



YOU. ARE. LOVED.

Live the Love Song

BY: LISA HEATON



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From the beginning:

One summer morning, I was about to walk away from my quiet time with God the Father. I specify God the Father since I often address Him according to my need. That morning, I needed the Father's ear. All this time later, I can't remember what was so pressing, just that this girl needed her Dad.

As I stood to walk away, I heard as clearly as I've ever heard Him speak, "You are loved." The words were choppy and specific, more like: You. Are. Loved. I paused mid-stand and then sat back down. With my eyes closed and a grin tugging at my lips, I said back to Him, "You are loved." I sat a while and listened but nothing more happened.

I started to stand again but then stopped. Before I walked away from a word so intimate, I had to ask myself this question: What will my day look like if I live it loved? A few things came to mind, like how I would live out my day with purpose and intention. I was working on a massive revision project at the time and needed focus. I reminded myself that God would be with me. It was, after all, His kingdom work I was accomplishing. I knew I could live out my day trusting that He would provide what I needed.

That's about all I came up with, so I moved on about my day. Many times throughout the day those three words came to mind: You Are. Loved. Each time, the memory made me smile, and a warm feeling washed over me. Different than my many decades before, I now know I'm loved by God the Father and Jesus the Son, my Beloved. Living loved is not new to me anymore. It's not something I take for granted by any means, but after about a decade of living loved, I know what love feels like. It's what I needed all my life. To me, love is the biggest deal. I wallow in it and revel in it and am constantly amazed by it. I now know that I was just as loved during my broken years as I am now, but I had failed to grasp it and pull it into my belief system. It was an elusive ideal that I knew was true, but I hadn't taken hold of it as my personal possession.

Later that night as I was settling in with my husband to watch TV, I was scanning through something on my phone while we waited for our show to begin. I heard music on the TV that caught my attention, so I glanced up. There were no words, but the tune was familiar. When I saw that it was just some commercial, I looked back at my phone, figuring the song was familiar because I had seen the commercial before.

For some reason, I glanced back up at the TV at just the right time and heard, "You are loved." That was it. The letters "ADT" appeared on the screen. It was a home security commercial that was using the Christian song by Stars Go Dim. The tune was familiar to me because I adore that song. I had even used it at conferences where I had spoken – of course, the Jesus Loves Me Conferences.

I was so blown away that I just sat staring at the TV. Then I tried to tell my husband, Kelly, about it. About what an impact it made. Father God had spoken those exact three words to me that morning in a way that stopped me in my tracks. He even

made a commercial about it to drive the point home, like bookends at the beginning and end of my day. That was serious planning on His part.

When things like that happen and He begins to weave together chords of revelation through repetition, then I know He's up to something. The next morning, I began to jot down a few notes of how I might use this subject as a possible book or study. Since I was working on that revision project and knew I didn't currently have time to devote real attention to it, I decided to hold off a few weeks until vacation. I figured if God planned on me writing a book, then the fire would fall when the time was right.

I'm not sure that you can call what happened on that vacation fire falling. One event after another hindered me from devoting time to writing until once, when I was at my most frustrated, the commercial came on again. It served as confirmation that I was to write about this topic someday.

That season wasn't His timing, but eventually, other small sparks of thought came together, fire fell, and I got started. Then I stopped again. Then fire fell again. Now I see that each delay has only provided deeper revelation and given me more insight.

One notable thought from my vacation emerged and has carried over into this book. My email devotion contained the following verse. It wasn't in my usual translation, but the timing of it kicked off one of those sparks of revelation.

"Yahweh, your God, is in the midst of you, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with joy. He will calm you in his love. He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17 WEB)

This just happens to be one of my of my favorite verses, one that comes at just the right time as a reminder that God is there, watching and in charge.

I have begun with this long story filled with minute details of how this book came about for this reason: to illustrate and emphasize that God is in our midst, just as Zephaniah says. He is in the small details of your life and my life just as surely as He's in the big ones. That's where people miss God at His most loving, in the minutia of their daily lives.

As further proof of His presence along this journey, a major new component of this project was added well into the process of writing it. This book is divided into two primary sections: Part One contains the foundational concepts that highlight God's love and how knowing you are loved will shift your entire life's perspective. Part Two is made up of individual topics that depict what living loved can or should look like in that particular area.

Though I understood the connection and how the two parts were irreversibly intertwined and dependent on the other, I had been at a loss as to how to explain it with clarity. I was missing the imagery.

I continued to pray until the answer finally came just the morning before I was to speak on this You. Are. Loved. topic for the first time. It was early morning when I prayed, "Help me explain it. Give me a way to express it." I heard only two words: a dance. That was all it took. From there all the pieces fell into place. His love is the music; the lyrics, His Word. Your faith walk is the dance you live out in relationship with Jesus.

That brings me back to Zephaniah 3:17, and how this phrase sings a new melody: "He will rejoice over you with singing." This life He has given us is His love song sung over us. I now offer this book as a verse in my love song of praise back to Him. I pray you draw closer to the lover of your soul so that you may hear the music of His love playing louder every day.

May your heart catch on fire so that you sing a love song in return with the way you live loved.

My hope is to show you what I've been shown, to tell you what I've been told, and to give you what I've been given. Recently, I acknowledged in prayer that I have no right to be writing this book. Jesus reminded me: Who better to write about the dance than one who's lived it?

I'm not a pastor, minister, or theologian. I am, however, a woman who has done it wrong most of my life. More importantly, I am a woman who has learned to dance to the melody of His love. I've been transformed in ways that I can hardly believe. Oh, I'm still a mess in many areas, but I've been healed by the love and grace of God. Nothing matters more to me than sharing God's love. I know of no better way to express the work the Holy Spirit has done in me other than through examples from my own journey. I am living the love song; come dance and sing along with me.

Grace and Peace,
Lisa



IN THE COOL OF THE DAY

Recently, during my quiet time, a phrase came to mind about walking with God: in the cool of the day. It was as if He was reminding me that walking with Him should feel like that, restful.

I love that this book begins with the beginning. I'm not strategic enough to have planned that on my own.

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8)

Usually when this verse is quoted, the focus is on the sin aspect, but that's not where I want to draw your attention. I want to point out that God's original design for man (and woman) was for us to walk with Him in the cool of the day. That's what living loved should look like. To walk with the Lord in the cool of the day should be a life of peace and acceptance and purpose.

Punishment for the original sin included mankind being expelled from the Garden of Eden, preventing humans from walking with God physically as Adam and Eve did. In a spiritual sense, that barrier was removed with the rending of the veil when Jesus was on the cross. We now have full access to walk with God the Father and Jesus the Son through the Holy Spirit. We are invited to that walk every day of our lives.

When God questioned him regarding his sin, Adam's response was:

“Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’ ” (Genesis 3:12)

Never underestimate the tremendous sway you have over your husband, home, and family. Take great care how you wield your power. Yes, Adam should have been the leader of his home and said no to the temptation, but Eve had an influence over her husband that altered the course of human history.

Consider this: If you know you are loved and live your life as if you are, there is a much better chance your family will follow suit. Our children tend to model our behavior. Our husbands take cues from us as well. This topic is critical for your life; it's vital that you live loved in front of the ones you love. They will only want what you have if what you have is inviting.

The latter part of the verse says:

“The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’ ” (Genesis 3:13)

I'm not sure why this verse has never impacted me in the past the way it has recently, but for whatever reason it's now stuck in my head, often ringing out in my own circumstances. I've been given a fresh revelation, a new way to view this verse:

The serpent is still deceiving, and we are still eating.

The enemy feeds us lies, and we eat. We eat until we're so full of doubt that we can hardly believe God is good. The enemy convinces us that what we are experiencing in our Christian walk is all there is, that our mediocre lives are what we are stuck with. We have no reason to believe there's more since we've never experienced more.

I'm here to tell you that's not true. You and I are designed to walk in an intimate relationship with God where we hear His clear leading, a walk where we feel loved and live our lives based on His truth. The Church as a whole isn't walking with God in the cool of the day. Most are hiding among the trees after eating what the serpent has fed them.

The list of lies we believe is a mile long: I am worthless, pointless, and aimless. I'm unlovable. There is no hope. I hold on to yesterday as if I might change it and fear tomorrow as if worry might affect the outcome. I'm too fat, too thin, too short, too tall. I'm not pretty enough or smart enough or capable enough. I have nothing to contribute. God could never love me.

The most detrimental deception we swallow is doubting God's love and faithfulness, which leads us to wonder if God really has our best interest at heart. Will He fail me? Why didn't He heal? Why did He allow?

There is something about settling the love issue that, with time, unravels all the other doubts. I say with time because trusting in His love doesn't happen overnight.

From my own experience, the most effective lie the enemy has ever fed me was to doubt God's love for me. If I doubt that, nothing else works: not trust or surrender or accomplishing what I was created to do. All it takes for the enemy to defeat and cripple us is to cause us to doubt the completeness of God's love.

Let's consider what it might look like to walk in the cool of the day with Jesus. We need inspiration, a reason to pursue this topic of grasping God's love and living loved. We all need a finish line in sight to urge us on.

If you walk in the cool of the day with Jesus, you:

- Know that He is enough
- Hear from God
- Keep reading the Love Letter
- Walk in the moment
- Reflect who He is to others

This is far from a comprehensive list, but it's enough to give you an idea of what you can look forward to.

One of the things I love about God is how He can tailor His work in my life to me and at the same time be the God you need. He knows us and meets us individually. Consider this from the Psalms:

"He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works."
(Psalm 33:15)

In my own walk, the cool of the day means: I feel no pressure of impending things. Whatever His call and plan, I know He will carry it out and empower me to do my part. The weight of the world is on His shoulders, not mine. I am at rest from worry. He calms my fears. Past moments of His faithfulness remind me He will come through, just as He always has.

I feel exhilaration while with Him, no matter the gloom and doom that awaits me in the world. I find time flies, and I have to tear myself away from Him. It hasn't always been like that. There were times in my life when I was kind of phoning it in, making time to read a little and pray a little. Now, I get so absorbed in the moment that I find myself running late for what's next in my day. That's a good thing. I can live with that.

I grow along the walk. He accepts me as I am but refuses to leave me that way. Every season brings to light new places for growth and allows for His continued work in making me more like Him.

The cool of the day isn't just a quiet time experience, something you only recognize while reading your Bible or spending time in prayer. It's a life experience. Jesus wants to hang out with you. He wants you to live out this life knowing love so penetrating that your daily life reflects Love.

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

(Matthew 11:28-30)

The cool of the day feels like that, rest for your soul. If you don't know love so restful, prepare for a journey where you will come to know His love with such certainty that you will live each day of your life loved.