

# Time with the King

BS #9

## **Perspective on the Bible study:**

As always, make this lesson fit your audience. If your folks are already having QT's, you don't need to do some of this. The lesson is written to persuade people who have never had "times with God" to begin to do so.

Basically this lesson is a discussion about a story in a Brennan Manning book and "how to get started." You can add additional Scriptures if you want. The "how to get started" part is important – you want to allocate enough time to give people a chance to try it out in your group time.

Be sure to think through the logistics. Do you want to ask people to "commit" to trying this for a week? How will you do this? Walk through what they would do in a 15-minute time with God. You can use day 1 of the 31-Day Experiment as a "sample."

I know this doesn't sound too spiritual, but logistics help people get going. Don't assume they are either motivated to do this or know how. Work at providing both motivation and "how to."

Quite often groups pair up for accountability – the sole responsibility being to e-mail or call each other every day or so and ask how it's going and what they are learning. You might ask the group if they want to do this. I think it helps; it's up to you. Be sure you explain that this arrangement is just for a week and it is not designed to be the law. The last thing you want is someone in your group berating someone else as a slacker.

Also, you can ask one of your strongest group members to lead a little 5-minute discussion next week of something he or she learned from doing this "experiment." This ups the group involvement, too.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **EXPLORE**

Tonight we're going to talk about how to deepen/develop our relationship with God. Just like marriage – which has a beginning – our relationship with God should prosper and flourish over time, growing more intimate every day.

**Q What elements are necessary for a human relationship to flourish?** (time, trust, communication, experiences together, etc.)

\*\*share brief example from marriage (or other relationship)

Many of these are the same with our relationship with Christ – we need time with him, time talking to him (prayer), time listening to him (the Word), experiences together (learning to trust him, seeing his provision).

\*\*share brief example from your own growth/relationship with God

**Q Do you tend to see your Christian life in terms of a relationship with God or is this thought rather new? Discuss.**

Tonight we want to talk about getting started in this area. Some of you are already doing something to develop your own relationship with Christ. For others, this will be a first. Over the next couple of weeks I'd love to see each of you begin to meet with God, getting to know him in a better way.

**Q Just curious . . . How many presently have a regular (or semi-regular) time to meet with the Lord? How many have ever done this in the past, but aren't doing it now? (don't need to ask this if you already know it!)**

\*\*\*\*\*

### GOING DEEPER

**Handout Brennan Manning *Abba's Child* pages 126-127** (It's typed it out at the end of this document)

Read the first three paragraphs, but first set the stage by explaining John's self reference as "the one whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). This is how John viewed himself and referred to himself in his gospel.

Then have 2-3 group members read the story of the man and the chair – or you can read it. Don't have everyone read it in silence.

**Q The dying man rested his head on Jesus' shoulder. This is a great picture of trust, comfort, intimacy, and tenderness. How do your own experiences with God compare with this story? Is this kind of intimacy completely foreign to your own relationship with God? Have you had similar experiences with God?**

Often our expectations of the "normal" Christian life are quite different from what is portrayed in Scripture. We perhaps think of the Christian life as going to church and living a moral life, maybe studying our Bible and even being involved in missions. These are good things.

But the Scripture also portrays the "normal" Christian life as involving an ongoing, open, honest, growing relationship with our Creator through Christ (notice word pictures of father/son, sheep/shepherd, bridegroom/bride, vine/branches, etc.)

**Q Manning puts it this way – we must be *affected* by Jesus, otherwise our faith is *derivative* (paragraph 3). Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?**

**Q. What would you say, at this moment, is the greatest barrier to developing an intimate relationship with God? Know how? Willingness – maybe you just don't want to? Fear? Time – too busy doing other things?**

## Application

### 31-Day Experiment Introduction

Over the next few weeks, before Thanksgiving Break, we're going to try a group project called a "31 Day experiment."

**1. Have someone read Ps 34:8-10.** The offer is clear – Taste and See that God is good. So, basically the 31 Day experiment is a chance for all of us to "taste and see" that God is good. It's just a program to encourage each of us to get daily time with God.

**2. Hand out the 31-Day Experiment Sheet below.**

(If you or your Bible study members are interested, books of the 31-Day Experiment can be ordered online at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) for \$6.99. The author is Dick Purnell and there are several to choose from.)

They will need to get a journal or some type of notebook to write their answers in each day.

If you are already doing something regularly to meet with God, you might keep doing that. But, if you're in need of getting started, this hopefully will help you.

**3. Walk through Day 1. Show them how you would do it.**

\*\*Share many, many stories and examples!

**4. Set up pairs.** E-mail, call during the week. Next time at your small group, share what we've been learning.

#### Some hints.

1. pray for your partner – to meet with God, to be regular.
2. share what you are learning – with your partner, but with others, too.
3. know yourself – find a good time. out-smart yourself.
4. recognize it will be a battle.
5. journal/write letters
6. don't give up if you fail.

# One-Page 31-Day Experiment

The key to the Christian life is getting to know God better. As we see His love and character more clearly we more deeply desire to serve Him and give our lives to Him. God's Word is the only source of information we have to tell us about the Lord, so one of the ways we can get to know God better is by spending time in His Word.

The 31 Day Experiment can help you grow in your love for God by helping you get to know Him better through these scriptures. Spend the time focusing on the character of God with questions such as: What is God like? Who is God? Why is He worthy of our praise and devotion? Here is a suggested way to spend 30 minutes with the Lord:

## 20 minutes

Read the passage for the day. Write out the main thought of the passage. What does this Scripture teach you about God? How does it specifically apply to you?

## 5 minutes

Write out one specific thing you will apply from what you've learned. This may be an attitude or action.

## 5 minutes

Thank God in prayer for what you've learned. Determine what your greatest need is in regards to your relationship with the Lord. Ask God to meet that need in your life. Bring any other concerns before Him. (1 Peter 5:7)

DAY	READING	DAY	READING
1.	Psalm 63:1-8	17.	John 3:10—15, Numbers 21:8,9
2.	John 10:10-18, 27-30	18.	Philippians 2:1-11
3.	Colossians 2:6-15	19.	Romans 12:1-5
4.	Isaiah 40:28-31	20.	Romans 5:6-11
5.	Psalm 1:1-6	21.	1 John 4:7-13
6.	John 6:22-29	22.	1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
7.	Mark 2:1-12	23.	Psalm 119:1—11
8.	Matthew 22~34-40	24.	Galatians 5:16-25
9.	John 15:1-8	25.	Luke 11:5-10
10.	2 Corinthians 5:14-17	26.	Philippians 4:6-9
11.	Philippians 3:7-14	27.	John 1:1-18
12.	Psalm 34:1-10	28.	Luke 11:5-10
13.	James 1:2-8	29.	2 Timothy 2:1-7
14.	1 Peter 1:3-9	30.	John 15:13-21
15.	Romans 8:31-39	31.	1 Corinthians 15:1-19
16.	Matthew 6:19-33		

***Abba's Child* by Brennan Manning, pgs 126-127.**

If John (the disciple) were to be asked, "What is your primary identity, your most coherent sense of yourself?" he would not reply, "I am a disciple, an apostle, and evangelist," but "I am the one Jesus loved." (see John 13:23-25).

The beloved disciple's intimate encounter with Jesus on Maundy Thursday night did not pass unnoticed in the early church. Offering explicit testimony to John's authorship of the fourth Gospel, Irenaeus (circa AD 180) wrote, "Last of all John, too, the disciple of the Lord who leant against his breast, himself brought out a gospel while he was in Ephesus."

To read John 13:23-25 without faith is to read it without profit. To risk the passionate life, we must be "affected by" Jesus as John was; we must engage His experience with our lives rather than with our memories. Until I lay my head on Jesus' breast, listen to His heartbeat, and personally appropriate the Christ-experience of John's eye-witness, I have only a *derivative* spirituality. My cunning imposter will borrow John's moment of intimacy and attempt to convey it as if it were my own.

Once I related the story of an old man dying of cancer. The old man's daughter had asked the local priest to come and pray with her father. When the priest arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The priest assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me," he said.

"No, who are you?"

"I'm the new associate at your parish," the priest replied. "When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Puzzled, the priest shut the door.

"I've never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man, "but all my life I have never known how to pray. At the Sunday Mass I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it always went right over my head. Finally I said to him one day in sheer frustration, 'I get nothing out of your homilies on prayer.'

"Here," says my pastor reaching into the bottom drawer of his desk. 'Read this book by Hans Urs von Balthasar. He's a Swiss theologian. It's the best book on contemplative prayer in the twentieth century.'

"Well, Father," says the man, "I took the book home and tried to read it. But in the first three pages I had to look up 12 words in the dictionary. I gave the book back to my pastor, thanked him, and under my breath whispered 'for nothin'.'

"I abandoned any attempt at prayer," he continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Joe, prayer is just a simply a matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here's what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because He promised, 'I'll be with you all days.' Then just speak to Him and listen in the same way you're doing with me right now.'

"So, Padre, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm."

The priest was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the rectory.

Two nights later the daughter called to tell the priest that her daddy had died that afternoon.

"Did he seem to die in peace?" he asked.

“Yes, when I left the house around two o clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead.

But there was something strange, Father. In fact, beyond strange, kinda weird. Apparently just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside his bed.”