



INTRODUCTION

Emphasis of the Study Guide

The study guide focuses on your personal experience and attempts to facilitate group discussion which may help shed greater light on your relationship with God. Often, as followers of Christ, we know how to talk a “good game” about information or concepts, but can confuse our knowledge with actually experiencing Him. The questions, exercises, and group discussions in the following chapters provide an opportunity to simply experience Him as we grow in our understanding of how He facilitates our spiritual growth. While this study guide can be used individually, we encourage you to use it with some trusted friends. Scripture encourages us to learn from the Abrahams, Isaacs, and Jacobs, those who have known God in the past as well as our sisters and brothers in Christ today. Our spiritual growth, therefore, happens best in the context of a loving community where God can teach us, not only through the stories of Biblical characters, but also through one another.

Design of the Study Guide

Each chapter of the study guide contains three phases that correspond to three activities we recommend for each week: Reflective Study, Spiritual Exercise, and Group Sharing.

1. We invite you to engage in a time of Reflective Study by yourself. Spend time in prayer. Then take notes as you read the chapter, and record your insights as you study the biblical

- texts. Finally, reflect on the questions about the chapter content.
2. The Spiritual Exercise, also completed alone, provides an opportunity to engage with God in a way related to the content of each chapter.
 3. The Group Sharing guide helps each person explore and share their experiential reflections, providing opportunity to learn from and support one another.

We suggested the following time allotments for the Three Phase Process:

Personal Reflection	approximately 1 hour
Prayer	5-10 minutes
Reading/Notes	varies
Digging deeper	10-20 minutes
Reflection questions	15-30 minutes
 Spiritual Exercise	 20-30 minutes
 Group Discussion	 60-75 minutes

The appendices of the study guide provide resources for further study as well as a chart of the mansions for comparison and contrast while reading the chapters.

Suggestions for Group Leaders

Before embarking on this study in a group, we encourage leaders to consider some important perspectives and keep them central in the life of the group.

First, *Mansions of the Heart* provides a great tool for helping us discern our relative place on the journey of our relationship with Jesus, and how God might be at work in us. We need to remember throughout the study that the mansions DO NOT represent stages to be achieved but places or seasons where we abide during our journey with Jesus. Each mansion describes a beautiful place to experience

God and His grace in our lives. We attempt to identify the general mansions in which we currently journey, not to try to “measure progress,” but to help us better understand our experience of God in that season and participate with God’s loving shepherding in our lives. Leaders should watch for and avoid tendencies to compare and strive as participants consider the various mansions.

Second, our spiritual growth is God’s work; it’s by His grace that we are transformed. However, He invites us to join Him and cooperate in His sanctifying transformation. His work continues, even when we struggle and don’t feel like we’re growing at all. Although He desires that we join Him in making us Christ-like, He doesn’t demand it. He gently and patiently waits until we respond out of love for Him. Leaders should watch for tendencies of participants to try to take responsibility for their own growth by an excessive focus on how to get to the next mansion.

Finally, the depths of relationship with Christ have to be experienced and in many ways can’t be objectively explained. Rather than engaging this study with an intellectual focus, see it as an opportunity to experience the greatest Desire of your heart.

Essentials for Group Discussion and Interaction

Select the right place for discussion to provide a safe and confidential environment where participants feel free to share. The “Time Alone with God” in quiet reflection is also a significant part of the group time. A private room in a church or home often works best.

Facilitate the right mode of discussion. Rather than debating the material, participants should seek to understand it in the context of one’s experience of God. We certainly don’t expect agreement on every thought presented in *Mansions of the Heart*. There may be some things that resonate with some, but not with others. Encourage participants to simply let go of things that don’t connect and focus on what the Spirit enlivens within them. While *Mansions* tries hard to connect Teresa’s observations to the clear teaching of Scripture,

invite participants to investigate the passages for themselves and draw their own biblical conclusions. Each chapter of this study guide includes a section for digging deeper into the biblical text.

Help participants maintain an appropriate spirit of discussion.

We encourage one another as we listen attentively and respond. Encourage participants not to interrupt one another. Before we share, we need to prayerfully listen to what God wants us to share. Begin each time of discussion with silent, reflective prayer as everyone seeks to know the Father’s heart. Allow for quiet and pauses which can facilitate thought and reflection.

Allow at least one hour for group discussion and interaction.

The following general guideline can help you gauge the time needed for each section:

Time with God	5-10 minutes
Review	10-15 minutes
Discussion	30 minutes
Reflection	10 minutes
Prayer	5-10 minutes

While this guideline proposes 60-75 minutes, **utilize a longer group time** to guide the discussion and reflection into those areas that are of most importance for the group. If a longer group time is not possible, utilize smaller groups of 2-3 to engage in the Reflection and Prayer sections in order to allow each person to fully participate and not feel rushed.

Consider how to provide adequate time for the group to share their timelines in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, the spiritual exercise encourages writing out a spiritual experience timeline. We’ve found that sharing our spiritual journey with one another, through these timelines, can be a powerful experience of growth and affirmation. We suggest an extra group meeting or a longer session for Chapter 3.

Facilitate the Time with God section for personal prayer. As a leader, prepare to lead the group in a time of silence, prayer or reflection, depending on the focus of the chapter.

Options for Using this Study Guide for Group Reflection and Sharing

This study guide provides material for all fourteen chapters of *Mansions of the Heart*, and is therefore easily used for a 14 week study. However, here are some ideas for groups of other durations ...

A 6 week study:

Week 1	Chapters 1-3
Week 2	Chapters 4-5
Week 3	Chapters 6-7
Week 4	Chapters 8-9
Week 5	Chapters 10-11
Week 6	Chapters 12-14

A 10 week study:

Week 1	Chapters 1-2
Week 2	Chapters 3
Week 3	Chapters 4-5
Week 4	Chapters 6
Week 5	Chapters 7
Week 6	Chapters 8
Week 7	Chapters 9
Week 8	Chapters 10
Week 9	Chapters 11-12
Week 10	Chapters 13-14

A 12 week study:

Week 1	Chapters 1-2
Week 2	Chapters 3
Week 3	Chapters 4
Week 4	Chapters 5
Week 5	Chapters 6
Week 6	Chapters 7
Week 7	Chapters 8
Week 8	Chapters 9
Week 9	Chapters 10
Week 10	Chapters 11
Week 11	Chapters 12
Week 12	Chapters 13-14

In formats other than a 14-week study, we suggest choosing only one of the “spiritual exercises” in the assigned chapters for that week’s reflection. Leaders can use the group format from any of the chapters, but may combine the Content Review questions to cover more material. A longer group time could also be helpful in facilitating fewer sessions.

We (Ted and Tom) pray that the Holy Spirit will use this material to demonstrate His love to you in possibly new and surprising ways. By the very fact that you are reading this book and taking the additional steps of reflective study and discussion, we know that you have a deep longing, as we do, to know more of our Lord and to experience His work in your life more fully. Jesus makes Himself known to those who seek Him as a faithful Shepherd. We encourage you to present yourself to Him in abandoned release, trusting that He is the one who put that longing within you and He will lead you toward its fulfillment. Dare to take Him at His word and join us in the adventure!

... He who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.... When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.... I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:2-4, 9-10, 14-16

