



**DO YOU KNOW THAT
YOU MATTER?**

A 5-Day Biblical Reflection Series by Americans United for Life



Our world is starving for the rich, Biblical theology of human value. If we want to transform our culture with the good news about being human and made in the image of a loving God, we must begin in the deeply personal conviction that we ourselves matter to the Lord. A soul that is aware of being held in existence by a good and loving Creator cannot help but share that good news with his neighbor – and change the world.

Scriptures Quoted, Referenced, or Implied in this study

*All verses referenced in this study are from the The Holy Bible: New International Version.

Genesis 1:27

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Jeremiah 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

Isaiah 49:15-16

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”

Ephesians 3:19 (referenced)

“...to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Matthew 18:12-14

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders off, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ... In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

Luke 15:4-7

(implied by the lost sheep analogy; not directly quoted)

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Matthew 14:28-31

(Peter walks on water—referenced in the reflection)

Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”

Psalms 139:13-14

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

DAY 01

You are Made in God's Image

**“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**

Reflect on the fact that the God of all creation willed that you – you – exist. In love, He made you in His own image. The imago Dei. You are the image of God. With intention and affection He created you and takes delight in your existence.

Each of us is here because He willed it. Because, in love, He wanted to share life with you.

What a profound gift it is to be alive.

Even though we may suffer at times, our lives – whether long or short – represent God's desire that we exist and live with Him forever. This time we have on earth is fleeting compared to the eternity that awaits.

Before you were even born, God envisioned your future in love. He reveals in Scripture:

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart; I appointed
you as a prophet to the nations”
Jeremiah 1:5.*

If you've never paused to consider how deeply you are loved or how much you matter to the Lord, don't beat yourself up. We are embedded in a culture that misunderstands and ignores the dignity we each bear as sons and daughters of God. Your goodness is entirely derived from your loving Father in Heaven.

Our culture kills the child in the womb and calls it “empowerment.” It tells teens that they, without God, are the key to their own happiness and calls it “self-esteem.” It convinces the elderly, the sick, and the vulnerable that assisted suicide is better than suffering united with Christ and calls it “death with dignity.”

We live among brothers and sisters starving to know that they matter. And satisfying this hunger begins with knowing we are loved so that we can reflect that love to others.

Consider the newborn child. He can do nothing for anyone. He is not educated. He is weak. He is needy. He is exhausting. And yet his mother and father look at him as though he contains all the riches of the universe. Indeed, he becomes the center of their universe. He came forth from them, in their image, and they would lay down their very lives in an instant to keep him safe.

Now realize that you are the object of God the Father's affection – and that His love is infinite and all-powerful. He has already seen every sin and mistake you will make throughout your entire earthly life, and yet his steadfast love for you remains unchanged.



I invite you today to look in the mirror and ask God to help you see yourself as He sees you. Speak aloud one truth about your identity as His beloved creation.

Father, help me see myself as You see me. Restore my sense of worth as Your beloved creation.

Never Forgotten by God

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.”

Isaiah 49:15-16

Growing up, were you ever chosen last?

You may remember the scenario: Team captains are appointed to select their team members one by one. The most popular and athletic kids are chosen first. Then the more average athletes are selected. The final few kids stand waiting with mild embarrassment, each hoping not to be selected last. But someone will be last – the one who was wanted the least.

We can be tempted to imagine that God’s love is similarly dependent on us.

How worthy are we? How much have we done to earn His love?

But God loves us with a love that “surpasses understanding” (Ephesians 3:19). His love transcends the framework of human affection. Unlike our flawed love here below, God’s love doesn’t ebb and flow depending on our abilities or our virtue. We are all prodigal sons and daughters, who, despite falling short of the glory of our Heavenly Father, are loved nonetheless. We are loved with a radical, irrevocable, unending adoration from our Father in Heaven.

St. Augustine writes in his *Confessions*: “O good and all-powerful God, who care for each of us as though each were the only one in your care.”¹

God’s love is not divided up into small pieces among billions of souls. God loves each of us as much as He loves all of us. Consider the revelation that He has “engraved you on the palms of [his] hands” (Isaiah 49:16). You are not a fleeting thought for the Lord. Though our fickle love may forget Him, or wander off and come back again and again, He does not stop loving or thinking of us for an instant.

This is a love that defies the broken love of this fallen world. So we must spend time grappling with the reality of His undivided love for us. Ask Him to make you confident in the knowledge of His love and ask Him to form your identity in that knowledge. As the morning sun shines upon you, bask in the confidence that, despite your shortcomings, He loves you unconditionally. Seek His forgiveness, have faith in His provision, let the anxieties of this world be released, and smile with pure joy.

¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, III.11.19. Trans. Albert C. Outler (various editions).



Take a quiet moment to remember a time you felt overlooked or unloved; invite God’s presence into that memory and thank Him that He has never forgotten you, not for a single moment.

Father, help me see myself as You see me. Make me confident in the knowledge of Your presence and aware of my identity as one who is loved and chosen.

DAY 03

God Seeks and Finds the Lost

“If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders off, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

Matthew 18:12-14

At one moment, I was secure and warm among the flock. My surroundings were familiar, all was peaceful, and I felt the Shepherd’s powerful gaze watching over us, keeping us safe.

But something in the distance caught my eye, and I began to wander off to see what it was. In my ignorance, I thought it might be better than the shelter of my home.

Before long, my vision grew dark. The night grew cold, and I could no longer hear my Shepherd’s voice. I became entangled in a thorny bush, far from my flock and far from safety.

In grief, I realized my fate. As the night grew dark, it was only a matter of time until I froze, or a predator claimed me for good. With so many other sheep to look after, my Shepherd probably wouldn’t even notice I was missing until the morning’s light. *Ah well*, He would think. *She was small and weak anyway. Probably for the best.* Realizing my foolishness, I wished I could change what I’d done.

Just then, in the midst of my despair, I heard my Shepherd’s voice. He was calling my name! I tried to call back to Him, but I was weak. But He kept searching. I heard Him contend with pred-

ators along the way, leaving those who would have claimed my life strewn in His wake. Then, finally, He found me – and He *rejoiced*. He gently freed me from the thorny bush, placed me on His strong shoulders, and brought me home to safety.

My foolish sin does not stop God from seeking me out. On the contrary, He rejoices when we repent and return home with Him. Our sin is no match for His mercy.

In 1987, a beloved Catholic nun named Mother Angelica wrote of an experience of God’s mercy.

While standing at the ocean, a drop of water landed on her hand. She felt the Lord say to her, “That drop is like all of your sins, your weaknesses, your frailties, and your imperfections. And the ocean is

My Mercy. If you looked for that drop, could you find it?” Angelica replied, “No, Lord.” And He asked her, “So why do you keep looking?”²

2 Mother Angelica with Christine Allison. *Mother Angelica’s Answers, Not Promises: Straightforward Solutions to Life’s Puzzling Problems*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.



Reflect honestly: Is there an area in your life today where you feel lost, distant, or burdened by shame? Offer it to the Good Shepherd and trust Him to find and restore you.

Father, help me to see myself as You see me. I relinquish my sin in the ocean of Your mercy and to rest in the knowledge of Your love.

DAY 04

God's Purpose for Your Life

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Children are often asked what they want to be when they grow up, as if that goal or career path is their “purpose” in life.

But God sees us as much more than our career or vocational pursuits. His ultimate purpose for our lives is that we would strive to know and love Him here and be together with Him for all eternity hereafter. And He cares about every single detail that goes into your unique life story. Nothing about your life is random. God had a plan for your country of origin, the decade(s) in history your life would span, the parents to whom you'd be born, the family tree from which you'd descend, your eye color, your interests, your gifts, and the unique joys and sufferings that would mark your journey.

God brings purpose even during our seasons in the desert. In 1944, after dangerously working to save her Jewish neighbors from the Nazis, Corrie ten Boom and her family were caught and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp. Despite the horrific experience, her life is a vivid example of God's purpose for our lives. Corrie brought compassion, light, forgiveness, and fortitude to the darkest places of humanity. She even found purpose and thanksgiving in the fleas that infested the camp as they kept the Nazi guards from her bunk and allowed her

to read the Bible to other prisoners. Her sister Betsy who died while suffering in the camp so powerfully proclaimed, “There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.”

From all eternity, He has had a plan for your life. Not just for “what you'll be when you grow up,” but for every breath, every heartbeat, and every hair on your head.

The realization that everything that happens is contemplated in His plan – whether as something He permits or something He ordains – can help to ground us in His love. What is unpredictable and seemingly chaotic to us is perfectly clear to Him. If only we would trust in His tender care, knowing that He has oriented the trials and sufferings of our life toward “hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Maybe you have seen instances in your own life where something did not go as planned, but in hindsight God's plan yielded more fruit than you ever imagined. These are the experiences we can cling to when we are tempted to doubt God's loving plan. Even Peter, walking on water, struggled to trust in Jesus when He was right in front of him (Matthew 14). The Lord knows our human weakness; He only asks that we trust Him.



Write down one way you see God's purpose in your story, even in difficult seasons, and ask Him to strengthen your trust that your life is no accident, but part of His loving plan.

Father, help me to see myself as You see me. I trust you and I surrender to Your loving plan for my life.

DAY
05



God Delights in You

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”
Zephaniah 3:17

Imagine God taking delight in you. We’ve reflected over the past few days on how the Father doesn’t just accept or tolerate us, but loves us unconditionally and rejoices over us.

In short, God delights in us. His delight for us predates our time on earth. He formed us, laid out our path, and He has a plan for our lives.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”
(Psalm 139:13-14)

The Father takes delight in our very existence. It is a love humans cannot fully grasp, because it transcends the brokenness of human love. Some relationships, though, reflect the Father’s love closely.

For instance, when loving parents gaze at their sleeping child, they experience what must be a similar delight. Listening to the child’s soft, rhythmic breathing, smelling his precious head while gently leaning down to kiss his forehead, and lingering in the doorway full of gratitude for the little soul entrusted to their care. Sometimes, the love of a parent for their child’s existence is overwhelming.

And yet, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit delight in you *infinitely more* than a parent is capable of loving her child. In fact, as John 3:16 so powerfully proclaims,

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

So often, though, we struggle to accept the reality of our Father’s unbounded love. We see our own failures and wounds, and we doubt that we are truly lovable for our own sake.

If we want to enter deeply into our relationship with God, we must ask Him for the grace of seeing through the lens of His love, *not* through the dim glass of our own human frailty. It is only through His Eyes that we can come to understand our true dignity as human beings and our value as sons and daughters of God.

This truth is liberating. When we comprehend how beloved we are to God, we can affirm that love to those around us who are starving to know that they, too, matter.



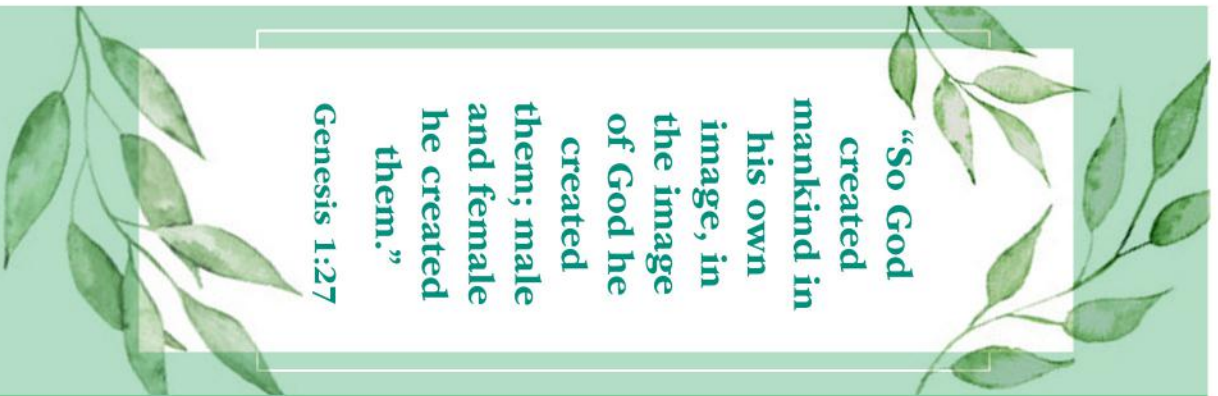
Sit in stillness and imagine God singing over you in joy. Ask Him to help you receive His delight, and think of one way you can share that affirming love with someone else today. *Father, help me to see myself the way You see me. Open my heart to receive Your delight. Silence the voices of shame. Let me rest in the joy You have over me, and reflect Your joy to others.*

Printable Bookmarks for Scripture Memory



“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



“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have

engraved you on the palms of my hands;

your walls are ever before me.”

Isaiah 49:15-16



“If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders off, will he not leave the

ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

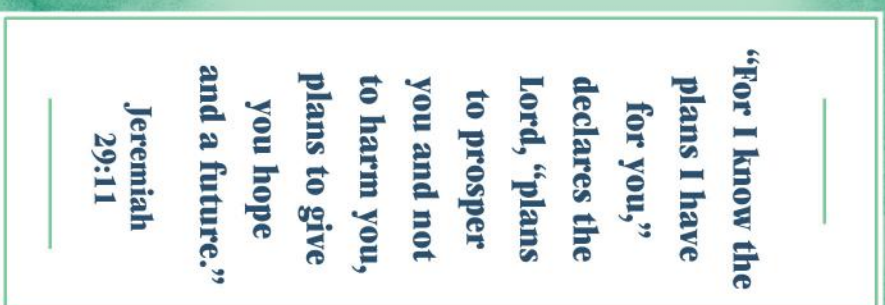
Matthew 18:12-14



HOPE & A FUTURE

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

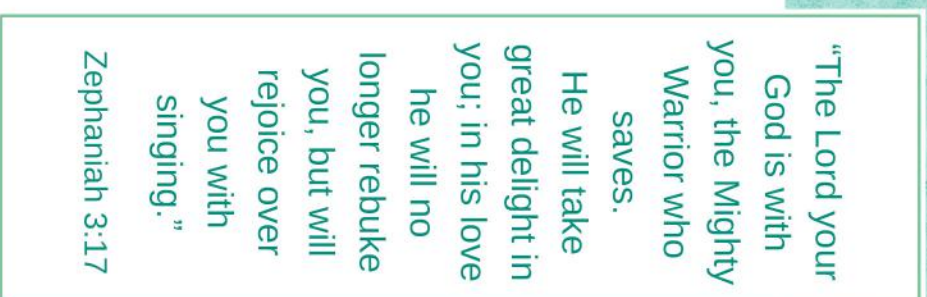
Jeremiah
29:11



“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with you with singing.”

Zephaniah 3:17





**1150 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036**

**AUL.org
life@aul.org**