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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

I'm delighted you've decided to immerse yourself in *Love Walked Among Us*. It was my first book, and it's still my favorite. That little story I begin the book with, of my wife Jill asking me, "Do you love me?" was the spark behind my whole discovery of the person of Jesus. I hope these three things happen as you study the person of Jesus:

First, I hope you learn to love in new ways. I still remember the day in March 1991 when I noticed the pattern of Jesus looking at people and then compared that with how inattentive I could be with Jill and others. That insight led to my great epiphany, mentioned in the book, that I was more efficient than Jesus! Of course, my efficiency reflected my shortcoming—how I didn't slow down and look at and value people. I hope, as you study, that you look at Jesus.

Second, I hope that you begin to encounter Jesus' beauty as you burrow into his life. I don't think I can explain how it happens, but I suspect as you read you'll notice me, at times, filled with wonder. I'm still often stunned by his beauty, how complex his love is, how other-centered he is.

Third, I hope that our attention to Jesus' relationships and patterns of love will help you experience an embodied Jesus. Particularly if you've grown up in the church, you'll know about Jesus as Savior but not as a Person. I want you to be able to feel him, to experience him, to pick up his cadences. I can spot my wife a block away just by her walk. I hope you begin to spot Jesus.

Finally, if you are not a believer or have left the faith, weary because you saw one too many Christians who didn't reflect Jesus, I

hope this book begins a path back to the very heart of the Christian faith—the person of Jesus. He is altogether lovely!

Enjoy his beauty,
Paul E. Miller

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PREFACE

The purpose of this discussion guide, a companion to *Love Walked Among Us*, is to help us learn to love by looking at Jesus.

Love sounds simple, but most of us can recall a moment when reality dawned, and we wondered suddenly: do I even know what "love" means? How can I possibly love _____? *Love Walked Among Us* was born out of author Paul Miller's struggle to answer similar questions.

We will have a two-fold primary focus throughout this discussion guide: Jesus and love. Before you begin, take a few minutes to pray and reflect on the following question: whom do I struggle to love? Confess your struggle to God, then keep your eyes and heart open to see where the Spirit may be at work.

Much of what you will be encouraged to do in the following pages won't sound spiritual. *Look, feel, act*—these could be instructions from a self-help book. But the truth is that we don't have the power in and of ourselves to sustain the movements of love. We can muscle through looking and entering into someone else's life for a day or two, but we can't love for the long haul without the power of God's Spirit.

We'll do the easy work of walking you, step by step, through the pages of the book. You will do the harder work of searching your heart and listening to the Spirit. But the Spirit will do the miracle of transforming your mind, heart, and relationships.

We are grateful for the contributions of Timothy Geiger, Matt Mitchell, Jim Arcieri, and Larry Schmidt, who deeply dove into the work of love with their own groups and gave us permission to use some of their questions.

12-WEEK READING PLAN

Week 1: Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 2: Chapters 2-3

Week 3: Chapters 4-5

Week 4: Chapters 6-7

Week 5: Chapters 8-9

Week 6: Chapters 10-11

Week 7: Chapters 12-13

Week 8: Chapters 14-15

Week 9: Chapters 16-17

Week 10: Chapters 18-19

Week 11: Chapters 20-21

Week 12: Chapters 22-24

WHO IS JESUS?

1. Paul Miller had to forget what he knew—or thought he knew—about Jesus in order to discover him as a real person. Discuss which of these false images of Jesus you need to forget:
 - A nit-picking Jesus who cares about the letter and not the spirit of the law
 - A preoccupied Jesus who is too busy with his work to notice specific needs or minister to individual people
 - A dispassionate Jesus who executes God's will without experiencing or expressing emotion
 - A mythological Jesus who shaped the culture we live in but not the actual world
 - Something else? _____
2. When Paul's wife Jill asked him three times if he loved her, he went to bed angrily compiling a mental list of ways he proved his love. Why did Paul respond that way? What did Jill actually mean?

3. Consider the people who have modeled love for you. In what ways were these models positive? How were they negative?

4. We never struggle to love people in the abstract; we struggle to love the unique, flesh-and-blood people God has placed in our lives. Prayerfully identify one person you struggle to love well and write that name here: _____ .

5. What prevents you from loving the person named above? Do you get overwhelmed by his or her needs? Are you too busy judging him or her to reach out? Do you feel trapped or used? Take a few minutes and confess your struggle to God, asking him to use this study to teach you how to love this person.

Part 1

LOVE SHOWS COMPASSION

Chapter 1

A MIND FULL OF SOMEONE ELSE

LOVE LOOKS AND ACTS

1. The first story about the widow of Nain includes details that are easy to skim over. Reread it slowly, visualizing the scene. What strikes you about Jesus? How does he show love?

2. Paul Miller emphasizes that *first* Jesus looks at the widow, *then* he feels compassion. Discuss why this sequence matters.

3. How does it make you feel when Jesus tells the widow, "Don't cry"? (Keep in mind that if you object to something you see Jesus doing, it may be helpful to ask the Spirit to show you why.)

4. Celebrate a situation from the past week in which the Spirit enabled you to love by following Jesus' pattern of looking, feeling compassion, and helping. Share with the group as you feel comfortable.

5. Now identify one situation from the past week in which you struggled to love another person. What happened? How could Jesus' 3-step pattern also help you to love in this circumstance?

6. On page 28, Paul says, "Jesus' tenderness suggested to me a new, less 'efficient,' way of relating." In which areas of your life do efficiency and order keep you from loving people? Be specific.

Chapter 2

LOOKING SHAPES THE HEART

LEARNING HOW TO SEE PEOPLE

1. This chapter explores how love begins with looking. Which specific situations in your life tempt you to look away? (Examples: when my kids are moody; when I've had an argument with my spouse; when my coworker needs help again.)

2. We look away for a reason. What does looking away do for you in the situation(s) mentioned above? What would looking require you to do?

