

# TO LOVE AS Jesus Loves



**LOVE LESSONS FOR  
CHRISTIAN WOMEN  
FROM WOMEN  
OF THE BIBLE**



A 6-SESSION **BIBLE STUDY**

WBLDD

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# **Jesus Loves**

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# Notes for Leaders

You have volunteered for a rewarding and challenging role. Bible study leaders often find their faith enriched and their lives rewarded in special ways. Your group will grow together in learning, praying, faith and fellowship. In your preparations as the leader, pray first! Pray for the participants. Pray for God's guidance. Rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you to lead effectively.

Before each session, read the Scripture readings and work through the materials, including the thumbnail sketch called for in "Put Yourself in the Picture." (Participants may need an example if they have trouble or are reluctant to try the assignment.) After you have read through the questions, then read through the session's answer key at the end of the study.

At the first session, introduce each member of the class, make each one feel welcome and make sure each one knows that she will be a valuable part of the group no matter what her Bible knowledge is. Take a few moments to learn where group members are in their lives at the moment. Encourage each person to share why she chose to join this study group or what drew her to join. If there's time, as an ice breaker each week, you can ask a fun question of everyone: "What is something that we might not know about you?" "What's the best gift you ever gave to someone else?" "If you were a pair of shoes, what would you be?" Create an atmosphere of loving acceptance and friendship.

Open each session with prayer. Perhaps sing a hymn. Ask anyone who wants to, to share her "Put Yourself in the Picture" from the previous week. Ask volunteers to read aloud the various parts of the study, the Scripture and the questions as you work through the lessons. (It's easier if you assign the Scripture readings to individuals at the beginning, so readers are ready to speak the texts printed in this study.) With each part of the study, highlight key words. Note themes. Encourage all to respond, and note the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some of the questions do not have right or wrong answers but are meant to spark discussion. Some of the questions do need specific answers and much of that information is found in the answer key at the end of the study. As the leader, your role is to be inclusive and not allow one or two people to dominate the discussions. If you personally don't have answers, you may have people in the class who have extensive Bible knowledge. Use them! Or you can search for answers during the week and return to the topic in the next session.

The end of each session is a good time for sharing prayer concerns.

# Introduction

Everyone has a story. We have stories of how God found us, embraced us, convinced us of his love for us, made us his own, showed us his salvation, equipped us with his Spirit and sent us on his mission.

My story, like yours, began in my baptism. But the most vivid, early chapter of my story unfolded the year I turned eleven. At that time, my family was in serious crisis. Everything was falling apart. Even a child knows fear, grief and hopelessness at such times.

A small mission church in our city initiated an evangelism campaign. Callers knocked on my aunt's door and invited her to worship services. She urged my family to come too. We all went to worship service each week, where we heard the healing Gospel, learned of Jesus' love and forgiveness, and found hope in his wounds.

At eleven, I soaked it all in, overwhelmed to be reassured that Jesus truly loved me and knew me by name. Even today I cannot sing certain hymns without choking up remembering that time, so precious was that season of worship for me.

Soon, everything changed for my family. We were all confirmed in our faith and lived on to thank and praise our loving God for sending his precious Son to save us.

You and I and all who have experienced the love of Jesus know there is nothing more important in all the world than sharing that love with others.

By gathering together around God's Word, you and your friends will be strengthened and motivated by the Holy Spirit to share the love of Jesus with others. No matter who you are or where you are in life, there is someone you know needs to know of Jesus' love. Here is your opportunity to grow in faith, enabling you to reach out and to pray, "Use me, Lord, to share your love" with that someone.

*—Donna Streufert*

# How to Use

## **AS A BIBLE STUDY**

One way to use this resource is as a six-session Bible study at church on Sundays or a weekday or at home in a small group. Make copies of each week's session for each participant to use and fill in answers on their own. Call on various participants to read aloud the Scripture texts printed herein. Encourage participants, as they feel comfortable, to share their personal stories related to the questions, the discussion topics or the understanding of what it means to live as a sister in Christ in general. Then invite them to take part in the action prompts at the ends of every session. This study can be done any time of the year.

## **AS A RETREAT**

Another way to offer this resource is as the framework for a weekend or midweek women's summer retreat. Invite participants to gather for an all-day or multiday event at a retreat center, convention hall or church camp for relaxation and refreshment. The six sessions could be spread out and used throughout the day or days of the retreat, along with other community-building activities.

## **AS A PERSONAL DEVOTION**

This resource can also be used as a guide for personal devotion for a week or several weeks over the summer or any time of year. The format of this study allows space for personal writing and the recording of faith moments related to being a Christian woman or other special moments of faith. This is a helpful tool to instill a routine for regular spiritual reflection on God's Word.

# Session Set-Up

As you use this study guide, you will find each lesson follows a pattern. The opening **Scripture** highlights God's love for us and God's gifts to us. Both his love and his gifts are so evident as we move through the study. The **Lesson Theme** is based on the opening Scripture. The Lesson Theme summarizes how God acts and we respond. **Getting Started** provides a brief contemporary open-ended vignette to spark thought and discussion. Notice how each connects to the Lesson Theme. Use your imagination. Think of the many different ways the questions might be answered. **Into the Word** leads your group into the Scriptures. In each lesson you will see how God used a New Testament woman to share his love. **Time Together** delves deep into the Scriptures related to the woman of Bible who experienced Jesus' love. Discussion questions help you step into her story.

**A Picture from the Past** highlights Christian women throughout history who shared God's love in ways similar to the New Testament women. These historical women are not well known. Let their fascinating stories encourage you as you learn how God has used women through the ages and today in reaching others with his love! **Put Yourself in the Picture** challenges you to describe how you might respond in ways similar to the women you've studied. You need not be a polished writer or artist to complete this exercise successfully! First, take time to reflect. Think over what you have learned. Then jot down your thoughts. If time is short, complete this part of the study later. Review this lesson by sharing your written or drawn sketches at the beginning of your next group session. It will be fun and rewarding to see how each person responds.

**Something to Think About** is designed to help you apply each lesson to yourself personally. Don't skip this! As the level of trust deepens in your group, you will find it rewarding to share your thoughts, feelings and experiences. The **Closing Prayer** summarizes the main truths in each lesson and may be prayed aloud together. Simple, sincere prayers for one another and loved ones may follow to close the session.

# Mary of Bethany

## First Things First

*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 JOHN 4:9-10 (NIV)*

### LESSON THEME

God reveals himself in his Son, sent to show the Father's love. God longs to plant his love in my heart.

### GETTING STARTED

Evie scurries from one task to another all day long. With a full-time job, four kids, two dogs, a big yard and a husband who travels for his work, she has little time or energy left for anything else ... Yet, Jesus waits. What is Jesus waiting for? What does he long to give Evie?

### INTO THE WORD

Now is a time for reflection, a time to embrace the great love God has for us in sending his Son. Now is a time to think about how Jesus expressed the Father's love, a time to recall how Jesus loved sinners, including each one of us. It's a time to be energized by the Spirit as we share Jesus' love with others.

But, first things first. Before we can share God's love with others, we will know him and experience his love personally. In this first session we focus on a woman who knew Jesus personally and experienced his love, support and friendship. Her name is Mary of Bethany.





3. Tell about a time when you jumped up and hurried to the kitchen instead of “sitting at Jesus’ feet.”

4. What do you think Mary learned or experienced that day?

5. How did Jesus show his love and support of Mary? What would that mean to her? How important is it to you that Jesus wants to spend time with you?



3. Once again we find Mary at Jesus' feet. How does she show her devotion to Jesus in a very personal way?

4. How did others react? How did Jesus show his support of Mary?

5. What does it take for me to know Jesus and love him this much?

## **A PICTURE FROM THE PAST**

Like Mary of Bethany, Rosa Young knew and loved Jesus. Born in 1890 in Rosebud, Alabama, Rosa grew up in a Christian family. Like many other African Americans in the South at that time, she and her family was very poor. Still, Rosa went to school and learned to read. For a while the only book she had was a Bible, which she read constantly. Often she would steal away to talk to Jesus. She was the valedictorian of her high school class, and her essay on graduation day was “The Value of the Bible.”

Rosa’s heart went out to people in her community, especially the children whom she described as growing up like weeds, children without hope, without God. In Rosebud she resolved to keep open as many schools as possible to retain the small public funds set aside for her community.

But she wanted to do even more. She truly lived out this prayer: “Use me, Lord, to share your love!” With God’s help she drew up a course of study, raised funds, bought land and built a school. In 1912 the Rosebud Literary and Industrial School opened with 155 students. The children prayed the Lord’s Prayer every day.

When hard times hit, Rosa appealed to churches for help. And she prayed. Booker T. Washington suggested she write to the Mission Board of the Lutheran Church for help. Rosa begged them to take her school under their auspices, and in January, 1916, the board agreed. Quickly, preaching stations sprang up. Congregations were organized, including 25 rural Lutheran elementary schools. Alabama Lutheran Academy at Selma followed, later becoming Concordia College Alabama, which produced many teachers and pastors during its years of operation.

“I have learned to know Jesus, the Savior of sinners, through his Word,” Rosa wrote in her autobiography, *Light in the Dark Belt*. Indeed, Rosa Young, your sister in Christ, understood the power of knowing Jesus and experiencing his love!

## **PUT YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE**

Do a thumbnail sketch of a woman of today who, like Mary and Rosa, knows Jesus, experiences his love and relies on his support. Who is she? What does her relationship with Jesus look like? What does she do? How does she relate to others?

Take time now to jot down your thoughts or draw a picture in the space below. Then share with members of your group. Or, bring your completed descriptions or sketches next time to share.

## **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

1. Just how much does God really love me?
2. When did God's love for me become real? (Can you tell about a time when you knew beyond all doubt Jesus loved you?)
3. What gets in the way of my fellowship with my Lord? How is our love for each other strengthened? What steps will I take to spend more time with him?

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, you love me. Of this I am sure. You came to earth for me. You came to show me the heart of the Father. You lead me to your cross to witness your love. You sacrificed everything to rescue me and make me your friend. You drew me into the arms of the Father. Draw me close under your loving wing. Teach me. Forgive me. Assure me by your presence that I am loved, forgiven and empowered to share your love, always. Amen.