

Introduction

Welcome to *Loving Well*. I'm so delighted that you have chosen to join us in this study of what is both a core challenge and a central joy of following Christ. We're going to jump into the Word to seek help in loving all the people God has for us.

You probably remember those old commercials where two people collided: "You got chocolate in my peanut butter," and "You got peanut butter in my chocolate." Well, in the fall of 2005 God brought several things together that resulted in *Loving Well*.

At that time, the Living Proof Live event team was preparing for what was going to be a special occasion. We were going for a weekend to Knoxville, Tennessee, and we sensed that God was up to something.

God had been dealing with me about loving people. He kept bringing me back to 1 John 4:7-8. As I prepared, God spoke to me about the four kinds of people we studied that weekend. Some are easy to love. Some are difficult to love, and some are humanly impossible to love. God wants to demonstrate His

might by doing through us what we cannot possibly do on our own. He wants us to learn to love all of these kinds of people—and love them well. So in Knoxville God spoke to us about the only way we can love well—with His love providing the key to how we can love them.

At the same time God was speaking to me about loving well, He was doing a new thing with my friends at LifeWay. We have done more than 80 Living Proof Live events together. We had never sought to capture any of them on video, but for the Knoxville event LifeWay sent a video crew.

No good collision around the Moore house could only involve two parties, though, so God brought in a third part of it all. For a couple of years people had been asking for something to help churches conduct a weekend retreat. We realized that the Knoxville weekend would be a great time to invite friends from all over to participate.

Now those of you who know me know that nothing would please

me more than to run off to some secluded spot and spend time with you in the Word. I want to sit and talk like the girlfriends we have become. We may have to wait for heaven to ultimately sit down together for that kind of personal sharing, but I hope *Loving Well* can be at least a taste of it for both of us. I'm not kidding when I tell you that you've become my dear friends though we've only gotten to study God's Word together through the page and video.

The LifeWay team has taken the time at Knoxville and formatted it for a weekend retreat. Or you may choose to study *Loving Well* in a four-week video study. My friend Julie Woodruff has written plans to prepare and conduct the retreat. My buddy Travis Cottrell has provided helps for worship leaders. And then Travis and I got together to provide some fun things you'll find on the DVD menu's. I hope you have as much fun with it all as we have.

This journal is not a study in the normal sense. In Knoxville, God really spoke to us about loving well.

I wanted us to have some time to reflect on and apply the teaching. So this journal takes the content of the video and invites you to spend time with the Father. I want you to have a chance to personalize and apply the concepts.

If you use *Loving Well* in a retreat, the journal gives you four weeks of follow up. If you choose to take the four-week study approach, the journal will allow you to reflect on the time together each week. I hope it will be an enriching time with you, your Bible, and the Lord. Then one day you can brew me a cup of coffee and tell me how He loved you well.

I love you,

Beth Moore

LOVE SPRINGS FROM GOD

Drawing from the Well

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is [springs] from God and he who loves [his fellowmen] is begotten [born] of God and is coming [progressively] to know and understand God [to perceive and recognize and get a better and clearer knowledge of Him]."
 1 John 4:7, AMP

We use the word *love* glibly, "I love my husband, I love my children, I love my grandbaby, I love my dog, I love coffee, and I love Mexican food." You get the idea. But we need to ask ourselves what it means to love well.

I'm convinced that to love well requires a persevering love that goes beyond our human capabilities. We cannot love well unless we have a growing personal relationship with Christ. If we are growing in Christ, we are growing in love because "love springs from God." We have no higher calling than to love. God measures maturity by how we love.

Over the next four weeks we want to evaluate the way we love others. Let's begin by asking ourselves some questions. Take a moment to journal your thoughts in response to the following questions:

Do I love others better than I did five years ago?

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Am I growing in my ability to love others more openly, with more vulnerability?

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What marked change or transformation has come about in the way I love?

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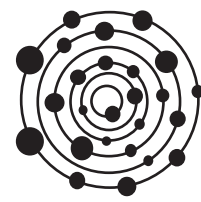
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As you ponder these questions today, ask God to show you where you can grow in love.



PRAYER Father, I confess that sometimes I try to love others out of a sense of duty rather than out of a heart that is overflowing with Your love. I have been reminded that I cannot give to others what I have not received. Before I can love anybody else, I need You to love me.

GOD'S LOVE

Drawing from the Well

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:9-12, NIV

Our goal is not just to learn to love but also to grow in our capacity to love well. No one has ever seen God, but when we love beyond our abilities, people will see Him in us. More than our teaching, serving, or exhorting, God manifests Himself through us when we love.

Today's verse, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us" sounds easy. But part of the problem we have in learning to love others is that we don't take time to let God minister to and love on us.

When was the last time you confessed to God that you need to bask in His love before you can love others? Unless He fills us with love, we will be unable to pour out God's love on others.

Read 1 John 4:7-17 and write down everything these verses have to say about love.

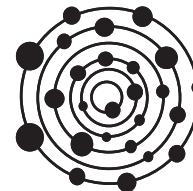
Lined writing area for journaling reflections on 1 John 4:7-17.

Do you really believe God loves you? Why or why not?

Lined writing area for reflecting on belief in God's love.

Carve out some time today or this week to spend an extended time alone with God. Go to a quiet place, taking only your Bible and your journal.

Talk with God about any fears or doubts you might have. Ask Him to show you His love today.



PRAYER Father, I confess that sometimes I try to love others out of a sense of duty rather than out of a heart that overflows with Your love. I have been reminded that I cannot give to others what I have not received. Before I can love anybody else, I need You to love me.