Session Four

Loved

WOMEN'S RETREAT | NOVEMBER 6–8, 2026

We already addressed security, identity, belonging; now, we are going to attempt to tie in purpose and competence to the reality of being loved

I. Loved

A. The topic of love, particularly from a Biblical vantage point, is vast…so broad!

1. The Hebrew word for love is *hesed* or *chedsed*
   a. It encompasses the idea of steadfast love, often translated everlasting love
   b. Throughout the OT is appears over 250+ times.
2. In the ancient Greek there are multiple words to describe love: *eros* describing sexual love, *philéo* describing brothering love, *storge* describing family-type love, and *agape*
   a. **AGAPE** is the most common form, appearing 320 times in the NT
   b. Most often it is referencing God and His self-sacrificial, unconditional love for humanity (e.g., *John 3:16*) but it also describes the active, faithful, selfless, sacrificial love of believers *(I Cor. 13)*
   c. It is not based on pleasure or desire but rather is it a choice of the will
3. Paul prays that believers would have the power to understand the enormity of God's love *(Eph. 3:18-19)*
   a. **How long?** From eternity for all eternity
      1. God the Father loved the Son "before the creation of the world" *(John 17:24)*
      2. God the Son loved the Father: *"I do exactly what my Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14:31)*
      3. God loved us and chose us before the foundation of the world *(Eph. 1:4)*
         - There has never been a time when God didn't know about us and love us
   b. **How wide?**
   c. **How high?**

> *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:11)*

   d. **How deep?**
      - It reached down from heaven to earth into the grave—the realm of death and therein "descended into the lower parts of the earth" *(Eph 4:9)*

B. God is love

Love is not just something God does or that God shows, but it is His essence; it is intrinsic to His character and His nature *(Romans 5:8; I John 4:16)*

Questions for Reflection

Where then is the struggle when it comes to love—receiving it, giving it, perceiving it? Where is the love? Why do we not sense this all-encompassing love on the daily? Wherein lies the disconnect? What runs interference with our sense of being loved?

II. When Expectations Are Revered, Love Might Just Disappear

A. Unmet expectations of God's love

1. We have created our own expectation of what God's love should look like and how it should behave
2. When life's circumstances or the actions of God do not meet those expectations, we allow the enemy to cast doubt, resulting in the questioning of God's loyal love, which ultimate leads to disillusionment and even faulty conclusion!
3. Such reasoning is flawed because our expectations are tainted by sin *(I Cor. 13:12)*
4. Example: The Unmet Expectations of Naomi *(Ruth 1-4)*

B. Unmet expectations of human love

1. We have created our own expectation of what human love should look like and how it should behave toward us, especially of others in the body of Christ
2. When the love of another does not meet our expectations, we allow the enemy to cast doubt, resulting in the questioning of love which ultimate leads to disillusionment and even faulty conclusion!

III. God's Expectation of Our Love as His Children

A. He expects us to love like He loves

1. From eternity past God has been and continues to be in a perfect, loving relationship as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit)
2. God created us in His image *(Gen. 1:26)*
3. As God is relational, so man was created to be relational
    - Adam alone, not in a loving relationship with a suitable match, was deemed **"NOT GOOD"**
    - Adam and Eve in a loving relationship became exceptional, deemed **"VERY GOOD"** (more accurately reflected/imaged the love of God)

B. He expects us to be in a loving relationship with Him

> *The greatest commandment is… "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30)*

C. He expects us to be in a loving relationship with others

a. 2nd commandment: *"'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31)*

b. New commandment: *"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other" (John 13:34)*

c. Mandate: *"Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God" (Eph. 5:1-2)*

d. **The highest goal is love**

> *"Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love. Let love be your highest goal!" (I Cor. 13:13-14:1)*

IV. Loving Well—My Purpose/My Competence

A. Human beings long to be loved

> *"The persistent cry of humanity is for someone to love us. Our need for relationship is even more powerful than our need for food." (Why You Do The Things You Do; Clinton, Tim; Sibcy, Gary)*

B. A recent poll of 3500+ American adults conducted by the Harris Group in '2025 identified relationships as is a key source of meaning and purpose

> *"An overwhelming 92% of adults recognized relationships as a key source of meaning in their lives. Family emerged as the most commonly selected source of meaning (77%), followed by friendships (62%), romantic relationships (47%) and pets (39%)."*

Yet...

50% said they lack real companionship often or some of the time	54% of adults feel isolated	50% feel left out	69% needed more emotional support in the past year than they received

Closing Challenge

You want purpose in your life? Do you want to find meaning in the day-to-day? You want to be truly seen? You want to be intimately known? Then I propose you start loving the way God loves—pursuing loving relationships, not only with God but with the other image-bearers all around you!

Questions for Session Four

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Question #1

According to Tim Clinton, a well-known Christian counselor, "The persistent cry of humanity is for someone to love us. Our need for relationship is even more powerful than our need for food." Would you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Question #2

In the story of Naomi, we learn that after losing her husband and both of her sons, she chose to call herself Mara, meaning "bitter." Overwhelmed by grief and left without the security and provision of a male family member, Naomi believed that the Lord's fist was against her.

If you had walked in Naomi's shoes, would you have questioned God's love and goodness, too? Can you recall a time when pain, loss, or disappointment caused you to question whether God truly loved you?

Question #3

In this session, we discovered a striking contrast in the 2025 Harris Poll: 92% of adults identified relationships as a key source of meaning and purpose, yet 50% reported lacking genuine companionship.

If we value relationships so deeply, why do so many of us struggle to build and maintain them? What do you think stands in the way of the meaningful connections we long for? What stands in the way of being seen, known, and loved?