

# THE4POINTS COURSE

MESSAGE IN PRISONS  
LESSON PLANS

**SELF STUDY GUIDE** (with video)





Session 1

# GOD LOVES ME

Welcome to the4points study guide. Throughout this guide, we will be learning and unpacking some of the basics of the Christian faith. Our hope is that by journeying through these pages, you'll gain a greater understanding not only of what Christians believe, but why too.

With these sessions, you'll get out what you put in so please make notes, record your thoughts in the spaces provided, and take time to reflect on what you've read and heard.

The four points are:

1. God loves me
2. I have made mistakes
3. Jesus died and rose again
4. I have a choice to make

Throughout this session we will be unpacking this statement and figuring out what that really means for each of us personally. Grab yourself a pen and let's get started.

**VIDEO** 0:00-02:25 ('...God is my Father in Heaven')

Before we can begin to understand the statement, 'God loves me', first let's think about who God actually is. Use the space below to write down your thoughts.

Who is God? Who do you understand God to be?

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Do you agree/disagree with any of the answers on the film? Why or why not?

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What does the Bible say about who God is? Read the following Bible passages and write down what you think they are saying about the character of God.

**Genesis 1:1–3** (including the entirety of Genesis 1)

*'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light.'*

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**Psalm 47:7–8**

*'For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.'*

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**Ephesians 4:6**

*'...One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all'*

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**VIDEO** 02:25 ('We all have different experiences of fathers' love...') – 05:55 ('...because he first loved us, and his love is perfect')

In your own words write an answer to this question: What is love?

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Write down some examples of love in your life. What are some things/people that you love? What type of love is that?

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Here are some verses about the love of God, why not write down some of what enters your mind as you read? How do they make you feel?

**Romans 8:38–39**

*'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'*

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**John 3:16**

*'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.'*

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**TESTIMONY VIDEO (SARAH'S STORY)**

05:56 ('Growing up, I was very much my parents' daughter...') – 09:14 ('And that's how I know I'm loved and I'm fulfilled in life.')

Let's watch Sarah's story of how coming to know God's love dramatically impacted her life.

Use this space to write down anything that stands out to you as you listen.

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Sarah talked about how God's love has shown her what her true value and identity is; let's read some passages from the Bible that talk about this. Again, please use this space to write down any notes.

**Psalm 139: 13–18**

*'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths*

*of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand – when I awake, I am still with you.'*

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**Luke 12:24–28**

*'Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?*

*Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you – you of little faith!*

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It is so vital that when lies and negative thoughts about who we are go through our minds, we remember who God says we truly are. Read through these two verses again (from Psalms and Luke) and take them in as personal statements written just for you. Write down some 'I am' statements about who God says you are and use these as a reminder next time you doubt your value.

e.g. I am created

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**VIDEO** 09:15 (What does God's love mean to you? 'God's love to me means I'm accepted...') – 12:41 (Finish of video session)

Jesus took the punishment that we deserved and he died for our sins on the cross. Three days later, he rose from the dead and made a way for us to be in relationship and right-standing with the Father.

**Romans 5:8** says:

*'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'*

We didn't do anything to deserve this forgiveness, in fact we were still sinners who kept messing up, and yet God sees us as valuable enough to die for! Think about that for a minute. Take some time to let that sink in: God says that you are worth dying for. Whatever we've done, whoever we think we are, God still sees us as his valued children.

Why not write down any reflections you have here.

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We've only scratched the surface on what all this means for us, but stick with us and we'll be unpacking all of this further over the next couple of studies.

Hopefully, at the end of this first study, you have come to better understand how God's love is unique and are beginning to accept that whatever your past, background, or present circumstances, this perfect love extends to you.

In the next study session, we will be looking at the second of the four points: I have made mistakes – don't worry, it's not all doom and gloom but will, we hope, help you to further understand how verses like John 3:16 and Romans 5:8 relate to each of us directly.

Thanks for journeying through this first study session with us.



## Session 2

# I HAVE MADE MISTAKES

Welcome to the4points study guide. Throughout this guide, we will be learning and unpacking some of the basics of the Christian faith. Our hope is that by journeying through these pages, you'll gain a greater understanding not only of what Christians believe, but why too.

With these sessions, you'll get out what you put in so please make notes, record your thoughts in the spaces provided, and take time to reflect on what you've read and heard.

The four points are:

1. God loves me
2. I have made mistakes
3. Jesus died and rose again
4. I have a choice to make

Throughout this session we will be unpacking the statement, 'I have made mistakes', and figuring out what that really means for each of us personally. Grab yourself a pen and let's get started.

First off, let's start by asking the question, 'what is sin'? Write down your answer here and then watch the video.

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**VIDEO** 0:00 – 03:03 ('...for his created people')

But really, what's the problem with sin?

Because God is perfect and we're not, our connection with him had been broken and this leads to separation from him. We were, and are, unworthy to be in the presence of God... that's the 'sin problem'.

It's pretty clear that the moral standard set is impossible for those of us who aren't God, because we have a sinful nature. Throughout the Bible we can see the standard that's asked of us; the 10 commandments, Jesus' teachings, his example, the moral standards set out in the Old Testament and the letters in the New Testament – the standard is high!

Can you remember any of the ten commandments? Write them here. If you need help, you can find them in **Exodus 20:1–17**.

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In the New Testament, we see Jesus build upon these commandments and set the bar even higher. In what is arguably the most famous preach ever, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus takes many of the commandments and says that simply following them and avoiding doing 'bad things' isn't enough anymore. He sets a challenge that we should be holding our actions to account to a higher standard.

**Matthew 5:27-29**

*'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.'*

These are strong words! What do Jesus' words here stir in you? What is your response to them?

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**VIDEO** 03:03 ('How have we all made mistakes?') – 06:18 ('...has an effect on our real everyday life as well')

It's clear from what we've read that God hates sin and what it does to his people, but you may be sitting here and thinking, 'but I'd never murder anyone' or 'I'm a pretty good person, I only lie sometimes'. You might not consider yourself to have a 'sinful nature'.

So, we have to ask ourselves the question, do we believe that some sins are worse than others?

Based on the biblical standard of sin, here is a list of different 'sins' that we see happening in our societies today. Read through the list and then rank the offences in order from best to worst (1 being the least offensive and 10 the most). Consider your personal opinion in this exercise, rather than what might carry a heavier charge in court or what the old lady around the corner might think.

- Manslaughter \_\_\_\_\_
- Forgetting to pray \_\_\_\_\_
- Car theft \_\_\_\_\_
- Getting drunk \_\_\_\_\_
- Tax fraud \_\_\_\_\_
- Sex before marriage \_\_\_\_\_
- Gossiping \_\_\_\_\_
- Arson \_\_\_\_\_
- Murder \_\_\_\_\_
- Telling lies \_\_\_\_\_

How did it make you feel to have to order sins? Did you find it hard or easy? Did it challenge anything in you?

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We all know that, in the eyes of the law, some things on this list are considered far worse than others. Many things on the list wouldn't even come close to being called into question in a legal sense, and yet the Bible still labels them 'sin'; The Bible still tells us that they aren't God's best for us.

The problem we come across when we start creating hierarchies of 'which sins are worse than others' is that we can find ourselves excusing things in us that we know are wrong because we see ourselves as 'not as bad as' someone else. Of course, some sins hold much heavier consequences, such as really hurting someone, being sentenced to prison, etc. but we must remember that despite this, all sin misses the mark of God's 'glorious standard'.

**Romans 3:23** says:

*'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'*

If you think of God's standard as a bullseye on a target which we are told we have to aim for and hit, it doesn't matter whether we miss it by a little or by a whole lot, we've still missed it.

Some of us are closer to the bullseye than others, but none of us have made that perfect shot. This is why the Bible can say with confidence that 'all' have sinned and fallen short of the glorious standard of God.

As pessimistic as it may sound, we only have to take a quick look at the news to see sin at work in the world. We see a lot of pain and suffering around us, often because of the self-centred nature of people.

Write down what you have seen sin lead to in the world, and in your own life.

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Watch this next part of the video and listen to Nick tell his story of what sin led to in his life. Use this space to write down anything that stands out to you as you listen.

**VIDEO** 06:19 ('The Bible tells us that the first people to sin...') – 11:37 ('...and these are my passions')

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It's likely that you can think of specific individuals or situations that have hurt you because the reality is, we are all broken people and so at some point have felt let down, and at some other point we've probably let someone else down. Thankfully, we can trust that Jesus will never sin against us and will never let us down because he was and is the one, perfect, sinless man.

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God solved the problem of sin once and for all. Jesus created a way for us to be made clean and free from sin so that we can have relationship with him and the Father.

Have you ever been forgiven by someone when you did something that hurt them? How did it make you feel to know that those 'sins' wouldn't be held against you anymore?

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So how does Jesus' sacrifice impact me?

Watch this next clip as the team explain.

**VIDEO** 11:38 ('Not only have we all sinned...') – 15:13 (finish)

Still sound a little confusing? Don't worry – in our next study session, we'll begin to understand just how this whole rescue plan of God's really worked.

Thanks for journeying through this second study session with us.



### Session 3

# JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN

Welcome to the4points study guide. Throughout this guide, we will be learning and unpacking some of the basics of the Christian faith. Our hope is that by journeying through these pages, you'll gain a greater understanding not only of what Christians believe, but why too.

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2. I have made mistakes
3. Jesus died and rose again
4. I have a choice to make

Throughout this session we will be unpacking this statement and figuring out what that really means for each of us personally. Grab yourself a pen and let's get started.

As with our first study session, to really begin to understand this statement and the relevance of it, we need to first establish the answer to this question: Who was Jesus?

How would you answer this question? Write down some of your thoughts here.

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Throughout history, we've seen many different ideas and depictions of who Jesus was. Obviously, we have a biblical account of his life but we also see him depicted in art and spoken about in many other historical writings.



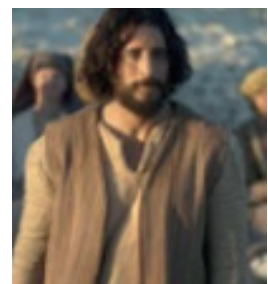
1



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Which of the above images comes into your head when you think of what Jesus would've looked like?

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The first image of a white Jesus is one that has been used very often throughout the Western church for centuries and has arguably given people an inaccurate idea of what Jesus looked like. The third image was released a few years ago in an attempt to discover Jesus' true appearance based on cultural and historical factors, and the fourth image is from a recent television series which attempt to depict the biblical characters with cultural accuracy.

As hard as we may try, it's safe to say that we can't know for certain what Jesus' exact physical appearance was, but what does the Bible say about him?

**VIDEO** 0:00 – 03:05 ('...what they, at the time, were trying to do')

In the video, the team talked about what Jesus said about himself. Let's take a closer look at a couple of them for ourselves.

1. In **John 14:6**, Jesus says that he is the only way for people to have access to the Father (God).

*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'*

2. In **Luke 22:69**, Jesus (referring to himself as the Son of Man) claims that he is King and will be seated on a throne next to the Father. At other points in the Bible, we are also told that this is where Jesus came from in the first place.

*'But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.'*

These are pretty big claims that Jesus makes. Many people today find these claims controversial, whereas many others recognise these passages as key to their faith – what do you think of them?

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What did other people say about him?

1. One of Jesus' closest friends and followers made this statement (**Matthew 16:16**):

*Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.'*

2. A Roman soldier who was present at Jesus' death said this (**Mark 15:39**):

*And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!'*

Many people were in agreement that Jesus was who he said he was, the Son of God. This wasn't just his followers and those who were close to him but even some Romans and Jewish leaders too.

Of course, we know that not everyone believed this. Many of the Jewish community considered his claims to be blasphemy and crimes against God and they plotted how to kill him because of this.

Why did Jesus die?

Why not take some time to write what you think the answer to this question is? What have you heard? What is the Christian teaching and do you believe any of it? Take a minute to gather your thoughts and put into words where you stand on this question.

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**VIDEO** 03:06 ('Jesus Christ is the most influential human...') – 06:55 ('...set free from our sinfulness')

How did Jesus die?

What do you already know about Jesus' death? Write some notes here.

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**VIDEO** 06:56 ('How did Jesus die?') – 10:27 ('...with your Father in Heaven')

Take a minute here to really consider the hardship and pain that Jesus experienced on the cross. Don't pass this moment by and move on because it feels uncomfortable. **John 19** in the Bible tells the account of Jesus' arrest, torture, and crucifixion – read through it and try to understand the magnitude of Jesus' love for you. It's hard to read but remember that he did all of that for you.

Here is some space if you want to write down any reflections, prayers, or thoughts that may arise as you read.

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himself, not just for now, but also for eternity with him in heaven.

All this means that we have a choice. We can accept His offer of forgiveness and relationship, or we can reject it. There's no 'sitting on the fence' with God. At some point, we'll find that we have to make a choice one way or the other... and that's what we'll be looking at further in our next and final study.

When Jesus died, sin and death were beaten. **2 Timothy 1:10** says:

*'...it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.'*

This means that while sin and death still exist today, we can know freedom from them because of Jesus. He has beaten the devil and his schemes once and for all and when Jesus comes again, there will be no more sin, suffering or pain.

Even though Jesus died for each one of us, he didn't stay dead. Three days after his crucifixion, Jesus rose again. Jesus is alive! He is alive today and he calls each one of us to turn from the way we've been living, receive his forgiveness, and step into relationship with him.

**VIDEO** 10:28 ('What is the resurrection?') - 18:25 (finish)

During this clip, you'll watch Miles' story.

Use this space to write down anything that stands out to you as you listen.

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Because of what Jesus has done, anyone can talk to God now, not just the high priests and the elite. Whatever we've done, whenever we did it, Jesus' death has the power to cover it. God wants to forgive us for the wrong we've done - the question is, will we let him?

You don't have to be 'super holy' to be saved, whoever you are, you can have a relationship with God. He has given us access to



## Session 4

# I HAVE A CHOICE TO MAKE

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Throughout this session we will be unpacking this statement and figuring out what that really means for each of us personally. For the final time, grab yourself a pen and let's get started.

**VIDEO** 0:00 – 01:57 ('...to come to life, truly, for the first time')

As Ben said in the video, we all know that we make loads of choices every day. Just the decision to pick up this study and work through it was a choice, the time you've chosen to do it is a choice, the clothes you have on as you do it is another choice. We've been created to be people with free will to make our own decisions.

A question that is asked a lot is, 'why didn't God just make us love him?' Many people would argue that this would save God, and us, a lot of time! But, none of us are robots; that's not how God created us. He could've chosen to force us to love him but instead, he chose to demonstrate his love for us by giving us a choice. By giving us free will, God gave us the chance to decide for ourselves whether we choose relationship with him or not; whether we accept his forgiveness or not.

What are some reasons you can think of that a relationship could be better if built on choice?

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We all have the choice to either follow Jesus or go our own way. The Bible says, in **Romans 10:9-10**:

*'If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.'*

So, let's think about it, what's your choice?

Before you can decide, let's talk a little about what it means to accept this offer that God has given.

**VIDEO** 01:58 ('What is forgiveness?') – 06:35 ('...by Your Son's death and resurrection')

In the video, the team talked about what it means to be a Christian.

Let's unpack this a little further and dispel some myths about what becoming a Christian actually means.

**1. MYTH: Life gets easier**

Being a Christian doesn't mean that life automatically becomes problem-free. The Bible never says that accepting God into your life will mean you never have struggles again. In fact, the Bible talks about us facing more challenges (**Matthew 5:11**). Many people today in many parts of the world are still subjected to torture, oppression and persecution for their faith, but Jesus promises that we will be blessed when we go through these trials for him. He promises that when we do go through these troubles that he will be with us at every step and he will give us his strength and his peace.

If you are facing any struggles or trials right now, why not write them here alongside a simple prayer that asks God to be with you in the middle of them? Ask him to give you peace and strengthen you through this time.

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**2. MYTH: You will never sin again**

Being a Christian doesn't mean that you will never want to, or be able to, sin again. As we talked about in our second session, we all have a 'sinful nature' and so we know that we will sin again at some point to some degree. It's been said that 'being in relationship with God doesn't make you sinless, but it makes you sin less'. The difference is that you feel convicted when you do sin and are driven to repent and do better. When you become a Christian, you know that God will always forgive you for the mistakes you make, but it's important that we don't just do whatever we want because we know that he will forgive us – God sees our heart and knows if we are truly repentant. We can't abuse his grace and cheat him into forgiving us, we have to really mean it when we say we're sorry.

1 John 1:9 says:

*'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'* Are there

*any hidden sins in your life? Are there things you've done that you've been holding on to? Why not take this opportunity to confess them to God (write them down if that helps) and ask him to forgive you?'*

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**VIDEO** 06:36 ('Mo's story') – 16:32 ('...encourage each other to live out our faith')

As you watch Mo's story, and the answers of the team, why not use this space to make notes of anything that stands out to you.

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The team shared how their lives have changed since accepting Jesus. They talked about letting go of many negative things as well as introducing new, different and positive things into their lives.

Have a think about your life, right now. Take time to reflect on where you're currently at and write down any things you may want to let go of, as well as the new and different things you would like to see in your life as you grow and mature in your faith.

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Wherever you are on your faith journey, why not think about who you can tell. You don't have to have your faith completely 'sorted' before you can share it with other people. Even if you're not sure what you believe yet, who can you tell about what you've learned through these studies?

Write down some names of people you could share with, and challenge yourself to find time in the coming days to do so.

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**VIDEO** 22:21 ('We all make choices every single day...') – 23:17 (finish)

So here we are, at the end of our studies, and there's one question left – what's your choice?

Following Jesus isn't always easy, sometimes it's really hard, but it is so worth it! After everything we've looked at through during these sessions, if you want to make the choice to follow Jesus and step into relationship with him then I'd invite you to place your hand over your heart and pray this prayer.

*Dear God,*

*Thank you so much for sending your son to die on the cross for me. Thank you that he rose again, so that I can know you, and live with you forever.*

*I'm sorry for the times I have turned my back on you, the times that I have gone my own way. I pray that you will forgive me for all the things I have done wrong in my life...*

*Please come into my life, and fill me with your Holy Spirit, so that I can live a life worthy of you, from this day on.*

*Amen*

If you prayed that prayer, why not write the date here so that you can remember this day as the day that you chose to step into all that God has for you.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have made the decision to step into relationship with Jesus, then we're not done here. Take some time to go and see one of the Christian chaplains in your establishment and ask them about some next steps; they'll be able to point you to some great resources and eventually to any groups that are running which will encourage you in your faith alongside others who are on the same journey.

If you didn't feel ready to pray that prayer today but want to keep learning, then I'd encourage you to talk to one of the Christian chaplains too. They'll be able to point you towards some helpful reading and resources and would be happy to answer any additional questions that you may have.

We hope that these studies have been helpful to you in your faith journey, whatever stage you find yourself at. It is our prayer that you will come away from these sessions with a greater understanding of God's love for you, and therefore the value that you have.

Thank you so much for journeying through the Four Points Self Study Guide with us.



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