

Chapter 1: Overview

Part 1: God's Yes to Me

Begin the group session with a few minutes of silence, ending with a short prayer for openness.

From the very beginning, everything made by God has been and is 'very good', and carries with it God's blessing and approval. 'God saw all that God had made, and it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

The balance and perfection of form, the purpose and interaction of being of everything that was created, expresses the infinite sensitivity and loving care with which God put each part into the whole. We human beings, the final climax of this symphony of creation, are an image and reflection of God's very self.

This beginning goodness, however, has been affected right at its heart and root by the damaging effect of sin which contaminates all that is created. Part of the effect of this brokenness is seen in the alienation and estrangement which exists among people and with their creator God. In spite of this rupture, God sees the promise and possibility present in each person, the giftedness and consequence of God-self having been imaged in each one. God's love for each person is full and unabated even though their whole or real self may be as treasure buried and hidden in the ground. God pays the highest price to have each one restored to love and communion. This love of God for the world is mediated through Jesus Christ, who willingly sacrificed himself to restore the relationship between God and each person.

We find in the Scriptures that people throughout the ages have sensed this love and affirmation. David is aware of God's tender involvement in his life from the beginning when he writes 'You created my innermost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb'. He is in awe at knowing himself to be 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. His sense of being persistently loved and cared for is overwhelming: 'You have searched me and you know me', 'you have laid your hand upon me' – 'such knowledge is too wonderful for me'. (Psalm 139) To the inhabitants of Jerusalem God says '... you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance ... I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.' (Isaiah 66:11–13)

Paul continues the theme: 'God has poured out God's love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom God has given us' and 'God demonstrates God's own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:5, 8)

He ends Romans 8 with the conviction that 'neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord'.



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The sense we have from God is a total 'YES' for each one, an unreserved and unconditional assent to our being, a commitment to wholeness and goodness in life with God. An ancient rabbinic saying asserts that a host of angels goes before each human being crying, 'Make way, make way for the image of God!'

In the light of all this, reflect for 10 minutes on Isaiah 43:1–7:

What is God's commitment to you?

What feelings rise up in you as you reflect on this passage?

Write up your journal for 5 minutes.

Share around the group something of what you experienced from the passage or the rest of the session. Decide who will facilitate the next meeting and end with a short prayer.



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