

# B1 Study | Seen Known Loved

*Understanding the Way God Sees Us When We Feel Left Out, Alone, or Misunderstood*



When you were younger, do you remember wanting to do things like find the end of a rainbow? Maybe you even believed you'd find a pot of gold there! If you ever set out on such a quest, you likely realized fairly quickly that it was an impossible journey. Sometimes, our heart can feel like it's on a similarly impossible journey, longing to find the place where we are seen, known, and fully loved, especially when we feel left out, alone, or misunderstood.

Searching to satisfy this longing in the wrong places can feel a bit like chasing rainbows. The only difference is that, unlike a fictional treasure at the end of a color-filled sky, there's truly a pot of gold waiting to fulfill our longing to be accepted and cherished. Though we can't see this place with our physical eyes, it's also not imaginary, and it's not beyond our reach.

In Psalm 139, the Psalmist points us to the place our hearts yearn for, and it's closer than you think! It's God's presence, and here's the thing - it's always with you. God knows every detail about you, and He loves you completely. His thoughts towards you are precious. There is nothing you can do to escape his love. His presence remains no matter where you go or what you do.

When we lose sight of the true treasure our hearts seek, we start hunting for it in the wrong places – like in our relationships, in the approval of others, in having *the latest and greatest* things, or by chasing after an impossible standard of perfection. This tendency becomes even stronger when we feel rejected, misunderstood, judged, or unloved.

In this study, we are going to dive into the stories of four women who experienced extraordinary encounters with Jesus—the living God. We'll examine each woman's story- her words and actions, considering how we might relate to her. Then, we'll shift our focus to Jesus, paying close attention to his words and actions. We're on a journey to better understand how Jesus sees us! Let's get started!

**CONNECT WITH GOD:** Before we dive into the first story, let's take a moment to connect with God by reading Psalm 139. Soak in the fact that God intimately knows you and chooses you. Then, echo the psalmist's words in verses 23-24 by asking God to search your heart. Where have you been seeking to be seen, known, and loved outside of your Maker?

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## The Bleeding Woman | Mark 5:21-34

When something surprising or exciting happens, you might later remember certain details that stood out to you. Similarly, your friends might recall different aspects of the same event. All the details occurred, they just stood out to each person for different reasons. This is true for the story of the bleeding woman in the Gospels of Luke, Mark, and Matthew. Each account came from someone who witnessed the event, but they each focus on different details. Some details are the same, while others are unique to each account. We will look at this story from Mark's point of view, but to get a fuller picture, we encourage you to check out the accounts in Matthew 9:19-22 and Luke 8:42-48.

**Read Mark 5:21-34.** What stood out to you in this passage?

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Mark's account tells us that the woman in this story suffered from constant bleeding for 12 long years. In her culture, this illness made her not just physically unwell but also isolated and rejected. She endured not only physical discomfort but also loneliness and the heartache of being cast aside by others. Imagine the desperation she must have also felt after spending everything she had on treatments that only made her condition worse.

Have you ever poured your time, energy, and money into something you hoped would fix a problem, only to be left disappointed? It's incredibly frustrating when things don't turn out as you expected.

The woman lived rejected and avoided for 12 years! Imagine her desire to be seen and known. She likely lived with a sense of deep disappointment, but don't miss this—she had the bravery to enter a crowd and get close to Jesus. She believed that by simply touching him, she would be healed! This was the true physician she needed, and she knew it!

Think about your favorite band or performer. Have you ever been at a concert, reaching out or shouting to get their attention, hoping they'd notice you? That must have been similar to how this woman felt about Jesus. She didn't care who saw her; she was determined to reach out to him, believing he could change everything. And He did! In a massive crowd, the one who was lonely and rejected yet brave and faith-filled received a miracle!

Unlike a performer, Jesus has the power to heal not only our bodies but also our souls. When Jesus' disciples questioned why he asked who touched him despite the crowd pressing around him, they missed the point. Jesus wasn't just aware of a physical touch; He recognized the woman's deep need to be acknowledged. He stopped, turned to her, and called her "daughter" before commending her for her faith in front of the crowd. The passage tells us that she was immediately relieved of her suffering.

Don't you want that, brave friend? To be seen by God and truly free? Jesus offers that to you—to see, know, and love you. Will you reach out your hand to him?

**CONNECT WITH GOD:** Close your eyes. What is something in your life right now that causes you to feel distant or separated from others? In what ways have you tried to satisfy your need to be seen and known outside of Jesus? Imagine Jesus walking through a crowd. Look at him. Do you believe he can make this right? Imagine reaching out and touching the edge of

his cloak. Envision him turning towards you and looking you in the eyes. How does he look at you? What is his facial expression? What do you imagine him saying to you?

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CONNECT WITH OTHERS: Do you identify with the disciples feeling impatient with Jesus? Is there someone in your life who might feel rejected and unseen by God or others? Pray for them now that they would have the courage to reach out and touch his cloak. Be open to how God might want to use you in their life in the days ahead.

DIG DEEPER Jesus is able to *meet us* in our feelings of rejection because He experienced it. Read Isaiah 53:1-12. What stood out to you in this passage?

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### **The Woman at the Well | John 4:1-30, 39**

There are times when feeling unseen hurts, and other times when it can give us a sense of relief - like if we're anxious about being around unfamiliar faces or worried about judgment from others. Yet, no matter where we are, what we truly crave is to be seen, known, valued, and loved.

When we feel "less than," we might hide, losing sight of our true identity. Knowing we are seen and loved helps us walk into a room with confidence, regardless of who's inside, because we have a purpose in that room that connects with eternity. We are about to dive into the story of a woman who intentionally avoided others until she had a remarkable encounter with Jesus. As you read her story, consider what she might have been thinking and feeling. Pay close attention to the words and actions of Jesus.

**Read John 4:1-30, 39.** What stands out to you about the woman in this story? What stands out to you about Jesus?

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Daily, the Samaritan woman made a trek to Jacob's well to fill her jug with water. Although most people came to the well in the early morning or evening to avoid the midday heat, she visited the well during the hottest part of the day to avoid being seen by others. She had a bit of a scandalous past that had likely made her "the talk of town." So, she preferred to remove herself from the judgemental whispers and suspicious glances of the other town's people.

One unsuspecting day, she encountered a Jewish man she'd never met. When he asked her for a drink, she was taken aback. In her world, it was unusual for a man to speak to a woman who was alone and even more so for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman, given the deep-seated animosity between their people.

Curious, she questioned him, and he offered her something astonishing: living water. Unlike the well water that would leave her thirsty again, this water promised to quench her thirst forever. At that moment, she realized this was no ordinary man. Throughout her life, she had sought fulfillment in relationships, moving from one man to the next, never finding what she truly needed—Jesus.

Jesus knew everything about her, but He did not reject her like the townspeople. Instead, He invited her to receive what she's always been after—Him.

**CONNECT WITH GOD:** Close your eyes. In what ways can you relate to the woman at the well? Envision that you are the one sitting at the well with Jesus. What are you most thirsty for in life? Imagine looking over at Jesus. What is something He sees when He looks at you that you might not recognize yourself? Confess your need for living water.

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**DIG DEEPER:** Read the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 63. These words were written in a desert. Highlight the words/phrases that stand out to you.

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### **The Woman Caught in Adultery | John 8:1-11**

Social media can be a useful tool for staying connected with friends and family — a place to share our lives and experiences with others. It feels good to be known and appreciated by friends and followers. But if we're not careful, social media can leave us feeling empty, let down, and longing for so much more.

While it can bring us joy, laughter, and encouragement, social media exposes us to comparison traps and criticism. It can lead us to desire what others have or judge what others do. Have you ever faced harsh criticism or found yourself passing judgment on others? Whether it's on social media, at school, or at home, being judged never feels good.

In today's passage, we'll meet a woman who faced harsh judgment by the religious leaders of her day and discover the very different response she received from Jesus.

**Read John 8:1-11.** What stands out to you about the woman in this passage? The Pharisees? What stands out to you about Jesus?

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The scene opens with Jewish leaders dragging a woman to the temple, aiming to publicly shame her while also hoping to trap Jesus in the process. They paraded her before the crowd, humiliating her, demanding a severe punishment—one that could cost her life.

Jesus' response was strikingly different from that of the woman's accusers. Rather than condemning the woman, he said, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." It's important to note that Jesus did not ignore her sin but highlighted that she wasn't the only sinner present. Each person there was in need of mercy and grace.

Jesus pointed her accusers to their own sinfulness, exposing their hypocrisy. Faced with their own shortcomings, the accusers had no choice but to leave. With compassion, Jesus told the woman that no one remained to condemn her—and neither did He. He stood between her and her accusers, offering protection and guidance. He encouraged her to leave her old ways behind and embrace a new path: "Go and sin no more."

Unlike the religious leaders who sought to condemn, Jesus responded with compassion and conviction. He defended the woman and invited her into a life of transformation.

CONNECT WITH GOD: Is there something in your life that makes you feel criticized or condemned by others? Bring it to Jesus right now. Picture Him standing before you. What does His gaze look like? What is He saying to you in this moment?

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DIG DEEPER: Gospel accounts of Jesus help us better grasp how God sees us. Considering the stories we have read so far, go back and read Psalm 139 again. What stands out to you now?

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### **Woman with the Alabaster Jar | Luke 7:36-50**

Have you ever felt labeled a certain way? When people describe you, what do they usually say? Do they focus on your talents, hobbies, or age? We are about to dive into a passage that introduces us to a woman known only for her past mistakes. Labeled a "sinful woman," her identity was overshadowed by her past faults rather than her true self.

Can you think of a time you feared being remembered for a failure? Have you ever felt anxious that God sees you through a lens of disapproval? As you go on to read about this woman's encounter with Jesus, I hope you will see her differently than how others at that time saw her. Perhaps you'll see a worshipful woman who is seen, known, and loved by a perfect God. Most of all, I hope this story helps you better grasp how God sees you.

Before we dive in, let's ask: why was this story written down? Why did God want this interaction to be recorded and remembered? Why did his disciples take note of this moment? John 1:18 tells us, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he [Jesus] has made him known." Every interaction in the Bible between Jesus and others is a crystal clear reflection of God's heart –the creator of the universe who sees, knows, loves us deeply, and wants us to know it!

**Read Luke 7:36-50.** Note any questions that come up, any words that stand out, and at least one attribute of God that you see in Jesus.

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*What is an alabaster flask? (verse 37)* An alabaster flask is perfumed oil– a costly item. The gospels of Mark and John both record its cost as 300 "denarii," which is about a year's worth of earnings! (Mark 14:5; John 12:3).

*What is a denarii (verse 41), and why does it matter here?* The denarius was a worker's daily earnings. In the middle of this true story, Jesus tells another story— a parable. Think of it as an illustration of a lesson Jesus wants to teach his listeners. A debt of 500 denarii was understood to be impossible to pay back. Jesus is teaching that sin is a debt we cannot settle on our own. He is using what other people know to be true of her– that she has sinned greatly, to show us an incredible truth about God: All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, and Jesus has been sent to forgive the debt of sin (Romans 3:23).

*Why is the woman's action so significant? (verse 38)* She is showing Jesus that she realizes her need for Him. Her actions are a profound act of worship, honor, and reverence– acknowledging that she also knows Jesus is a holy God, the only one who can wash away her sin. Jesus points out that her genuine devotion contrasts sharply with the Pharisee's lack of honor. The Pharisee felt he had little need for forgiveness, while the woman recognized her desperate need for His grace.

**CONNECT WITH GOD:** As we sit and reflect on this true story and the parable within it, let's think of how God views us– including our mistakes, failures, and even our darkest thoughts. Just like it was towards the woman, Jesus' heart towards us is grace upon grace. The woman in this story responded to God's grace with costly worship. What would it look like for you to do the same?

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CONNECT WITH OTHERS: May we all be bold enough, like this woman, to know our need for forgiveness and thank God for it in front of others. We can do this by sharing some things Jesus has forgiven us for. What did Jesus take to the cross that was yours? Pride? Gossip? Deceit? A desire to people- please?

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**TAKEAWAY**

We want to walk away from time in God's Word. What are you taking away from this study that you need to remember in the days ahead?

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What is a brave step God is asking you to take?

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