

# YOU ARE LOVED

## WEEK 1 - OVERLOOKED

One day as I was cleaning the house, I had an overwhelming sense that I was missing out on something. Why I felt this way was a mystery to me. Have you ever felt this way?

As I pondered this, I realized that what I was missing out on was time with God. During the summer months, life becomes busier as we try to make the most of longer days and warmer weather. The end result is that God is pushed to the back burner. We overlook God.

Check out Isaiah 43:4.

You are what to Him? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

I am not sure where you are in your relationship with God, but one thing is certain my friend: He *loves* you. My favorite part of this scripture verse is “*because I love you.*” The beauty of this scripture is that it reveals the entire Bible as a love story of God and His people.

Often when we feel like we are missing out on something, we have a deep sense of fear that we are being overlooked. When things go wrong and hurt steps in, we start to feel like others have it better than we do. We begin to question, “God, what about me?”

How often in your life have you wanted to be in someone else’s shoes? To have what they have or to be doing what they are doing? The feeling of being overlooked or missing out has less to do with others and more to do with our relationship with God. God is the one who gives us our identity and worth. No job, person or material thing will ever be able to give us the security that is found only in God.

When you take the time to converse with God in prayer, you begin to recognize God’s love for you.

Take a look at Psalm 139:1-18.

How involved with God were you in coming into the world? Can you list all the ways?

God made only one of you. You are unlike anyone else who has ever lived or ever will live on this earth. You are NOT overlooked. Your whole purpose is designed by God the Creator. By moving God to the front burner this summer, you will see for yourself that you are LOVED. Your unique gifts were specifically designed for you and only you. You can be confident that your Creator gave you everything you need.

Turn to Isaiah 49:16. Whose name is written on His hand? \_\_\_\_\_.

The ultimate proof of His love for you can be found in John 3:16. God gave up His only Son, for your salvation, all because He loved you and wanted you to be with Him for eternity. As you turn to God in prayer this week, keep in mind that YOU MATTER TO GOD!

Here are a few Scripture verses for further reading: Romans 5:8; Romans 8:35-39; 1 John 4:16.

### **Discussion questions**

What is your prayer life like in the summer time?

Are there any doubts about God's love for you?

Do you see yourself the way God sees you?

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## WEEK 2 – EVERLASTING LOVE

Why is love so hard to write about? Because love defies a definition. We measure God's love to how we have been loved. Therefore, no one can agree on what love is. But no matter how you describe love, it is the one virtue that will continue on into eternity. Today my goal is to set you on the path to an intimate, loving relationship with the Father.

What is holding you back from receiving God's incredible gift of love? There are three central obstacles to experiencing this love. Maybe no one has ever shared the Gospel with you. Perhaps you have given up on having a relationship with God. Or, possibly you've given in to the temptation to ignore God's love. No matter what it is that is holding you back—hurt, disappointment or a lack of commitment, God's perfect love is there for you.

When you turn away from God and sin, it becomes hard to believe that God still loves you. We fear God's perfect love because we are not perfect. When we confess our sins and turn back to God, we stand in the rays of His unfailing love for us. Through all your challenges, our merciful God continues to shower you with love.

Check out Ephesians 2:4. What does God's great love offer us? \_\_\_\_\_.

God's love is genuine, sacrificial and unconditional. God's love is *agape* love. It's the truest, most pure expression of love. This type of love indicates it is more than an emotion, it is an action.

Turn to Jeremiah 31:3, God has loved you with a \_\_\_\_\_,  
and He has drawn you with \_\_\_\_\_.

In Jeremiah, did you notice that the past tense was used? "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Here we are reminded (again!) that God loved us even before we were born. And He will love us forever. What a magnificent gift!

Turn to Psalm 145:8-9. We are reminded again that the Lord is rich in \_\_\_\_\_. And what does God give you with His love? \_\_\_\_\_.

God desires to give all of us his perfect love freely and openly. 1 John 4:19 states, “We love because, he first loved us.”

This week, use your prayer time to open yourself up to receive God’s love. Look into your heart and see what is holding you back from accepting God’s unconditional love. Focus on letting God’s love seep into your heart. You won’t be sorry.

Here are a few Scripture verses for further reading: Isaiah 54:10; Psalm 86:5; Psalm 52:8.

### **Discussion Questions**

Do you feel love is easier when it is conditional versus unconditional? Why?

What keeps you from accepting God’s unconditional love?

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## WEEK 3 – MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

The past two sessions we have looked at God and his everlasting love. Today let's focus on love for yourself. I think we as women have a hard time receiving love from God and others because we don't love ourselves or feel that we are worthy.

Mirror, mirror on the wall I don't like ... Can you think of some things you may have said to yourself as you stared in the mirror? It is easy to be complimentary to others but when it comes to ourselves we are much more critical. I had not realized the negative self-talk I had been doing until it came time for me to video tape a Bible series sessions. I froze and did not want to see myself on a video recording. I pleaded with God to help me with this obstacle.

Now I would like for you to turn to Luke 10:27.

What are the two great commands?

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The second command to love your neighbor as YOURSELF, struck me in a profound way. I knew that I was to love God with all my heart, soul and mind, as well as to love my neighbors. However I skirted over the last part; to love myself. God spoke to my spirit in such a profound way. Did I question God on who he was or did I feel God messed up when he made me? Wow!

How can we love others if we do not love ourselves? In 1 John 4:19, we love because he first loved us. In order for us to love we will need to go to God who will show us how. If we want to be kind to ourselves it will be important to spend time with God who will fill us up with his love and truth.

Perfectionism is the culprit for women of today. We strive to have a certain weight, look, hair style, education, career, etc. Often times we will not move pass one of these hang ups until one

of them is met with perfection. The self-talk could go like this, “When I ..., then I will ...” The hiding game goes in to affect. In our Father’s eyes you are perfect and you belong to Him. He loves you unconditionally and He wants you to love yourself unconditionally. You have it more together than you think.

To be critical of ourselves is in essence saying God messed up. Let’s take a look at three ways we can be kind to ourselves.

1. 1 Peter 3:3-4, where does inner beauty come from?
2. We know God is all perfect. What does Songs 4:7 say in regards to you?
3. Psalm 139:13-14. In verse 14, what do we know full well?

An exercise I would like to close with today is for you to go to your mirror and take a good look at yourself. If one negative thought comes to your mind, I would like you to say, “Deliver me Lord.”

It is time to be kind to yourself starting now.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What negative things do you say or think about in regards to yourself? Be open and real.
2. Is it easy to stand in front of the mirror and like everything about yourself?

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### WEEK FOUR – LIVE OUT LOVE

The last three weeks we have talked about the love of the Father and how we can love ourselves by using what He has taught us in the Bible. In this last study session, let's focus on our marching orders: LIVE OUT LOVE.

This study came to me last winter as I was preparing for a women's conference. As I prayed about the conference, an intense feeling of love kept coming into my heart. The question which kept coming to mind was: do women know they are loved? The theology class I had just finished had focused on morality. After I completed the final exam, a couple of thoughts continued to get my attention: the first being a call to holiness and the second being that judgement belongs to God. The course was tough and challenging. I felt convicted especially when it came to having rash judgements on people, situations, beliefs and convictions.

The night before the conference I had an opportunity to visit with Kathy, the chairperson of the conference, and her daughter. They shared stories with me about the amazing women of their church community. I was blessed to share with them that what I felt that God had put on my heart to talk about was the love of God. I also shared the experience I had with my morality class. I spoke about my call to live a righteous life and to be nonjudgmental of others. I would bring those points into my study on how to live our lives with a spirit of love.

Kathy's daughter expressed that 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 would be a logical starting point on how to live out love. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

The Apostle states, if we do not have \_\_\_\_\_, we have nothing.

In this chapter, Paul outlines moral guidelines in the letter to the Corinthians. The Apostles stand firm on the notion that everything we do should center on love. In all our abilities and services, if we do it without love, we gain nothing. So we can either do it for the glory of God or for ourselves. If we do it for ourselves, we lose the power that love gives us. Paul instructs us on what love is and what love is not. Essentially when we do good things for our own gain, those acts lose their meaning their power to spread love. Division is the outcome.

In verses 4-7, Paul describes what love is not. When actions of \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ are a part of our actions, division will  
always occur. Can you see why Paul says that without love it will all mean nothing?

We all know this, however life isn't easy. We become over extended and tired, and loving others becomes a challenge. Once I was visiting with my pastor about how frustrated I get with myself for losing my patience when I am tired. I asked him if he had any suggestions. He suggested keeping track of my triggers to help to begin to gain control of my human nature. But he also prompted me to take a deep breath, step back and pray. Basically I was to put myself in a timeout.

So we have the guidelines for living our life with love. First, keep your tank filled up on prayer and the Scriptures. And then, go out and love others. Show the world what the love of Jesus has done for you. Can you imagine if each one of us took what we have learned and demonstrated that love to those around us in our neighborhoods? From neighborhoods, to cities and then the entire world--- how could one person change the world? Yes, it is possible to live out love, and it can start with you.

Love the people that God has surrounded you with. Open your heart and let that love come streaming out of you! I promise you that you (and the world) will be happier.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. When do you find it hard to love others?
2. What did you gain from this four week study?