the benefit of others and have no particular use in my own life. But then again, isn't relationship about bringing pleasure to another person?

So as you take this journey, suspend your wrong beliefs about all kinds of things. It might be best to just start fresh. Actually that is what repentance is. It is to '**change your mind**' about something. That is to say, it is to '**change what you believe about God, yourself and others.**' Just tell God, "I want to know who you really are, not what I have been told by others or general hearsay. Many of my expectations of You have resulted in my disappointment. I've been upset that You didn't fix this thing in my life or keep sickness from people I love. Help me to see how perfect you are in every relationship way. Let me **feel Your love** for me!"

Volume 1, Day 6: Feeling, Not Trying to Love

It is hard for many of us to overcome the idea that God is distant and cold and will not engage us in a way that causes His love to be felt and received. But I have received thousands of emails from people who have started out with wrong beliefs about God and yet came to find the reality of a deeply satisfying relationship with Him. So, purpose to let God show you His truth about everything. His Holy Spirit is in you for that expressed purpose.

Whenever you wake up each day, just say to God, "If You exist and if You are real, show Yourself to me?" Now, the hard part is this. You cannot have any expectations about what that might look like. God only shows Himself in His ways, not ours. Let God make Himself known to you however He wants to. And if you already believe He exists, but He just **feels distant** from you, then what you want to begin to believe is, "Maybe I've gone about this wrong. Maybe I'm looking in the wrong places." In this case, just say, "Okay, God, what's next? Would You show me Your love today?" These are just things you should explore if you're going to even have a desire to develop this kind of relationship with Him.

Relationship is not about **trying** to do anything. We simply give our hearts to another. In this case it is God. Unfortunately, we submit to Christian rituals and think that's going to make us love God. But unless and until you're convinced God is real and loves you without conditions, You cannot go any further. Only He can make Himself known. As with human relationships, you cannot force it or command it. Love is offered freely, without reservation or it is not offered at all. Let it play out naturally. Love is its own fertilizer. Love begets love. Just give God a nod that you will accept His offer of love and love Him back! You can't rush love. Love is its own rush!

Volume 1, Day 7: Feeling, Not Trying, to Love

You don't need to carve out some special time away from it all, some special quiet time somewhere. You can talk to Him, listen for Him or think about him when you're driving, taking a shower, eating or going for a walk. He just wants You to be up-close-and-personal with you. Just explore that. Let Him convince you. Let Him put His thoughts into your mind. Just go about your daily life with your focus on Him. Find or create quiet places at every point of decision to let God participate with you in them!

One acquaintance of mine told me that in order to increase his awareness of God's presence and love he set his smart phone to alarm every hour to remind him to think about God. In time, that man's soul was transformed into a very loving one! That's what a loving relationship with God can do for you! Look for a positive reason for every pain or trouble which might reveal to others the depth of your love for God.

Discipleship is about developing a relationship with God. In actuality, I think this is what discipleship really is. It's not you building a relationship with Him. It's recognizing how He's building one with you. That changes the scope of it entirely because now I'm not focused on what I'm doing. I'm focused on what He's doing and what brings Him pleasure, and that's when this works.

Discipleship is not learning what the Master does and always doing it. Discipleship is developing a heart that loves what the Master loves. When you love what He loves you will do what He would do in any situation. The best news about our Master, God, is that He not only does love, but also **God IS love's very essence**. Jesus told His disciples to **Love Like Jesus Loves**, with absolutely no reservation or conditions of acceptance.

Volume 1, Day 8: Religion Was Never Meant to Work

Religion was never meant to be the final answer. This relationship, Christianity, works very differently from the way we were taught to build it on our own. So the most important question at this point is how do you see God when you're thinking about Him or talking to Him or listening to Him? How do you picture Him in your own mind? Is He cold and distant so that you have no hope of getting to know Him? Is He stern and angry so you don't even want to know Him? Or is He so disappointed in you that you feel like you have to crawl out of a huge hole before God would even think of smiling at you?

How you think of Him is incredibly important to not just this journey, but everything in life. You won't enjoy a relationship with Him if you don't know Him as the Abba, that tender Father, whose lap you can crawl up into like a daddy or a grandpa. That's the image Jesus wants us to have. We're not to fear God. We are to be endeared to Him because He's endeared to us. "Perfect love casts out fear!"

Now, how do you get there? You must begin it in your own heart and mind. You must explore who God really is. He says of Himself, "God ***IS*** Love!" And how do you come to love Him? Look at your own experiences. But don't be informed by religion or poor father role models. If you do, then you will likely **not** think God is an endearing father. Also watch the lives of your friends who have found God to be very dear and very near and incredibly tender, compassionate and patient. He is actually **for** us, not against us. He's not trying to get you to imitate His life. He wants you to enter into a relationship with Him, which will then make you desire to do everything in your life God would want to accomplish.

Volume 1, Day 9: Willingly Dismiss Your Wrong Beliefs

Reread the scriptures themselves. But look at the Word of God through fresh eyes. Dismiss any other opinions about what you read and let the Holy Spirit in you understand what is written. Focus on the stories of Jesus. Jesus was the 'spitting image' of the nature of the Father. So when He comes to someone who's struggling or failing or hurting or in sin, notice how Jesus is treating them? Is He the angry taskmaster demanding their conformity and obedient behavior? Or is He that loving brother who found them where they were and began to invite them to a much better flavor of reality?

Until you intentionally search the Bible for a God who wants to be tender and compassionate with you, you will continue in your present, likely unpleasant, experience of life. Jesus showed us that God is extremely loving toward even the most unlovable people.

You must be willing to dismiss much of what you're so convinced might be true right now. If you've known God only to be distant, uncaring or not interested in being involved in your life, fortunately you have been sadly mistaken. And I stress **sadly**. Well, that's not who He is. So let go of that false view of God. He wants to help you learn to live this life. He's not demanding that you do it **for** Him. That's where this journey begins to take on meaning. Ask God to show you. God says that "If you seek Him, You will find Him." It's a guarantee. (Listen to transitions at the lifestream.org website.)

This is the relationship God wants with you more than you want it for yourself. When you come to realize that he **might** love you and actually **might** be on your side, then this relationship can and will take its course. He is the best lover in the Universe!

Volume 1, Day 10: Love Fully and You Will Behave Well

At some point in our journey we cease to be satisfied with just the taste of this thing. We actually want to go deeper to participate more fully in this life. Many of us have been taught that it's all about praying the sinner's prayer, being baptized, affirming a certain creed and then suddenly we're saved. That means we've got our get out of hell free card. But Jesus didn't talk about salvation as a get out of hell free card. Jesus talked about salvation as knowing the Father and knowing Himself. It's a genuine relationship we are invited into. My misunderstanding happens not only at the beginning, but every day of my life, no matter where I get confused, distraught, perplexed, upset, angry, even at God! If He is **not doing what I think He should**.

Where my relationship gets back on track is when I have that moment of just surrender to Him and I say, "Okay, God, not what I want, what You want! I want to follow your way. I want to know you intimately." I realize I can get pretty messed up and think some pretty wrong things. I have discovered that surrender is **not just the first day I got into this relationship**, but every day that I walk this journey. Surrender is what keeps opening for me greater opportunity to know him in a deeply personal way. That is why Jesus said, "If you want to come after Me, you must take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Me."

Isn't that like you do with your most significant other much of the time? What Jesus means is that we can't keep living life our own selfish way and ask God to bless it or ask God to invade it. Instead, we want to begin to live the way that pleases Him. And His **asks** let us know what He wants. And to be sure, it is not to behave well. It is to love fully the other person.

Volume 1, Day 11: Your MOST Significant Other

Most Significant Other relationships begin simply with the act of surrender, giving up our selfishness to be selflessly desirous to please the Other! God wants to be our Most Significant Other!

Peter talked about it on the day of Pentecost when 3000 people were surrounding him wanting to embrace this thing that they were all experiencing, this **new life in Christ**. Peter told them, “There are some things you must do. First, repent of your selfishness and sin (relationship crimes) and secondly, be baptized (visible expression of your commitment to faith in Jesus for salvation).

Let's consider repentance. **Repentance is not** groveling in our shame promising God we'll never do that awful thing again. In most things we've misunderstood repentance. **Repentance is** simply the word surrender in the context of who is sovereign over your life, you or God. I surrender my pleasure to God's pleasure. I **change my mind** about the way I've been living, and I want to learn to live in ways that please God. Again marriage is a prime example of how God wants to relate to me. And my verbal promise to correct my behavior is not a guarantee that I'm not going to do it again. I will sometimes act selfishly. I'm going to fail in my attempt to always do what pleases my lover.

This is a relationship journey you get to grow in. But you begin by simply telling God, “I'm tired of doing things my self-centered way. God, would you teach me to do things your way, abandoning my agenda and embracing Yours?” Once you commit to God, let God do all the work and provide all the revelation necessary to make you the finest lover of God that you can possibly be!

Volume 1, Day 12: Forgiveness: Past, Present, Future Sins

Peter talked about being baptized. I know that seems archaic to some today. We don't have baptism as a regular ritual in our culture like the Jews did back in His day. But for centuries, being baptized in water has been one of those things that provide the most convincing symbol that we want to die to an old lifestyle to begin in a new one. If you have not been baptized in the past, that is something you might consider. Baptism is a means by which I celebrate the changing of life from the way I've wanted to do it myself, to now I have found a God worth knowing and want to fulfill His desires for my life.

Peter preached those things so that you could embrace the forgiveness of sins. It is important, in order to take this journey to intimacy with God, that you know that in fact, every sin (relationship crime) that you have ever committed or ever will commit has been forgiven by God by faith in Christ as His Only Begotten Son. Now to be sure your sin was not summarily dismissed, Jesus paid the penalty for you. Forgiveness is "paying it forward" to Jesus. God paid your sins forward to Jesus and Jesus suffered the full penalty for you. This is God's way to provide justice both for the victims and the perpetrators and yet provide a way to restore right relationships between Himself and any of us!

Now that I have been **born again** (in spirit), He's going to have the **long suffering** (inexhaustible patience) with me as I struggle with sin in the future. Even those future sins were paid for by Jesus such that my sins are wiped out in Him and forgiven in advance. He died naked and shamed in order to pay not just for my guilt but also naked to bear my shame. I can let go of my shame and live fully loved by God.

Volume 1, Day 13: Feel God's Love in His Holy Spirit

This is not just something you believe 'factually' in your head. Salvation occurs when it becomes real in your heart and soul. Repentance happens in your heart and soul. When salvation occurs, you actually **feel** clean. And you are clean. You're not perfect. You know you didn't earn it. Finding your way to an effective repentance, through an effective surrender, that alone enables you to **feel** forgiven. It enables you to know that, "Yes, I get to start fresh and clean with God today. And you get to live fresh and clean every day, even your worst one. Instead of groveling in guilt and shame when you sin, jump for joy and shout, "Thank you, Jesus, that you paid for that sin also!"

Find your way into that. Spend time alone with God until you **feel** forgiven. And then, "... we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is essential that God comes alive in us. The Holy Spirit makes Himself known in our life and speaks to us and makes scriptures clear. The Holy Spirit inspired every writer of scripture and therefore is the most capable one to properly interpret God's Word to me. I don't need a pastor or priest. I am a "priest" according to the Book of Hebrews. So I can live fully understanding the Word of God. It is the Holy Spirit's role (John 16:13) to guide every believers into all truth. So let Him be your guide instead of hearsay from **any** others.

That's the work of the Holy Spirit, and that's the gift that God gives every one of us who want to follow Him. All you have to do is let the Holy Spirit take up residence in you. It is your commitment in relationship as in a marriage to Him. Only you can make it. As the Holy Spirit comes alive in you, you become part of something so amazing and satisfying that it staggers the imagination.

Volume 1, Day 14: New Creation, New Life

This is the new creation. When Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians, "... old things have passed away and behold all things have become new ...," that's what he meant. It doesn't mean I'm totally different from that day on. It doesn't mean I'm free from sin from that point on. What he means is I enter into a whole new way of living the new creation, no longer held captive by the things of the old life or the old creation. Now I've become part of something new where I get to live in his love, experience his life, live by his power instead of my own.

Now, I know many of you have jumped through some of these hoops before. You've said the sinner's prayer. You've been baptized. You've done this. Yet, you still feel like the relationship hasn't satisfied your longing to be loved. I even get emails from people that are just certain, they've committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which explains why this relationship isn't working for them. Or they've committed some other sin that disqualifies them from God's grace.

The 'Christian' religion will make you feel that way. But if you have a desire to know God intimately, you can. God says, "If you seek Me, you **will** find Me." He does not hide from you. But you must be willing to change what you believe about God in order to love Him. If you haven't discovered this relationship yet, now is the time to tell God, "I want to take this journey with an open mind."

Religion set you up for failure. Don't think it's your fault. Don't look inside and believe that there's some reason God **will not do this with you**. When you trust Him enough to surrender absolutely to Him and His ways, this journey becomes effective **for you**. Spend much time asking God to show you what and how to surrender to Him.

Volume 1, Day 15: To LIVE backward is EVIL

Even Jesus prayed in the garden before the cross, “Not my will, but what you will.” So what He prayed with the disciples a few days before His death was not, “Father save me.” It was, “Father glorify yourself.”

Religion portrays God as a goody reward snack machine. He'll give us the goodies if we act goody. The ‘new creation’ life that begins instead with, “Yeah, God does have all the goodies and He loves you and He wants to teach you how to live in His way. He wants you to experience love, joy and peace with everyone and everything. Living by our selfish ways only leads to death and frustration. But in Christ we have a chance, but only by surrendering to Him, to learn to live in the fullness of His life and His love!

We are taught from an early age, even in church, that, “If you don’t look out for number one, no one else will.” Nearly everything we do is to serve that purpose. Yet, EVIL is nothing other than to LIVE backward. We were made to love others. But we have been taught to love ourselves. Religion promotes ‘self care’ over other care. “You need to take care of yourself first so that you have the strength to care for others!” That is how misery overtakes so many Christians.

We are still living backward in ‘selfishness.’ But that Holy Spirit within you, the Spirit of Christ, wants to express His ‘other-caring’ nature to those within the scope of your influence. Your moral whiteness will repulse people from God. Only the irrefutable evidence of Holy Spirit’s unconditional love in you will compel them. In the end, it is all about living knowing you’re loved and letting the Holy Spirit within you live loving others! “It is the kindness of God that compels anyone to repentance.”

Volume 1, Day 16: What glorifies God

What's the difference between doing things **for** God or doing things **with** God? If you're doing anything for God, anything at all, stop doing it. Now, that may sound a little strange coming from a clergyman. Stop doing stuff for God. Yes, God doesn't **need** you to do stuff for Him. Most of us try to earn God's favor to get some blessings from Him. We expect that the stuff we want to do **for** Him, even things like building an amazing ministry **for** God, we do because we want God to reward us.

We hope to gain prosperity, popularity and power. But whatever we do **for** God, harkens back to the old creation the way our natural selfish ways work. That's the way we used to live. That's the way that we were trained to live and the religious things that we participated in. But in reality, when we claimed that we were doing things **for** God, we were actually doing them **for ourselves** because it actually made us **feel** better.

When they succeeded, it made us feel like we were doing our part. And if we failed, we **felt** even worse. We didn't love God enough to do the very things we said we wanted to do for Him only motivated by love for Him. As a man left a Bible study, he was asked by the teacher, "Jim, If you worked long and hard developing a thriving ministry for God and I got all the credit, would you be okay with that?" Jim immediately shot back, **absolutely not!** The teacher continued, "Then that ministry was about you getting glory, not God's glory."

If you do things **for God's glory**, you won't care who tries to get glory with Him as long as it isn't you! God does not share His glory with us. As a matter of fact, the 'glory of God' is the fully surrendered, humble servant who is only and always motivated by God being glorified!

Volume 1, Day 17: Performance? NO! Affection? YES!

Our desire to be rewarded by God causes us to focus on performance. Our religious obligations say that, “there are certain standards, certain expectations that God wants us to meet.” If I meet them, He will bless me. He will be with me. He will speak to me. And if I don't, He won't.

Here's the problem with that. When you're failing, you've got an excuse for God not to speak to you, not to care about you, to be disgusted with you, not to be involved in that with you, because after all, it's your fault. And that's where religion is so misleading and heinous. By religion, I mean man's attempts to earn God's approval. It's **what we try to do for God**.

What Jesus offered us was the ability to walk with His Father, alongside Him and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In other words, it wasn't about us doing things for them. God has always been active in the world. Jesus modeled that Himself. He said, “I only do the things I see the Father doing, and I only speak the things I hear the Father speaking.”

So we've lost sight of this journey, if we ever had it at all. We began to think that by performance, doing enough good for God or good for his kingdom or good for something, then my life is going to be blessed and all things work out well. But Jesus offered us something different. He offers us a relationship that allows us to walk **with** Him. Think about the things you do for your most significant others that might be inconvenient. You do it because you love **them** and want to please **them**.

“God is never disillusioned with you, because He never had any illusions about you in the first place. He knows that you are weak and foolish with a history of messing up!” Just let God love you and love Him back!

Volume 1, Day 18: Motivated by Passionate Desire

We do things for and with others not because it is quicker, cheaper, or easier, but because we **want to** be with them. God doesn't **need** us. God **wants** us! While we are with Him, He wants to share what He does in the world. He **wants to be with people who want to participate with him** in it. But our mentality must shift. It must change from, "I've got to do this **for** God." Instead, we can relax into what is God asks us to be part of.

Even my prayer lists in the mornings used to be because I was trained this way. I had a full list of things to pray for people. I wanted God to bless things. I wanted God to give wisdom. I wanted Him to give me stuff. I would pray, pray, and pray again, mostly asking for these things that would bring me comfort or pleasure or respect or influence or that would remove misery from me. And I don't know about most of you, but when I had long lists of prayer requests, most of them were simply repetitious. And God seldom answered them. Occasionally He did. But the bulk of the list continued to grow on.

What I've learned in the past few years is to pray differently. My prayers have shifted to this. "Father, what are you giving me today? Who are you giving me to love? What do you want me to know? What is Your Spirit urging me to do today?" My prayer life was radically altered. I am no longer trying to do things **for** God, even great things **for** God, even trying to pray down revivals or all the gymnastics I had gone through, hoping that God would finally see me. Hoping that He knew I was sincere enough to get Him to change my heart to love Him more.

God already and always wants to resonate with your heart. God wants you to learn to always be aware of Him, in every moment of decision or expression.

Volume 1, Day 19: Do Only Because You Love Him

So when we know Him intimately and are fully surrendering to Him we'll naturally want to follow Him everywhere. Consider Him in the midst of your activities and decision making. Increase your awareness of Him. This is a life-long pursuit. As your habits change to include God in everything, not just religion, He will become very dear to you. And you **will do** things **for** Him, but only **because you love Him** so much you cannot help but please Him.

Your expressions to all others will have the flavor and savory of God's love, not your own. Keep practicing 'following that nudge' in your my heart. Learn to recognize that nearly every thought might well be planted in your mind by the Holy Spirit. Pursue that thought unless the Holy Spirit causes you to stop. He will give you pause in order to keep you from doing something selfish. Or He will give you assurance to follow the thought. You will discover, "Ah, that's His thought or His idea, or the reason that person has come to mind. It is because God wants me to give him a phone call, write an email, or go by to visit.

Learning to live *with* God instead of *for* Him is what makes this relationship satisfying. It's the real essence of what it means to follow Christ. If we want to really walk **with** Him, we must completely stop doing things **for** Him.

I must be an active learner in this process. I needed to stop just taking in information and filing it in my memory. I can actually do the things I want to do. That's what we need to do with God. Other people, me, people on videos, authors of books, whatever can give you counsel, encouragement, advice, but we can't control this journey. This journey is learning to fly in the life of the Spirit by engaging in action with God in the process.

Volume 1, Day 20: Transformation: Active Learning

Here is an example of active learning. I wanted to learn to fly airplanes. So at 16 years of age, I worked until I had enough money saved up to actually take my first flying lesson. When I got on the plane with my instructor, we each took our seat. He looked over at me and he said, "I'm going to teach you everything you need to know about flying." And I thought, "Wow. This is great!"

It's absolutely quiet, and I kept looking at him waiting for him to tell me what I should do, but he didn't. I kept looking at him. He kept smiling at me. Finally I got frustrated and said, "What are we doing?" He said, "What would you like to do?" I said, "I'd like to learn to fly." He said, "I'm an instructor. I could teach you." And then he was silent again. Finally it dawned on me that he wanted me to take an active role in my own education.

Instead of my instructor just telling me what I needed to know, he wanted me to ask what specific thing I wanted to know. So I asked him, "Well, what do we want to do first?" He said, "What would you like to do?" I asked, "Do I want to start the plane?" He said, "Every good pilot will pre-flight the aircraft before he starts the plane." And then he was quiet again. He was guiding me to the order of the specific answers, not just the answers.

So when we want to learn this way with God, a great first question would be, "God, what do you have for me today?" Others might be, "What do you want to show me today?" If you have trouble, ask Him about that. "God, I don't understand what's going on here." Don't expect the answer to come immediately. Eventually something will drop into your heart and mind, a thought that's bigger than you, better than you, and you'll realize, oh, that's God showing me something. "How do I walk in that?"

Volume 1, Day 21: Relaxing into Reality

What this journey feels like is that you awaken to a **new reality**. Unfortunately, most of the things in the world make us feel like we have to achieve. There is something to work at. I've got to find my way into some reality or make my own. As we've often said it in our Christian traditions, "I've got to pray through or press in or be more committed or more devoted." But this journey doesn't work that way.

This is a **reality you relax into**. I know that may be strange language, but it's strange because God's love for you is already assured. He does love you. Whether you know it or not, see it or not, believe it or not, doesn't change the fact that He loves you. So what He's inviting you into is how to relax into the reality of that love.

Let me tell you how it's happened for a young woman from Eastern Europe. She wrote, "Hi, Wayne. It's working. I've been listening to your podcast for 15 months, looking for a relationship with God and trying hard to make it happen without realizing it. I was listening to you like another Pastor. But your teaching was not like any of the others.

Your teaching has changed my understanding. It's a change not by intellect, but by revelation. I get to follow the man, Christ Jesus, my friend and older brother. You've been a big help in pointing me to Him all the time. I get it now. I guess I was just ready. I'm starting on this journey with Jesus. I didn't get answers to my many questions, but I don't need them anymore."

"It's very simple. I live by what He reveals of Himself every day. And it's enough, even if what he gives so far is just peace. God loves me and it's okay between me and Him and I finally can just relax. He's here to help!

Volume 1, Day 22: Freedom from Struggling to Please God

My young woman listener from Europe continued, "... God sent His Son, not to condemn, but to save the world from the penalty of sin." And I love this freedom, and I guess that's where the relaxing comes from. It's not just to find a couch and become a potato. What relaxing means is that I'm not **striving so hard** on the inside. I don't mistrust God's love such that I have to earn what He wants to give me. And then I can relax into that reality."

That's something Jesus talked about with his disciples when He talked about this journey in Matthew chapter six. He's talking about the birds of the air and the flowers of the field and how they don't toil or spin, but God provides. He cares for them. And He asks the question, "How many of you, by worrying, can add even an inch to your height." And then Jesus says this (and I'm going to use "The Message" by Eugene Peterson) "What I'm trying to get you to do is to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, that you can't respond to God's giving." Now, that's where the shift needs to happen.

For all of us, we're used to getting. We're trying to **get** God's will, **get** a voice, **get** a relationship, **get** a ministry, **get** something. We've been taught all that, but **this** relationship is not about what I can get from God. It really is as if we were each morning waking up and saying, "God, what are you giving me today? What do you want to put into my life? And if it's just peace and if it's just calm it's okay."

It may not be words of wisdom and revelation and knowledge every day. It may just be the security of God's assurance, "I'm with you. I've got your back. You're safe in me." Let's grow in the beauty of this relationship. Relax.

Volume 1, Day 23: Trust Follows Love Received

It's not hard to do. It's like my relationship with my 2-year-old grandson. If I'm going to have a relationship with him, he can't do any of the work. I'm going to do the work. If it's true of me and my grandson, how much truer is it of me with God? If this relationship is going to grow and flourish, it's not because I'm going to know what to do. It's because He does. And as I'm actively participating **in** Him, I'm not actively trying to grab what I want for myself. I'm actually learning to relax in God's provision.

Everything about life, the fellowship, the wisdom and the strength you need is a gift that God gives. But if you ask him, He'll help you. Pray, "Lord, teach me to rest in your love today. Help me know how deeply loved by God I really am, even in my least worthy moments." You'll find out He's not there to condemn you. He's there to teach you how to love Him enough so that you will trust Him enough to follow Him with no more questions.

Volume 1, Day 24: Transformation NOT Information

We've learned that there are experts. And if they tell us what to do, we can follow them. Or there is some system we need to work that will make this Christ-life happen. Listen to this letter from Orlando. "Several years ago, I had a conversation with my pastor and asked him, "Why can't we have a conversation with God in the same manner that the men and women we read about in the Bible did?" His response was, "We don't need to. We have the Bible today."

Now, I love the scriptures, but if we're going to follow the Bible, we will not be following Him. We will have made the Bible the object of our worship. The journey we've been invited to take is not to be **good** Christians. It is not to follow the obligations, demands, and rituals of religion. Instead, we've been invited to love Him and follow Him only because we love Him.

This is how Paul expressed it in Ephesians chapter five. Again, reading from the message, "Watch what God does and then you do it. Like children who learn how to live from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with Him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious, but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us, but to give everything of Himself to us. Love like that."

That's where this journey takes us. As God begins to make Himself known to you, you will develop a greater desire to follow Him. An unfortunate thing happened to Christianity in the second century. It went from being people who were learning to live in the love of God and celebrate that love with each other, to being a religion about Christ with defined doctrines, rituals and traditions.

Volume 1, Day 25: Simplicity and Peace of Love

People became **good** Christians by doing the things that **good Christians do**. Jesus didn't teach us to live like that. Instead, He taught us that God wanted us to love Him in the same way that we were being loved by God. This is a journey of love. It is a journey of growing love. And for that, we need to follow a **person** not a **punch list**. Many times when we are following a religion or curriculum or some man's idea of what God is, we'll find ourselves on a completely opposite journey.

Come back to the simplicity of the love of Jesus. Ask Him, "How do you love me and how do you want me to love you?" Then listen for Him. This journey is **not**, "Yes, I'm sharing my life with Him. I'm initiating the dialog. I'm talking about the things that concern **me**," but **rather**, "I'm always listening. I am listening when I'm engaging in my activities and simply talking to Him."

I don't always get answers right away. I don't have direct conversations like, "Well, God, what do you think about this?" And He answers, "Well, I think that." But over time we fall into a rhythm where we already know what He thinks and desires and begin doing it immediately.

Now, how does God speak to us? It's different for every person. I look for an impression in my mind or soul. It is something deep inside that leads you. I like this. Someone said, "When you're being led by the Spirit, there are times when you have a sense of peace or a sense of pause. In other words, He speaks to you through your circumstances. Sometimes it's a feeling of warmth and rightness about what it is that He might want you to do or something He wants you to know. It brings peace to your heart, even if it's a difficult word, even if it's something you'd rather not do. There's a peace with it."

Volume 1, Day 26: Even Restlessness Leads to Peace

There are times when there is restlessness in our heart when we're thinking about doing something difficult or thinking about dealing with a difficult person. This restlessness and unease can be the Spirit of God as well. It is still as simple as learning to recognize and follow those impressions in our spirit. When they come we can be fully aware of them. Scripture described it as, "... a still, small voice." Some people wish that God would just yell at us, light up neon signs and make His way obvious. I think God speaks in a still, small voice to us for the same reason I do it with my children.

When I talk in a still, small voice, it invites them close. They lean in, and it's the relationship that's more important than the voice. It's more about learning to recognize how God is loving me than it is what I should do or what I should know about him. Recognizing his love in the actual circumstances of my life as I walk on day by day is what it means to follow Him.

The scriptures may help, if the Spirit directs you to a particular passage that provides guidance. But do not play 'spin the Bible' to get random chance answers. The most important thing is that you **feel** His love. How this Father **feels** about you in your worst moments and in your best moments is identical. He always loves you wholeheartedly. **Feeling** His presence with you in the agony of your life gives you peace even when the circumstances are anything but peaceful.

He's celebrating happily and joyfully with you and in you in the middle of the mess. You consider it joy when trials come when you believe how deeply God loves you. As you live **feeling** loved, you can love others like that. His love will make you comfortable in every situation.

Volume 1, Day 27: Prayer as Natural as Breathing

Begin to listen to God in the thoughts He puts in your mind. Feel the impressions He makes on your heart. This is how He makes Himself known to you. He also talks to you through your circumstances and experiences. It's not an exact science. We use words, actions and body language like He uses these things. Following Him is by becoming literate in His ways of communication, that is, His expressions. You're not going to be a hundred percent sure of what He is trying to express. Neither are you 100% sure that you have been perfectly clear in your communications with other persons. But we get the idea.

There's a feeling of warmth in being drawn into something by Him. And there's the feeling of restlessness when it's time to back away. And fully understanding another's communication may require extensive dialog. Prayer is this dialog with God to get a more accurate understanding of what He is trying to tell you. Then prayer expands like human conversations into dreaming and scheming new things.

Someone wrote to me, "Since I've started on this journey, my prayer life has flat lined (died)." He said that he used to pray a big list, trying to get God to do those things. And in the course of this journey that began to feel artificial. So, he stopped doing it. He thought his prayer life was over. So, I asked him, "Are you talking to God at all?" He responded, "Yes, all the time." I asked, "When you're engaged in your daily activities?" He said, "Yeah, I've got things before God all the time." I continued, "Is He speaking to you? Is He making some things clear?" He said, "Yeah, I feel like I'm beginning to make some discoveries." I said, "But you feel like your prayer life is flat lined." Suddenly it dawned on him. THIS IS PRAYER!

Volume 1, Day 28: PRAYER: Affectionate Dialog

Prayer is an ongoing conversation with God in which I simply present things to Him or ask Him questions, a dialog of sorts. I'm listening for Him to express Himself in His ways as I go through the day. We are finding our way into a rhythm of conversation and life together. My prayer life changed drastically in this journey.

Before I became confident in the Father's affection for me, I prayed a lot. But I prayed my fears. I prayed my anxieties. I prayed for things I wanted. And I prayed intensely. I was desperately hoping that God would give them to me or my friends for whom I was praying.

When I began to be at ease in His love, I wasn't as anxious anymore. I wasn't as needy for the things I wanted God to do in my life. I didn't need a big ministry with great book sales volume anymore. So those things that I had been praying for ceased. Anxiety was no longer driving my prayer life anymore. And, to be honest, I felt like I was losing something valuable to me.

But as time went on, I learned that I was losing something that had never worked anyway. And I ask you this, "For all the prayer lists you have, how much of that did God actually do for you?" For most of us, the answer is, "Very little!" Occasionally something happens regarding those lists. I am confident that God meant us to live in genuine dialog with Him, but not by reciting prayer lists.

Prayer is about the things God wants to give us, not Him giving us the things we're requesting or expecting of Him. So now that I have engaged in conversation with Him, I find myself asking these kinds of things. I just pray, "God, what are you giving me today? Who are you putting in my life that I get to love? What do you want to show me about yourself? How do I live in your life and grace?"

Volume 1, Day 29: PRAYER: Enjoying Our Friendship

Today, I find that sharing my thoughts with God and Him sharing His with me are much more part of my prayer time than lists of needs. It's about knowing more of what He is doing and thanksgiving for what He does. It is not a discipline worshipping God. It is not about sucking up to the big man by telling Him I like Him.

I'm actually overwhelmed often by the things God is doing around me. I'm captivated by the things He has put into my life. Gratefulness just becomes due course in this dynamic, rich sharing of our hearts with each other. And then I explore my day with Him. If I've got things coming up, I'm telling Him about those things and what I think of those things. Does He already know? Of course, He knows! But He likes hearing it from my perspective. He likes looking at it through my eyes.

So I do talk about circumstances coming up. I talk about people that are difficult in my life. My neighbor is one of those. At the moment, we're having a lot of conversation about my neighbor and how I'd like to ring his neck. And I know God wants me to love him in a way that I don't know how to do yet in times of anxiety.

Now, instead of praying all my worries to God, I'm just asking, "God, what is it about you that I don't know, that if I knew it, I could trust you in this?" Now, He doesn't usually answer right away. Sometimes He gradually awakens my mind and heart to the answer. But you know what? When He's with you as a companion on this journey, you need fewer answers than you thought you needed. You're more content to just let things be in His heart and mind. And knowing this, that when He wants me to know something, or when He wants me to do something, He's able to make that crystal clear to me.

Volume 1, Day 30: PRAYER: with Eyes Wide Open

Now some people ask, “Wayne, do you have a prayer closet that you do this in every day?” My answer to that is, “I really don't. I don't see this as a daily ritual, but an ongoing conversation. So it happens throughout my day whether I'm driving, whether I'm listening, whether I'm on the phone, I'm still listening and talking to God as best I can.” I have times when I don't do any of that. I just enjoy the day, whatever I'm doing. But my heart is somehow always turned toward Him. It listens to hear what God is doing.

Now, there are times when something particularly critical is going on or I'm feeling a bit distant that I'll get away to have a concentrated time with God. My prayer closet might be a walk in the foothills near here. It might be sitting in Sarah's garden for a bit and just asking God some questions and listening. I don't always get the answers I want right then, but somehow over the next few days those answers will kind of soak through to my heart if I need them. There are times when I don't need them.

I considered unanswered questions to mean there's nothing I need to do about it right now, so just keep walking with him. At other times, it really is up to me. God doesn't want to control every detail of my life. He wants to share my life with me. So sometimes that means, “Wayne, do what you want to do and I'll do it with you. I'll be in it with you.” And that's often how it works as well.

Lean into your dialog with God just as you would with a significant other or good friend. God is more interested in you than you likely think. He loves to hear your voice even when He already knows what you will say. And as in relationships with family, consider God at table with you and include Him in the conversation. And look His direction and don't close your eyes to talk to Him!

Volume 1, Day 31: Live in Freedom from Condemnation

What you need to do to have an effective life in a growing conversation with God is to have the freedom to fail. I know that sounds strange, but the performance basis of receiving God's affection must be recognized as false information. The thinking that, "I've got to get this right. It always has to be perfect." "If I ever miss God and do something wrong, my whole world will blow up and my life in Him will end," is neither Biblical nor relational.

When you go on this journey with God, believe me, it creates quite a bit of struggle. It's quite a learning curve to learn how to listen and how to follow without hesitation. It is no different than children learning to talk. They may stammer or call things by the wrong name for a while. And as we help them learn what exactly things are called, we do the same thing now in our journey into intimacy with God. So you will struggle. You will make mistakes. And you may still be struggling with a particular sin in your life. But don't let your sin consciousness creep in. We'll talk about that later, but those who think, "I can't have a relationship with God as long as there's sin in my life," will never know the freedom from self condemnation that comes from living in Him.

The best thing you can do about your sin right now is simply to thank Him for the forgiveness already given and to immediately concentrate on your love affair with Him. Listen to what He's saying. He is not going to remind you of sin. It has already been fully paid for. He's inviting you into a relationship with him where you feel His affection for you and then let Him guide you in all of the experiences of life. John 16 states clearly that the Holy Spirit's role for unbelievers is to convict them of sin. His role for those who are 'born again' of the Spirit, is to guide you into all truth. That includes, "...no condemnation to those who are in Christ."

Volume 1, Day 32: The Awesome Power of Prayer

When a mortal can talk to God almighty
and know that His voice is heard,
what a wonder it is that He understands
my sighs and tears as if they were words.
High above the chaos, a whisper is so clear.
The sweetness of His presence echoes He is near.

He already knows what I'm gonna ask
and what His answer will be.
But He loves the communion of father and child.
And more than an answer it's Him that I need,
to give me new perspective, breathe purpose to my soul.
So I keep coming back to Him and releasing my control!

So, I pray in the morning.
And I stay in touch with Him all through the day,
whatever I'm doing, wherever I'm going,
regardless of what anybody may say!

I wouldn't waste my time if I didn't believe it.
I tell you it works because I have seen it.
It's unexplainable, yet so incredible,
attainable anytime, anywhere,
the simply marvelous, supernatural,
awesome power of prayer!

Songwriters: Marcia Henry / Rachel McCutcheon

Prayer without ceasing is being:

Aware of His Presence constantly,
Available to Him instantly and
Accepting His assignments joyfully.

ENGAGING God -- Alan - Jacobsen