

WWWC Spiritual Preparation I

Colorado January 24-26, 2020 Weekend

Happy New Year to each of you! I know many of us have prayed for specific “words” for a theme or focus in 2020. I started early and chose the word for REST for the Christmas Holidays; which in my mind meant being present, not too busy, focused on Jesus’ birth and my family, making space for the important things about the season rather than getting consumed by the frenzy. Well, it turned into an interesting blessing as I really received the “gift of rest” through having an emergency appendectomy on Christmas Eve. I then spent this past week on the couch with some virus that laid me out!! Yes, God has an interesting sense of humor. But it really DID turn out to be a Blessing in Disguise. As I reflected over these past 2 weeks, I was put in a very humbled position throughout the holidays as we hosted dinners and our family including 4 grands were staying with us -I was totally unable to function out of my usual “do-everything and serve-everybody Enneagram 2-ness.” Instead I was somewhat forced to give myself permission to allow others to serve me and be the doers- while I could just BE. And this Christmas turned out to be the most joyful time we have had together as a family in years!! God honored my prayer beyond my wildest dreams.

So, our words and how we perceive their meaning and put them to use are very powerful. Our Women’s Walk With Christ mission statement was prayerfully crafted to express a precise and empowering statement:

“Walking with Women in their healing and transformation in Christ.”

I would like to encourage each one of us to focus on our mission and our own healing and transformation in Christ before the weekend so that we are equipped to walk alongside missionaries in their healing and transformation up in Estes Park.

Romans 12:1 tells us *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is. His good, pleasing and perfect will.”* As we heal and transform in Christ’s likeness we must renew our minds! Our transformation can take place through the power of the Holy Spirit by identifying the lies we hear from the pit - the shaming messages we take on, or tell ourselves. We can choose to listen to our loving Father who has called us the Beloved. He has chosen us and blessed us. He uses our brokenness for HIS Glory not our shame. He sends us out into the world for the good of others.

So, the first word we are going to unpack is **BELOVED**. Our true identity in Christ. We are the King’s Beloved Daughters. Our minds must be transformed to receive this fact that we are absolutely LOVED and cherished by our Good and Beautiful God. He calls us His Beloved throughout scripture. You can do a Bible word search and see how many times we are referenced as beloved. One of the most powerful verses is stated in all of the first three gospels. Matthew 3:16-17 says, *“This is my Beloved Son,[Ⓢ] with whom I am well pleased.”*

Because we are hidden “in Christ” as it says in Colossians 3:3 God’s words to Jesus can be applied to us!! We can claim this blessing, *“This is my beloved Daughter,[Ⓢ] with whom I am well pleased.”*

Yes, there is a voice that speaks to us from heaven. God whispers this over and over to us, we just need to be spiritually awakened and silent long enough to hear Him. And the truth is, the greatest gift we can give one another is this same gift of calling out and encouraging each other to live as the beloved daughter of God.

However, we cannot give what we have not claimed for ourselves. So what keeps us from claiming our Belovedness? According to Henri Nouwen two things: The first is self-rejection-when we believe the voices that call us unlovable, not enough, worthless. And the second is our own arrogance, which is really the other side of self-rejection. Under the arrogance is self-doubt and a great amount of pride hidden in my self-rejection.

Henri Nouwen says, within both aspects “self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.” Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.”

As we enter into the next two weeks, we are going to claim our true **Belovedness** by unpacking four more words **CHOSEN, BLESSED, BROKEN and GIVEN**. You can go through the following reflections at your own pace and share your insights with your Prayer Partner(s) along the way. Please try to connect at least twice with your partner.

Here are some suggested practices for the next two weeks:

- 1) Post a sticky note where you can see it first thing in the morning to claim your own Belovedness.
- 2) Do a Bible Gateway word search and write out all the scriptures that call you Beloved.
- 3) Memorize one of the verses that speak to you about being the Beloved
- 4) Be attentive to the voices you are listening to in your head. When you notice a shaming voice, don't dwell on it, rather RUN to the Father and have HIM reaffirm the truth that YOU are His Beloved Daughter.

Our song for the weekend is **Run to the Father** by Cody Carnes
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTHS4W1bPj8>

Theme Verse : Matthew 3:16-17 “*This is my Beloved Daughter, with whom I am well pleased.*”

Please note, this Spiritual Preparation have been inspired and adapted from Henri Nouwen’s book, The Life of the Beloved.

Questions from Preparation 1 for you to reflect on, journal and share with your Prayer Partner:

- 1) What negative voices do you struggle with that keep you from knowing you are the Beloved?
- 2) Do you struggle more with self-rejection or with arrogance? And how does this play out in your life?
- 3) Which of the above 4 Spiritual Practices will you do to remind yourself that you are Beloved this month?

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Our second word for our spiritual preparation is the word **CHOSEN**. As children of God not only are we the BELOVED, but God actively CHOSE you before the beginning of time. He chose you because He loves you! Not because you did anything!! Scripture is full of this affirmation.

As the psalmist says in Psalm 139 :13-16

¹³For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
¹⁶Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

Isaiah 44:2

Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

Colossians 3:12

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

2 Thessalonians 2:13

¹³But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning[Ⓜ] to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit[Ⓜ] and belief in the truth.

This particular word "chosen" hits a bit of a wound for me. I was a very shy child and my family moved from state to state every two years when I was growing up because of my dad's job. I was always the "new" girl at school and was "assigned" to another student for them to be "nice" to me. The message I took on was- "They didn't choose me, I was thrust upon them by the teacher." Also, I was not especially athletic so was not chosen until last for dodgeball

teams, kickball, four-square etc...I learned I had to earn my way into friendship and being chosen.

Henri Nouwen states, *"When love chooses, it chooses with perfect sensitivity for the unique beauty of the chosen one, and it chooses without making anyone else feel excluded....To be Chosen as the Beloved of God.....means instead of excluding others, it includes others. Instead of rejecting others as less valuable, it accepts others in their own uniqueness. It is not a competitive, but a compassionate choice."*

The beauty of GOD choosing us is HIS choosing is so beautifully intimate and particular to each individual. His love is limitless. Maybe you have never felt "chosen." Well it's time to change that The GOD of the universe has chosen YOU in particular to love, adore and cherish. Jesus Himself calls you friend. He has chosen you even when the world has not chosen you to be his BEST friend!

John 15:15

"I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father."

Nouwen gives us some ideas for claiming our chosenness:

- 1) Unmask the world's destructive lies. Remind yourself they are lies.
- 2) Look for people and places where your truth is spoken and you are reminded of your deepest identity as the chosen one. (Sounds like Spirit Circle to me...)
- 3) Celebrate your chosenness constantly and THANK GOD for choosing you. GRATITUDE is a choice and gratitude begets gratitude.

When we get in touch with our own unique chosenness, we can love others with the same affirmation of being precious in God's eyes. It is a lifelong struggle to claim that chosenness, but it is the basis of being the Beloved!!

Questions from Preparation 2 for you to reflect on/journal about and share with your Prayer Partner:

- 1) Did you grow up feeling chosen or unchosen? Journal about how it felt. How does it feel now as a strong woman, to be chosen by God?
- 2) Which scripture passage speaks most to you about your chosenness. Take a 3x5 card or paper and write it out in colored marker/pencil and meditate on it.

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Our third word is **BLESSED**. At church we often receive a benediction which -in Latin means "speaking" (dictio) "well" (bene) or saying good things about or to someone. To give a blessing is to affirm someone's Belovedness. It speaks the truth of who someone is. The opposite of speaking well of someone is cursing them. This is often what the world does to us – it speaks lies to us or actually curses who we truly are. There are two parts involved in claiming our BLESSEDNESS. The first part is **prayer** and the second is **presence**. Prayer is a way of listening to God about what He has to say about us. In this way we can receive HIS blessing. The hard work in prayer is becoming quiet and sitting in silence long enough to listen to His voice that says good things to me, and then REMEMBERING what God actually says! Presence is paying attention to the blessings that come to you each day. It is slowing down and NOTICING when others are blessing us, rather than dismissing the blessing.

Nouwen says as we begin to claim our own Blessedness, we begin to desire to bless others more often. It becomes much easier to think of saying good things about others than chiming in on gossip, accusations, criticizing or blaming others. All people yearn for a blessing. But we cannot truly pass on the blessing if we have not heard one ourselves.

We are CHOSEN and we are BLESSED. When we have truly owned this then we can face our own BROKENNESS and others' brokenness with open eyes.

Questions from Preparation 3 for you to reflect on/journal about and share with your Prayer Partner

- 1) Pause now for some time of prayer and jot down words of Blessing that GOD whispers to you! You may want to hold out your right hand and ask God to reveal a new word to you about your giftedness!! Thank Him for what He reveals to you!

- 2) Who has blessed you this week and what was their blessing?

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Our fourth word is **BROKEN**. On our Women's Walk with Christ weekend and in Spirit Circle work, we have become more aware of our brokenness. Take a moment now to reflect back to your original weekend. Remember walking into check-in and the feelings you had as you took your luggage up to your room. Remember the question, "Are you willing to commit to participating and not just observing in this experience order to receive all that GOD has in store for you this weekend?"

Your commitment led you to press into your brokenness, to feel it, experience it, and to claim it as your own. You felt your deceit, your fear, your anger and sadness, and your shame. By experiencing all of this brokenness, you put it under the blessing by befriending it. It was no longer a curse that defined you. No longer something to be avoided. You allowed yourself the gift of making your most feared enemy your friend. As you accepted your brokenness – it became an intimate companion, part of your very unique story of healing and transformation into Christlikeness. These broken places were no longer an obstacle to growth. Instead, your woundedness became an avenue of transformation into your Belovedness as you trusted the Lord to work in these tender places.

Henri Nouwen says, *"The great spiritual call of the Beloved Children of God is to pull their brokenness away from the shadow of the curse and put it under the light of the blessing."*

This knowledge does not diminish the pain of our suffering, but it does give us hope in the midst of the suffering. Paul acknowledges the mercy of God in our pain as well as the consolation and hope we can find in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God." I personally have found great comfort and meaning in my brokenness through Joseph's words to his brothers in [Genesis 50:20](#)

*"Even though you intended to do harm to me, **God** intended it **for good**, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today."*

Question from Preparation 4 for you to reflect on/journal about and share with your Prayer Partner

- 1) Have you experienced your unique woundedness as a blessing? In what way do you see the blessing?

- 2) How has your woundedness become an avenue of transformation into Christlikeness? (this could have to do with your mission statement!)

WWWC Spiritual Preparation 5
Friday AM
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For the past two weeks we have done work around claiming our true identity in Christ! We are the Beloved Daughter with whom He is well pleased!!! This is the promise we receive from Matthew 3:16-17, as God Blesses Jesus at his Baptism – We can claim this blessing as our own since we are IN CHRIST and He is IN US.

“This is my Beloved Daughter, with whom I am well pleased.”

We have been attentive to the fact that when we choose to claim we have been CHOSEN, we can unmask the world’s lies and see how we were loved and chosen before time began. In turn, we can clearly speak truth to other women about their chosenness.

As we choose to accept that we are BLESSED we can encourage and BLESS others.

As we accept and befriend our BROKENNESS as part of our own unique and beautiful identity, we can inspire others to embrace their BROKENNESS. We can encourage women to pull their brokenness out of the shadow of the curse and place our brokenness in the light of transformation in Christ-likeness.

As we live in the truth of being the Beloved, it is critical we CHOOSE each day to “own” that we are Chosen, Blessed, and Broken. This choice is not just for our own good. It equips us to fulfill the two commandments that Jesus proclaimed in Matthew 22:37-39,

³⁷ Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

As the Beloved, we can fully embrace our Beautiful, loving God, accept ourselves and more authentically love our neighbor.

As we prepare to serve 39 missionaries this weekend, our fourth aspect of being the Beloved is to be GIVEN.

Henri Nouwen says, “In the giving of ourselves, it becomes evident that we are chosen, blessed and broken not for just our own sake, but as the Beloved ones, our greatest fulfillment lies in becoming bread for the world. That is the most intimate expression of our deepest desire to give ourselves to others.”

We are to become Bread for the world! Some of the greatest gifts we have to give others comes from our joy, inner peace, compassion and strength that have been developed through our woundedness and healing. Our brokenness is connected to our ability to give. It opens us up to a deeper way of sharing our lives and offering each

other what little we have, We can offer both our gifts/ and our brokenness to God and put them both under His Blessing. He is able to transform and multiply our little crumbs into an abundance of love for others.

Matthew 15:32-38

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand (summarize vs 32-34)

³² Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."

³³ His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

³⁴ "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish."

Read:

³⁵ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ Then he took (CHOSEN) the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, (BLESSED) he broke (BROKEN) them and gave (GIVEN) them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷ They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ³⁸ The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children.

God only asks us to show up and offer Him our small morsels of bread. Our blessings and our brokenness. He takes our offering and multiplies it beyond what we can imagine!! He is a God of abundance.

(Handout large Red Hearts and markers)

Take this red heart and prayerfully "Run to the Father" and ask Him to show you what you have to offer this weekend on behalf of the women you are serving. Consider the gifts of your blessing and the gifts of your brokenness. Claim these truths and write the words that describes your Belovedness.

(Play 'Run to the Father' as they pray)

The beauty of living as the Beloved, is that we have everything we need in Christ. 2 Peter 1:3 promises: "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Share your "heart" with 2 other people and give a voice to what you are offering today. Spend a few moments in prayer with them for the weekend.

Small wooden hearts were handed out.

This small heart is a reminder you can put in your pocket or nametag.

YOU are the Beloved Daughter of the King. You have been Chosen, Blessed, Broken and Given.