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THE QUEST THAT UNITES US

EACH OF US WANTS TO be a star. Maybe not on the Hollywood big screen, but somehow and in some way, we want to shine. We want to be good at something. We want to be recognized. We want to be called out and chosen. Each of us wants to be *loved*. And in a fallen world, we don't always feel as if we are. Most of the time, that deep sense of love and acceptance we long for eludes us. So we chase it. With all of the effort we can muster, we strive to be the most beautiful, the most popular, the most athletic, the most scholarly, or the most whatever it is we really want to be.

Simply put, we compete. "Oh, I just have a competitive nature," we say. But really what our hearts are saying is, *I need to be the _____* (best, prettiest, smartest, most popular, most athletic—fill in the blank as you see fit). *If I'm not, I will do my best to take out whoever is. My worth is wrapped up in this. Being second best won't do.*

More often than not, whatever we chase outruns us in the end.

Sure, for a time we may be able to catch up with our dream of being unconditionally loved and accepted — of being truly good at what it is we want to do — but then out of nowhere someone else steps into our lives, usurping our roles and snatching from us the titles we fought so hard for. But that's not the worst part of it. The worst part is that we think we're the only girl in the entire world who feels this way. We feel cheated and abandoned. We feel alone. Desperately alone.

And no matter how many times it has happened to us in the past, we always feel as if *this* time we will never be able to get back to that place where we had purpose and worth. We blew our last chance. As far as we're concerned, our lives are over. Well-meaning friends and family members usually use these moments to remind us that God loves us and thinks we're special.

We *know* God thinks we are special. Of course He does. He has to. He's God. We're His creation. He made us the way we are for a purpose, we've been told. Over and over again, we've been told that. Yet that purpose eludes us most of the time. One thing we have somehow missed in all of our moping is the fact that we are not *alone* in this. We aren't the first of God's daughters to deal with disappointment and discouragement. Our moments of insecurity and fear don't just unite us with God; they unite us with other girls — even girls who lived long before we ever arrived on this earth.

Insecurity is a language we all speak more fluently than we would like to admit. It spans generations and nationalities, hair colors and music preferences. Our low moments are what make us all the same at the core. How we deal with them, and how we use them for our benefit and God's glory, is what sets us apart.

The Bible contains chapters upon chapters telling the stories of girls just like us who wanted to be loved but seemed to fall short. They were girls who wanted to be somebody, somebody who mattered. In their lifetimes few of them achieved that, at least on the surface. Ironically it was after their deaths, as the pages of history were unfurled, that these girls left their marks. Let me mention just three.

One of them — Leah, the sister who was rarely loved and never chosen — became the mother of a nation that would forever be known as God’s chosen people. Another — Hagar, the slave who was sent away to die in the wilderness because of Sarah’s jealousy — became the mother of a nation whose political and spiritual unrest still marks our world today. And another still — Miriam, known mostly as the sidekick of her brothers Moses and Aaron — played a pivotal role in delivering the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt.

This Bible study is Leah’s story. It’s the story of the older sister who could never quite measure up to the younger. Overlooked and underestimated, Leah took her place with the rest of us in the Broken Hearts Club. But she didn’t stay there. God lifted her out of her heartache and gave her a role to play in history that more than overshadowed that of the sister she couldn’t seem to compete with. We’ll see that God’s providential hand took her where her strivings never could.

As we travel through her story together, we may at times find that peering into her story is almost like looking in a mirror. As Leah looked for love, begged for it, and even schemed and competed for it, her heart bore the same cry that ours do: *Pick me, pick me. Oh please, pick me.* Because of that, her story is worth reading. She was chosen by God even when the world rejected her. Her story will teach us the one thing we all so desperately need to learn: Life is not about being popular; it’s about fulfilling our God-given destinies.