

women²of faith™

You are
loved

BIBLE STUDY

Embracing
God's Love *for* You

Sally Clarkson & Angela Perritt

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You Are Loved Bible Study: Embracing God's Love for You

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Previously published in 2014 as *You Are Loved: Embracing the Everlasting Love God Has for You* by Love God Greatly under ISBN 978-1-4993-2875-2. First printing by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., in 2015.

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Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Foreword

“I HAVE LOVED YOU with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). . . . When the God of the universe spoke those words to *all* of humanity, it changed everything. And those simple but profound words can change everything for you, me, and everyone in the world.

If you’ve known those words since you were a child, perhaps you take them lightly and are hesitant to embrace them for yourself. If you have no concept of the love of God, you might wonder what in the world these words could mean for you personally.

Wherever you are in your understanding of God’s love for you, the little book you hold in your hand will help . . . and encourage you to embrace the love of God . . . not just for yourself and your family but maybe even in a far broader sense. It will help you understand His love for each and every person in the world. What kind of love is that!

Whether you enjoy the study in those quiet moments when you’re alone or in a small group of friends, our prayer is that you will embrace the reality of His profound love for you. Perhaps you’ll even find yourself humming an old tune you heard as a child, “Jesus loves me. This I know. For the Bible tells me so.” His love changes everything. Even you and me.

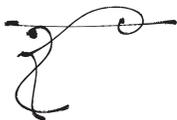
Mary Graham

Introduction

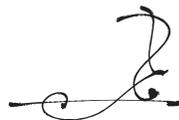
AS THE TWO OF US gathered in Colorado last summer, we dreamed of writing a book together that would inspire, encourage, and point women to the Lord. After prayer and lots of talking, we decided that if a woman truly understands how deeply she is loved, she is free to grow into the potential loveliness that God created her to have. When a woman feels truly loved, she is confident in herself, she is more generous of heart, and her faith grows strong because of the deep acceptance she receives and lives in from her Creator.

Our Bible study has grown out of our own understanding of God's abiding love. It is our hope and prayer that as you grasp this important spiritual foundation, you will be transformed forever. May God's love flow through your life.

Sally and Angela



Week 1



Week 1 Challenge:

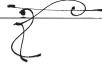
Do you live moment by moment, knowing that God loves you? Do you dwell in the security and assurance of His love, or is there a voice or obstacle that keeps you from knowing His love?

Write down your fears, failures, and faults on a piece of paper. Leave room at the top.

Then across the top of the paper write:

*“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
Nothing can separate me from the love of God. I cast all of these
sins, failures, thoughts away, and accept His love forever and ever.*

Finally, tear up your paper and throw it away. Let it be a physical representation of how God cast away your sin and replaced it with His love.



Week 1 Memory Verse:

*The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.*

*He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.*

Zephaniah 3:17, NIV



CHAPTER 1

He Calls Us Beloved

Sally

God's unfailing love for us is an objective fact affirmed over and over in the Scriptures. It is true whether we believe it or not. Our doubts do not destroy God's love, nor does our faith create it. It originates in the very nature of God, who is love, and it flows to us through our union with His beloved Son.

JERRY BRIDGES

AT THE AGE OF forty-two, after three miscarriages (including one during which I almost died and had to be rushed to the emergency room), I thought I would never have another child.

Then one day my son Nathan, a scruffy, loud, and always moving little boy, came to me and announced, "Mama, I sure do think you should have one more little baby, and it should be a little girl."

"Well, Nathan," I began, wrapping my arm around his little shoulders and pulling him close to me on the couch, "Mama's body is getting just a little bit old, and I haven't been able to have a baby for several years. Remember when I was in the hospital? Well, that was because I wasn't able to keep the sweet baby who was inside my 'tummy.'"

“But, Mama, you always tell us you believe in prayer. Are you willing to pray about it? Maybe God would do a miracle and give us one more little girl. You do believe God can do a miracle, don’t you?”

So I prayed, and sure enough six weeks later, I was throwing up and had morning sickness for the next eight months!

During the last two months this baby was inside the womb, we prayed for a safe, healthy delivery. One of my friends would pat me on my belly as she prayed, and she would always call the baby Joy, since this little one was such an amazing miracle and an answer to the prayer for our family.

In fact, we did name our younger daughter Joy, and she ended up living up to her name. To our family she is a total joy. Perhaps because I never thought I would have a child again, I did not mind the sleepless nights, her cries, or her baby needs quite as much as I did as a younger mom.

Joy moved from a crib to a real bed when she was about two and a half years old. Often, at the crack of dawn she would climb next to me in my bed, squeezing and snuggling tightly against my body. After settling in, she would fall back asleep for a while longer.

Her feather-soft hair would tickle my cheek, and her warm pudgy body, soft to my skin, was a delight to me as I wrapped my arms around this tiny gift and held her tight.

“Mama,” she said thoughtfully early one morning, “this is where I most belong, as close as I can get to you, because I can feel your love better when I am closer.”

Then a smile crept across her little face as she breathed out a sigh and settled into a few more minutes of “love.”

Because Joy was my beloved, prayed-for little girl, I loved having her next to me. I cherished the times I still had a little girl

who wanted to be so near me, one who would trust me utterly. As her parent, I was so thankful she wanted to be near her mama. When she crawled into my bed and cuddled next to me, I was filled with happiness and appreciation of the gift she was to me. I loved it that she loved me! It didn't matter what she had done the day before—

if she had cried a lot
 or broken a mug full of juice
 or fought with her brother
 or disobeyed me

She did not have to promise to be more mature, or confess her faults, or stay away because of having a bad day the day before.

At any time, she could just snuggle up next to me, because as my daughter, she belonged there! I delighted having her near me. She was my own little girl. I loved her with my whole heart, and I loved knowing that she wanted to be close to me and that she depended on me for her security, protection, comfort, and love.

My love for her had nothing to do with her performance. My love was committed, solid, and constant because she was my beloved one.

This is a human picture of God's parent love for us. The very nature of God is to love. He can do nothing else. His love defines Him, so His love for us is settled forever and cannot be changed.

Of course, we will never come close to the perfection or holiness of God. We are selfish most every day! We often say things that are harsh, do petty things, and act in a stingy or angry way. Yet still He loves us and wants us to be close to Him! It is almost impossible to believe that He could love us even when we are not loving to Him.

In the same way that I did not expect Joy to behave like an adult but accepted her limitations as a normal little toddler, so God is mindful of our own limitations and yet still loves us.

God sees us as toddlers, so to speak. Understanding our fragility, our humanness, He responds to us as I responded to Joy. He is mature even when we are not. He is constant in His love toward us, His commitment, His care for our needs, and His compassion for our heart's cry. As our heavenly Father, no matter what we do or how we fail Him, He is the constant one, the responsible one. He knows our frame—that we are weak, immature, and imperfect, but He doesn't require us to perform before we come close. He just wants our heart to trust Him, and He wants us to depend on Him as our loving Father.

When we come to Him as a child—innocent, dependent, trusting, and humble—He welcomes us into the place right next to His heart.

Even as an artist prefers his own art, or a musician his music, so God loves just exactly who we are because He made us this way. He loves His own artwork—us!

He formed us, gave us personality, knows our quirks, crafted our hair and eye color, our stature, our frame. Because we are His very own artwork and design, He takes pleasure in us and understands us as no one else does.

However, many of us spend our whole lives trying to earn the love of God because we think His love for us is based on works. We are a part of the family of God—and so we belong with Him. There is no special ticket, no need to earn or prove ourselves. For better or worse, we have His name, His love, His loyalty, His acceptance.

And because of this we can have hope. He said that He is going to build a place for us—a place to belong where we can celebrate even more in the beauty of His creation.

So often, we want to please God so we seek to keep a list of holy rules or behaviors.

We strive and work and fret in our Christian life to do “God’s will.”

The truth is, we cannot do the will of God until we know and experience the love of God.

As we accept and live within the sweet comfort and security He offers, we will find the strength to live our lives well in a fallen world.

We know our inheritance is sure and we are related to the King, which makes us royalty! Our heritage is beautiful, and we are in the company of all those who have accepted God’s love and allowed themselves to be adopted by Him.

If this is true, then why do we not experience this intimate and secure comfort from God every day of our lives?

If we truly are as precious to Him as my precious little Joy is to me, then what is the barrier? Surely if God is willing to be that close and available to us, our lives should be different because of His love. People should see us filled with peace because we know that God will always be with us and protect us. We should feel secure and special, because we know how great His love is toward us every day.

The more we look into His heart and see His love, the more transformed we will become. We will be at peace, no longer having to work for our salvation. We will have humility, which will come out of gratitude and the desire to share this peace with others who so desperately need to know His love.

Perhaps there will be times when the selfish, immature toddler in us comes out, even as it did in Joy. We may tell ourselves

You eat too much.

You yell at your children.

You have committed sins that are too much even for

God to overlook.

You are too lazy.

You make the same mistakes over and over again.

You complain and whine so much.

You are so selfish.

These messages in our head may be an accurate list of our own imperfections—but they do not define us. Jesus came while we were yet sinners to die for us—even before we asked. We did not deserve it then and we will never deserve it. It is not about “deserving”; it is about His great heart, His deep wellspring of abiding love, His commitment to our well-being throughout our lives.

Today, as you are, as He created you, with that body, that personality, that history, He loves you and considers you special because you are His! And He will redeem your story one day into a great love story with a happy ending—it is who He is; it is the promise He gave you when you were adopted by Him.

A person who feels loved lives with relief that she does not have to perform. She lives with joy knowing she is acceptable as she is. She lives with hope because she is not alone.

WEEK 1

Reflection Questions

READ AND RESPOND TO the questions below in light of the verses that follow them. Each passage highlights something God says is true about His love for us:

1. *Do you realize that nothing you do will ever separate you from the love of God? How can you live into this truth? Even the dark moments of your life that seem to obscure Him from your eyes do not hide you from Him. He is with you always. Psalm 139 tells us that even the darkness is not dark to Him. He is your shepherd. He died for you. He wants to guide you, show you compassion, and show you mercy. He loves you, and you can never separate yourself from His love.*

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:37-39, NIV

2. *What does it mean to you that God is a warrior big enough to fight your battles? Imagine Him fighting for you today. You must turn to Him and allow Him to lovingly guide you and give you His love. Imagine Him singing over you out of His delight. That is what we read, and it is true!*

The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17, NIV

3. *There is only one one-word definition in Scripture about God—God is love. His very essence is love! And when you learn to accept that God’s love for you is freely given, no matter what you do, you will begin to love others as He loves you—with grace, generosity, and without condemnation. Can you think of anyone in your life who needs to know this kind of love from you and from God?*

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:7-8, NIV

4. *What about when you blow it—again? You are impatient and yell at your children. You don’t measure up to your ideals. How can you quickly restore your fellowship with God and others?*

The verses below show us God’s true nature—He has compassion on us in our weakness and difficulties on this earth. When we turn our hearts to Him, we will find Him to be slow to anger. No matter who else in our lives is impatient, God is patient. He overflows with love and will always be there for us because He is faithful.

You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Psalm 86:15, NIV

Prayer:

Dear Sweet Father, thank You for always loving me. Help me to come close to You, as a child to her mother, because You want to be my strength, help, comfort, and provider. Thank You that there is no limitation to Your love and that it will always be with me and guide me. In Jesus' sweet name I come!

Week 1: Monday

Read: Psalm 139

SOAP: Psalm 139:7-10

S Write out the **Scripture** passage for the day.

O Write down one or two **observations** from the passage.

A Write down one to two **applications** from the passage.

P **Pray** over what you learned from today's passage.

Week 1: Tuesday

Read: Romans 8:35-39

SOAP: Romans 8:37-39

S Write out the **Scripture** passage for the day.

O Write down one or two **observations** from the passage.

A Write down one to two **applications** from the passage.

P **Pray** over what you learned from today's passage.

Week 1: Wednesday

Read: Zephaniah 3:17

SOAP: Zephaniah 3:17

S Write out the **Scripture** passage for the day.

O Write down one or two **observations** from the passage.

A Write down one to two **applications** from the passage.

P **Pray** over what you learned from today's passage.

Week 1: Thursday

Read: Isaiah 43:1-7

SOAP: Isaiah 43:1, 4

S Write out the **Scripture** passage for the day.

O Write down one or two **observations** from the passage.

A Write down one to two **applications** from the passage.

P **Pray** over what you learned from today's passage.

Week 1: Friday

Read: Psalm 86:15

SOAP: Psalm 86:15

S Write out the **Scripture** passage for the day.

O Write down one or two **observations** from the passage.

A Write down one to two **applications** from the passage.

P **Pray** over what you learned from today's passage.

