

# SESSION 4 - HIDDEN LOVE



Breaking the hard ground of unworthiness & distorted love

## LEADER'S NOTES

God's unconditional love is central, yet many of us find it hard to let it shape how we see ourselves. For many, love can become tangled with expectations, performance or worthiness. We may believe in God's love in theory, yet struggle to trust it in practice.



### Noticing the places where love may become hidden

Through experiences, self-protection and distorted views of God, love may feel hidden. These patterns are deeply human. They are not signs of weak faith or spiritual failure, but responses formed over time through lived experience. We are invited not to judge these places harshly, but to notice them honestly.

#### Experience

Experiences of conditional care, rejection or disappointment can quietly shape how we understand love.

**How do you feel these things have impacted your view of God's love?**

#### Self-protection

Over time, we may learn to protect ourselves, holding parts of our hearts at a distance in order to avoid further hurt. What begins as self-protection can gradually harden into a belief that love must be earned, deserved or even kept at a distance.

**What could unconditional love from God look like? Do you believe the truth that you are worthy of such a love in God's eyes?**

#### View of God

Love can also become hidden when distorted views of God take root. If God is seen as distant, disappointed or conditional in his care, then love can begin to feel fragile. We may approach God cautiously, unsure whether we are fully welcome as we are, or whether closeness depends on our performance.

**What is your current perception of God's nature? How could your perception impact your receptivity to his love?**

LOVE



Through the help of the Holy Spirit we can receive the revelation that God's love for us is not earned or based on merit but wholly given in grace by his presence.

**'God is love'** – they cannot be separated (1 John 4:8).

God reveals his heart through the language of comfort. He speaks to a people who have known profound upheaval, loss and judgement, living in the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction and the scattering of communities through exile.

'As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.'  
(Isaiah 66:13)

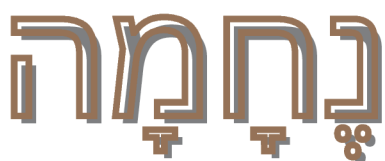


### When you hear the words of Isaiah 66:13, what do they stir in you?

God is tender, attentive and unwavering in his love for us. The love revealed in Isaiah 66 is not a reaction to behaviour, nor something that rises and falls with performance. Comfort is not offered because God's people have finally got things right, but because they belong to him. This matters deeply for those whose understanding of love has been shaped by distance, disappointment or conditional care. Isaiah 66 does not deny that God has spoken words of challenge elsewhere. It shows us that correction is never God's final word. Even after seasons of failure or exile, God's heart remains oriented toward compassion. **Love, not judgement, has the last word.**

At this point it may be helpful not to explain God's love any further, but simply to listen to what Scripture has to say about it. You may choose to assign the following Bible verses to individuals to read aloud and discuss together what they reveal.

- Psalm 136:1
- Isaiah 54:10
- Jeremiah 31:3
- Lamentations 3:22-23
- Zephaniah 3:17
- John 3:16
- Romans 8:38-39
- Ephesians 3:17-19
- 1 John 3:1
- 1 John 4:9-10



The Hebrew noun for  
'comfort' is **nechama**  
pronounced ne-kha-mah

Encourage people to spend some time praying and listening out for what words of comfort God wants to bring to them.

You may wish to invite the group to spend some time studying the Hebrew word for comfort, נְחָמָה. Others may wish to write it on pieces of paper to put in strategic places (e.g. wallet, pockets, car, diary) as a tangible reminder of God's love and comfort.

LOVE



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## JOURNAL



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**Noticing the places where love may become hidden:**

### Experience

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### Self-protection

Over time, what begins as self-protection can gradually harden into a belief that love must be earned, deserved or even kept at a distance. **What could unconditional love from God look like? Do you believe the truth that you are worthy of such a love in God's eyes?**

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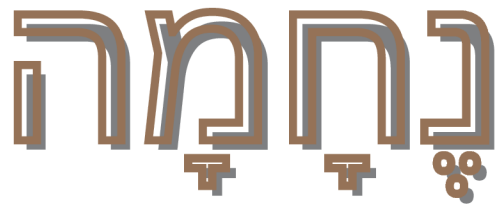
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**Scripture study: note down what the Scriptures reveal about God's love.**

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LOVE

