

## ARE YOU CONVINCED GOD LOVES YOU

Do you really know how much God loves you? Women today are so busy. There are so many demands on their lives. Most of you work outside the home, some of you even work two jobs. Then you have to come home, take care of your family and do everything your children need you to be. You have to be there for your husband. He has had a hard day. There is just a lot going on in a woman's life. Besides that, she has dreams and visions of things she would love to do with her life. Some of you do not even know what you would do with your life if you had the chance. I hope through this series of 12 lessons you will have a wonderful idea of how much God loves you and how much He wants to help you become all that you could possibly become. I think most people are not convinced how much God loves them. Most people have a concept of God like this: He is up there, I am down here, God is busy, I am not going to talk to Him about my problems because He has all these starving people. He has all these people with real problems. Why would I think that God would have time for me?

God lives outside time. He looks at time differently than we do. Do you remember the Bible verse that says, "A thousand years is but a day to God." He sees your life from before you are born. When you are a twinkle in somebody's eye, God knew you were going to be born. In fact, it even says that before the foundation of the earth, He had already decided to have you born. He had a plan for your life. Did you know even the miracles you are going to do have already been planned? Everything happens according to God's plan.

What happens to most people? Most people have done things they are ashamed of. They have done things that they do not want anybody to know about. Maybe they just really have not done anything. That is another reason why people say, "Why would God be interested in me? Who am I? I do not even have an education." In Colossians, it says, God does not care about education. God does not care about race. God does not care about nationality. He does not even care if you are a male or a female. To God, we are all the same. He wants to use us. God has a wonderful plan for your life, just wonderful. You would love it. But most people never find it. In these lessons to come, I am going to talk about how you discover God's destiny for you. But, first, you have to know God loves you. How are you going to do that? What do you have to do to get past your pain, your mistakes and know God loves me?

I know I struggled with it. I had a lot of hard things in my life. A lot of family issues, a lot of personal issues. I was sexually molested. When that happens to you, it really messes with you more than you realize. It affects areas of your life that you do not even know it affects. It can make you feel like you do not really belong. Something is wrong with me. There is just a lot that goes on with that. When you have trouble like that behind the scenes that nobody knows about, you have struggles. Does God really love me? Yes, He does.

How do you know when your husband or your best friend loves you? Everybody needs a good friend. If you do not have a good friend, you need a good friend. Ask God, "Give me a good friend, Lord. I need somebody who loves you, somebody who wants to talk about you, somebody who will encourage me to grow and I could encourage her." We all need friends; women especially need friends. Men are from Mars. They really are. But then, we are from Venus. Yet God wanted us to marry, so He knew what He was doing. Your husband needs to be your best friend, but you also need a woman friend. There is just nothing like one. I have one. We have been friends for 25 years. We talk on the phone almost every morning at 6 o'clock, sometimes 5 o'clock. We have even called each other at 4 o'clock saying, "Are you up yet?" "Yes, let me get some coffee." We laugh, talk, share and pray. Through all of that I get encouragement from her that God loves me. She will say, "Oh, Betty, God is doing this and God is going to do that with you. Let's talk to the Lord about this." We motivate one another. That is what you need, because they are the people who know God. They are the people who can help you see God. They can help get God explained to you. Look for good friends. Really knowing that God loves you comes slowly. It is not like, "Okay, God loves me, I accept it." It is like any friendship. You have to get closer and better. You have to spend time together. You have to talk like you really talk.

Listen to what God says in the Bible in Isaiah 49:14-15, "Jerusalem says, "The Lord has deserted us." Have you ever felt like that? The Lord has forgotten us. Do you ever feel like that? Listen to what the Word of God says, "Never, never, I do not care how it looks, He has not forgotten you and He has not deserted you. Can a mother forget her nursing child?" If you have ever been a mother who nursed a child, you know your mind is on them constantly. Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? Absolutely not. I used to have a jail ministry for about ten years. It did not matter what those women had done, they always said to me, "Can you get in touch with my child and make sure my child is okay?" There is just a mother love that every woman feels. Yet God says in this verse in Isaiah 49, "Even if that were possible, I would not forget you." You have somebody who will never desert you, never leave you and never forget about you, no matter what.

Psalms 139 is a good chapter to read over and over and over if you are struggling with God's love for you. At the first church I attended where the people really loved God and were on fire for God, an older woman came up to me and said, "You need to read Psalm 139 every day for a month." I hardly knew the Bible. I had been in church all my life and hardly knew the Bible. I thought, "Okay, I'll read it." When I read it, I thought, "It really says that?" When you are reading the Bible, it is really important that you get a translation that speaks to you. King James is good and I love it. I read it a lot. But it is kind of hard to read. The New Living Bible is good, the Message Bible is good. The New International Version is good. There are all kinds of Bibles that you can read. Just pick the one that when you read it, you can tell this is God talking to me and He loves me. Psalm 139 says, "Lord, you have examined my heart and You know everything about me." It is nice to think that there is somebody who knows everything about you and He still loves you. Now that is love. If I sit or if I stand up, God knows it. It says it right there in the Bible. He knows my every thought.

Sometimes people say, "Well, I don't know how to pray." And they say, "It doesn't sound very good when I pray." Just talk to Him like you do somebody you are totally comfortable with. He already knows your thoughts. Sometimes I have thoughts that are not very good. They really are not and I am embarrassed. Maybe I am mad, have a bad attitude or something like that. Instead of thinking that God is not listening, it says He knows my every thought so I just sit down and talk with Him. "Lord, look at this what I'm thinking. Isn't that awful? Help me. Tell me not to think that way or not to be that way." It develops a personal relationship between you and the Lord. It comes on slowly and you have to work at it. Just like any other relationship.

So, here it is, You know every thought, every moment, You know where I am. Sometimes I am out shopping. I do not want anybody to know where I am. I just need time away from everybody. Yet, every moment, You know where I am. You know what I am going to say before I even say it. That is good, because sometimes the Lord has to say to you, "Do not say that, you will be sorry." The mistakes I have made when He has told me that, I have wished so many times I had just kept my mouth shut because I should not have said it. It says, "You both go before me and You follow me. And You put your hand of blessing on my head." This is too glorious, too wonderful. It is just hard to believe, but it is true because God cannot lie. He is not a respecter of persons. If He loves me, He loves you. If He loves you, He loves this person. God has enough love that when He looks at you, it is like, "You are the most wonderful thing I have ever seen. I love you. I love you more than anybody in the world." He feels that way about all of us. I want you to know that love.

If you have never asked Jesus into your heart and your life, you do not even know what I am talking about. But you can know. Just right now say, "Jesus, I don't know you. I want to know you like that. I want that kind of relationship. I am a sinner. I have done all this stuff." And Jesus says, "I know. I know everything you have done. I love you anyway. I love you so much, I gave My life for you." If you do not have that kind of relationship with Him, just bow your head right now, say, "Jesus, come into my life, touch me. I want to be different. I want to really have You in my life. I don't want to say I do, I want to really have it." If you mean it with all your heart, He will come in. You will have a different life and know what I am talking about. The love of God will be spread abroad, all over you. Smeared on like butter, smeared on like jelly. The love of God will be covering you. He will fill you up so much, you will want to love other people because there is always so much love left over.

It even says, "You were there when I was being formed in utter seclusion." Some of you think, "My parents did not want me. They have told me I was a mistake. They have even said, 'why were you ever born?'" Maybe you were the product of a rape or the product of an affair. But I want to tell you what the Word of God says about you. It does not matter how you got here. All that matters is that God wanted you here. Listen to this, "You saw me before I was born and You scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Every day was recorded in your Book." How precious it is, Lord, to realize you are thinking about me constantly.

Have you ever had somebody you thought so much of, you found yourself thinking about them a lot? You just thought about them all the time. That is how God is. You are so precious to Him, He thinks about you all day long. What else do you need to know? Why do you have such a hard time believing me? You have a hard time because you have not had enough experiences with God. One time, I used to have this jail ministry, as I told you and my husband is a veterinarian and I met this lady at a party for veterinarians for Christmas. We were just having a polite conversation and she says to me, "I'm an atheist." I said, "Oh, really?" I did not know what to say, so I just started telling her about my jail ministry. She said, "That is very interesting. I'd like to go with you sometime." I said, "Okay." Her name was Tippy. She was from Rhodesia in South Africa. She started going to the jail with me and watched how I prayed with the women. She saw what God did, but she did not believe. She said, "I just can't believe." I said, "Oh, Tippy, let me tell you what to do." Go home and ask God for something that is really important to you. Then when He answers it, you will know He is real. I did not see her for a couple of weeks. When we got back together she looked different. She had a glow and she had joy. I said, "Tippy, what happened to you?" She said, "Oh, Betty, I went home and got down on my knees. I knew what I wanted to ask God for. I wanted to ask God for \$5,000 to go home to Rhodesia to attend my sister's wedding because we didn't have the money." "So, I got down on my knees and I thought, 'I just can't ask God for something like that.' And so, she said, 'I said, Lord, I just yell at my kids all the time. Please help me not yell at the kids.'" She said, "A couple hours later, my husband came in from work and he said, 'Tippy, you will never guess what happened today? We got a check for \$5,000 in the mail to go to the wedding.'" And I said, "So, Tippy, do you believe? Do you believe now?" She said, "Of course I believe now, Betty. If God could care about me, a little ant on an ant hill, of course I could believe that Jesus Christ could die for me." Do you remember when I said God, in the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, knows your thoughts. He knew her heart. He knew what she wanted and He listened and cared.

He also wants to help women with their children. We all think, "If I can ever get this kid raised," especially in their teenage years. But God cares about you. Out of that love you get from experiencing Him, walking with Him, talking to Him, telling Him how you really feel, there is an overflow in your children. God will help you raise your kids, too. He can tell you what to do with each child. We are all different. All of your children are different and it requires different ways to raise them. Sometimes people have a hard time believing God loves them because of their parents. Unfortunately, some of us have had parents who were hard to deal with. They had issues of their own that were overwhelming them. I see that a lot. People say, "My dad never had time for me. He worked all the time. My mom worked all the time. They just left me alone." One woman told me, "My mom was such a social butterfly. She was just so busy doing all of her parties and everything. I was just in the background and shuffled along with people to take care of me." That is why you have trouble believing God loves you if you have a parent who did not pour out love on you.

I knew a lady who was not that attractive, but she really liked herself. I said to her one day, "Why do you feel so good about yourself?" She said, "Oh, my daddy just loved me so much. My daddy always told me, 'You're wonderful. I love you. You're the cutest thing. I've just always believed that about myself.'" Maybe you did not have a daddy who did, maybe your daddy died or maybe your mom and dad got a divorce. It is hard for you to believe that God could feel that way. If you have a distant parent, then you feel like God is distant. If you have an abusive parent, you feel like God is going to get you and hurt you. Your parents teach you. They teach you about God without even realizing it.

Sometimes you have sin issues. Sometimes you are an orphan. Are any of you orphans? Then it is even harder. What you need to learn, though, is everybody has hard times. Did you know that God scheduled every day of your life. Some of the stuff I have been through, I thought, Lord, why? Why did that have to happen to me growing up? Why did I have to have all that in my

family? One time, I asked the Lord that. I just opened up the Bible casually, looked down. It opened to Ecclesiastics and it said, "It is good for a man to bear the yoke of his youth." I thought, "I probably would have been spoiled rotten. I probably would have been a brat. I probably would have not had anything but me, me, me, me, me. Instead, when you go through hard times and you conquer them, then you have a compassionate heart for other people because you know what it feels like. Never let anybody tell you, "Oh, look at your life. You'll never be anything." It is a lie. It is a lie from the devil because that is not what it says in the Bible. It says God scheduled every day of your life. Sometimes, we are way over here. We are so far off track, God is over there with His plan. We are out here going, "Nope, I'm going to do my own plan. I am going to do it the way I want to do it. Everybody leave me alone." Crash! Does that happen? Then you have to say, "Okay, Lord, I'm sorry, I want to be in Your plan."

The Lord has a plan for your life, the devil has a plan for your life and you have a plan for your life. Which one are you going to follow? I can tell you right now, the one with God is the one to follow. If you are a man and had a \$5,000, custom-tailored, Brioni suit made; they know this shoulder goes up, this shoulder goes down a little bit. They know that this arm is just a little bit longer than this one, so this sleeve needs to be a little longer. You have to tuck it in here because your waist is made that way. It is tailor-made for you. If somebody else put that suit on, it would not fit the same. You need to understand God's plan for your life is like that. He loves you so much, wants to take you places and do things with you. He wants to just bless you. Let Him do it! Receive it. He wants to do it for you. Also, you need to get to know the Lord so well that when the devil accuses you in your mind, "God doesn't like you. God isn't going to help you. God doesn't care about you. God is mean." You can say, "No, He is not. I know Him."

I have been through some pretty hard things in my adult life. It would be pretty easy to say, "I don't think the Lord is helping me. I don't think He cares." One time I went through something so hard. We went through that financial stuff in the late 1980s when all the savings and loan institutions were failing and businesses were failing. There were so many bankruptcies in the paper every day. It was really hard. We were trying to sell a house during that time and could not sell it. I remember saying at the beginning, "Lord, I know you love me and I want to go through this trusting you. Help me to get all the way through it trusting You." One day the pressure was so great. I was in my kitchen. I just grabbed my Bible and pulled it to my chest and said, "Devil, I guess I need to tell you something. I know God, and I am trusting Him. You might as well leave me alone because I am not going to quit trusting Him. He will take me through this because He loves me." You need to be like that. Get to know Him.

Another thing you can do is keep a journal of all of the specific times that God has spoken to you or you have asked Him questions and He has answered it; miracles He has done for you; miracles He has done for your children, for your husband, for your family because you will forget them. I have kept a journal 35 years. In that time, I forget about things God has done for me. I am glad I have it. I can look back and say, "In 1988 God did that for me. Look at that!" You could call it your Journal of Love or Journal of Relationship. That is what God is looking for, relationship and closeness. When you think the God who created the stars, the God who created all these birds with all these colors, all these fish with all these colors, He is a genius. Yet, He repeatedly says in the Bible, "I love you, I want to know you, I want you to know Me. I want us to spend time together."

It is like an important man, the President of the United States, everybody wants to get to know Him. Everybody wants something from Him. Everybody is trying to have meetings with him. All it takes is that phone call from his little girl and he drops everything and talks to her, "Hi, Honey." She says, "Hi, Daddy." It is not hello, Mr. President. That is the way you talk to God. You do not have to say, "Hello God, dear God of the Universe." There are times that your worship is so deep you feel that, but most of the time it is just like a father and a daughter talking. Teach your children that, too. Teach them how to pray young. Teach them how to know God. You can get books on knowing God. You can get books that teach you how to practice praying and how to practice the presence of God. There is one like that by Brother Andrew. There are books on knowing God, experiencing God. These are the kind of things that you can do along with a Bible to study how to get to know God better.

Always remember the times of His faithful love for you. You need to have two or three that you remember God did this for me, God did this for me and God did this for me. Tell yourself, "Don't

you dare think He doesn't love you." He does. He loves you dearly. If you get depressed, read all of the Psalms, especially the chapters in the 40s. God loves you!

#### QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. What realization is important to understand before fulfilling your destiny with God?
2. What Scriptures tell you that God loves you?
3. How has your relationship with your father affected your relationship with your heavenly Father?
4. What type of relationship does our heavenly Father desire with us?
5. What are some ways to help you understand that God loves you?

To watch the video on ARE YOU CONVINCED GOD LOVES YOU, Pillar Two, Intimacy with God go to: [www.bettyswann.com](http://www.bettyswann.com)

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