

You Matter to God

Week One

are especially important to God. Of all the billions of encounters God has with individuals, these are the moments He most wanted captured in print and saved throughout time for us - **for you** - to know. God's Word tells you something very important about who He is, something He wants *you* to understand in a very real and very personal way. As you reflect on this story, listen to it from God's perspective. Listen as if He is right there telling you the story face-to-face and listen as if you are hearing it for the very first time. **Please read Genesis 1 and 2.**

Think about Adam and Eve. What challenges might they have faced? What feelings?

From God's point of view: Considering God's perspective, how might this event have impacted Him and what He desired?



As you consider this story as a significant moment in God's own life, what captures your heart?

I am struck by the "incomplete" nature of the first five days. When God had only created light and separated it from the darkness, God considered it a full day's work and said that it was good. "Let there be light!" ***It was enough for the day and it was good.*** The next day He separated the waters above (sky) from waters below (lakes and seas). That was all, yet it was enough for the day and it was good. On the third day He created land and all sorts of growing things. *From my perspective this was a banner day.* Why? Because I like to see things happen, to see things be accomplished and look complete. It was good and I can see why. But then on day four He returns to the issue of light and darkness, the work He began on day one. Now God creates the sun, moon and stars. Did you notice that when God created land, flowers and trees (day 3), the sun was not yet created? God didn't add that to the picture until day four! *What?* It feels a little backwards in my human thoughts, but not to God; He was pleased to order things in an interesting way. You see, He returned to what He began on day 1 and now gave light a physical source apart from Himself (as if any of creation could ever be separated from its maker). Then on day five He returned to the work He began on day two, adding birds to the skies above and fish to the lakes and seas. He added to the work He'd previously begun, work that He had been thoroughly satisfied to call "good" while He knew it was yet incomplete. And finally on day six He returns to all that He had created on land and added animals and man. Whew! ***Finally finished.***

I don't know about you, but sometimes I get frustrated that God doesn't just thoroughly finish one area of my life before moving on to another. He comes back to areas and builds on His previous work, not because the previous work was not adequate or valuable, but because He has more to add there. Not only that, ***He calls it "good" while it is still in process.*** Day one was just as "good" as day six. I think the only reason day six was "very good" was

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because He had finished creating our world and had created the human race. Even now, He is still busily building and re-creating in our lives and world. But in creation, the original plan was set in motion and it pleased and satisfied Him.



Now consider your own life. What are the “incomplete” areas in your life that trouble you?

As we will further explore, our part in the process is to be paying attention and cooperate with His work. **Are you paying attention and cooperating with His process? If not, why not?**

If so, in what ways can you rest in His estimation that today's growth is “good” while still not fully complete?

Please read Hebrews 11:1-3. **Where do you need faith to believe that God will create something for you out of something that does not yet exist?**

With what new hope or insight do you close today's study? Write it here as God's special gift to you and keep this thought before you.



God's special gift to me: _____

This week's theme: “I _____.”



Take-Away: God's process within me is good while still not complete.

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Day Three: Just Between You and Me



Make your whole self available to God. Rest quietly and reflectively. Each day's journey builds upon the one before it, seamlessly flowing together to weave the fabric of our lives. Most days will be left with situations that remain incomplete, issues that have yet to fully unfold. While there are occasional moments of resolution, most of the things God will teach us will develop over a span of time, with one day's questions added to the next day's process. We can learn to recognize what God is doing within us when we actively pay attention to the areas that remain tender, troubled, or unfinished. *As you reflect on yesterday's events, what made an impact on you?*

Name here any thoughts, questions or feelings that linger.

Ask God where He may be moving in these things and record what stirs in your thoughts here.

As Jesus responded to people, He often asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" What does your heart desire for God to do for you in these unfinished situations?

Lay all these things at His feet, choosing to quiet your mind and heart further, trusting that He IS at work in these things, even if you cannot yet see it. Ask Him to become more real to you and that His work in these things would be more evident to you. Nestle in closely now and listen expectantly as God shares His heart with you. **Now please read the following:**



God has always wanted you. Before there was light, before there was an earth, before there were animals and before He created Adam, God wanted you.

"Long ago, even before He made the world, God loved [you] and chose [you] in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.

His unchanging plan has always been to adopt [you] into His own family by bringing [you] to Himself through Jesus Christ.

And this gave Him great pleasure."

- Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

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[I have exchanged the plural word “us” in this passage with the singular word “you” for a more personal application.]

You are not a random addition to a sea of people over a sea of decades caught up in a sea of time. You are a very specific dream that God desired so intensely that He made His dream a reality. When God created you He did not intend for you to figure out life alone. Instead, He created you to be a beloved child in His family, interacting with Him. Like a devoted father adores his children and invests himself in them, so God wants you to engage Him deeply.

God's desire towards you is constant even as you begin your first feeble attempts at a relationship with Him. Because of what Christ did for you, you are accepted by God when you take hold of Jesus' offer of redemption. You will have quite a journey ahead of you in God's renewal and restoration (sanctification), yet God makes Himself fully available to the heart that is committed to Him and to pursuing life His way. ***Even in the midst of the re-creation process, you are a very good creation.*** As a matter of fact, you bear a striking resemblance to your Creator.

The Bible tells God's story of Who He is from His own perspective. We have a tendency to focus on the human element in the Bible, seeing things from the human point of view. Yet God (in the three persons of the trinity) is the only consistent participant in His story. Mankind has bit parts here and there, but through these stories God chooses to illustrate ***who He really is***. In the course of your lifetime, God wants to demonstrate who He really is ***through the story of your life with Him***.

God began His story with us in Genesis, as He brought His dream to life through His spoken Word. He created the world as a backdrop for the thing He coveted most: ***a family that resembled Him***. Because of His sense of kinship with us, He put His own hands into the process of forming man. While holding these new creations, He placed in them His own imprint, His own divine reflection. God literally breathed His breath into man. We are the only ones who, like God, are spirit beings. Genesis also tells us of God's continued interaction with man through conversation and friendship. God had made Himself fully available to the man, and so demonstrated the intent of His heart to be “*God-With-Us*”. That is exactly how God wants you to know Him: *God-With-You*.

God-With- _____
(Your name)

This is the theme throughout God's story: ***He created us to be with us***. He talks about it incessantly. He illustrates it continually. Then He makes His intention tangible, in flesh-and-blood, so that we will finally believe Him. He sent Jesus, *God-With-Us*. Every year at Christmas we celebrate a wonderful truth: Jesus as Emmanuel, which means *God-With-Us*. God loved His creation so much that He chose to move through the human creation process to be birthed fully into our world. When I was a child I imagined I could walk beside Jesus and talk with Him. I imagined how safe I would feel if I were sitting with Him. As a young adult, I could picture myself again with Jesus, but not in my innocence as before. I saw myself approaching Him in my worn and tattered state. The Gospels demonstrate that He would welcome me tenderly. The New Testament tells us that once we have accepted Christ's offer

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of exchanging our sinfulness for His sinless-ness, our unworthiness for His perfect worthiness, then we have full access to God Himself. There are no more barriers. To completely cross the visible and invisible realms, and seal our connection with Him, God places His active presence, HIMSELF, in us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Not since Adam walked in the garden with God Himself has mankind been given such a precious and incredible offer. Christ has given you full access to God Himself. ***You can walk and talk with God.*** Along the path you walk every day, along the route you drive to work, at the kitchen sink as you do the dishes, in the darkness of the night when no one else is awake for you, ***you are not alone.*** God wants to be that kind of friend to you. He wants you to know the rest that comes from allowing Him to carry the full weight of your future upon Him.

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*"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity.

I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord,

"and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NIV)

Looking back at what God says in Jeremiah 29, we see He has been specific with us about what He desires from us. *"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."* God wants you to join Him in conversation. He has already set plans into motion that will bring you hope and a good future. He is waiting for you to engage Him in conversation, to ask Him what He is thinking, to ask Him what He wants you to do. He promises that He is listening. *"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord."* He **wants** you to discover Him. He **wants** you to know Him. He **wants** you to see Him.

"I will gather you..." He says as a picture illustration of what He does for you through the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. He will gather together all the pieces of you that have been lost or that have been stolen over the course of your life. Throughout the books of the prophets, God continually asserts His desire to rescue His people and then to create an astounding life of promise for them. His plans for you are the same. **God wants an interactive relationship with you.** According to His own words, He is looking for a give-and-take exchange. He will not extend or accept the illusion of intimacy; He wants you to invite and pursue an authentic connection with Him.

You may acknowledge the belief that God is present in this world and even in your life. This is not, however, the same thing as experiencing God's Presence. The abundant life that you crave is found in the experience of God's specific and personal interaction with you. That joy is found in beginning to recognize God's fingerprints in the events surrounding you, and in absolutely knowing that it is God Who is speaking to you.



Does your heart feel joyfully welcome in God's presence at all times?

If you do not have a joyful freedom in God's intimate presence, what do you think may hinder your complete freedom?

Does your heart truly believe that your Father loves you just as much as He loves any one else?

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Just how involved do you believe God is willing to be in your life?

“The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord.

He delights in every detail of their lives.

“Though they stumble, they will not fall,

for the Lord holds them by the hand.”

- Psalm 37:23-24 (NLT)

For the sake of understanding, I want to define “godliness” very simply. **A godly person is a person who is God-centered or God-focused.** While they must give their attention to countless details every day, their gaze is continually drawn back to God. They choose to evaluate all things within the context of God’s work and presence within them and around them and through them. **No matter where you are in your journey with God or in your maturing process, you can be a godly person.** When you choose to see God as the center of your life, and then place all of life’s happenings securely within the framework of God’s plans for your life, you give God free reign to reveal and express and demonstrate Himself in ways that will astound you.

How might your life change if you arranged your entire perspective to always be expecting God’s involvement in all the details of your life?

What area of your own heart or life most resonates with what you’ve considered here?

How do you need to respond to and cooperate with God?

With what new hope or insight do you close today’s study? Write it here as God’s special gift to you and keep this thought before you.



God’s special gift to me: _____

This week’s theme: “I _____.”



Take-Away: I can learn to walk and talk with God in an intimate way.

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My Heart's Response ~ Please read Psalm 33

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Day Four: At the Teacher's Feet



Make your whole self available to God. Rest quietly and reflectively. Each day's journey builds upon the one before it, seamlessly flowing together to weave the fabric of our lives. Most days will be left with situations that remain incomplete, issues that have yet to fully unfold. While there are occasional moments of resolution, most of the things God will teach us will develop over a span of time, with one day's questions added to the next day's process. We can learn to recognize what God is doing within us when we actively pay attention to the areas that remain tender, troubled, or unfinished. ***As you reflect on yesterday's events, what made an impact on you?***

Name here any thoughts, questions or feelings that linger. _____

Ask God where He may be moving in these things and record what stirs in your thoughts here.

As Jesus responded to people, He often asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ***What does your heart desire for God to do for you in these unfinished situations?***

Lay all these things at His feet, choosing to quiet your mind and heart further, trusting that He IS at work in these things, even if you cannot yet see it. Ask Him to become more real to you and that His work in these things would be more evident to you. Nestle in closely now and listen expectantly as God shares His heart for you through His written Word. The Bible is a collection of moments in time, moments that are especially important to God. Of all the



billions of encounters God has with individuals, these are the moments He most wanted captured in print and saved throughout time for us - ***for you*** - to know. God's Word tell you something very important about who He is, something He wants *you* to understand in a very real and very personal way. As you reflect on this story, listen to it from God's perspective. Listen as if He is right there telling you the story face-to-face, and listen as if you are hearing it for the very first time. **Please read Genesis 3.**

Consider Adam and Eve. *How would each one tell their story? What challenges did they face? What might they have been feeling?*

Adam might say, "Well, I

Eve might say, "Well, I

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From God's point of view: *Based on the text and everything else you know of God, what do you think God's feelings were as this story unfolded?*

Considering God's perspective, how might this event have impacted Him and what He desired?

While we often focus on what Adam and Eve lost, what did God lose? _____

As you consider this story as a significant moment in God's own life, what captures your heart?

Now consider your own life and point of view. Keep in mind those issues you laid before His feet before studying today. Where might you be facing similar challenges or feelings?

As I read this account, I am struck once again by the way God holds us accountable for our choices. From start to finish, the Holy Word is filled with examples of **God's response** to individuals' choices. Even Jesus said that He was only saying what He heard God saying, doing what He saw His Father doing and following whatever He understood His Father's will to be. (See John 8:26-29.)

We must accept responsibility for our choices.



Adam pointed to Eve, and Eve pointed to the serpent, but God held all three of them responsible. No one got off the hook because they'd been coerced. Neither will you or I. There is very little we do while under genuine duress. Oh, how we feel the pressure of what others might think, or the pressure of wanting our own way rather than God's will. None of that will make us exempt; ***nothing will make us exempt.*** Each of us has been given the ability and the responsibility to make many small choices every day, and many of those choices will affect more than our own lives. ***Our choices have a ripple effect for good or for ill.*** When we choose badly we like to hide, just like Adam and Eve. Hiding behind fig leaves... what are our fig leaves? Anything we use to camouflage or hide the truth of our choices. ***Just like all of mankind, we're still choosing, and when we don't choose well, we're still hiding.***

What choices are you struggling with right now? _____

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What camouflage do you most frequently employ? (What fig leaves do you hide behind?)

How do you need to respond to and cooperate with God? _____

With what new hope or insight do you close today's study? Write it here as God's special gift to you and keep this thought before you.



God's special gift to me: _____



This week's theme: "I _____."

Take-Away: My choices have a ripple effect, for good or for ill.

(Optional) For further study: Romans 5:12-21

1 Corinthians 15:22, 42-49

Day Five: What He's Singing Over Me



Make your whole self available to God. Rest quietly and reflectively. Each day's journey builds upon the one before it, seamlessly flowing together to weave the fabric of our lives. Most days will be left with situations that remain incomplete, issues that have yet to fully unfold. While there are occasional moments of resolution, most of the things God will teach us will develop over a span of time, with one day's questions added to the next day's process. We can learn to recognize what God is doing within us when we actively pay attention to the areas that remain tender, troubled, or unfinished. *As you reflect on yesterday's events, what made an impact on you?*

Name here any thoughts, questions, or feelings that linger. _____

Ask God where He may be moving in these things and record what stirs in your thoughts here. _____

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As Jesus responded to people, He often asked them, "What do you want me to do for you?"
What does your heart desire for God to do for you in these unfinished situations?

Lay all these things at His feet, choosing to quiet your mind and heart further, trusting that He IS at work in these things, even if you cannot yet see it. Ask Him to become more real to you and that His work in these things would be more evident to you. Nestle in closely now and listen expectantly as God shares His heart for you through His written Word.



Open your Bible and read Isaiah 42:16 slowly. Stop anywhere you find yourself struck by something you've read. *Record your thoughts here:*

Now read it in this translation (NLT). Insert your name in the blanks.

"I will lead blind [_____] down a new path,

guiding [her] along an unfamiliar way.

I will make the darkness bright before [her]

and smooth out the road ahead of [her].



Yes, I will indeed do these things;

I will not forsake [_____]."

Spend time with it; listen to what is going on inside of you and record it here.



No matter where you are in your faith journey, God is continually walking you through seasons of change and growth. Short are the stretches on familiar paths, and long are the stretches on unfamiliar paths. This does not have to be frightening or disheartening, ***for God has intended your journey to be an adventure! He is with you, my sweet sister, He is WITH YOU!***

What happens within you as you consider this passage today?

What is the greatest comfort in this passage for you? _____

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With what new hope or insight do you close today's study? Write it here as God's special gift to you and keep this thought before you.

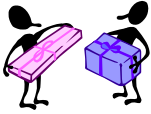


God's special gift to me: _____

This week's theme: "I _____."



Take-Away: I don't have to see the path ahead because my God is gently leading me.



Gathering together with other believers and sharing with one another is vital for a flourishing relationship with God. Even in our study of Adam and Eve we see the dynamic that humans need other humans. ***Spend a few minutes looking back over your week's entries. As you think back on all that has happened in this last week, where do you recognize God's fingerprints, whispers, or guidance?***

What is your most significant "take-away" this week? Prayerfully consider how you can share this with someone this week.

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