

HEALING THE PAST GOD'S WAY
TEACHING NOTES
I AM LOVED; I AM FORGIVEN

MEMORY VERSE:

In Him we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.
Ephesians 1:7-8a

I AM LOVED

We approach love as an emotion, a feeling, a desire. But love, as God defines it, is an action. It is how God relates Himself to us – as Creator, as Savior, as Father and as Friend. As you teach on God's love, remember to emphasize the act of God's love in comparison to our feelings which are a by-product of how we experience love, but not love itself.

Christian love is an affair of the will.
C. S. Lewis

The reason it is important to emphasize God's love as an action stems from the directional flow. God's love comes from Him to us and it is perfect, complete and abundant. God's love does not come through us (our emotions) to Him as if it were only defined by how we received it. Many people who struggle with God's love live as if their emotions define God's ability to love. If he or she felt unlovable, then they might believe that God could not (would not) love them. Their emotional ability to receive God's love defines for them the scope of God's love. In addition, if he or she felt particularly worthy of love, then their ego or sense of worthiness would elevate for them God's ability to love them more than others.

Here's the problem with that kind of thinking (other than it is not Biblical): if God can love me more, then logically, God can love me less. I become more or less valuable to God based on my person, ability or potential. However, God is holy and I am a sinner. There is nothing in me that merits God's love. God loves me because of who He is. That is what makes His love unshakable.

In addition, God is not waiting for me to feel lovable. God's love is not defined, caused or showered out because of me. God loves me, period. He loves me because of who He is and He loves me in a way that only He can, perfectly.

GOD DEFINES LOVE: 1 John 4; 1 Corinthians 13:4 - 13

agape – perfect, complete love (charitable, selfless, altruistic and unconditional)
phileo – brotherly love
eros – sexual love

GOD'S LOVE IS INFINITE: Various Gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Christ

A Holy God sacrifices His only Son to reconcile rebellious, sinful man – there is no way to measure or quantify God's love (Romans 8:31 – 39)

GOD'S LOVE IS AN ACTION:

God created us
God saved us
God sustains us
God sanctifies us
God is calling us home

GOD'S LOVE IS A PERFECTING LOVE: Hebrews 12:3 – 13

God, who did not spare His own Son (Romans 8:32), reconciling us to Himself, will not leave us as He found us. As a loving Father, God intends to discipline, train, correct and teach us as He changes us to look more and more like His Son. It is a process that only a perfectly loving and holy God can accomplish.

GOD'S LOVE IS MY FOUNDATION: Various Psalms

Take a look at how the Psalmists described God: Rock, Fortress, Strong Tower, Deliverer, Shield, Defender, Comfort, Shepherd, etc.

As you walk through those descriptions, you glean a picture of what it looks like when the object of God's love, embraces the fullness of that love. Teach your women (and men) to recognize the manifestation (evidence) of God's love through and in their lives. Don't be afraid to point out how even in our trials and sufferings, God's love has provided for us all that we needed to get through the trial and indeed, how God used that very difficulty to glorify Himself, to change us and maybe even to bless others. In God's love, even our pain is not wasted.

I AM FORGIVEN

When we live our lives as victims, our focus on sin is almost always on the sins committed against us. It is very easy in this day and age to forget that we, ourselves, are sinners saved by grace.

You will not be able to move someone out of their self-focus or victimhood mentality until he or she grasps on a basic level that they sin on a daily, sometimes moment-by-moment basis and that our identity in Christ must include an understanding of our status as a sinner and our need for a Savior. Daily, we live covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

WE ARE SINNERS

BY BIRTH: Romans 5:12 - 21

BY NATURE: Romans 7:13 - 25

BY CHOICE: Romans 6:15 – 23

Before you move on, define sin for the class.

“And He (Jesus) said to him,
‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD
WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL,
AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’

This is the great and foremost commandment.

The second is like it,

‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’

On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22:37-40

VISUAL TEACHING NOTE:

Draw a stick figure on the white board. Write the name, *God* above the figure and draw an arrow from the figure, pointing at God. Then draw an arrow pointing to the left of the stick figure. Next to the second arrow, write the words – pain, past, people, possessions, passions, fear, anger (and other words that describe our focus).

Then, ask the women to look up and to the side at the same time. Obviously, it can't be done. Remind them that when their life's focus is on anything other than God (like people or past or pain), they are disobeying the command to love God with ALL their heart, soul and mind. When we live as a victim, we are sinning simply by our focus and perspective.

Remind them again – we are all accomplished sinners, not just those who have sinned against us

Sin is a denial of God's character. It is a proclamation in pride and foolishness that our ways far exceed God's ways in one or more areas of our lives. Because we are sinners by birth, by nature and by choice, sin must be dealt with on a daily basis. Allowing a sin to fester over a period of days, weeks or months only serves to invite further sin. Satan will use any opening to avail himself of your natural tendency toward pride. Take this opportunity to establish a pattern of daily confession and repentance. Nothing is as powerful in the life of a believer as an attitude of submission in acknowledgment of God's awesome character.

In addition, as you help the individual or group focus on their sinfulness (and not on the sins committed against them), remind them that they are not responsible for the sins committed against them, but they are responsible for every way in which they responded. In other words, we are responsible for our words, thoughts and deeds even after someone sins against us. God will forgive but He will not excuse our sin.

(SEE CHAPTER 12 FOR CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE NOTES)