

LISA HARPER

JESUS

A Scandalously
Devoted, Conspicuously
Uncool, Super-transparent
Homage to Who
Our Savior Is
and How Much
He Loves Us

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This devotional is dedicated to the beautiful sisterhood of women who've been coming to our neighborhood Bible study at Belle's for the past fourteen years. Leaning into Jesus with y'all every Tuesday morning is an incredible joy and privilege. It's also been such a sweet and necessary anchor for my rolling stone kind of life. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

MY DAUGHTER MISSY (YOU'LL hear a lot about her in this devotional if you don't already know her story!) turned thirteen this past year and her passage into pre-adulthood came complete with her first crush. Of course, my lips will remain zipped about exactly who this young man is because all her secrets are safe with me (well, at least until her rehearsal dinner at which point all the romantic fodder from her youth will be fair game for a video montage!). But what I can divulge is that he's a good kid and Missy is momentarily riveted by the contours of his story!

I was sitting across the table from her recently, listening to her wax poetic about who he walked into school with, what he wore that day, when he bumped into her in the hallway (after she "accidentally" stepped into his path!), where he sat while eating his peanut butter and jelly sandwich with the crusts cut off at lunch, and why oh why he and his family don't attend our church or live in a neighborhood closer to ours. I couldn't help smiling over the sweet innocence of her preoccupation, but I also found myself musing, "Goodness gracious, I want to be *at least* as preoccupied with Jesus as my girl is with that skinny little dude."

I want to know who's on Jesus's mind, what He likes to talk about, when His voice gets animated, where He's prone to linger and have long conversations, and why He didn't turn James and John into pillars of salt when those oblivious goofballs brazenly asked if they could flank either side of His future throne (Mark 10:35–45)! I want to know who makes His divine eyes twinkle, what causes the corners of His mouth to curve into a smile, when He doubles over with laughter, where His heart sings for joy, and why He cried outside Lazarus's tomb—was it over His dear friend's death or Mary and Martha's lack of faith that He would ultimately raise him from the dead (John 11:35)? I want to know who else made Him sad, what else prompted tears to roll down His incarnate cheeks, where He went when He needed to grieve alone, and since He's perfectly God why Jesus chose to "learn" obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:8). I want to know what He would describe as the highest mountains and the lowest valleys of His earthly ministry. I want to sample my Savior's favorite foods, listen to His favorite music, and take in His favorite views with my own eyes. I want to

know everything I possibly can about our Redeemer because He is *the Love of my life*—my forever crush!

I've been a Christ-follower for fifty-plus years. I've been in vocational ministry for thirty-plus years. I've spent over a decade studying God and His Word in seminary at both the master's and doctoral level. I've filled in more Bible study blanks than there are stripes on a huge herd of zebras. But I still feel like I've only scratched the surface of knowing Jesus. He is infinitely more interesting than we can wrap our finite minds around; and no matter what new season we enter, it seems like His attributes are *always better*—more compassionate, more accessible, more righteous, more empathetic—than the first, second, third, or thousandth time we encounter them!

No matter where you are in your walk of faith (some of you have known Jesus longer and enjoy a more intimate relationship with Him than I do, while some of you aren't sure that He's anything more than an existential construct and you're not yet convinced He's actually *knowable*), my hope is that while traveling with me on this sixty-day adventure, you'll find yourself leaning more fully into the outstretched arms of our Messiah . . . maybe for the very first time.

And so, as you go on that journey, here are a few things to expect in the terrain along the way:

1. For every day's devotional experience (there are sixty days total), you'll enjoy a passage of Scripture to consider, usually a little humor (because who doesn't need to laugh every now and then in the crazy times we're in?), and some theological nuggets (because I just can't help myself when it comes to sharing tidbits of transformational information I've learned along the path of walking with Jesus for half a century!).
2. Another thing to note is that each day of this devotional centers on either something Jesus *is* for us, or something Jesus *does* in the Scriptures (and in our lives!). Which basically just means I'm purposefully trying to focus our attention on either the *person* of Jesus or the *work* of Jesus—because when you come into contact with those two elements of who He is, you'll never be the same!
3. And last, expect a lot of stories with my daughter, Missy, as a major character. She's been the apple of my eye ever since I started the

process of adopting her from Haiti shortly after her first mother's death in 2012, and God continues to teach me through her every single day.

All that being said, let's dive into Jesus. Because He's not only central to the Bible's story—He's central to the world's story and to *your* story, as I prayerfully hope you'll see by the end of your journey through this book. And it's a good thing to have Him smack dab in the center of your life; because when Jesus is at the center, everything else falls into place.

Love,
Lisa

Day 1

JESUS IS TOTALLY SCANDAL-WORTHY

Then one of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster jar of perfume and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—she's a sinner!" LUKE 7:36–39

I'VE BEEN IN CHURCH since I was in utero. Which means I've heard most of the Bible stories many, many times. Plus, I was raised partly in the Baptist tradition, which means I've seen most of them flannel-graphed! I've also had eight years of masters—and doctoral-level seminary training. The bottom line is: I'm no stranger to the Scriptures. But here's the deal, y'all—God's Word isn't a flat, one-dimensional text that we can memorize and effectively "conquer." It's a supernatural love story with more facets than our finite human minds can possibly master. No matter how many times you hear, read, or peruse a biblical passage, there are *always* new truths to glean and contours to explore!

I recently heard our seminary president, Dr. Mark Young of Denver Seminary, preach on a familiar passage, and I was blown away by a poignant detail I've missed for decades. He unpacked the story in Luke about a woman who washed Jesus's feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, then anointed them with perfumed oil. He explained how every Gospel account includes an encounter where Jesus was anointed by a woman (Matt. 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, Luke 7:36–50, and John 12:1–8). He shared that of these four encounters recorded in the Gospels, New Testament scholars agree that there are at least two separate anointings going on in these scenes, based on the chronological differences and unique characteristics in the individual narratives.

Furthermore, John's account specifies that the "anointer" was Lazarus's dear sister, Mary of Bethany, who was a good girl, despite the fact that she chose to chill at Jesus's feet instead of crushing it in the kitchen like her super-productive sibling, Martha! Yet Luke's account refers to the woman anointing Jesus as a

“sinner” (which commentators say is a euphemism for a prostitute), who was neither a good girl nor a personal friend of the Christ like Mary of Bethany. Instead, the woman in Luke’s Gospel account was likely one of several uninvited guests who’d gathered in Simon’s yard to lean against the wall of the courtyard and eavesdrop on the alfresco conversation and/or beg for food, as was common in the Ancient Near East.

As I read about her in Luke 7, I can’t help but wonder what compelled her to come. Maybe she’d watched Christ engage with a grieving widow who was trudging alongside the pallbearers carrying her dead son’s body and looked on in awe as He raised the boy back to life because that miraculous encounter happens just prior to hers in Luke 7. Some teachers think she put her hope in Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist. Whatever the case, this sinful woman was willing to ignore propriety, invite judgment, and initiate a scandal to get closer to Him.

According to tradition, Jesus and the other fellas (formal meals at that time were segregated by gender) reclined on cushions while they ate because tables in that era were low-slung—more like a rustic coffee table than our modern dining tables. They would’ve leaned on their left elbows and eaten with their right hands because Torah depicted the right hand as superior to the left and, therefore, was considered the “clean” hand (Gen. 48:13–14; Lev. 7:32; 1 Kings 2:19; Ps. 17:7; Eccles. 10:2). And their feet would’ve been extended behind them because feet were considered the dirtiest part of the body, and so, naturally, a Jew would’ve been diligent about keeping those yucky tootsies as far away from the food as possible.

These first-century facets clarify why Luke describes this woman as coming from *behind* Jesus to wash and anoint His soon-to-be-pierced feet. Her tears made fetching a basin of water unnecessary and there was no need for a towel either because she used her hair to dry them. The hair thing is no small detail here (and was sure to make some observers of her demonstrative devotion gasp) because, as you probably already know, women in New Testament culture rarely let their hair down apart from private settings with their husbands. To have free-flowing hair back then was perceived as a very intimate gesture. Which is why Simon started acting priggish and presumed something to the effect of: “If this dude was really a prophet or even a relatively astute rabbi, he

would've realized this chick is trashy and would've removed his feet from her filthy hands!"

I imagine Simon rolling his eyes and huffing indignantly when she continued her consecration with a kiss and then sealed it by rubbing our Redeemer's feet with expensive perfumed oil instead of the standard olive oil that was normally used for anointing (which would've been her most valuable possession if she was indeed a "lady of the evening" as many theologians assert). Based on Simon's mental recoil and ancient protocol, her actions were utterly scandalous.

But Jesus wasn't offended. In fact, He praised her affectionate attentiveness and chastised Simon's lack thereof. Which is the point in the text we get to the marvelous minutia that blew fresh faith into my sails recently:

Turning to the woman, he said to Simon . . . (Luke 7:44a, emphasis mine)

That petite phrase paints a glorious portrait of grace. Because while Jesus reproved this rude religious leader who was oblivious to the fact that *God Himself in the flesh* was his dinner party guest, He was gazing compassionately at the woman Simon dismissed. She was used to men looking at her with lust in their eyes, but our Savior's unconditionally loving focus was surely unprecedented. Can't you picture her tipping that alabaster jar upside down and thumping it with the heel of her hand in response, intent on giving Him every last drop of her adoration?

Propriety is a small price to pay when compared with the invaluable gift of divine redemption.

- **WHAT'S THE MOST** extravagant gift you've proverbially laid at the feet of Jesus?
- **HAVE YOU EVER** been accused of being too excessive in your devotion to Him? If so, did their chagrin dampen your zeal?
- **IF IT'S BEEN** a while since you felt as devoted to Jesus as this woman, explore why. What do you think is contributing to your lack of affection for Him?

Day 2

JESUS IS PERFECTLY DIVINE

The Jews surrounded him and asked, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." "I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in my Father's name testify about me. But you don't believe because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." JOHN 10:24-30, EMPHASIS MINE

WAY BACK IN 2004, long before grown people began pulling hamstrings trying to keep up on the latest social media app or overgrown people began making themselves miserable on Keto (mostly teasing but true from my own half-starved vantage point!), an epic Hollywood blockbuster called *The Passion of the Christ* came to theaters and captured the imaginations of millions of moviegoers. It ultimately grossed more than 600 million dollars with its dramatic portrayal of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It also catapulted the handsome young actor who played the Messiah, Jim Caviezel, to seemingly overnight stardom. A few months after the movie hit theaters, several of my girlfriends attended a large conference where Christian publishers, record labels, and the then-budding faith-based film industry met with ministry, retail, radio, and television representatives to promote their upcoming projects. And much to their delight, Mr. Caviezel was there in person.

I had dinner with a few of them soon after they got home from the conference, and when I asked what upcoming books, Bible studies, or worship recordings they were really excited about, they drew a blank. Neither remembered much at all about the hundreds of faith-based projects they'd been pitched. But honey, they'd become experts on Jim Caviezel because they'd spent the bulk of the two-day conference trying to figure out where he was at any given moment and then, when they located their poor prey, they followed him around the convention floor like starstruck paparazzi! While describing their mission/mild stalking in detail to me, one sighed dreamily and said, "Oh Lisa, if you'd been there, you would've traipsed after him too because that Jesus was absolutely

gorgeous!” I couldn’t help laughing—and they good-naturedly poked fun at themselves—that they were swooning over a man named Jim who’d simply pretended to be Jesus.

I don’t think there’s anything wrong with their momentary crush, although I do think it underscores humanity’s tendency to dumb down our Messiah’s divinity. To rub the shine off His proverbial crown a bit so we won’t be as intimidated by that whole “divine nature” thing He has going on. Associating Him with an attractive actor isn’t much different than referring to Him by anthropomorphic (which is a fancy word that, in the context of theology, means using human attributes to describe God) terms like *copilot* or *homeboy*; it’s simply a way to lower our perceived drawbridge around the King of all kings so that we, as commoners, can access Him. Which, again, in and of itself isn’t necessarily a bad or heretical habit. Heck, the accessibility of Jesus is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament!

We just need to be careful not to throw the proverbial supernatural baby out with the relevant bathwater because the undiluted deity of Jesus Christ is a big deal. After all, when historic Christianity was being built at the *very* start of the church era, the undiluted deity of Jesus Christ was (and still is) one of the foundational walls. From the very beginning of the formation of the Christian belief system, the fact that Jesus has a divine nature—that He’s really, truly *God* in the flesh—is and always has been a nonnegotiable. In fact, the divinity of Jesus was so imperative to our faith that it was the main focus of the first two Christian councils when the need for orthodox boundaries became apparent. Why? Because in the late (AD) 200s and early 300s, church leaders became aware of Gnostic mystery cults and errant teachings that were being circulated about Jesus; namely, that He was of a lesser nature than God the Father. In other words, some heretical yahoos had infiltrated first-century Christian circles and were talking smack about Jesus, which was causing confusion among believers.

In response, Emperor Constantine called church leaders together for the first formal Christian council in Nicaea in AD 325 to prayerfully consider two main questions: *How does this teaching stack up against the whole of what Scripture teaches?* and *What are the implications of this teaching regarding our salvation through Jesus?* Ultimately, the Council of Nicaea concluded that Jesus’s divine nature was the very nature of God, and that He was, in fact, *Immanuel*, God with us.

One of my all-time favorite Christian scholars, authors, professors, and pretend theological boyfriends, Dr. J. I. Packer, eloquently elaborated on this magnificent mystery with this observation:

The really staggering Christian claim is that Jesus of Nazareth was God made man—that the second person of the Godhead became the “second man” (1 Cor. 15:47), determining human destiny, the second representative head of the race, and that he took humanity without the loss of deity, so that Jesus of Nazareth was as truly divine as he was human.¹

He took humanity without the loss of deity . . . that’ll make you think twice before putting one of those “Jesus is my homeboy” bumper stickers on your car, won’t it?

- **THINK ABOUT OUR** modern habit of using anthropomorphic/casual terms for Jesus like *copilot* and *homeboy*. In what ways has this dulled our awe about the fact that Jesus is divine?
- **IN WHAT SPECIFIC** ways do you sometimes treat Jesus like He’s just a man, and not God? What are some practical ways to restore appropriate reverence and awe (not formality or rigidity, mind you!) into your real, intimate *relationship* with Jesus?

Day 3

JESUS IS ALSO PERFECTLY HUMAN

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon. JOHN 4:6, EMPHASIS MINE

When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled. “Where have you put him?” he asked. “Lord,” they told him, “come and see.” Jesus wept. JOHN 11:33–35, EMPHASIS MINE

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. PHILIPPIANS 2:5–7B



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN driving down a road during a rainstorm, and noticed a big body of water gathered to one side of the road—one that you’re sure you’ll hydroplane on if you don’t have enough time to swivel the wheels around the puddle? We’ve all been there, and we’ve all probably thought the exact same words: *Avoid catastrophe!* Problem is, when we dart our wheels away from the puddle, sometimes we overcorrect, sending our car into another type of potential danger. Often there’s a ditch on the other side of the road awaiting us, and if we’re not careful, we’ll drive our car straight into that parallel catastrophe on the other side of the road—even if it was for good reason. Overcorrecting from one sort of danger can sometimes lead us into another sort that’s equally disastrous.

If that’s ever happened to you, don’t worry. You’re not alone. Almost everyone overcorrects at some point, Christians and non-Christians alike. In fact, you could say church history is one course-correction after the other, swinging to and fro to avoid catastrophe, which oftentimes led to overcorrecting.

Just over one hundred years after the matter of Jesus’s divinity was conclusively settled at the First Council of Nicaea, another formal meeting of Christian leaders convened at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. Why another council? What else could possibly need to be settled? Well, an “overcorrection” took place after Nicaea. People were convinced about Jesus being God, which is

great, but the pendulum had swung so far in that direction that a new theory had emerged: namely, that Jesus was fully divine but wasn't fully human. One leader who held this unorthodox view went so far as to insist that when Jesus cried at the tomb of Lazarus, they were faux tears—the tears of an actor!² Here we have a quintessential example of driving into one theological catastrophe in order to avoid another. Ultimately, the Council of Chalcedon affirmed that Jesus Christ has two natures; that He was and is truly divine *and* truly human at the same time, that we don't have to give up one in order to affirm the other. In short, this is the point in history where God's people learned how to avoid the puddle *and* the ditch when it came to who Jesus really is.

This whole history lesson is why we now call Jesus “God incarnate.” He's fully God, but *incarnated* as a human. Or, as I said before, Christ is truly divine *and* truly human at the same time. Granted that's a mouthful and a mind-full. I think it's even more difficult than playing Twister at my age to wrap our human cognition around the fact that Jesus is perfectly divine and perfectly human at the same time! But leave it to my academic crush whom I introduced you to yesterday, Dr. J. I. Packer, to further elucidate this truth for us:

It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14); God became man; the divine Son became a Jew; the Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, unable to do more than lie and stare and wriggle and make noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. And there was no illusion or deception in this; the babyhood of the Son of God was a reality. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is the truth of the Incarnation.³

I wholeheartedly agree . . . the more I think about the King of all kings humbly condescending to wear an ancient pair of Pampers, the more gobsmacked I get! As an adult rabbi, all Jesus did was speak and the wind and waves obeyed Him (Mark 4:35–41). All He did was touch a leper and the disfiguring disease immediately left the poor man (Matt. 8:1–4). All He did was walk up to a commotion taking place on a spooky tombstone-strewn hill called the Gerasenes, where a legion of demons was tormenting a man, and His mere presence caused that

evil gang of satan's⁴ minions to have a conniption fit because they recognized His supernatural supremacy (Mark 5:1–13). Yet, before King Jesus chose to express His divine power and majesty, He stooped to be potty-trained, to learn Aramaic (the New Testament sayings of Jesus are typically recorded in Greek, but His native tongue was Aramaic—more specifically, a Galilean version of western Aramaic—although Luke 4:16–20 reveals that He also read and spoke Hebrew⁵), to do His chores, and eventually to saunter down a dirt road to school like all the other little boys in Nazareth.

He really was fully God and fully man at the same time. And that miraculous reality of what supersmart theology people call the “hypostatic union” is why the author of Hebrews could describe Jesus as our *empathetic* High Priest:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Heb. 4:14–16 NIV)

If you and I could understand, even in part, just how much this passage conveys about our Savior's deep understanding of our human experience, if we could but remember that this Scripture means our Savior can say, “Been there, done that!” with regards to every single emotion in the human continuum—including our deepest grief and most difficult struggles—it would dramatically increase our security as His stumbling saints. Jesus is not some faraway, dispassionate, untouchable, cape-wearing superhero who redeems us from a distance, y'all! Instead, He's an up-close, incarnate, compassionate Redeemer who intimately relates to every, single, thing we've been through or are afraid of going through.

Marinate for a moment in the juxtapositional miracle of Jesus's *divine humanity*, and I bet you'll find yourself leaning more fully into His embrace. Because since He's capable of knowing us completely, His love is surely unconditional.

- **REREAD HEBREWS 4:14-16.** What phrase is the most meaningful to you and why?
- **WHAT PERSONAL "WEAKNESS"** do you most need Jesus to empathize with this season?
- **IN WHAT WAYS** do you treat Jesus as if He's only divine, but not human? What do you miss out on when you forget about His human nature?

Day 4

JESUS IS A PRESENT AND PASSIONATE BRIDEGROOM

“I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him.” JOHN 14:18–21, EMPHASIS MINE

Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself. REVELATION 19:7, EMPHASIS MINE



NOT LONG AGO A friend lectured me about the lack of direction in my love life. I think it was her way of saying the lack of a pulse, since my dating life hasn’t registered a blip on the romantic radar in years. Anyway, she strongly encouraged me to join an online dating service. I thought, *So, it’s come down to this.*

I know finding the love of your life via the Internet has become commonplace in our culture; I’ve seen the advertisements featuring cute couples gazing at each other in adoration, so it obviously works for some people. But it still feels a tad awkward to me. Not as desperate as renting a plane to fly a *1-800-588- please help Lisa get a date*, but awkward, nonetheless.

My friend argued that the main reason I was hesitant about collaborating with a high-tech matchmaker was my pride. And since pride has certainly been my downfall before, her logic made sense. I thought, *Maybe she’s right. Maybe I should just get over myself and give it a try.* So I paid for a three-month trial membership to a Christian online dating service.

Let’s just say I should have followed my initial instincts. I won’t take the time to enumerate all the “date-astrophes” I had as a result of that digital dating adventure. I’ll just share the highlights/lowlights of one because I think it’ll give you the gist of the entire experience. There was a particular gentleman who was witty and personable and even used spell-check in our email conversations, which is quite charming to me because good grammar is more important than broad shoulders in my estimation. Plus, he was gainfully employed and did not

live in his mother's basement. These aren't necessarily nonnegotiables for me when it comes to gentleman callers, but let's just call them "strong preferences."

So anyway, between his humor, grammatical skills, and his full-time job, I got my hopes up and we began making plans to meet face-to-face. Which is when he sent me a lengthy message explaining why he'd never posted a picture on his profile because, while he was gainfully employed, his work was actually entirely online due to his severe social anxiety and hesitancy to leave his house—even for a few hours—out of concern for how his absence could negatively affect the emotional security of the *dozens* of pet cats he'd adopted over the years.

Now, please hear me. I'm not saying there's a single thing wrong with being a homebody with feline companions—heck, I'm a middle-aged woman who likes going to the local tractor wholesale supply store! However, I'm an extrovert who travels for a living and has a daughter who's allergic to cats, so I thought I should probably go ahead and graciously bow out of this whole ordeal before I met this guy since there likely wasn't any long-term potential. Of course, I didn't want to hurt his feelings, so I prayed and pondered how to best communicate the end of our not-quite-started-yet relationship without bumming him out too much, and decided I'd send him a reply later on that evening.

At this point my plan probably sounds well and good to you, but there's a detail I have not divulged until right now. Unfortunately, I wasn't my normal self that night because my doctor had put me on antibiotics and a strong steroid because I had walking pneumonia and a double ear infection. On top of that, he'd also prescribed a sleep aid in light of the fact that the steroid would likely cause me to have trouble sleeping.

So, yes, three medications and one groggy morning later, I woke up to find my laptop next to me in bed and I thought, *Uh oh*. (I know what you're asking: *Why would you assume the worst about yourself, Lisa?* Because one time I'd used my laptop while on sleep aids and unwittingly signed up for an expensive, yearlong book-of-the-month club with an ironclad contract that forced me to pay \$19.99 per month no matter what, and I'd also come dangerously close to buying a time-share in Cabo. Clearly, I wanted to read by the beach.) Then that sinking feeling got even heavier when my fuzzy head cleared up enough to remember the cold, hard truth: I'd tried to email a Dear John message to the potential beau in the middle of my *drowsy-loony* phase the night before.

I immediately opened the dating app and hurriedly scrolled down my *sent* messages—and there it was. In irrefutable, black-and-white digital form was a rambling message that said I was sorry we wouldn't work out romantically but that maybe one day I could come over and . . . wait for it: *sit on his lap!* To this day, I don't know how my brain scrambled *maybe I could meet your cats* with *maybe I could sit on your lap* but it did and, needless to say, that was the mortifying end of online dating for me.

In my admittedly limited but oh-so-humiliating experience, dates just aren't as fulfilling when they're dependent on a Wi-Fi signal. I want real, face-to-face relationships with real intimacy. Thank heaven, Jesus is not some faraway, wannabe suitor using a fancy filter to make Himself look more attractive. Instead, He is the up-close and perfectly passionate Lover of the Bride, His church. He is the Groom who, by giving us His Spirit here and now, offers us infinitely more than a long-distance relationship while we wait to unite with Him once again in glory.

- **IT'S WIDELY UNDERSTOOD** that a soon-to-be bride's priorities are securing a venue, picking out a dress, and choosing her bridesmaids. What do you think our priorities should be as the spiritual soon-to-be bride of Christ?
- **ON A SCALE** of 1 to 10, with 1 being *I can't remember His name* and 10 being *We know what the other one is thinking before we even put it into words*, how would you define the level of intimacy in your love relationship with Jesus?

Valley or mountain top, do you ever wonder what “walking with Jesus” actually means in everyday life? The great news for us is that Jesus is not a *proposition* to be studied, He’s a divine Person with whom we get to engage and enjoy!

In her much-anticipated follow-up to her bestselling devotional *LIFE*, and in her beloved, humorous, and relatable voice, Bible teacher and author Lisa Harper helps you do just that: engage with *JESUS* personally. As you open each page, prepare yourself for a devotional journey of unapologetically gawking at, reveling in, walking with, and worshipping our incredible Savior—and laughing a lot along the way. Because there’s nothing like real relationship with Him in the ups and downs of life!



LISA HARPER is an engaging, hilarious communicator as well as an authentic and substantive Bible teacher that many enjoy hearing in person, or on countless TV and radio platforms. She holds a Master of Theological Studies from Covenant Seminary, and a doctorate-in-progress at Denver Seminary. She’s been in vocational ministry for thirty years and has written twenty books and Bible study curriculums but says her greatest accomplishment by far is that of becoming Missy’s (her adopted daughter from Haiti) mama! They live on a hilly farmette south of Nashville, Tennessee, where they enjoy eating copious amounts of chips, queso, and guacamole.

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