

Known By Love

A Real Life Venture In
Christian Relationships



GRAFTED LIFE
MINISTRIES

Known By Love:
A Real Life Venture in Christian Relationships

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Introduction

“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

1 Corinthians 13:13

Welcome to *Known By Love*.

It is hard to overestimate the potential that love brings to our lives—to change hearts, to heal relationships, to overcome evil, to create unity. Love is powerful stuff.

Love sits at the center of our relationship with God. Because God loves, we are loved constantly and completely. When we enter into relationship with God, we are called to love Him in return as a first and foundational commandment.

In Jesus’ Church, love is also a central theme. As members of Christ’s Body, believers are instructed to love one another as Jesus has loved them. Our love for one another is meant to be the mark of our discipleship, our calling card to the world so that they understand that we belong to Jesus.

We are commanded by our Lord to be known by our love.

Yet, in spite of love’s prominence and importance to our faith, many of us are often bewildered when it comes to demonstrating love in our relationships. When we stop to think about it, we wonder what is involved in loving God and our Christian sisters and brothers. Can we just act loving or do we need something more to happen—perhaps to actually become someone transformed by love in our hearts? Our confusion about love can hinder our progress forward or limit our potential to become all that Christ desires for His followers.

So what is the process to becoming someone known by love? How is God involved? What qualities would need to be present in our relationships with others for us to be seen as loving? How could we, as Christians, revitalize our reputation in the world as a community of people who truly love deeply?

In the next several months, *Known By Love* will lead you on an interactive journey to explore these questions with God and your Christian community. Alongside the opportunity to learn what Scripture teaches about love, this study also provides practical exercises to guide you toward becoming a more loving person in all of your relationships. You could say it is a hands-on experience with love.

Sound intriguing? If so, keep reading to learn all you need to know to get the most out of each week. Because this study is likely different from previous ones that you have participated in, the orientation that follows is important. It will help you get your bearings going forward.

Blessings to you as you begin. Our prayers have gone before you and we know that God goes with you. May you feel His love as your companion throughout every step of the journey.

Orientation

In order to get you started on the right foot, we offer these seven concepts to orient you to the type of study you are participating in. Take some time before you begin to reflect on these points. But also keep them in mind as you proceed. It may be helpful to review this page if somewhere along the journey you find yourself wondering about any of the reflective questions or activities in the study.

Known By Love focuses on biblical concepts.

This study begins with Scripture. Each week you will find a set of verses that ground the Lesson for that session. All of the remaining activities are meant to guide you to reflect on the meaning of the biblical ideas and to apply them in your daily life.

Known By Love is interactive.

This study will involve more than just reading, answering and discussing some questions. You will be asked to engage in a comprehensive process towards personal and spiritual growth. From listening to podcast teachings to trying out new relational skills with real people in

your life, you will be invited to learn and practice core biblical principles in ways that truly impact your heart and your life.

Known By Love includes God in the process.

This study emphasizes times of prayer. As you participate in the activities and reflections, you will be asked to talk to God about what you are doing. These conversations are meant to deepen your awareness that God is with you all the time and to strengthen your ability to connect with Him in daily life.

Known By Love encourages you to think.

This study includes many opportunities for you to record your thoughts about the concepts, your relationships and the activities that you engage in. Though sometimes the questions may seem similar to previous ones that you have answered, each one is designed to expand your perspective and reveal your understanding of the weekly concepts.

Known By Love asks you to explore your feelings.

This study poses many questions that focus your attention on your emotional responses. This is done very purposefully. Regardless of our gender, our feelings influence the decisions that we make. They can also affect the dynamics in our relationships. Because of their importance, the reflection questions will often ask you to evaluate what you are feeling. This practice helps you to grow in awareness of your emotional responses and gives you an opportunity to talk openly with God about the state of your heart.

Known By Love flexes with your schedule.

This study is set up in a 12 week format with an approximate 2 hour time commitment each week to complete all of the activities. However, you should feel the freedom to alter the pace of how you engage with the materials. Although we do not recommend that you go faster than one lesson per week, you might desire to slow the process down in order to get the most out of the activities and times of reflection. Allow yourself the time to let the concepts sink in and to practice the relational skills. This journey is not designed to be a speed race, but rather a leisurely walk with God and some fellow Christians.

Known By Love works.

This study includes proven practices that open people's hearts and lives to be changed by the Holy Spirit. But these activities only work if you engage. The practices will require effort on your part. Sustaining that effort may not always be easy. At times, some activities will seem uncomfortable, challenging or maybe even pointless. Some questions might press you, and you may feel resistant to engage fully with what is being suggested to you.

Pay attention when this happens. Rather than force yourself to move on, we suggest that you take some time to talk with God about what you are feeling and to ask for His help in completing what you can. Remember that there is nothing magical about the practices in this study, but there is great potential for change when we turn our hearts toward God. The ultimate work of this study and the point of each activity is growth in relationship with Him and our fellow Christians.

The Activities

Known By Love includes five different weekly activities.

The Lesson

Listening to the audio podcast will begin the activities for each session. Each Lesson podcast focuses on the Scripture for the week, offering opportunities to listen to the verses and to consider application of the biblical concepts in your relationship with God and others. Each recording is between 10 and 15 minutes long and can be accessed on the Grafted Life website.

Note: For those who have difficulty hearing or prefer to read along, we have PDF transcripts of the Lessons available at no additional charge.

The Real Life Practice

After you have listened to the Lesson, you will be invited to practice the scriptural concepts in your life. These real-life activities are relational encounters that you will have between you and God or with another Christian in your life. This notebook will guide you through the process of choosing who you will connect with and any conversation topics that you should cover.

Participating in these conversations will allow you to experience how love is present or lacking in your current relationships. They will help

you to see where growth is needed and where small changes can make a big difference in the way love is given and received.

Observation Notes

After you have completed the Real Life Practice, you will be led through a short series of questions that help you observe what happened in the encounter. These opportunities for evaluation are needed because while we are engaging in relationship, our minds are occupied in the exchange. We have a limited capacity to understand what is going on. When we take the time later to turn our full attention to what happened, we have an increased ability to see the whole picture and expand our perspective. This also gives us an opportunity to include God in the process, asking that His perspective be added to our own insight about the conversation.

Reflection

To complete your personal exercises for the session, you will answer a series of reflective questions designed to integrate the components of the study for that week. These questions will give you an opportunity to revisit the Scripture verses and the Lesson, in light of the Real Life Practice, and consider your own thoughts and feeling about the material. This ending evaluation will allow you to think about what has been beneficial and what you would like to apply going forward.

This time of reflection is also a time of prayer—a time to talk over your thoughts and feelings with God. He will be there to direct your thoughts as you open your heart and mind to what He wants to communicate.

The Group Discussion

At the end of each session, you will find questions for group discussion. These conversation starters are designed to help a group share their experiences with each other. Having the opportunity to verbally process what happened and to synthesize the activities can bring clarity to what God is doing in our hearts and lives. Participating in the group discussion also gives you another opportunity to practice the relational skills of love which are covered in the study.

If you are not participating in *Known By Love* as a part of a small group, we recommend that you invite one or two other people to do the study with you. Going through the process with others can add a helpful dimension to the study experience.

Week 1

Getting Started

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

The Lesson

15 minutes

Listen to the podcast for Week 1. You will find instructions on how to access the podcasts on page 8 of the introduction.

This Lesson introduces you to the context of *Known By Love* and gives you an idea of what to expect as you participate. Each weekly activity is outlined and described, and helpful tips are offered for getting the most out of this unique study.

Reflection

15-20 minutes

Find a quiet place to consider the following questions. Begin your time by reading the Scripture verses for this week.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

✍ What thoughts and feelings do you experience as you read this invitation of Jesus, particularly in light of beginning this course?

✍ What brought you to this study? What are you hoping to get out of it?

Participation in *Known By Love* will require a time commitment each week:

- *Listening to the Lesson podcast – 10 to 15 minutes*
- *Doing the Real Life Practice – 20 to 30 minutes*
- *Writing Observation Notes – 5 to 10 minutes*
- *Answering Reflection questions – 15 to 20 minutes*
- *Sharing in the Group Discussion – 30 to 60 minutes*

✍ Are you willing and able to set aside time for these activities for each week of the study? What practical changes to your schedule might you need to make in order to fully participate?

✍ As noted in the Lesson, God might use this study to reveal things about yourself that you did not know. What's your reaction to this thought?

✍ Becoming a fully loving person takes a long time, perhaps even a lifetime. How do you feel about that idea? Does it discourage you or encourage you as you begin this study?

✍ What do you anticipate will be your greatest obstacle to engaging fully in *Known By Love*?

✍ In light of your answers above, can you offer yourself to God and accept whatever experience He may choose to give you through this study? What would you like to say to Him?

As you end your time of reflection, consider how your understanding of these verses has deepened.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

Group Discussion

30-60 minutes

Use the questions below as a guide for your group discussion. This week, we focused on preparing for this study. We also considered Jesus' relational invitation in Matthew 11:28-30. Refer to your experience with the Lesson and the Reflection as you talk together.

Read Matthew 11:28-30 aloud.

- » From the Scripture passage this week, what did you learn about your current relationship with Jesus?
- » What did you discover about yourself as you considered what it will mean to begin this study?
- » How are you hoping this course will help you grow in your relationship with God and others? What do you want to learn?
- » What are you expecting or hoping to get out of the group discussions?
- » What are you anticipating will be most difficult for you as you engage in the activities and exercises?
- » What would you like to ask God for as you commit yourself and your time to *Known By Love*?

End the discussion with prayer.