



# *Pursued with Passion*

## A LEADER'S GUIDE FOR THE DIVINE ROMANCE

BY DEE BRIGHT

Welcome to the study of *The Divine Romance*, the story of my futile pursuit of love and acceptance. But its primary focus is on God's *passionate pursuit* of those who, like you and me, are yearning for something more intimate and meaningful in their lives. And when we finally turn and gaze into God's loving eyes, we begin to experience him in a fresh and profound way. It's then that we realize he is the answer to all of our deepest longings. So, if you're ready to embrace the adventure of discovering romance with God, you're in the right place! And if you need a resource to guide other women to the real love of their lives, this leader's guide has tips and guidelines to support your efforts. May God bless you in your journey!

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN...

The *Pursued with Passion* leader's guide will assist you in leading your study group. As you begin, here are a few tips:

- Be prepared. Read and re-read the assigned pages. Highlight what's important to you and make lots of notes in the margins. Answer the questions and do the exercises. (Read the "Additional Tips and Tools for the Leader" found at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com).)
- Relationships are key. This study will be most effective when individuals feel safe and comfortable with you and with each other. It is then that real growth and change can happen! People are more important than the "task," so gently guide your group toward mutual respect, confidentiality, and friendship.
- Be flexible. Don't feel your group must answer every question in the book and in the leader's guide. Be selective. Choose those questions, Scriptures, and exercises you feel will be most beneficial, then make sure to allow time to address them.
- Allow time for prayer. Prayer is key. Even if you're in the midst of a great discussion, manage the meeting time

to allow for prayer requests and prayer. Note: during the course of this study, encourage prayer requests to be personal (pertaining to the individual) and relevant to the study (versus about life in general). That's not to say there can't be prayer for issues of concern, but ideally each person will share a request that is related to the study.

- Pray weekly for each woman in your study group. Encourage group members to pray for each other.



## OPTIONS FOR LENGTH OF STUDY



You may use The Divine Romance and this leader's guide in any way that works for your group. Whichever format you choose, please consider:

- Prioritizing some time during the first meeting to begin building relationships. Conduct introductions, provide an overview of the study process, define group expectations and guidelines, and so on.
- Studying chapters 11 and 12 individually. The end-of-chapter "Challenge" sections in both of these chapters require a great deal of thought and individual work, so these chapters should be studied individually if possible.
- Planning a separate and additional date for an end-of-study celebration and social time. (See the "Additional Tips and Tools for the Leader" found at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com).)

For all studies except those following the six-week format, you can plan to pass out books at your first meeting, then use your remaining time for introducing the study and for building relationships within your group. For the six-week study, distribute books in advance and ask participants to come prepared to discuss chapter 1 at the week 1 meeting. Here are suggestions for each different format:

### 6-WEEK STUDY

Week 1	Introduction / Chapter 1
Week 2	Chapters 2, 3, & 4
Week 3	Chapter 5, 6, & 7
Week 4	Chapters 8, 9, & 10
Week 5	Chapter 11
Week 6	Chapter 12 / Wrap Up / Plan Celebration

### 10-WEEK STUDY

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	Chapters 1 & 2
Week 3	Chapter 3
Week 4	Chapters 4 & 5
Week 5	Chapter 6
Week 6	Chapter 7
Week 7	Chapter 8
Week 8	Chapters 9 & 10
Week 9	Chapter 11
Week 10	Chapter 12 / Wrap Up / Plan Celebration

### 8-WEEK STUDY

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	Chapters 1 & 2
Week 3	Chapter 3 & 4
Week 4	Chapters 5 & 6
Week 5	Chapter 7 & 8
Week 6	Chapters 9 & 10
Week 7	Chapter 11
Week 8	Chapter 12
	Wrap Up
	Plan Celebration

### 12-WEEK STUDY

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	Chapters 1 & 2
Weeks 3-11	One chapter each week
Week 12	Chapter 12 / Wrap Up / Plan Celebration



# LEADER'S GUIDE BY CHAPTER

## CHAPTER ONE



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. What do you hope will happen for you as you read through this book?

This question does not require a “deep” response. Let the group know that they may have vague or unclear hopes, or they may desire a specific outcome. You may give an example by saying, “I’m looking forward to learning whatever God might be trying to teach me! How about you?”

2. Are you willing to look at how God desires you to live your life, in spite of how difficult that might seem? Why, or why not?

This question is going a bit deeper, so remind women that it’s okay to be unsure at this point, and also that they have the “right to pass” on the question.

3. What is one specific thing you want to do differently in your life as it relates to dealing with unmet needs? What are you willing to do differently this week?

If there are no immediate responses, you may simply suggest: “It might be something as simple as being more aware of my feelings of neediness, or stopping when I catch myself watching a questionable TV show, or anything like that. For myself, I want to...(share your own decisions). How about you?”

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER TWO

### PURPOSE

To show us we all have unmet needs, and how important it is to allow God to show us those needs.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 2; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Understand that it's possible to allow God to meet every longing and every need!



## CHAPTER TWO



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. What are some of your unmet needs? Where are you hurting or feeling unfulfilled? Whether you’re married or single, what is it you want or expect from a man in your life?

To get the ball rolling with this question, you may want participants to get into groups of two or three

to brainstorm. You might even say, “Let’s model what they did at those seminars. Let’s break up into little groups of two or three. Come up with as many thoughts as you can in the next five minutes, and then we’ll all share. Have someone take notes for your group.” After five minutes, ask for feedback from each small group.

2. What are you hiding in some of your “caves?” How are you attempting to fill or “dull” your unmet needs? (Examples: reading, working excessively, watching movies, staying busy, fantasizing, eating, etc.)

If no immediate responses are forthcoming, you can share something you keep in a cave. Again, remind women that they don’t need to share anything that makes them uncomfortable, but that this is a safe place to begin opening up.

Note: Use your insight and discernment to determine how ready the group is to go deeper. Don’t rush it, but also let them know you hope the group will reach a point of feeling safe enough to appropriately share with each other.

3. Specifically, how do you want God to help you?

Again, if the group needs a nudge, simply say, “I want God to help me (in the following way). Who else can share one of the ways you want God to help you?”

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER THREE

### PURPOSE

To accept feelings as real, but also understand the concept of choice.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; fill out the “Challenge” graph at the end of the chapter; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Get in touch with your feelings so that you can begin to deal with them.

## CHAPTER THREE

### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. Look at the worksheet, and start by focusing on the left-hand column. Did you find it helpful to put your feelings down on paper? What did that do for you?  
Be prepared to share an example of your own.
2. Were you able to identify Scriptures that spoke to your feelings? Is someone willing to share? What does that tell us about the Bible being a valuable resource for all of the situations in our lives?
3. Were you able to come up with some possible solutions for your feelings or concerns?(Look for some sort of positive response.) Would someone walk us through the process for just one of your feelings?  
In other words: the feeling or concern, the Scripture found, and the possible solution.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER FOUR

### PURPOSE

To recognize the traps we often fall into in an effort to respond to our feelings.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 4; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Recognize that traps are only temporary substitutions for the real thing God has to offer.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. Think about some of the ways you cope with your need to feel loved and valued. Begin this discussion by lumping all the behaviors together. What were some of the ‘tuning out behaviors’ mentioned in the chapter? How about ‘escape’ behaviors? ‘Substitution’ behaviors?

Allow time for women to find answers in the book. As they offer up a list of behaviors, you can say something like this and keep it light, almost humorous: “Okay, now here’s where we need to get honest with one another! Most of us have struggled with one or more of these things. Which ones have been temptations for you?” Encourage responses. Remind your group that everyone struggles, and that admitting our areas of struggle to ourselves, to God, and to one another removes the power from the temptation.

Note: If it becomes necessary, remind women to avoid graphic detail. On the other hand, if a response is too vague, you can gently ask clarifying questions.

- If you get “push-back” here—in other words, if someone challenges whether or not something is really wrong—don’t argue. Simply say something like, “Many women would agree with you. But I’d like to challenge you to keep an open mind about this as we work through the book together. God has a way of revealing what’s okay for us and what’s not, and that’s what’s important.”
  - If it’s something blatant, like sex outside of marriage, you might say something like, “Well, the Bible does address that situation pretty candidly, and we’ll talk much more about it in chapter 5 (next week). Are you okay with waiting until then to go deeper into this issue?”
2. Stand in your feelings for a moment. When you cope in the ways we just mentioned, what feelings and unmet needs are underneath the behaviors?

Ask “How did you do with this question?” Wait for a response. If someone indicates she completed it, ask her to share the process she went through. If the group had difficulty with the question, use this example, or one of your own:

When I’m feeling stressed, I eat. I nibble. I get cravings for certain kinds of food, even when I’m not really hungry. So, I can keep eating and stave off whatever feelings I’m experiencing. OR I can let go of the refrigerator door handle and just STOP—just focus on what I’m feeling. This takes practice! But when I pray

and ask God to show me what feelings I'm trying to cover up or avoid, I begin to be more sensitive and insightful. And the more often I do this, the better I get at it! Does this make sense?

- If you feel the group is “deep” enough, you might ask someone to volunteer, and you can walk her through the exercise. It's just a matter of gentle probing to find out more about her feelings and what's going on in her life.

Alternately, you can walk the whole group through the process as follows:

- First, think about one of the “traps” you struggle with—one of the behaviors we just discussed.
- Okay, now I want you to close your eyes and think about your feelings, the feelings that are associated with that behavior. For example, when you pick up a romance novel, or get ready to watch a rather sensual TV show, what are you anticipating? What is it you're looking forward to experiencing? Think about this for a moment. What specifically are you hoping to feel?
- Now, think about why that anticipated experience makes you feel good. How does that feeling stack up with your need for that feeling? In other words, do you feel the only way you can create that feeling for yourself is to indulge in this behavior?
- Stand in that feeling for a moment. What is it you're experiencing? What's lacking in your life, or what are you trying to avoid?
- Debrief by asking the group what was revealed to them in the exercise. Encourage them to practice “standing in the feelings” whenever they catch themselves avoiding uncomfortable feelings or creating feelings that make them feel better.
- **Important!** Reinforce the concept that, no matter what the feelings and resulting behaviors might be, God can and will change us as we continually turn to him and ask for his help.

3. What is one coping behavior you want to change right now? Why?

For this question, simply encourage women to share their desires.

4. Describe the benefits of making this change.

When women can answer this question, it will help to reinforce the change they desire.

Leader's Note: For your group prayer time, you may want to consider wrapping up what has been covered in this time together. Point again to the hope we have in Christ. He can and will meet all of our needs. During your time together, be sensitive to women's reactions; someone may need additional time with you after the meeting. Listen, encourage, and pray!

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER FIVE

### PURPOSE

To realize that God's standards for purity are motivated by his overwhelming love for us.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 5; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

When we accept God's love for us, our desires to please him and live our lives his way increase.



## CHAPTER FIVE



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. Think about the story of the frog in hot water. Have your standards slipped at all over the years because of the lower standards of the world today? If so, in what specific ways? If not, how has God helped you to avoid that compromise?
  - What kinds of things do you see on TV today that a few years ago may have been considered shocking or risqué? Why do you think we continue to read and watch things that a few years ago we may have avoided?
  - Read Romans 12:2. What does this verse say about conformity?
  - What things are you allowing in your brain that you want to reconsider?
2. How do you feel about God’s incredibly high standards? Do you agree that his way is ultimately best for you? Why or why not?
  - Do you think it’s possible to live a holy life?” Look for responses like: “No, not on our own, but he’ll help us.” (Refer back to 2 Cor. 12:9)
  - Read Romans 6:19–23. What do these verses tell us about the result of living an unholy life? A holy life?
3. He knows we can’t be perfect, but he wants our hearts to want to be perfect. Do you want that as well? Tell him about it.
  - Read 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 26:2; Col. 3:1. What do these verses say to you?
4. How are you feeling right now about his incredible love for you?
  - Simply ask women to share.
5. What’s your motivation for being obedient?
  - If there is hesitancy, you might start off by sharing your own motivation for being obedient, then ask others to share as well.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER SIX

### PURPOSE

To recognize the enemies we face: the world, our flesh, and Satan.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 6 and review the “Who Am I?” graph; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

To better understand what we’re up against so we’re better prepared to defend ourselves!





## CHAPTER SIX



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. Are you ever tempted to let inappropriate or sinful thoughts “simmer” in your mind? What kinds of thoughts? How might those thoughts affect your heart toward God?
  - Proverbs 23:7 states, ‘For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he’ (KJV). What does this verse mean to you?
  - What do you think God thinks of those inappropriate thoughts?”
2. This chapter uses a prison compound as an example. Are you inside or outside the prison compound? Where do you want to be? Why?
  - Why do you think it is so easy to become complacent?
  - What’s the danger of complacency? And what do we miss out on when our faith becomes lukewarm?
3. After reading about the craftiness of our enemy, are you sensing a need to be better armed? If so, what can you do?
  - Read Ephesians 6:10–18. As we read the description of spiritual armor, what does it tell us about our enemies?
  - How does a daily quiet time arm us for spiritual battle? How might that also help us avoid complacency?
4. Look at the following “Who Am I?” chart. As you read, where do you see yourself? What are your thoughts? Is there anything you want to do differently? What? Why?
  - Ask someone to walk through the chart, sharing their thoughts. Be willing to share your own.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER SEVEN

### PURPOSE

To understand how God designed our minds and the impact our thoughts have on our behavior and beliefs.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 7; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Understand that we DO have control over how we choose to perceive people, challenges, and events in our lives.



## CHAPTER SEVEN



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))



## CHALLENGE!

1. As you walked through the models, did you think about some of the ways you may blame other people and circumstances for your feelings?
  - Can you offer an example? For instance: I may interpret someone glancing at me and not smiling as rudeness and feel angry or hurt, when in reality they were simply preoccupied.
2. Did you identify any triggers that set off undesired responses? If so, what are they?  
For example: When someone doesn't call me back within a reasonable amount of time (according to me!) I may feel unimportant, unloved, ignored, etc.
3. What are your thoughts about the importance of choice in the way we frame our self-talk?  
Key thought: Having a choice about how we interpret the world around us means we can no longer play the "victim." If we choose to do so, we can frame things in a more positive, or at least neutral, way.
4. Can you think of any negative or unproductive self-talk you have that may be very difficult to change? If so, what is it? Why will it be difficult to change? How can God help you with that?
  - Simply encourage women to share, and perhaps share something of your own.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER EIGHT

### PURPOSE

To understand that we have constant, moment-by-moment opportunities to either choose God's way or our own way for our lives.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the questions in chapter 8; talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Realize that the "price" for living our lives God's way is far surpassed by the joy and intimacy we experience when we're walking with him.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in "Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders" at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

Leader's Note: Most of these questions lead directly to responses, so just ask the questions and encourage responses. Please see note with question 6.

1. Awareness leads to choices, and choices can lead to changes. What has God been showing you in this chapter about something you may choose to change?
2. Think about a time when you were tempted to do something your way rather than God's way. Which did you choose? What were the consequences? How would the consequences be different if you had made the opposite choice?

3. Have you ever paid a price for doing something you knew was wrong? What did you do? What was the “price”?
4. Has Satan ever fooled you—made something look attractive or even innocent—so that you fell for his lie? What was it? How do you see it differently now?
5. Jesus modeled obedience for us when he submitted to his Father’s authority. Is there an area in your life you have not yet submitted to God? If so, are you willing to put it into his safekeeping now? If yes, tell him so. If no, explain why not.
  - Ask, “Have any of you identified something you are now willing to give to God?” and raise your own hand. Ask for someone to share. When everyone is done sharing, take a moment to pray, and validate those decisions to trust God.
6. Doing things God’s way can be painful. Can you think of an example in your own life when you experienced discomfort in order to obey him and his commands? What was the outcome? Do you feel he honored your choice to be obedient? How so?

Leader’s Note: Just a reminder that if at any time you encounter an issue that is too big for you to handle, or that you feel may jeopardize the mental or physical well-being of an individual in any way, please gently lead that person to a pastor or counselor who can provide the appropriate guidance.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER NINE

### PURPOSE

To understand how old habits and unproductive self-talk can limit our ability to live our lives to the fullest.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins. Take some time to review the self-talk sample exercise, then think about and respond to the self-talk exercise. Talk to God about what he is showing you.

### PAYOFF

Learn and practice with an exercise that will help us challenge our negative self-talk and replace it with words that mirror God’s truth.

## CHAPTER NINE

### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

Self-Talk Exercise

1. What are some of the negative things you say to yourself? Which one did you pick for the exercise?
2. Ask if someone is willing to share by walking through the TED model describing their responses. If there is any hesitation, begin by sharing your own, then again ask for someone to share. If clarity is needed with

some of the responses, you might simply say, “Can you tell us a little more about that?” Try to get 3-4 people to share, depending on time.

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER TEN

### PURPOSE

To understand that unconditional, powerful love motivates everything God allows into our lives.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter; highlight things that grab your attention; make your own notes in the margins; respond to the challenge questions. Take some time to stop and pray to God in your own words about what his love means to you.

### PAYOFF

Understand that we CAN trust God with our deepest longings, and that as our loving father he will fulfill our desires beyond our expectations!



## CHAPTER TEN



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. Are you comfortable believing that God loves you—deeply and completely—like his cherished daughter? Did any particular verses or descriptions make it easier for you to accept this fact? If so, how might you use them as reminders throughout your day?
  - See if you can get your group to generate a long list of good ideas for reminders!
2. Is it more important for you to be beautiful by the world’s standards or in God’s eyes? Explain your answer.
3. In the world, you may sometimes feel you are not beautiful, or you may believe you are not truly loved and cherished. How can you incorporate God’s truth about your loveliness and value to him into your thinking? How will that change your life for the better?
4. Does it help you to know that, as you seek to love and obey him, you can trust him with every need? Are you willing to tell him about each of your longings and unmet needs, and then trust him to fulfill your desires in his way?

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER ELEVEN

### PURPOSE

To define where you are right now on the path toward allowing God to meet all your needs.

### PROCESS

Four thoughtful exercises will lead you through the obstacles that may be preventing you from living the life you want to live.

### PAYOFF

Be equipped with tools and knowledge that will assist you as you intentionally move toward becoming the woman God already knows you are!



## CHAPTER ELEVEN



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. What does your “ideal man” look like?
2. What are some of the invisible barriers that are holding you back? Did any of the Scriptures listed help you change your beliefs and focus on God’s truth? What are your two New True Beliefs?
3. Are you willing to share one or two of the behavior traps that keep you from God’s best for your life? What are you willing to do right now to examine and/or change them?
4. What are your two old habits? What are your two new habits?

## PREVIEW OF CHAPTER TWELVE

### PURPOSE

To create a Personal Action Plan with whatever God has been leading you to do or change as you have read through *The Divine Romance*.

### PROCESS

Read the chapter and make notes. Give thoughtful attention to the action plan.

### PAYOFF

Have a detailed plan—with action steps, timelines, and identified resources—that will move you toward the obedience, love, and intimacy you desire to experience with God!



## CHAPTER TWELVE



### OPENING

Opening Questions (see Conversation Starters in “Additional Tips and Tools for Leaders” at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com))

### CHALLENGE!

1. If members of the group are open to sharing, and if there is time, give each woman time to walk the group through her Personal Action Plan.  
Leader’s Note: IMPORTANT! Emphasize that each woman has just completed a Personal Action Plan for her FIRST desired change! Ask the group to write down one to three additional things they want to work on, with God’s help, once they feel comfortable with their progress on the first change they have identified!
2. Ask each woman to identify the three most important things she has learned, or that God has revealed to her, from the book and this study. Plan your celebration and social time! (See the “Additional Tips and Tools for the Leader” found at [divine-romance.com](http://divine-romance.com).)



## A PRAYER FOR THE LEADERS



And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love; and may you be able to feel and understand, as all God's children should, how long, how wide, how deep, and how high his love really is; and to experience this love for yourselves, though it is so great that you will never see the end of it or fully know or understand it. And so at last you will be filled up with God himself (Ephesians 3:17-19, The Living Bible).