



# Revealing Words Bible Study

## “It’s a Relationship Not a Religion”

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### It’s a Relationship. Not a Religion

When I was stationed in Alaska while serving in the military, I was invited to speak to a youth group one cold winter evening. As I prepared, I asked God what He wanted me to share. His answer came quietly but unmistakably, “Relationship with Me.” It was simple yet profound, something every Christian hears about but not everyone understands completely. I knew then that this message needed to be practical, relatable, and real.

When the youth gathered, I began with a question that instantly caught their attention. “How many of you would like to be in a relationship?” Every hand shot up, some confidently, some shyly, but all of them raised. I smiled and asked, “What would you do in that relationship?” Their answers came quickly, “talk on the phone,” “read and write love letters,” “go out on dates” (I’m showing my age since “text one another” wasn’t a thing back then). These were the things that made sense to them, the things that helped them feel connected to someone they cared about. Then I asked, “Why do you want to do those things?” A boy in the back raised his hand and said, “To get to know them better.” His answer was simple, but it opened the door perfectly. I told him, “Exactly. And this is no different from our relationship with Jesus.” The room grew quiet as they leaned in.

I explained that talking on the phone is like prayer. Prayer is our direct line to God. The Bible reminds us, “Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3 NIV). Prayer isn’t a ritual. It’s a conversation with the God of the universe, who loves us deeply. When we talk to God, we’re not performing. We’re connecting.

Then I moved to the second point. Reading and writing love letters is like reading the Bible. God’s written expression of His heart toward us. In Psalms 119 it says, “Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105 NIV). The Bible isn’t just a book. It’s a love letter filled with guidance, encouragement, correction, and promises. When we read it, we learn who God is and who we are to Him and in Him.

Finally, I told them that going out on dates is like going to church or Bible study. These events are intentional time set aside to grow closer to God. I told them that in Acts it says, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46 NIV) and in Ephesians it says, “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV). God encourages us not to neglect

meeting together because fellowship strengthens us, sharpens us, and keeps our hearts aligned with Him.

But then I shared something even more important. I said to them, “If you did all these things in a human relationship without your heart in it, that person would think you weren’t really interested in them.” They all nodded. I continued on and said, “In the same way, God doesn’t want us to go through the motions with Him. He wants our hearts fully.” I told them that the Bible says in Jeremiah, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV).

I reminded them that God isn’t looking for perfect performance. He’s looking for genuine desire to know Him and be in a loving relationship with Him. A real relationship with Him grows when we pray because we want to talk to Him, read His Word because we want to hear from Him, and gather with others because we want to walk with Him. I said to them, “Come near to God and He will come near to you...” (James 4:8 NIV). I told them that we couldn’t be double-minded and live a life as a Christian one moment and as a sinner the next. We had to decide between the two and if we chose a life dedicated to Christ Jesus, we had to do it with all our heart in the same way we would try to do it in a dating relationship.

That night, in a small church room in Alaska, I watched their eyes shift with understanding. They realized that a relationship with Jesus isn’t complicated. It’s intentional, heartfelt, and built the same way any meaningful relationship is built. And when we pursue God with sincerity, He meets us with grace, love, and a closeness that transforms everything.

### **Reflective Questions**

1. When you think about your relationship with God, do you approach Him in prayer the way you would approach someone you genuinely want to know (Jeremiah 33:3)? What areas is God calling you to draw closer to Him?
2. How often do you read the Bible as if it were a personal letter from God to you, rather than just a religious duty (Psalm 119:105)? Make each reading a time to seek His will and draw closer to Him.

3. Do you find yourself going through the motions in your spiritual life, or are you seeking God with your whole heart (Jeremiah 29:13)? What areas are you in a relationship versus going through the motions?

4. In what ways does your prayer life reflect the kind of communication you would value in a close relationship (1 Thessalonians 5:17)?

5. How intentional are you about spending time with God's people, and how does that impact your spiritual growth (Hebrews 10:25)? Set time aside where you can draw closer to God with fellow believers.

6. What does it look like for you to “draw near to God,” and how have you seen Him draw near to you in return (James 4:8)?

7. When you read the Bible, do you look for God's heart toward you, or do you simply read to check a box (Psalm 119:130)? Are you sharing the lessons learned with others?

8. How would your relationship with God change if you pursued Him with the same enthusiasm you would pursue someone you love (Matthew 22:37)?

9. Are there areas of your spiritual life where you've allowed routine to replace genuine desire (Matthew 15:8)?

10. What steps can you take to deepen your communication with God this week (Philippians 4:6)?

11. How does understanding the Bible as God's love letter change the way you approach reading it (2 Timothy 3:16)?

12. Do you believe God desires a real, personal relationship with you, and how does that truth shape your daily life (1 John 3:1)? If you do not have a *personal* relationship with God, press in and make prayer, reading your Bible and going to church/Bible study a time to really get to know God and build a relationship where you communicate with Him throughout your day—everyday.