



# YOU ARE *the* BELOVED

A 7-day Plan

by the Zoweh Women's Team





# ***You Are the Beloved***

## **A 7-Day Reading Plan**

by the Zoweh Women's Team

*Adapted from the video series The Deepening Journey*

We invite you into the story God is telling - a love story, set in the midst of fierce battle. This is the story of your life and mine - the glory we are born with, the wounds our hearts experience along the way, and our restoration back into shalom and the good that God intended for us. Journey with us into the story of Belovedness.

# 1. Come Away, My Beloved

Mark 4:19 talks about how the revelation of the Kingdom of God can be choked out by the worries of life, the cares of the world. That feels like such an understatement. Life in this day and time comes at us fast and furiously. The to-do list is ridiculously long, a thousand people/events/needs tug on us asking for our attention all at once! The earth is still in the grips of its latest crisis, and in America, we've fractured along so many political and social lines it's hard to know how to function, no matter where you find yourself.

Our hearts need rest. Comfort. Clarity. We need a chance just to be still. To hear God. Oh, we so desperately want and need to hear God. We need to hear God's wisdom over the stuff of our lives, but perhaps even more, we need to hear God's heart about our very existence. *Do you see me, Father? Does my heart matter to You? Am I pleasing to you?*

And we have questions about our existence as women. *What am I made for? Where do I fit in your design? What is the glory that You've assigned to my life?*

There is so much that Trinity God wants to speak to your heart. So much that He wants you to know. Things like:

*I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls [the walls of your life] are continually before me. (Isaiah 49:16, NASB)*

Can you hear the great love and passion in that statement? God's very essence has been altered by His love for you. You are constantly in front of His eyes, always on His mind and treasured in His heart.

*You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book. (Psalm 56:8, NLT)*

Isn't this the cry of our hearts – to be seen, to be known. To hear Father say, 'I know daughter, I know the sorrows you've borne, and they matter to me. You matter to me.'

*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV)*

A love that will never fail you, never abandon, never reject, never forget or be too busy or distracted. The offer on the table for your heart is love that will never stop doing good for you all the days of your life.

*Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28, NLT)*

And there is the invitation. Servants don't get to rest, but beloved daughters do.

*But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. (Hosea 2:14, NLT)*

And here is the reason for the invitation: Come away with me, dear beloved of mine, **so that** I can speak tenderly to you.

You have questions, you have sorrows, you have unmet longings, and a thirst for more. We invite you to come away with us over the next few days. Quiet your soul. Lay down the busyness. Invite God in. It's going to be so good.

Each day we encourage you to take time to be still with God, bring Him the questions of your heart, invite the Trinity into those conversations, and listen for His responses.

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## 2. Once Upon a Time

There are three questions which we have found helpful in connecting the smaller stories of our individual lives to the larger story that God is telling: who are you, where are you (what is your place in the story God is telling), and what is the good that God is up to in your life? Today, we begin to look at who you are.

You were made by Love, and for love. As the Trinity sat together before the beginning of time, their love for one another took on a procreative nature. That's what love does. It re-creates itself in the Beloved, who then re-creates it in another, and on it goes. You are part of that great love story. There is nothing about your life that is accidental. You may have been a surprise to your parents, but never to God. The Trinity planned for you, longed for you, made a place for you in time, and then waited with joy and anticipation for you to be revealed. That is the true Father and Mother heart of God.

You, dear one, are the apple of His eye, and His portion forever. (Deuteronomy 32:9-10, Psalm 17: 8) You are also the representation of God's nature:

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27, NIV)*

Understand this: the revelation of the personhood of God would have been incomplete without woman. There is a part of God's nature that we uniquely bear as women. Did you know that among the names of God revealed in scripture, there are names which are stated in the feminine gender? El Shaddai (e.g., Genesis 17: 1 and Psalm 91:1-2, 14-15) and Ruach Elohim (the name for the Holy Spirit pictured in Genesis 1). In stunning mystery, the name which encompasses every name – Yahweh – is a blend of feminine and masculine word endings. Both Deuteronomy and Isaiah describe God giving birth, while Matthew quotes Jesus using the analogy of a mother hen to describe his own heart for Jerusalem. And Wisdom, heralded in Proverbs, is a “she.”

This is our honor and our glory, that through the feminine heart, God displays beauty, nurture, intimacy, ferocious strength (think of a mama bear), and a drive for relationship. We are an in-life picture of how the human story culminates: the bride of Christ, living with Him in adventure and intimacy for all eternity.

Throughout scripture, God honors women. He destines the daughter of Eve to bear our Savior. It is women who are first trusted with the truth of the resurrection. And it is a woman who is allowed to pour out her love on Jesus by washing his feet with her hair. Whether or not the world values your feminine heart, God does. And He called it good.

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## **As you ponder this with God today, ask Him ...**

*Father, would you speak to my heart, show me my beauty?*

*Spirit, what adventure are You calling me to?*

*Jesus, what are You entrusting to my compassionate, nurturing heart? Where do You see me bring forth / create life/ nourish life?*

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# 3. Two Realms, Two Kingdoms

Scripture for meditation: Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-16; Revelation 12: 7-10

*And the beast opened its mouth to speak blasphemies against God and to slander His name and His tabernacle – those who dwell in heaven. Then the beast was permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them, and it was given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb who was slain. Revelation 13: 6-8*

It is an abrupt turn in the story, isn't it? One minute we're talking about Eden and intimacy and being made, gloriously, in the image of God. And in the very next breath, there is a beast making war against us. Talk about disorientation! As it turns out, this love story that creates and births us, is set in the midst of fierce battle. And the prize is the life and heart of all humankind. If you don't know this, then your life will never make sense. You will never know the answer to the second question we've posed: where are you? Or, as Samwise Gamgee asks in *The Lord of the Rings*, What sort of tale have we fallen into?

The rebellion that began in Heaven as Lucifer made a failed bid for the throne of God, ended up on the earth. In a fit of fury, the serpent aimed to hurt God by targeting those He loves. And a special hatred is born between the serpent and Eve and her offspring (Gen 3: 15). All of history bears witness to that. Your own life bears witness.

But God has planned for this, and in His foresight and goodness, He has written into the fabric of feminine design, the heart of a warrior. You are an *ezer kenegdo*, born with a sword in your hand and Father offers to train you how to use it (Psalm 144). This is part of the “where “you are.

Swords take many forms. Take, for example, a mother's fierceness in protecting her children. Proverbs 31 speaks of women, clothed in strength and speaking in wisdom. There is fierceness in love which is,

*as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away (Song of Songs 8: 6-7)*

And there are outright acts of spiritual warfare where thoughts are taken captive (2 Corinthians), bound prisoners are set free (Isaiah 61), and demonic oppression is broken (e.g. Mark 4: 36- 5: 15). We see people who “through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the raging fire, and escaped the edge of the sword; who gained strength from weakness, became mighty in battle, and put foreign armies to flight....”



(Hebrews 11: 33, BSB). These are ordinary people, clothed in God, positioned in time and in the world, to carry out a mission of loving God and loving people.

This is another version of what we see in Micah 6:8,

*And what does the Lord require of you except to be just, and to love [and to diligently practice] kindness (compassion), and to walk humbly with your God.  
(AMP)*

Kindness, love, compassion, justice, humility – these are powerful expressions of the heart of God and powerful acts of His kingdom on earth. It is how we meet the broken, and afraid, the ones who are alone or in need.

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## **As you ponder this with God today, ask Him ...**

*Father, where am I in this story You are telling?*

*Jesus, what are the weapons of warfare You have placed in my hands and heart and what are they to be used for? On behalf of whom?*

*Spirit, how and where am I called to show up in the world as a beacon of light, love, and hope? How can I move toward the hurting and help bring healing to the brokenhearted?*

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## 4. Masks and Fig Leaves

Scriptures for meditation: Genesis 3:6-9; Psalm 139

*Then the eyes of the two of them were opened [that is, their awareness increased], and they knew that they were naked; and they fastened fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool [afternoon breeze] of the day, so the man and his wife hid and kept themselves hidden from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.  
Genesis 3: 7-8 , AMP*

Eden fell and Adam and Eve hid. Their hiding took a particular form – dressing themselves in the fig leaves that have covered us ever since. This is the day that the false self first appears in the human story – the masks we wear to disguise our nakedness.

Part of the nakedness we try to hide is the vulnerability we carry as a result of wounds our hearts have sustained. Other parts of the nakedness are things which are precious and not for everyone to know because we've learned that some will not treat those things as precious.

For women, one of the most common of the false selves is the over responsible – "have it all together" – "control everything" persona. We learned it from Eve, who struggled to trust that Father would actually provide for the desires of her heart, and so she took matters into her own hands and brought the world down with her. Sarah tried that same tactic years later, and Ishmael was born. (Genesis 18: 1-5 and 21:1-18) You'd think that we might learn from their experiences, but control is an illusion that dies hard and many of us take up that same mask. For those of us who are married, this is especially true if our husband's fig leaves include Adam's passivity and we have learned not to count on them for our protection.

Even though people around us may believe we are the masks we wear, and sometimes we believe that too – God knows better. And He still loves us and wants us to come out of hiding.

*Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the words I'm about to speak before I even start a sentence!*

*You know every step I will take before my journey even begins. You've gone into my future to prepare the way, and in kindness you follow behind me to spare me*

*from the harm of my past. (Psalm 139, TPT)*

*"My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely." (Song of Solomon 2:14, NIV)*

Can you imagine living with a heart so settled and rooted in Belovedness that you have nothing to prove, nothing to hide, and nothing to fear? This is the freedom for which Christ has set us free. (John 8: 36)

Whether your fig leaves are stitched from control, success, or eternal optimism and a bright, plastic smile, or you are hiding amongst the roles and tasks you take on, it is important to ask God to show us our false selves, for, in the end, they keep us from life and from intimacy.

Consider this prayer today:

*Search me O, God and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts.  
(Psalm 139: 23)*

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## **As you ponder this with God today, ask Him ...**

*Father, where am I like Eve, who struggled to trust that You would actually provide for the desires of my heart? Where do I take matters into my own hands?*

*Jesus, in which roles do You see me hiding, proving, or living from fear?*

*Spirit, what is a mask You see me wearing that isn't my absolute true identity – who I really am?*

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## 5. The Terror of Night and Arrows that Fly by Day

Scriptures for meditation: Psalm 91, Psalm 56:8

Eden fell and evil entered the world. Evil that was intent on destroying what Trinity God loves – humanity. The story of your life tells that very tale of woe. No matter how long or short your time on this earth has been, your heart has already encountered things it was never meant to know: loss, betrayal, grief, anxiety, diminishment, fear, pain.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. We know that, but perhaps don't fully understand it. When Trinity God designed us, it was with Eden in mind. That was meant to be the context of our lives. We were created to live in a world that reflected the order and culture of Heaven. And we were to live face to face and hand in hand with a God who was tangible. Even as I write that my mind struggles to embrace it, as Eden is so very far from the world which we inhabit here and now.

When Eden was lost and we could no longer live in the face to face presence of God, we carried with us an orphan spirit that has been the legacy of every son and daughter of Adam, save One – Jesus. As if that weren't enough, our enemy speaks convincing lies and looks for opportunities to weave his narrative into our pain. And the kingdom of darkness enlists the help of those it has enslaved and deceived. Our deepest wounds come at the hands of people, and most often, people who are important to our hearts.

*My father and mother abandoned me. But you, Yahweh, took me in and made me yours. (Psalm 27:10, TPT)*

Or consider David's experience,

*It wasn't an enemy who taunted me. If it was my enemy, filled with pride and hatred, then I could have endured it. I would have just run away. But it was you, my intimate friend—one like a brother to me. It was you, my adviser, the companion I walked with and worked with! (Psalm 55:12-13, TPT)*

For most of us (truthfully, all of us), the wounds of our childhood have many forward reaching effects, for this is the game plan of our enemy. Whether the soul injuries came through the sin of another, the fallenness of the world, and our specific cultures (family, geographic region, ethnicity, church, etc.), or via direct enemy assault, Satan's strategy has always followed a predictable plan: if you can't prevent life, wound it early so that it doesn't function in its intended glory. Once wounds have been sustained, our enemy works to strike those same sore spots again and again over the course of our lives. It is a very effective strategy.

Your heart's story matters to God; *you matter*. It's why He keeps all of your tears in a bottle (Psalm 56:8). Notice that He doesn't just wipe them away, but keeps them in

remembrance. God honors our pain, and asks that we do the same. Pain is not the end of our stories, and it does not define us. But a large part of making sense of your life and finding your way in the story God is writing, will involve giving your heart space and time to tell what it has experienced. It is in this telling, and in the inviting of God and trusted others into the story, that we find healing.

*But as for me, I will call upon the Lord to save me, and I know he will! Every evening I will explain my need to him. Every morning I will move my soul toward him. Every waking hour I will worship only him, and he will hear and respond to my cry. Though many wish to fight and the tide of battle turns against me, by your power I will be safe and secure; peace will be my portion. God himself will hear me! (Psalm 55: 16-19, TPT)*

Consider setting aside some significant time to talk with God about your story. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight parts of your story so that you can invite the Trinity into those parts – to speak to your heart, to offer comfort, to point the way through.

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## **As you ponder this with God today, ask Him ...**

*Spirit, would You show me parts of my story where I have experienced loss, betrayal, grief, anxiety, diminishment, fear, pain?*

*Jesus, where have I experienced the enemy striking those same sore spots again and again over the course of my life?*

*Father, what lies have I believed about You?*

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## 6. Trinity to the Rescue

Scripture for meditation: Isaiah 61

When Eden fell, Heaven mounted a search and rescue mission. Father surprised the serpent with His announcement that One was coming, a seed of Eve, who would crush the serpent's head and end his reign of terror (Genesis 3:15). This is the knight in shining armor, the one who rides in on a white horse to rescue His Beloved and vanquish her foe. Dramatic? Yes! This is a full scale adventure story, complete with a valiant and lovesick hero who will move heaven and earth to find you.

And this, dear one, is the good news. Jesus came to breathe life to your heart. The Holy Spirit comes even now to heal your wounds.

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3, NIV)*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. (Psalm 103:2-4, ESV)*

*He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners ... to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (Isaiah 61: 1-3, NIV)*

But for God to heal us, we must first acknowledge and name our wounds – feeling the pain, grieving what happened to you, and embracing the story of what has happened to us. And then we bring all of that to Jesus. We ask them – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – into our story and find that God is brokenhearted for us, with us. And His tenderness and kindness, His compassion and wisdom meet us in those desert places and bring us back to life again.

*In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them. (Isaiah 53: 9, NIV)*

The path of healing for our hearts usually involves a combination of things that might include the wise counsel of professional healers, the solace of sweet companionship that we find in friendships and family, and the direct ministry of the Spirit of God who comforts us in our woes and brings us to life again. No matter which of these are part of your story, they all have the theme of healing through relationship. Because our deepest heart wounds come from people, it is also through redemptive relationships that healing will flow. And that, too, is part of our restoration - that God heals our hearts in a way that leaves us open to love and intimacy and community.

*Jesus, come, into our broken places, into the desolation of our hearts. Spirit of Life, breathe on us again. Spirit of Comfort, hold us tight against your heartbeat and lead us into Your safe spaces. Arrange for our hearts whatever Your Wisdom knows that we need in order to be whole again. We trust that You know the way to life, and that You will lead us there.*

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# 7. Redemptive Sisterhood

Scripture for meditation: Acts 2:42-47, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*How truly wonderful and delightful it is to see brothers and sisters living together in sweet unity! (Psalm 133:1, TPT)*

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, NIV)*

There are a multitude of reasons why Father tells Adam that it isn't good for him to be alone. Some of those reasons are found in the intimate mysteries of marriage. Others are found in the sweet depths of friendship and community. One of the truths that is held in high regard among us at Zoweh is that redemptive community comes from redemptive friendships. And that flows from a lifestyle of intimacy where lives intersect and people share their lives together – pray, play, worship, eat, share, and journey together. They are often intergenerational and cannot be contained in a day, a time, or a room.

Although friendship, community, and love are fiercely contested, there is a deep soul thirst for them written into the heart of every daughter of Eve. Remember that relational Eve is one of the clearest representations of God, who exists as a relational community/family of Three – Father, Jesus, Spirit. Women walking together in sisterhood can offer, perhaps, the highest level of mutual care and support as is found on the earth. To know and be known, to be seen and met and loved. That is a priceless treasure which has no substitute.

Life is difficult, and often confusing. There is such comfort in having others to walk with you, lending wisdom and a hand up when you stumble. We see here, too, the value of having other *ezer kenegdos* alongside who will lend their swords and fierce hearts on your behalf and for the sake of the mutual mission that you journey in.

Because relationship is opposed, we must not be put off by the effort it requires, or the differences and conflict which inevitably arise from time to time. This is why love is so central to community as it has the power to cover every sin (1 Peter 1:8).

*As Ephesians 4:2 (NAS) says, we must walk “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.”*



It is in relationship when we are most like God. It is through relationship that our rough edges are sanded. And it is from relationship that we understand our identity and worth.

God does us the honor and privilege of creating us a space, a place to be us. The Father gives us a seat at the table through the Son, Christ, where They know we truly belong. God has moved heaven and earth to make that invitation to a Redemptive Community – a place in His family.

We pray you know your place in the Kingdom, the seat that is yours and yours alone. This is the banquet table of the King and the celebration begins when you know you belong, continues when your seat is pulled back and you snuggle in, and goes on and on as we enjoy the company of Love and all those who are redeemed, restored, and re-created for the Life Everlasting. What a hope ... what an honor.

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## **As you ponder this with God today, ask Him ...**

*Father, where have I held back in friendships, not allowing my true self to be known and seen?*

*Jesus, You yearn for flourishing in my life and relationships; what is in the way of my deep friendships?*

*Spirit, in my deepest heart, I yearn for deep friendship; who might I invite into exploring more together?*

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