This study of spiritual disciplines has been written to bring you and the participants closer to God. Without question, spiritual disciplines are challenging to implement; even those “easy” ones such as praying and reading the Bible often get pushed to the side because of busy schedules, interrupted routines, and outright negligence. Yet, these disciplines are necessary to building a relationship with Christ. These are not chores to check off; these are ways to get to know your God. It’s about relationship.

This Bible study covers the ins and outs of what it takes to achieve spiritual growth in the Christian life. By uncovering relationship fears, studying God’s Word, and experimenting with various disciplines, the small group members will come to understand the invaluable benefits of quality time with God.

Advertising this Bible study is very important. Below are some ideas for you to use in a church bulletin, newsletter, email, phone calls, text messages, Facebook events, and more. The descriptions for the lessons are short enough for text messages, Facebook/Myspace status, or Twitter.

Session 1 “Getting to Know You”
In our first session, we will realize God’s deep desire to have a relationship with us, and commit ourselves to developing a deeper relationship with Christ.

Session 2 “Love Letters”
In our second session, we will be challenged to incorporate regular Bible reading, study, and meditation into our Christian walk.

Session 3 “Quiet, Quality Time”
Our third session will focus on the benefits of silence and solitude and the importance of quiet, quality time with God.

Session 4 “Words From My Heart”
In our final session we will realize journaling can be a tool for spiritual growth and be challenged to journal on a regular basis.

If you use PowerPoint, there are suggestions for slides found in the lessons. Each lesson has reproducible handouts for you to use. The main lesson is for you—it is written to you. This curriculum is written to be discussion driven and application oriented. We have provided tips for you along the way to help you and the group feel comfortable discussing the various topics.
SESSION 1  Getting to Know You

MATERIALS NEEDED
Bibles
Copies of Student Handouts
Extra pens or pencils

LESSON OBJECTIVE
Group members will realize God’s deep desire to have a relationship with them, and to commit themselves to developing a deeper relationship with Christ.

CONNECT
To begin this lesson, give each participant a copy of the student handout, “My #1.” Give your group a few minutes to complete the handout. Once everyone is finished, go over the questions, asking for volunteers to share answers. Focus on question number three: How do you nurture that relationship? Discuss the time, sacrifice, and energy necessary to create and sustain a healthy relationship. Also, ask: Why do we invest so much into important relationships? What are the benefits? Segue into the CONSIDER section by saying: When entering human relationships, both parties bring hesitations such as fear, insecurities, guilt, and so on. This is one reason human relationships involve so much work.

CONSIDER
Ask your small group members: What hesitations do we bring into our relationships? The list could include: (POSSIBLE POWERPOINT SLIDES)

- Trust issues—What if this person hurts me, betrays me, or abuses me? Can I trust him or her?
- Insecurity—I am not good enough. I am not pretty enough. I am not talented enough. I am not whole enough. I am not enough.
- Guilt—I don’t deserve this. I shouldn’t be happy when . . . .

Once participants have pondered and discussed various hesitations that keep them from experiencing intimacy and harmony in their relationships, shift the focus from human relationships to their relationship with God. Pose this question: Do we approach God with the same hesitations we bring to our human relationships? Can I really trust God? What if God causes this to happen . . . or what if this is His will? I am too terrible for God to love; I have messed up too much. Can He really forgive me?

Ask your group to write and answer the questions below on the bottom portion of their handout. Assure them these answers will not be discussed, and are only for their personal reflection. (POSSIBLE POWERPOINT SLIDES)
What keeps me from having a more intimate relationship with God?

How can I improve my relationship with God?

We build our relationship with God—get to know more about Him—through Bible reading and meditation, prayer, quiet time (moments of solitude), and worship (both individual and corporate). These are called spiritual disciplines. Of course, this is not an exhaustive list, but it does include the basic building blocks to fostering a more intimate relationship with God.

Oftentimes, spiritual disciplines are viewed as a chore—a task to check off the “Good Christian” list. However, it is important to understand reading your Bible and prayer is not about following rules, but about building a relationship—God loving you; you loving Him. Ask participants: How does viewing spiritual disciplines as a way to build a relationship with God impact your perception of Bible reading, prayer, etc.?

Bible study, prayer, and worship are not only ways for us to love God, but they are also ways for God to communicate with us. God wants to fix the communication gap that arises between Him and His children. How do we know? The Bible. Even as God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, He promised a coming Messiah who would destroy the work of Satan and restore fellowship between God and His children (Genesis 3:15). Years later, in Genesis 12:1-3, God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless him and curse his enemies; God even promised to bless all the nations through Abraham, which came true in the Messiah. God’s ultimate act of reconciliation was extended through the work of His Son Jesus. Jesus is His gracious offer to humanity for a loving relationship with Him. Page after page, book after book . . . throughout all of Scripture we see God reaching out to people.

Ask volunteers to read the Bible verses below. What is God expressing to us in these passages? Write Scripture references on small pieces of paper and place those in a bowl or jar. Small group members can take one paper from the bowl or jar, reading the chosen selection.

(POSSIBLE POWERPOINT SLIDES)

- Joshua 1:9
- Psalm 27:1
- Psalm 100
- Isaiah 43:1-3
- Ephesians 1:7-14
- John 1:12
- John 14:27
- John 15:15-16
- Romans 5:8
- Hebrews 4:16

COMMIT

If we know spiritual discipline is our way to understand more about God and His way of loving us, then what keeps us from following through, from spending quality time with our Redeemer? Think about these questions again:

What keeps me from having a more intimate relationship with God?

How can I improve my relationship with God?

Provide group members with a copy of student handout, “Getting to Know God.” Explain that this handout should be used during the week to aid in their quiet time with God. Challenge your participants to spend 15 extra minutes beyond their usual devotional time this week—a first step to increasing their quality time with God.
SESSION 1

STUDENT HANDOUT 1   My #1

Please answer each question thoroughly and honestly.

What is your most important human relationship (marriage, parent/child, friendship, etc.)?

What do you treasure most about this relationship?

How do you nurture this relationship?
SESSION 1

STUDENT HANDOUT 2  Getting to Know God

What do you treasure most about your relationship with God?

How do you nurture your relationship with Him?

After spending more time in reflection, did you change or add to your answer for the question: What keeps me from having a more intimate relationship with God?

Pray Psalm 139:23-24, asking God to make you aware of any hindrances in your life keeping you from a closer relationship with Him. Ask Him for the grace and strength to overcome those obstacles.

Read the following Bible verses and write what you learn about God.

- John 10:1-16
- Psalm 23
- Isaiah 30:18-21
- Zephaniah 3:14-20
- Philippians 4
- Matthew 6:25-34

God desires to have a relationship with us. We should commit ourselves to developing a deeper relationship with Christ.