



LOVE & TRUTH

*Navigating Relationships
with God's Grace*

Love and Truth: Navigating Relationships with God's Grace

by Jim and Christa Lord

Concept adapted from *Ships: The Relationships of Life* by Frank Hamrick, Bill Coffey, and Steve Braswell

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A Quick Note

We wrote this study to help you understand what godly, healthy, hope-filled relationships look like. We've framed up a few of the big ideas, but the finishing work is up to you. Ask God to show you His truth in His Word.

Whatever sea you sail from, we trust that God's love drives all your relationships closer to Himself. We're praying for you.

By His Grace,

Jim & Christa



E SUM LUX MUNDI: QUI SEQUITUR ME, NON AMBULAT IN TENEBRIS, SED HABEBIT LUMEN VITAE

KINDNESS

HOPE

FAITH

PATIENCE

GENTLENESS

RIGHTEOUSNESS

TRUTH

GOODNESS

LOVE

JOY

JUSTICE

PEACE

EXCELLENCE

IN THIS BOOK

As you work through this student manual, you'll develop a great reference you can revisit long after this study is complete. The more thought you put into your Bible study, the more you'll get out of it, both now and later.

Sections in Each Lesson

Teacher's Lesson Outline

This is a fill-in-the-blank outline of the lecture your teacher will present to your study group. These notes can help you follow along during class time and review each topic later.

Exercises

This section encourages you to dive into the Word on your own. In general, you'll read a passage of Scripture, and then explore questions about it. References and verse numbers will show you where to look for answers.

Reflections

Here the book will ask you to consider the principles you've learned from Scripture and apply them to new situations. Take a few moments to think about where you've been and where you're going.

Peace in the Storm

This section encourages you to read and meditate on a passage that highlights God's relationship with us. No matter how good or bad our human relationships may be, we can trust God to love and protect us.

A Note on Privacy

Throughout this study, you'll be asked to write your thoughts on some very personal topics. To encourage yourself to be honest and straightforward, please keep this workbook private, sharing your answers only as you'd like to participate in group discussions. If you can't make sure that your answers stay private, record some of them in another journal or document, or at least consider the questions carefully.

Getting the Most from Your Study

Class Time

- **Prepare before you get to class.** Bring this workbook and a pen or pencil.
- **Review the previous lesson.** A quick flip-through of last week's outline will refresh your memory.
- **Take notes.** Don't stop at filling in blanks. Write down your own thoughts and questions during the teacher's lesson. You'll find that writing will clarify your thoughts and simplify future review.
- **Join the discussions.** It's OK to talk. You'll learn more if you stay engaged in class.

Exercises

- **Pick the best time of your day to study the passages.** Try to find a time and place free of distraction. Play some quiet music or go to the library—whatever helps you focus.
- **Begin with prayer.** Ask God to teach you through the Scripture readings and show you how to grow in holiness.
- **Compare notes.** After you've studied and meditated, discuss what you've learned with other students, as appropriate.
- **Commit it to heart.** Your teacher may ask you to memorize a short passage from each lesson.

God prepared His truth for you to discover in His Word. By His grace, you can study the Bible. Seek His wisdom, and He'll show it to you.

Scripture Memory

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Memory Verse</i>	<i>Signature</i>
1	2 Corinthians 12:9	
2	1 John 3:2	
3	John 17:3	
4	Ephesians 1:13-14	
5	1 John 4:19-20	
6	John 17:15-17	
7	Luke 11:13	
8	Matthew 19:14	
9	Psalms 78:4	
10	Ephesians 6:1-3	
11	Proverbs 1:8-9	
12	Ecclesiastes 4:9-10	
13	Psalms 1:1-2	
14	John 15:12	
15	Proverbs 18:12	
16	1 Corinthians 13:1-3	
17	Matthew 18:15	
18	Matthew 16:18	
19	Matthew 28:19	
20	Romans 16:17	
21	Proverbs 3:35	
22	1 Peter 4:10	
23	Titus 3:1-2	
24	1 Corinthians 11:11-12	
25	Genesis 2:24	
26	Ephesians 5:1-2	
27	Matthew 19:6	
28	1 Corinthians 7:4	
29	1 Corinthians 6:12	
30	1 Corinthians 9:23	

Notes

SHIPS OF THE BIBLE

Lesson Notes

- A relationship is _____

The Ships

How God Teaches Us

The Ark <i>Genesis 5–9</i>	
The Fishing Boats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Picture of Outreach (Matt. 4:18–22) • A Teaching Platform (Luke 5:1–11) • A Place to See Christ’s Power (Luke 8:22–25) • A Refuge to Leave Behind (Matt. 14:22–33)
The Ship to Tarshish <i>Jonah 1</i>	
The Prison Ship <i>Acts 27</i>	

Big Ideas:

- God uses all ships—both good and bad—for our good (Rom. 8:28).
- Some people use ships to pull us away from God.
- When our ships sink, we can still trust God (Phil. 1:6–21).

Exercises

Read Matthew 14.

In this chapter, we catch an astounding glimpse of the love of Jesus. Our Messiah, God in the flesh, the omnipotent Lord of Creation, chose to live among us. He came to Earth to restore a relationship—to give us a way to know God the Father. Christ reached out, even when doing so was painful.

A Man of Sorrows

Note also John 11:33–36. When Jesus’ friend Lazarus died and He saw the sorrow of Martha and Mary, He was moved and troubled. He wept openly.

As part of His ministry to us, Christ submitted Himself to the sufferings we all face. Isaiah described Him as a man of sorrows, a person who knew grief well (Isa. 53:3). Though Jesus could perform miracles, command angels, and do *anything* He wanted to do, He chose to feel what we feel.

Jesus endured weakness and temptation in part to show that He would be a sympathetic priest for us (Heb. 4:14–16). As both God and human, Jesus is the perfect mediator between us and the Father.

- Because of the twisted politics of a corrupt royal family, who was executed (vv. 8–10)?

- This was Jesus’ cousin, the person that God had used to herald the coming of the Messiah. How did Jesus respond to the news of John’s death (v. 13)?

- The crowds following Christ, however, did not leave Him alone. They met Him on the opposite shore, many of them sick and hungry. How did Jesus respond, even in His weariness (vv. 14–21)?

After these miracles, Jesus finally found time to rest and talk with His Father (v. 23). His disciples, however, got caught up in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus walked out to them on the water, and though He startled them at first, He told them not to be afraid.

- How did Peter show trust in Jesus (vv. 28–31)?

Even though Peter’s faith mixed with his doubt, he trusted Jesus to save him from the waves.

Jesus suffered pain, shame, and death so that we could have the joy of a relationship with God. As we meditate on His kind of love, as we look for God’s goodness around us, He will teach us to trust Him. And over time, we will learn to love others like He loves us. By God’s grace, we can love others even when we least feel like it.

- Write 2 Corinthians 12:9.

If we meditate on this verse, we won’t be too harsh on Peter. We’re all like him. It’s in our nature to fear and to doubt—and in a way, that’s healthy. Caution keeps us from stumbling into danger. But if we want a good relationship with God—and with other people—we must also learn to *trust*.

We might take little steps at first, careful of the waves, and we might even start to sink. But we must keep our eyes on Christ, confident that as we walk toward Him, He will keep us in His hands (John 10:29).

Read Hebrews 12:1–2, and finish the following sentences.

- As believers, we should lay aside _____

- We should run this race with _____
- And we should look to _____, who gave us faith—and will perfect it in us.

We can't force ourselves to have more faith. We depend on God to give us that—because only God can prove Himself. We can only seek Him, follow Him, and watch Him fulfill our trust.

Reflections

- Of the things you know that God wants you to do, what do you find most difficult?

List three relationships in your life that you believe you could better steer toward God. By the end of this study, how would you like to see these relationships improve?

Relationship

Ways This Should Improve

Peace in the Storm

Meditating on Your Most Important Relationship

Read Hebrews 11.

- What things cannot be proven—that is, what beliefs can we accept *only* by faith (vv. 1–3, 6)?
- What did God do through the faithful people listed in this chapter?
- What do we have that these Old Testament believers did not (vv. 39–40)?
What truth has God given us to make our faith stronger?

Unit 1

Lordship

GOD OUR CREATOR

Lesson Notes

Describing Jehovah

- **God Is** _____
 - He calls Himself Almighty (Gen. 17:1).
 - He sees everything (Ps. 139; Prov. 15:3).
 - He knows everything (Ps. 33:13–15; Heb. 4:12–13).
 - He created the universe and gave humanity His image (Gen. 1).

- **God Is** _____
 - Our _____ God (1 John 1:5)

Sin is _____

- Our _____ God (Isa. 6)

- **God Is** _____

Pictures of God's Care

	Psalm 23
	2 Samuel 22:3
	Hosea 13:4–8; Matthew 23:37
	2 Timothy 4:18

Exercises

Important to your relationships is your concept of *self*. You can't relate to people well unless you first have an idea of who and what you are.

Different people construct their self-concept in different ways:

- Some people depend on their family.
- Others point out what makes them different or unique.
- And some define themselves by what they do.

These ideas are all part of us, but as believers who trust Christ, we can find a new and even better self through God.

God's Image in You

When God created humanity, He made us in His image (Gen. 1:26–27). Though we don't yet understand all of what that idea means, Scripture explains that we have a spiritual dimension to our being—something that points to a higher reality.

Just like a painting is more than simply brushstrokes on a canvas, we are more than atoms and cells and organs. Our thoughts can, in some small way, reflect the thoughts of God Himself. And because we bear His image, we can fellowship with Him.

Of course, we have tarnished this image with our sin. With our hatred, our lies, and our selfishness, humanity has twisted God's reflection into something grotesque.

- Read Genesis 9:1–7. Here God gives Noah and his family some instructions as they rebuild human society after the Flood. God tells Noah that for the sin of murder, the punishment should be death. What is the reason for this punishment—that is, what makes murder so bad (v. 6)?



- And you don't need to be a murderer to profane God's image. Read James 3:8–10. How can we be hypocritical with our words (v. 9)?

Through the sacrifice of Christ, God has cleansed believers of their sin. Jesus is the perfect image of God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3), so by His grace, we can once again shine brightly with His love and truth. We can bear His image proudly, and we can respect the good He has placed in others, as well.

Who You Are: Two Perspectives

Describe yourself in the following tables, using the fewest, most important words possible.

Earthly Perspective: How I See Myself as a Person

<p>My Heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where I came from • What I've done • Who I used to be 	
<p>My Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where I am now • What I do now • Who I am now 	
<p>My Destiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where I'm going • What I hope to do • What I hope to be 	

Spiritual Perspective: How God Sees Me as a Believer

My Heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genesis 1:27• Romans 3:9–18	
My Identity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Romans 5:6–10• Romans 8:14–17	
My Destiny <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 John 3:2–3• 1 Corinthians 13:11–12	

- Read Romans 8:15. Thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit, what can we now call God? _____

If we trust Christ, we can embrace our roles as sons and daughters of God. He gives us an identity more secure—and a hope more certain—than any we’d find on Earth. People will fail us, and we will fail ourselves, but God will never let us fall out of His hands (John 10:28–29).

Reflections

God has placed His image in us, and He expects us to reflect His love and truth to others. Think of four people in the following categories and write a specific way you intend to reflect God to each person.

<i>Person</i>	<i>One Way I Can Reflect God</i>
A family member	
A friend	
Someone in my peer group at church	
Someone who opposes or frustrates me in some way	

Peace in the Storm

Meditating on Your Most Important Relationship

Read 1 John 3.

- For believers, what part of our destiny is certain (vv. 2, 23–24)?
- If we choose to abide in Christ, what will we put away (vv. 4–6)?
- If we choose to follow Christ’s example, what will we do instead (vv. 11, 16)?

GOD OUR SAVIOR

Lesson Notes

The Messiah

- A *messiah* is an _____

- God's promised Messiah is _____

- **His** _____

He came to Earth to fulfill the Old Testament Law.	Matthew 5:17
He gave us an example of sacrificial love by caring for others and by giving up His life for us.	Matthew 20:28
He reached out to sinners in a way no one else could.	Mark 2:17
He offered salvation with eternal life.	John 3:16–17
He offered abundant life, as well.	John 10:10
He gave us light and truth through the knowledge of God the Father.	John 12:44–50
He established believers as heirs of God—as His own children, who could claim their Father's blessing.	Galatians 4:4–5

Jesus came to Earth to connect us back to God.

- His _____

- We call Jesus the *Son of God* because He is _____

- Jesus is the only begotten of God—because He *is* God.

- His _____

- Teaching God’s Truth
- Showing God’s Love

- His _____

- He became our sin and endured our punishment (2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 27:46).
- But He rose again, showing power over sin and death itself (Luke 24:5–7)

The Gospel of Christ

We are lost and powerless in our sin. We deserve death, judgment, and separation from God (Rom. 3:23).

But Jesus died to pay for our sin, and He rose to show His power over death (1 Cor. 15:3–4, 56–57).

If we trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior—if we accept His sacrifice for our sin—God will forgive our sin and consider us as righteous as Christ (Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:22).

We don’t need to fear the penalty for our sin (Rom. 6:23).

Instead, we believers can now live in a way that is holy and acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

The God of the Gospel

The perfect,
spotless sacrifice

The victory over
death and sin



The free gift of
salvation for us

Exercises

Read Matthew 27:24–61.

As the Creator God Himself, Jesus designed the laws of right and wrong. He alone decides whether we are perfectly righteous or we deserve eternal punishment.

Yet because He loves us, He became our sin and bore all the punishment that we deserve. He chose to take all the consequences of sin on Himself, even though sin and evil were our fault.

In the following table, briefly describe the suffering that Jesus endured for our sake.

v. 26	
vv. 28–30	
v. 31	
v. 35	
vv. 37–44	
vv. 46–50	

The Gift and the Giver

According to James 1:17, every good gift comes directly from God. Unfortunately, we sometimes value the gift over the Giver—placing our trust in wealth, circumstances, and relationships, instead of in the God who controls all these things for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Like David in Psalm 37:1–4, we should delight first in God Himself, who gives us the desires of our hearts. And as Jesus commanded in Matthew 6:25–34, we should not stress over earthly needs, but instead seek God’s kingdom first.

In this passage, we see just a glimpse of what we deserve without God—pain, derision, and separation from Him. But as we read this horrific account, we can begin to appreciate God’s love for us. We see how far He went to redeem us back to Himself.

- Read Matthew 28:1–7. Did sin and death defeat Jesus? _____

Christ revealed that He had the power to save us from our own sins. He did this not because of who we are or what we’ve done, but because He loves us and cherishes us.

To receive this gift, we simply believe in the *Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 16:29–31).

- **Jesus**—because He is the real, historical figure who died and rose from the dead.
- **Christ**—because He is the Anointed One sent to save us from sin.

- **Lord**—because He is God our Ruler, deserving of all our worship and obedience, who has the standing to forgive us when we ask.

We trust God to make us righteous. Our actions do nothing—He simply saves those who ask.

Reflections

For this section, take some time to think about the work that Christ has done in your life. Answer the following questions as best you can, even if you don't remember some of the details. No one's story is the same, so don't worry if your memories don't sort neatly into the questions below. Simply reflect on your spiritual journey thus far.

Beginning Your Journey

If you have not yet accepted Christ as your Savior, please consider talking with a mature Christian in your family or church. God offers salvation for free. We can't earn it—we simply *ask* for it. This book will encourage you to have better relationships, but none is more important than your relationship with God.

- Name _____
- How I'd describe myself before I accepted Christ:

- The things that discouraged me from accepting Christ:

- What kind of person do I want to be? What do I want to do with this life?

- What struggles in my life most concern me now? What things still don't make sense?

- Where can I go for advice? Who can listen *and* help?

- Should I find new lifelines and sources of strength? If so, where should I start looking?

By answering these questions, you've begun to meditate on God's work in your life. Your story has just begun to take shape, but even now, you should be able to see God's grace on display.

When Meditation Is Painful

If much of your life is painful to think about, or if you feel hopeless where you are now, please reach out to your pastor, a counselor, or any mature Christian you can trust. God did not design your path to be walked alone, so don't hesitate to ask someone to come alongside you. As a believer, you may feel lonely, but you will never, ever be alone.

Peace in the Storm

Meditating on Your Most Important Relationship

Read John 17.

This passage records Christ's prayer the night before His crucifixion.

- What was Christ's primary purpose in coming to Earth (vv. 1, 6)?
- Who was Christ praying for (v. 20)?
- What was His motivation? What blessing did He want for us (v. 26)?

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS: PART 1

Lesson Notes

Being Friendly

- We Must _____ (John 15:12–15)
- We Must _____ (Prov. 27:5–6; 17:9)
- We Must _____ (Prov. 14:9; Gal. 3:26–29)
- We Must _____ (Luke 7:34; Mark 2:15–17)
- We Must _____ (John 13:13–17)
- We Must _____ (Prov. 18:24)

The Value of Solitude

By silencing the distractions around us, we can meditate on . . .

- Where we are
- What God is doing
- Where we're going

Be mindful of your blessings and your struggles—then seek God's perspective.

Fighting Loneliness

- **Spend more time with your closest Friend.**

Even when you feel lonely, you are never truly alone.

- **Find ways to guide your thoughts.**

- Take a walk in a place that has fresh air and greenery.
- Do something quiet and enjoyable that helps your mind stay in the moment.
- Read, re-read, and memorize passages of Scripture.
- Keep a small, private notebook in which to write your thoughts.

- **Build deeper friendships with good, safe people.**

Reach out, ask for help, and trust as much as you can.

Exercises

Believe it or not, there are bad reasons for being friendly. If we act friendly just to make ourselves more popular, our friendliness will quickly become a burden.

- Write Proverbs 18:24 below.

It takes a lot of work to maintain many friendships—in person or online. But more valuable are the few friends who stick close to us no matter what.

If we act out of true love, not selfishness, friendliness becomes ministry. We build good relationships by deciding to *be* good friends.

The Friendships of Paul

Lesson 12 noted the friendship of Paul and Barnabas, but Paul reached out to many others, as well. Over the course of his ministry, he worked and served with

countless believers from a variety of backgrounds, and his friendly testimony helped point many people to Christ.

In cultural terms, Paul was a bridge-builder. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, and answer the following questions.

- What role did Paul take toward the people he met (v. 19)?

- What did he become to the Jews (v. 20)? _____
- What did he become to those who weren't under the Old Testament Law (v. 21)? _____
- According to verses 22–23, why did he adapt and reach out so much?

Do not misunderstand—Paul did not adopt sins from a culture in order to share Christ. But he did take the time to understand people and put away whatever would distract from the gospel. He used his freedom to serve.

Read Ephesians 4:1–6, and answer the questions below.

- Describe the attitudes we fellow believers should have (v. 2).

- According to verse 3, what should we try to do?

Paul on Mars Hill

Paul's sermon on Mars Hill illustrates how to explain the gospel to a hostile culture. Paul stood among the many pagan shrines and connected the people's fear of an unknown god to their need for the one true God (Acts 17:22–31).

- In your own words, why should we do this (vv. 4–6)?

You can find a sampling of Paul’s many ministry friends in Romans 16—Jews and Gentiles, men and women, young and old, all of whom bonded over their shared love of Christ. For these and many other people, Paul gave thanks. He was grateful for the way God used people in his life.

The Friendship of David and Jonathan

One of the strongest relationships pictured in the Bible is the friendship between David and Jonathan. It’s rare to find two people so committed to God and to



each other. Driven by love, they stood together despite hardship, family conflict, war, and death.

In 1 Samuel 17, we read of David's infamous fight against Goliath. God used David to help drive off the Philistines, and when David returned to King Saul's court after the battle, this lowly shepherd boy was treated like a hero.

- According to 1 Samuel 18:1–5, Saul's son Jonathan bonded with David immediately. How does verse 1 describe this friendship?

- But as David secured more victories for the Israelites, how did Saul react to the boy's fame (vv. 8–9)?

So Saul tried to kill David, twice by hurling a spear in anger (1 Sam. 18:11) and other times by sending him on impossible missions (v. 25).

- Read 1 Samuel 18:12–16. Ultimately, why did Saul lash out against David?

- Read 1 Samuel 19:1–7. How did Jonathan save David's life?

Unfortunately, Saul would again try to take David's life (vv. 9–17). But David continued to honor and serve the king—even when fleeing for his life.

The Fall of Saul

By this point, God had already told Saul that he would lose the kingdom to someone else (1 Sam. 15:26–29). Saul had disobeyed and tried to cover it up, so the prophet Samuel told the king that his days on the throne were numbered. Saul was therefore suspicious of anyone who might rival his popularity.

Read 1 Samuel 20, and answer the following questions.

- What did David ask Jonathan to find out (vv. 4–7)?

Jonathan's Kingdom

By birthright, Jonathan should have succeeded Saul as king. But the prince knew that God had chosen David to take the kingdom. Jonathan could have seen David as an enemy, a traitor—but instead, he accepted God's decision to move the crown to another household.

Jonathan was a good friend and a good son, even though his relationships seemed to pull him in separate directions. By trusting God, he showed compassion and honor—despite Saul's attempts to kill David.

- What did Jonathan promise to do for David (v. 13)?

- And what did Jonathan ask David to promise in return (vv. 14–16)?

- How did Jonathan know that Saul still wanted to kill David (vv. 30–33)?

Saul left no doubt. So Jonathan met with David, and they wept together, reminded each other of their promises, then parted (vv. 41–42).

David and Jonathan met only once more, while David was on the run in the wilderness of Ziph.

- How does 1 Samuel 23:16 describe the way Jonathan supported David?

Jonathan was later killed while fighting alongside his father against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1–3). He remained faithful to his father and his kingdom until the very end.

When David heard the news, he mourned greatly. In a psalm of grief, he honored both Saul and Jonathan, praising Jonathan especially for his faithfulness and love (2 Sam. 1:19–27).

And even though Jonathan was dead, David kept his promise. When he discovered that Jonathan's son Mephibosheth still lived, David brought the man to court, gave him Saul's old lands, and set a steward over the estate (2 Sam. 9). Even when Mephibosheth was accused of supporting Absalom's rebellion, David did not break his promise (2 Sam. 16:1–4; 19:24–30).

Reflections

In a journal or another private document, write down the following:

- The three greatest needs your friends have shared with you recently.
- One or two people in your school, youth group, or community that need friendship.
- The biggest thing discouraging you at this point in your life.

Then commit yourself to two things:

- Each day for the next month, spend time praying through this list. Ask God to show you how to reach out and encourage people, whether or not He makes their problems go away.
- And for whatever issue is discouraging you most, reach out to a mature believer and tell them about it. Ask them to pray with you and for you. This conversation doesn't have to be long—just *connect* with someone. Ask God to use His Word and His people to hold you up.

Peace in the Storm

Meditating on Your Most Important Relationship

Read Matthew 6.

- What are good and bad reasons to serve others (vv. 1–4)?
- What are right and wrong ways to talk with God (vv. 5–14)? What about fasting (vv. 16–18)?
- If we want better reasons to practice our faith, where should we look (vv. 19–24)?
- How can an eternal perspective help comfort us (vv. 25–34)?