

ADDITIONAL NARRATIVE RESPONSES

A. INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVE RESPONSES

Lesson 1

Being embraced by God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

Prior to this study I had never really thought of my relationship with God as a marriage. It made me think about my own marriage and what that requires of me in terms of being fruitful and that drew me to the first commandment: You shall have no other gods before me . . . for I am a *jealous* God. He is so faithful even when I'm not (F).

In a society where individualism is so encouraged it is refreshing to be reminded that Christ has an intimate relationship with us for the purpose of creating a holy people. The individual doesn't just stop there; he is part of a larger picture (F).

Encouraging us to read a portion of Scripture and memorize it is an excellent start to this experience (F).

Realizing this love is comforting to me. I'm loved, I'm redeemed, I am in his care (F).

This 10-week session is not what made me feel closer to God. It is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit that has worked this in me on a daily basis. It is my own personal devotions that I feel works wonders in my life. This is what strengthens my faith life and walk with God (F).

I'm not sure the growth happened only because of the learning experience (F).

This 10-lesson journey has been from my head to my heart. I'm grateful for having had this opportunity. I do feel a closer intimacy with my Triune God. However, (and unfortunately), this peace and joy in the Lord is, at times, not as steady as it ought to be. I'm a work in progress (58).

My journey started already before we joined the Bible study (M).

I find myself being embraced in God's love through his Spirit through music and in touching experiences with children or with those who are disadvantaged. We need to be like a child dependent on a parent in our relationship with God (M).

Ten weeks is a long time. A few weeks in, I experienced noticeable growth, but that leveled off, partly because of other events in our lives. Much of this hinges on the opportunity to take time, be still and find connection with God (M).

Can we trust our feelings? Terrorists feel good about bombing infidels. As for understanding—further study of the Word is *enlightening!* I *do* want to learn more about living in union with God. As to success—I guess I would have to poll my family (M).

There is quite a difference between knowing about the embrace and experiencing and/or feeling the embrace itself. I absolutely believe that God wants to embrace me and does embrace me. However, I am learning or trying to learn what it means for me in every day circumstances (F).

Lesson 2

Surrendering to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

I want to surrender everything; sometimes it is confusing. What is human? What is dying to oneself? What is losing your life? (F)

It's easy to say I surrender to God but actually living it is difficult. I am working on it (F).

Thankfully God's presence has always been felt in my life. Though at times it is stronger than others. I feel closer to God now but it isn't like I've never felt this close before (012531).

Surrendering *all* of life is most likely the hardest thing to do (F).

Even as it is my desire to surrender to the Lord, but I often fail to live that kind of life. Yet I am not my own but belong to Him (F).

I really like the song on page 22. You write that your soul can be lost, but this does not seem to capture the intent of the paragraph. It's very challenging to surrender *every* dimension of the soul to God. Once you are aware of this you pay more attention to it. I found myself consciously thinking more on this (F).

Once again it was not the 10-week session but my ongoing faith and life in general that makes my walk with God more intimate through the work of his Spirit. On a daily basis our faith increases and our thankfulness to God (F).

In relation to #7 I would say I always want to surrender. It is not so much this learning experience but how sinful we are and how we need to understand that to understand God's deep grace and mercy towards us (M).

A fresh look at old "scriptures" always renews my spirit. Hopefully they will stay fresh—but I am certain. I will need to revisit them regularly. Is that "doing" rather than "being"? I appreciate what was written on the *soul* (M).

I do have a greater sense of peace, lying down at the feet of the Good Shepherd. The Lord showed me in Psalm 23 that in the order of actions in verses 2 and 3, the first is "*makes me* lie down"—one of complete surrender—before one's soul is refreshed and ready to move on under the Lord's guidance (F).

Surrender is good, liberating, comforting. The Holy Spirit is gracious and so patient. The devil has a way of undoing wish, activities, obligations, etc. He interferes with this time with God (M).

I had significant trouble with the concept of “soul” as described. Substituting “you” each time for “you soul”. E.g. “God wants to enter you . . . “ (M).

Lesson 3

Receiving God’s Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

Receiving is like the embrace. The difference between knowing and experiencing it: when is it real and when do I talk myself into it? When is it the heart? When is it the mind? (F).

It was good to be reminded that we must be *receptive* to God’s love (012531).

I do love to read and meditate on the Word, but I have to continue to be more listening (F).

Not sure if you are trying to say God is also female, i.e. Mother God. God has what we would call feminine characteristics and I can see that these can be developed (F).

I have always felt that my faith is God-generated. As I go through my daily life I want to learn more about God’s love and all that He has done for me through Jesus. The session has not changed that desire to be God-generated but 10 weeks has grown me closer to God (F).

It might be useful to work more on the Father, Son and Spirit interplay (dance)—also in view of lesson 4 (M).

The masculine/feminine distinctions were confusing (M)

The Word touches me with the most impact when it is accompanied with imagery—comparing my soul to a glass that has pebbles in it is effective (F).

I have become more receptive to God’s love in Jesus Christ by using the formational reading method of the Bible—stilling my mind and praying for God to open my heart and to teach me thru the word. Amazing grace! It works (F).

Lesson 4

Visualizing God’s Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

When I look around me I see evidence of God’s love and mercy towards me. I don’t feel a need to look for more evidence. I did through appreciate the [explanation of Rublev’s] icon in lesson

5. That was a beautiful way of showing how each member of the Trinity points towards the other. So we too as children of God must point others towards Him (F).

This was a very effective lesson (507122).

As Abraham offered his son Isaac, so also God the Father sent his only Son to die for *sinner*s. That is love (F).

Visualizing God's Father-Son love in daily things around you makes you more aware of your surroundings, [such as] patterns in the sky, wind and snow. Then when you listen to the news or read the paper, all the murder, violence, injustice, etc seems even more that it violates God's love for us (F).

The 10-week session has not brought me closer to God than was already there and on a daily basis it increases (F)

Some wonderful images discussed (M).

When we did this lesson I realized that I already do visualize God's love and form pictures of unseen realities. But now I understand the importance of this and want to practise it more (F).

This would include experiential, modeling. I think the power of music could have been discussed in this section as well. Personally, the strongest forms of visualization come via creation and visuals—banners, stained glass windows, stories that paint word pictures (F).

Lesson 5

Radiating God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

I want so very much to be like that. Yet I become confused when others (unbelievers) do many good deeds and shine. Is that radiating the love of Jesus Christ whether they know it or not? What about personality differences? What is natural and what is godly? (F).

On page 63 of the Workbook you ask: "What resonance or dissonance do you feel about radiating the vulnerability of Christ?" You changed that to say . . . radiating your own vulnerability. I wonder though if the first was not better, in that we share with others Christ's humanity, showing that He really can identify with our suffering (F).

I've learned that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always radiating their love to each other and also to us. Then I also want to do that to those around me (F).

If you use the word *dance* in the way Eugene Peterson does it sounds very beautiful. He says that the term *perichoresis* was a term used by our Greek theologian *ancestors*. Today I think the word

dance does not evoke such a thing of beauty since much dancing is sexually explicit and immoral (F).

My desire to learn more about God and his love for me has been there for years and will continue. My prayer is always to radiate God's love to all those around me (F).

I want to but, personally, am struggling to do so in my church community. However, personally, at home and with the people I work with, I do feel better equipped to radiate this love. "Dancing with the Spirit—wonderful imagery!! Of the whole series of lessons, this passage in *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (p. 62 booklet) was the most helpful in my growing faith and devotion to God (F).

Relationships with people are what seems to be what we are created to do (live in community with one another). I have had the experience that being around many people in my family that attend different denominations and many people in my work that have not come to Christ in all these relationships. God works through me and those I am in contact with (M).

I don't know how much is possible (radiating God's love) except through the power of the Holy Spirit (M).

It's a journey, which I find sometimes confusing, sometimes tiring, sometimes exciting, sometimes hard to believe it's the truth. Often I feel very little support or understanding or encouragement. A lonely journey (F).

I would have appreciated the opportunity to hear from others—times that they experience this closeness to God (F).

Perhaps some concepts will always be part of the 'mystery' of the faith—but what we *can* know surely is capable of being 'grasped' and God can work out the details. I don't need to defend everything *logically* (M).

Yes, radiating—the evident results of internal belief, through emotions. I'm struggling here because daily challenges and blessing can so quickly make the world look different (M).

The picture of seeing Jesus when you look at others is very helpful. It immediately fills my heart with concern and compassion for that person. I want to radiate that love all the time. It's actually easier to do with strangers than with your own loved ones . . . that's when neediness and sensitivity gets in the way (F).

Lesson 6

Discovering God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

The mystery of God—his redeeming love—we cannot always understand it. By faith we may believe that God sent his Son, not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. Not only for the church as a whole, but also for me (F).

My desire has been to live in union with God for years and the older I get the more meaningful it becomes (F).

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Lesson 7

Representing God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

I am not sure how I represent it to the world. My sphere of influence is quite limited (more like family, friends and church people). What is the presence of Jesus in my life? Do I seek his face or what He can give me? (F).

Emmaus [= Evangelism course] was helpful in starting me down that path of sharing Christ in me (F).

I have the desire to tell others but do not have the knowledge of how this is done (F).

The church stands as a witness and hope in this world, because Christ is our hope. I pray that I may also live that way (F)

I hope that those around me will continue to see that I'm different and want to know why? (M)

What a 'responsibility' (privilege?) the church has to offer the world its only hope in Jesus. We desperately need the power of the Spirit—Eph. 3 (M).

How beautiful it is to represent God's Father-Son love in the world. Yet, how often I have fallen short. I am practising getting dressed in the morning in the armour of God—helmet, shield, belt, sword, shoes . . . and taking my fruits with me (F).

I think the Spirit is teaching me grace and patience to let go of little things in order to represent Him as God. Every type of challenge is an opportunity to show God's grace and love (M).

Really appreciated the diagram showing how the church is central to the gospel and how the church is in the world. Also really appreciated the poem. Reminds me that showing Christ to others never takes a break (F).

Lesson 8

Living embedded in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (F).

I experience a more sensitive awareness of a reality of God and a love for Him. I find it nice to end the day when I lie in bed looking up and feeling Christ's presence in and around me (F).

I would reword question 30 as follows: I understand better now that the Gospel is that Christ has not only given us forgiveness of sins but also works to live in us through the gospel (this needs further rewording) (M).

If Christ does it in me, so why do I not do a better job? Why do I have so many questions? (F)

I try to make this a daily experience but the cares and pressures of daily living sometimes interfere (F).

Christ 'in' me; the Spirit 'within'—is a concept that staggers the mind. If I depend every moment on 'feeling' this—then I've missed the boat. I want to *remember* these promises every day and claim the victory (M).

Lesson 9

Conforming to God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

It is the greatest desire to know the voice of Him who has a plan for my life. I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit to hear this Voice and act in obedience (F).

I have to learn to do everything as unto the Lord; to be in constant communion with Him. Breathe on me, breath of God. Fill me with life anew. That I may love what Thou dost love and do what Thou wouldst do (F).

I became more aware how the Holy Spirit is so very necessary for Christlikeness to be formed in us. We need the Holy Spirit also to work on our association to circumstance or in relation to

circumstance. You might not even like the feelings or wish you didn't have those feelings. If you pay more attention to God entering the soul with his Father-Son love through the Holy Spirit you realize the Holy Spirit can also permeate feelings (F).

I have been praying to be filled with the Spirit long before this course. My prayers have been and continue to be ones in which I focus on being filled with his fruits (F).

I'm still struggling the mind-emotion thing here. My main focus is "Be holy because I am holy" (M).

I answered 'no' to 33-36 because I have often prayed to be filled with the Spirit and don't feel I do it more since this study. Praying on the spot in a difficult situation has awesome results. When I have done this I immediately receive peace/guidance and feel led by the Holy Spirit (F).

I always prayed for the Holy Spirit to live in my heart before this, too (F).

I have renewed my efforts in praying for the Spirit's work in me (M).

It seems like a life-long process of 'sanctification' or conformity (M).

Lesson 10

Resting in God's Father-Son love through the advance installment of the Holy Spirit

I have peace in my heart. I do believe God is in control. I do trust Him fully. I just struggle with his plan for my life. What goals do I set. Are they my goals or his goals? (F).

The resting aspect is something I do struggle with. Sunday, though, has always been a day of refreshing even if it was busy with church and family. It seemed there was renewed energy to face the challenges of the new work week (F).

We may rest in God, who created all things and upholds all things. He has redeemed us and claimed us as his own. What more can we want? We are secure in his Fatherly hand (F).

I have a renewed appreciation for the rest God gives and why it is given. I like the quote that the Sabbath was not primarily about us and how it benefits us. It is about God and how God forms us. It shows how great God's love and care for us is to make us Christlike. We are reminded of it every six days. Visually you see it on the calendar and physically you are allowed to experience it (F).

It's amazing to me that we are already complete in Christ—everything has been finished and even our good works have been worked and prepared beforehand. All we have to do is rest, receive and allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. Wow! I think I will rest more often (F).

Yes, I do, when I lay everything else aside. It is so hard to let go of personal desires, hopes and *agendas* (M)

Resting—a wonderful concept. Often the peace that passes understanding seems elusive (M).

B. UNEDITED OVERALL RESPONSES

1. Male

The more I learn the more I am aware of how much I have to go. Knowing that in this life we will never get there. The 10-week learning experience was good to go through. . . I have found this lesson book to be difficult in language and to too theological. . . . I wonder if we can teach a personal relationship with God through the Spirit. . . I find greater joy in hearing your experiences than in studying them from a theological point of view that has a certain dogma. What has come out of this for me is that we live in a life of wonder. Our culture has taken everything and dissected it into mathematical equations. . . . A quote that I found in my own personal study in these 10 weeks: “We debate the doctrine of God’s great love, but do we ever just bask in it” (Charles Price).

An introductory comment: I think you make far too much of the differentiation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. . . in so doing, made things far too convoluted and complicated and confusing. The gospel of salvation is not about theology. . . The gospel is very simple. . . I found the workbook very confusing and very hard to read. . . I find it far too confusing to speak of being embraced by (1), surrendering to (2), receiving(3), visualizing (4), radiating (5), discovering (6), representing (7), living with Christ in (8), being conformed to (9), and resting in (10) God’s Father-Son love through the Holy Spirit. I did, however, find the multiple-choice questions very difficult. The four domains in which the answers are to be done overlap very much. To deal with the affective, cognitive, volitional and behavioral all in one quick order seems redundant. In many instances it could be said that yes I feel, understand, desire, and actually do more of what I did before the 10-week course. But that does not get at the real issue. Could it be said that I have grown **SINCE** the beginning of the 10-week program. Of course! Could it be said that I have grown **BECAUSE** of the 10-week program. I am not so sure.

2. Female

This study has been a great experience for me personally. It has enriched my faith life and will continue to do so. . . Thank you for teaching this course and for sharing your passion and personal experiences. Doing the exercises has been very helpful. I pray that I would be a better representative of God’s love and radiate his love to others.

Having God in my life has been very important to me. The older I get the more meaningful it becomes. The desire to live with Him and have the Holy Spirit work in me has become stronger on a daily basis and it is my prayer that it may permeate all aspects of my life. The work of the Holy Spirit has become stronger and I pray that I can surrender my whole life to Him. The desire

to show this love to all others also grows continually. This desire has not increased because of the 10-week session. It was always there and naturally increases daily. . . This 10-week session I found too in-depth for people living a self-generated life. The Christian faith is very simple. Believe in *Him!* The seven different aspects of the soul in lesson two makes things too complicated. If Christ is truly in our heart and we desire to do his will, He will through the work of the Holy Spirit guide us in our life. If we already live a God-generated life, this 10-week session makes things more complicated. Keep the message simple. Praise the Lord! God bless.