

SESSION 1

# HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE

*“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart’s desires.  
Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will  
help you. He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and  
the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.”*

*PSALM 37:4-6 (NLT)*

# SESSION 1: His Banner Over Me Is Love

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- ▶ **Main Idea:** Christians should live in their identity as God’s beloved rather than working to earn his love.
- ▶ **Head Change:** To *know* that we can trust God with our lives.
- ▶ **Heart Change:** To *feel* the reality of God’s love for us.
- ▶ **Life Change:** To put Jesus at the center of our life so that all efforts flow out of his love for us.

## 1 OPEN

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**When you are asked, “So, tell me about yourself,” what is your typical first response?**

Our lives are often so full of satisfying activities and joyful relationships that we can conflate those outside influences with our inner identity. We are sometimes tempted to rely too much on what we do or our relation to others to form our sense of self. But God created each of us uniquely, and he calls us his beloved. That foundational truth frames our value and informs our self-worth. In this study, musical artist and songwriter Christy Nockels explores Christian identity as the foundation from which we live for Jesus. Table table table

## 2 VIEW

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Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Christy Nockels’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

**1. What definition does Christy give to the term “beloved”?**

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**2. What is the danger of doing things for God rather than living from our identity in Christ?**

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**3. What does God give us when we surrender our dreams to him?**

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▶ **Show Session 1:** *His Banner over Me Is Love* (12 minutes).

## 3 REVIEW

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1. Christy Nockels began by acknowledging how difficult it can be to answer the question “Who are you?” We often are tempted to conflate our identity with our occupation. **How do you separate who you are from what you do?**
2. Living from a heart of rest, Christy said, depends upon reordering our lives according to God’s order. **Which does God value more: you as his beloved, chosen child or how you please him through obedience? Why do you think your answer is correct? In what ways do you live according to your answer?**
3. Christy mentioned that God often reminds us in Scripture of our identity before commanding our activity. Read Colossians 3:12. **What is it about us that makes us capable of treating others with kindness, compassion, patience, and the like?**
4. Read Revelation 4:11. God is the creator, and he creates from a heart of love. **How does it impact your self-image to hear that you were created for God’s pleasure? In what ways can that truth give you permission to love yourself better?**
5. Many people have never heard that God takes pleasure in them. They’ve been taught that they must earn his love. **In what ways have you been tempted to believe God loves you for what you can do for him?**
6. Christy explored the idea, referencing Romans 8:23, that each of us has a longing set inside us by God himself. That longing is for God. **In what ways have you experienced an ache or inner groaning that seems aimed at God? What kinds of life experiences might cause such an ache within?**
7. As we learn to love and enjoy the Father, he will then give us our heart’s desires. This is not a transactional relationship, but rather a transformational one. **What is the difference between a transactional and transformational relationship? Which method has dominated your relationship with God?**
8. Christy introduced her analogy of a target with concentric circles radiating from the center out to the edge. She connected the bullseye with the “quiet center of God’s love.” Other rings represent the community of God’s people, and further out is what she called the “capacity of the beloved,” where we live empowered by God’s Spirit. **How does her analogy strike you? In what ways can you apply it to your life?**

Christy painted a picture of a life properly centered on God. When we find our joy and peace in Christ first (the bullseye), we rightly prioritize our sense of worth and subsequent behavior. First realizing that God loves us, we can then pursue our dreams and serve him with our lives. Too often we get this order backward, seeking significance and purpose in what we do rather than in who we are.

Turn to Psalm 37:4–6. Christy mentioned this passage as key to her “Farm Table” experience in which God showed her that he wanted a transformational—not transactional—relationship with her.

The psalm laments the seeming success of wicked people over the righteous. The psalmist counsels the righteous person in verses 4–6 to trust in God rather than striving to make everything right. Read verse 4. **In what ways can you “delight yourself in the Lord”? What does that look like in your life?**

The second half of verse 4, “and he will give you your heart’s desires,” seems to imply that God will reward a faithful person with tangible benefits. **How have you understood this verse in the past?**

Delighting in God includes prioritizing him, centering our days around him, looking to him for our purpose and identity. When we delight in God, he generously gives us himself, for he has become our heart’s desire. **How does delighting in God reflect a transformational relationship, as Christy called it, instead of a transactional arrangement?**

In verse 5, the psalmist continues the same thought in a parallel manner, “Commit yourself to the Lord; trust in him and he will act.” Again, God is placed in the center of the righteous person’s life. **In what ways do you commit your behavior to God? How might a regular practice of offering your actions up to God influence how you act toward others?**

Prayer can be a powerful force in a believer’s daily life. **How would you describe your prayer life? How easy or difficult is it for you to seek his help and trust him to act for your good?**

Verse 6 describes the result of delighting in the Lord and committing everything to him: He will work in our lives in ways that glorify him. “He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” **Who is doing the work in this passage? What could it look like for you to stop striving to be good or do good and instead focus on God himself?**

In verse 6, the words translated righteousness and justice are twin terms meaning almost the same thing: rightness, honesty, accuracy, and the ability to judge those qualities in truth. In true Hebrew poetry form, the psalmist emphasizes his point by repeating it. **How do righteousness and justice reflect the heart of God? In what ways do these qualities show up in the life of someone delighting in the Lord?**

Elsewhere in Scripture, a life focused on God is described in terms of light. Read Psalm 36:9. **How does the “light” of God influence those who follow him?**

Read John 1:4–5. This beautiful prologue to John’s Gospel is speaking of Jesus. **What imagery do you think of as you read this passage? In what ways does light describe Jesus? How powerful is Jesus, the “light of the world”?**

Read Matthew 5:14–16, where Jesus encourages his disciples not to hide the light within them, but to let it shine before others. **Why might you be tempted to hide God’s light? What can you do to shine the love of God to your part of the world?**

Read Ephesians 5:8–9. Our identity as children of light—redeemed people of God—results in a new pattern of behavior. **What sort of change did you see in yourself after coming to faith in Christ? In what ways does your relationship with God influence your choices now?**

Resting in our identity as a loved, accepted child of God frees us to live with joy and purpose, not guilt or striving. **What would it look like for you to commit yourself to rest in your God-given identity this week?**

## 5 LAST WORD

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All of our efforts to please God are worthless unless we know him as savior first and foremost. In Christ, we not only know we belong to God, but we also are empowered to shine his light to the world around us. When we remain glued to him, we begin to let go of our own desires and plans. He transforms our hearts so that we might desire what he desires.

Christy used the image of a target, with a bullseye and concentric circles radiating outward. Living from the outside, where we seek what we want, gets exhausting. But living from the inside out, centered in our identity as God’s children, becomes energizing. As the study progresses, we will explore more of what it means to delight in the Lord.

## 6 DEEPER WALK

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- ▶ **Walk:** Find a path or park where you can enjoy God’s creation. As you walk, tell God of your hopes and dreams. Offer them to him and ask him to make his desires for you come true.
- ▶ **Study:** Using a concordance (online, or in the back of your Bible) search for the word light. List out the different ways it is used, then write down your favorite verse that uses the word.
- ▶ **Pray:** Thank Jesus for exchanging his life for yours and for continuing to strengthen and guide you each day.