

STUDY GUIDE: Week #4

I'm In <3 | Sustaining Romance

September 28-October 4

This fall we will be going through a seven week sermon series based on Pastor Bruce's new book, "I'm In <3," in which he challenges us "to know the deep intimate love of God through the person of the Holy Spirit."

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has been in love knows the excitement of a new romance. New is exciting, it still smells good and you haven't discovered any annoying habits. The problem with new is that it doesn't stay that way for long. The excitement of new quickly becomes normal and routine. We recognize this is the reality in our personal relationships. We know that we have to work to make love last but does it also hold true with God?

CHAT

In his book, Pastor Bruce says this: *"Romance needs the sustaining power of persistence and loyalty. Romance can lead us into glorious marriage and joyful devotion, but it needs to be followed with sustained patience so that the sparks can glow again."*

- How does this romantic imagery jive with your experience and understanding of your relationship with God and the Spirit?
- Think of a time or season when your relationship with God felt fresh and alive. What circumstances contributed to that?
- * Bruce said, *"We can lose the twinkle in our eyes in a relationship and pretty soon just go through the motions."* Describe a time when you were going through a "cold season" with God. Can you identify some circumstances which may have contributed to this?

READ & DISCUSS

Read Hosea 3:1-5 and Jeremiah 2:20-25

In his book, Bruce says: *"Hosea's divorce is one of the saddest moments in Bible history. His wife was unfaithful. In fact, she eventually ran off with a man who did not love her or her children. When her lover abandoned her she descended into poverty. Using the only means she knew to survive and feed her children, she resorted to prostitution."*

- How does this parallel your own journey with God?
- Why do you think God chooses the imagery of prostitution to describe our own wandering tendencies (in relation to Him)?
- How does this comparison strike you?
- In what ways do we, or are we tempted, to prostitute ourselves today?

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

In his sermon this week Bruce said, *"It takes work to keep the flame alive in our romance with the Holy Spirit. Just like any loving relationship there are times when the passion fades and the mundane requires our attention. But remaining connected in the life of the faith community helps get us through the cold seasons as people around us help fan the flames of the Holy Spirit in our lives."*

- What do you think about the idea that community with others plays a key role in sustaining our relationship with the Holy Spirit? How does this work?
- Bruce's book sites a statistic that women are more likely to engage in meaningful community than men. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What are some of the things that keep you from engaging in community at a deeper level?
- What does healthy accountability look like? Have you ever experienced unhealthy accountability?

APPLY

Created for Community: The fact that we are created in God's image has big implications for our lives; we are artistic and creative, logical, and loving. We are endowed with these traits because we are created in God's image. But, we often ignore one key aspect of who God is that shapes who we are: God EXISTS in community. He is at all times engaged in the loving relationship of the trinity - Spirit, Father, Son. We too, then are designed to engage in community! It is built into our DNA. We need meaningful connections with God and with others to live as we were designed to live.

What step might you take this week to go deeper in your relationship with others, and with the Holy Spirit?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

