

## Identity Wars study 3 – Near to the Heart of God

What were your feelings when you had your first child?

What were your expectations of raising your child? What did you want for your child?

Why did you choose the name you did for your child?

Can you share a special moment when you looked at your child and had a special feeling of love?

Why is your child any more special to you than anybody else's child?

- Imagine the joy on that day when Jesus formed Adam from the dust of the ground and then breathed into him the breath of life! How do you think He felt? Why did He feel that way?

There is something special about the words "You are mine." Especially when spoken after the question, 'Why do you love me?'

- Before your child has done a thing: before it has had its first feed, before it has muttered its first word, before it has crawled for the first time or taken its first steps, before it has shown any signs of talent or special capabilities at school, you already loved him/her. Why?
- Do you think it is any different for our Heavenly Father? Why does He love us?
- Can anything change His love for us? Can anything we do enhance or diminish His love for us? Why?

Gen 1:26, 27 We were made in God's image, both physically and relationally. There was no performance based criterion when God first expressed His love for Adam and Eve on that first day in the Garden of Eden (they didn't need to prove themselves for God to love them). They were His and that was that. He loved them. They had done nothing to earn or command His love. They were in fact the product of His love and nothing was ever going to change that.

- Therefore value in God's kingdom, from its inception, is based on relationship not performance. This should tell us a lot about the God who made us and who we worship.

Malachi 3:6 – "I am the Lord, and I do not change, therefore you sons of Jacob are not destroyed." What does this tell us about God? How does this knowledge impact the way we view God's love for us?

- The door to our heavenly home where our Heavenly Father resides is always open. What could possibly stop us from entering there one day? This is the great question we all need to consider.
- As a Father there is no way, based on His everlasting love, that He would slam the door to His home in our face and say, I don't want you here. So what could stop us from entering there one day?
- Perhaps not understanding and knowing the truth about God could alter the way we think about him and twist our mind to the point that we would choose not to want to go there and live with Him. Ouch! That hurts!

What are God's thoughts toward us?

Luke 12:6,7 Five sparrows, hairs, do not fear. What could we possibly be fearing?

Jesus is explaining the principles of His kingdom. What makes people significant in God's kingdom? What makes them count for something? What makes them worth something? Basically, what makes them valuable? Answer - God's thought about them

- How much does your closest friend know about you? God knows more
- How much does your greatest enemy know about you? God knows more ... and still loves you.

In your own words, explain what "don't be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6-7) means to you.

- Can you see how worth and significance is gained in God's kingdom?
- It comes from realising that God lovingly thinks about us constantly.

Think of the things God does for us every moment of every day. He gives us life. He sustains our lives by causing our hearts to beat. He pours out His love into our lives so we can both express it to and receive it from others. He imparts rich gifts, talents and abilities for our satisfaction, enjoyment, and service for others.

This the secret of God's kingdom, the secret of significance – that He does all this for us because of the giving, pure nature of His love.. It is the key which unlocks the enslaving kingdom of worthlessness and depression. Do you have the courage to believe it?

How much is God thinking of you?

Read Psalm 40:5

- if our value is determined by the loving thoughts God has towards us, then this verse tells us that we are priceless.

How do feel to know that you are priceless?

Think about this. If God thinks you are priceless, of the highest value and that He is thinking good things about you constantly, then what if somebody else has a different opinion about you, what if someone says you are useless or worthless – who is correct?

- We can rest in our Heavenly Father's promise, and there remain in quiet confidence and assurance that His eternal opinion is what counts.

Jer 29:11-13 God knows His thoughts towards us. Nothing else matters. You are near to the heart of God. Praise Him for that and draw close to His loving heart with praise and thanksgiving. Amen.