Intimacy with God will lead directly to a longing for more intimacy with God! We don’t ‘know’ God through Bible study, but through obedience to Him in everything we learn through Bible study! John 14:21 “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” Jesus will show Himself to the one who has His commands and obeys them, because this is the one who loves Him! “While we must never on the one hand lose the freedom to enter boldly and joyfully by faith into God’s presence during our lives on earth,” warned John White, “we must also learn how to revere God in our relationship with Him…intimacy cannot occur without respect.”

In the very intimate Book of Ruth, Ruth represents the church, and Boaz—Kinsman Redeemer—represents the Lord Jesus Christ! And the nearer kinsman represents the Law. Boaz was to Ruth what Christ is to His Church! Ruth’s responsibility will become her response to Boaz’s ability to redeem her. Naomi’s instructions to Ruth included:

1. Be cleansed (freshly) Ruth 3:3—wash yourself
2. Be consecrated (fragrantly) Ruth 3:3—perfume yourself
3. Be clothed (fitly) Ruth 3:3—best clothes
4. Be committed (fully) Ruth 3:3-4—uncover his feet; lie down
5. Be compliant (faithfully) Ruth 3:4-5—he’ll tell you what to do

Ruth 3:18—“Then Naomi said, ‘Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.’” Ruth was to place herself at the foot of her Redeemer, saying, I am willing to accept you as my Redeemer, my protector, my husband. And Boaz received her! This is about our relationship with God; enjoying His love (agape’) for us—basking in it! Intimacy with our God—our worthy Confidant—is to be understood, accepted, loved and supported. Dr. Clyde M. Narramore, Christian psychologist and author, said, “When God loves, He loves a world—when He gives, He gives His Son.”

Of the ‘Love of our Life’ Charles Spurgeon said, “In the manger and in eternity, on the cross and on His throne, in the garden and in His kingdom, among thieves or in the midst of cherubim, He is everywhere ‘altogether lovely’.” And Sarah Young in Jesus Calling said, “The deepest yearnings of your heart are for intimacy with Me. I know, because I designed you to desire Me.” She had earlier said, “You cannot serve two masters. If I am truly your Master, you will desire to please Me above all others. If I am the Master of your life, I will also be your First Love.”
From the cradle, there is a need for intimacy and love: Most have heard the true story of a Russian orphanage where seemingly healthy babies were dying. This tragedy was a mystery since they were physically well cared for. But some of the staff began to notice that those babies who were given loving attention and intimacy above and beyond physical care seemed to be the ones that thrived—the ones more often picked up and cuddled by caregivers. So those who’d act as ‘professional mothers’ were hired to hold, cuddle and talk to all of the babies, and that investment made all the difference—they all lived!

George Matheson was a young Scottish student at the University of Glasgow when he met, fell in love with and became engaged to a lovely young Christian woman. Before their wedding, he became ill and learned that over time he would become blind. He wrote a letter to her letting her know, and offering to release her from marriage to him, hoping that her love for him was strong enough—but she chose to break off the engagement! The blow caused Matheson to go through several years of deep mental anguish. But he continued his studies as a preacher, and writer of devotionals, and eventually penned what he’d come to know about God’s love in the following old hymn:

“O love that will not let me go,
    I rest my weary self in thee;
    I give thee back the life I owe,
        that in thine ocean depths its flow
            may richer fuller be.

“O joy that seekest me through pain,
    I cannot close my heart to thee;
    I trace the rainbow through the rain,
        And feel the promise is not vain
        That morn shall tearless be.”

Look at God’s love—it is unconditional, inclusive and it lasts. We must know how much God loves us—John 3:16—to know the heart of God! Nothing can separate us from God’s love—Romans 8:35—but God is holy love: He is not indulgent; He is not indifferent to moral distinctions. He loves righteousness and He hates iniquity. And He is faithful to discipline those He loves—Hebrews 12:6-11. We must learn to love what God loves; and to hate what God hates.

J. I. Packer in Knowing God said, “What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it—the fact that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands; I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him because He first knew me and continues to know me.” James 4:8a invites: “Come near to God and He will come near to you.”
In the matter of meditating on God’s word and talking about God: how often should we do it; how much should we do it? Deuteronomy 6:4-9 will answer: “Hear, O Israel: The L ORD our God, the L ORD is one. 5Love the L ORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

→How about when we sit and walk and lie down and get up? “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 6Impress them on your children.

→How about when you sit and walk and lie down and get up? “Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

→How about tie them, bind them and write them? “Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 8Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

→How about day and night? “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

→How about all day long? “My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.”

→How about in the morning and at night? “It is good to praise the L ORD and make music to your name, O Most High, 2to proclaim your love in the morning, and your faithful ness at night.”

We cannot spend too much time communing with God—we’ll serve while we commune, and we cannot talk enough about Him: we can never talk to the wrong person about the Lord! Are we fearful of talking about God—witnessing about the Lord Jesus Christ? 1 John 4:18 “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” Zig Zigler gave this acronym to the word fear: false evidence appearing real. About our fear of driving people away by our witness, Bob Harrington said, “Where are you going to drive them—hell #2?”

I’d like to borrow a title from Our Daily Bread devotional called When Being Nice Isn’t So Nice: More than two years ago a ‘nice’ Christian lady told me that I was guilty of going on-and-on about things I’d learned from Scripture, and she felt I was attempting to teach her things she already knew. She said she did not need me to teach her about God or His word. The rebuke hurt, but I accepted it making a ‘note’ not to discuss these things with her again. Needless to say, it put a little strain on the relationship. But God through Paul spoke to me in Galatians 5:13-15—“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 15If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”
I had a responsibility to let go of the painful offense, to love on, and to let God teach me through her. When severely criticized, we need to accept the rebuke as from the Lord and wait for any affirmation He will give. God often lets us deal with a rebuke or correction for a while to see if we’ll humble ourselves before He gives an answer. In February 2014, He showed me that it is not the going on-and-on that’s the source of their contempt, but rather the subject of the going-on! Bottom line: The word of God is being spoken by one they deem unworthy is the issue! D. L. Moody: “I am not polished, educated…but I love God with all my heart.” And extreme love for God is my only credential!

Charles Stanley said, “God will never tell you Chapter 1 if Chapter 2 is not going to be there. What is it that you can’t do if God tells you to do it?” If we are going to encourage ourselves, we must obey God’s leading even though we are fearful. Oswald Chambers said, “At the risk of being thought fanatical, you must obey God! The narrow path is going to provide us with the greatest life that Christ died to give us.” See 1 Samuel 30:17-20. David encouraged himself in the Lord and look what happened:

- Bethlehem = God with us forever;
- Calvary = God for us forever, and
- Pentecost = God in us forever!

One of my life verses is 2 Timothy 2:15 and the KJV says: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” There is a ‘right’ way to divide God’s truth, and only those who study it out—meditate on it—will know how to ‘rightly’ apply it to their lives. Any believer who wants to have the Lord show Himself to them can commit to study and to meditate on God and His word so thoroughly that the Holy Spirit will begin to reveal wonderful things from His word and His Person.

Solomon in Proverbs 22:17-19 exhorted: “Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, 18 for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. 19 So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you.” One of the lessons I learned from that season of ‘rebuke’ is that we all need to listen to God’s word being shared; of His Person being magnified; of another’s testimony of what great things God is doing in their lives, and of what God is speaking to them about. Even if we’ve heard it before, be sure God wants us to hear it again! Solomon’s last phrase in verse 19 speaks volumes to me: “I teach you today, even you.” I cannot learn the lesson for the rebuker, but I can learn it, really learn it as I’m being taught daily. I pray that I will be willing to receive instruction, correction, rebuke and, yes, that wonderful encouragement from any one of God’s people—anytime!
Judah’s King Jehoshaphat, in his third year of reign, sent out teachers in 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 who taught the people the Law of the LORD. And 2 chapters later in 19:2, after Jehoshaphat had returned from fighting alongside Ahab at Ramoth Gilead where Ahab met his death by a random arrow, Jehu said to him, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is upon you.” We are not to love those who hate the Lord: We are not to align ourselves with haters of God. Yes, we are to pray for their salvation, for them to turn from their wicked ways to God, but we do not yoke ourselves with them in any relationship: marriage, friendship, business partnership, etc.

Notice how faithful love constrains, maintains and sustains—demonstrated in a lesson titled: Father’s Dealings with a Prodigal Son, by Charles Swindoll. In Luke 15:11-23—steps the father took included:
1. Listened and risked (the father heard his son’s request and took the risk);
2. Let go without protest (the father released his son);
3. Waited for God to change his son (the father never stopped praying for his son and his return), and
4. Welcomed back this son who was at the bottom where he needed to be.

‘Pain plants the fortress of the rebel heart…’

LOOK at LOVE’s RESPONSE: Verse 20 revealed a filthy young man bowing before a loving father and getting a robe and ring (credit card) and sandals. Verse 23 described a feast—come just as you are—and the fatted calf. Then there’s the unloving older brother and his prodigal attitude…and the father would love him too! Someone said that our sinning does not stop God’s loving!

Elizabeth Barrett Browning 1806-1861—Much of her work carries a religious theme. She is quoted as saying, “Love doesn’t make the world go round; love is what makes the ride worthwhile.” But she also said, “We want the sense of the saturation of Christ’s blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry through them in answer to the ceaseless void of the Sphinx of our humanity, expounding agony into renovation.” In Lilian Whiting’s 1899 biography of Elizabeth, she describes her as ‘the most philosophical poet’ and depicts her life as ‘a gospel of applied Christianity.’”

Charles Spurgeon said, “Groan within yourself for higher degrees of consecration, and your Lord will grant them to you; for He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.” And about longing to know and experience more of God’s love, J. I. Packer said, “…that the Spirit may shed God’s love abroad in our hearts with greater power. The love which He shows to men, and which Christians know and rejoice in, is a revelation of His own inner being.”