



**Witbank House of Prayer**  
Missions Base

**First Commandment Book**  
Transcribes from Mike Bickle's teachings

# First Commandment Book

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### *Session 1: Loving God: The First and Great Commandment*

#### **OUR INHERITANCE: LOVING GOD FOREVER**

Matthew 22:37 says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your mind” (paraphrased). Now the gospel of Mark adds, “And with all of your strength” (Mk. 12:30). It adds a fourth distinction there. We will look at that a lot throughout the course, those four distinctions that are all complimentary to one another, though they do have some very definite distinctions. But here is the part that I want to focus on tonight. Jesus said, “This is the first . . . commandment” (Mt. 22:38): the one that is first priority to God, first priority in the kingdom, the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit. And He said it is the great commandment. It is the commandment that has the greatest impact on God’s heart, the greatest impact on your heart, the greatest impact on the people to whom we minister.

So Jesus gives this commentary on the great commandment. Now He is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5, which we will look at many times throughout the course. The important point tonight I want to highlight is that Jesus is giving His own commentary on this passage that He is quoting from Moses. Of course, He is the One who gave it to Moses, but He is adding something that Moses did not receive. He said, “It is the first commandment; it is the great commandment” (Mt. 22:38, paraphrased). This commentary from heaven has been greatly overlooked and dismissed by the Body of Christ throughout history.

What we are committed to doing as individual believers, and even as a spiritual family, is that we want to take those two words, “first” and “great,” and push them to the full extreme of the grace of God, their meaning for our life and for this generation. I want to challenge you in your ministry and your personal life—that instead of reducing them and dismissing them as casual statements, we are going to honor these two descriptive statements of the great commandment, the first commandment.

#### **CREATING AN INHERITANCE FOR THE SON**

This commandment reflects God’s ultimate purpose for creation, His eternal purpose. From before the foundation of the world, God had a plan in His heart. Before the world was created, He had a “why” behind the “what.” We know what happened: He created the heavens and the earth. This commandment tells us why God did what He did. We know what He did on the cross: He accomplished redemption. This verse tells us why He accomplished redemption. So it gives us the why behind the what of creation and redemption.

In a sentence: God wanted to establish a family for Himself. He wanted to raise up faithful children, sons and daughters who would be loyal to Him in love, and He also wanted to raise up an equally-yoked Bride for His Son who would be His eternal companion. The Father promised His Son an inheritance. That inheritance is a people whom He would totally possess. Jesus' inheritance involves more than real estate, more than owning the nations, more than government, more than the fact that He controls the nations. He does own all the real estate of the earth; it has been deeded to Him by the Father. We see insight into that in Revelation 5, that the scroll was given to the Son—the title deed to the earth. So we know the inheritance of the nations: He owns all the land. We know He controls all the governments, but to inherit the nations and to totally possess them means more than that. It means that He would possess the heart of the people in all the nations of the earth. The Father said in Psalm 2, “I will give you the nations—total control over the government. I will give you the ends of the earth, the very people” (v. 8, paraphrased). “You will possess them in their entirety” is the idea here.

### **MANDATORY OBEDIENCE AND VOLUNTARY LOVE**

Jesus' inheritance involves the mandatory obedience of all creation. In Philippians 2:10–11, Paul gives us some insight. Paul is actually quoting Isaiah 45:23, where the Father promised the Son in the Old Testament that every knee will bow, every tongue will confess—every knee, every tongue, every demon in hell will bow down their knee in obedience. Every unbeliever, when assigned eternal judgment, will go there in obedience to the word of Jesus.

Obedience of all creation is mandatory, but there is more. God wants more than mandatory obedience. He wants voluntary love. The inheritance of the King is the obedience of all the nations, but the inheritance of the Bridegroom is the voluntary love of all the people in all the nations. So as a king, He receives an inheritance: “Every knee will bow.” As a bridegroom, He receives an inheritance: “Every heart in Your kingdom will love You. All of the redeemed will love You. Not automated, not forced, not programmed; it will be voluntary love. They will choose to love You because they will see Your worth and they will want You.”

The very core of the Bridegroom's inheritance is different from the inheritance of Jesus as the King. The very core of the Bridegroom's inheritance is the fact that the people will be equally yoked to Him in love. Now, we are going to spend time on this in one of the sessions and really break it down, this idea of being equally yoked in these four ways: all the heart, all the mind, all the soul, and all the strength.

### **LOVING GOD AS GOD LOVES US**

Now the reason the Father wants the people to love Jesus this way, and the reason Jesus wants it is because this is how God loves us. This is the most remarkable thing. I cannot even imagine this. That is biblical because it presses beyond human comprehension. Ephesians 3:19 says it is beyond the comprehension of the human mind without the aid of the Holy Spirit and without the time frame

of eternity to unpack it. Even by the Holy Spirit we only get a little bit of it, but for the ages, forever and ever and ever, we will continue to understand this—that God loves us. Can you imagine? God loves us with all of His mind. How vast is God’s mind? He loves us with all of His heart, all of His strength. Imagine the strength of God.

Now that will take the supernatural power of God to do this, of course. It takes God to love God. A fundamental principle of Scripture is, it takes the power of God for us to love God. God knows that. Romans 5:5 says that God has promised us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to

empower us to love Him—that He would pour love into our heart. This would involve several different dimensions of love. We will look at it in a minute.

#### **FOUR DIMENSIONS OF GOD’S LOVE**

I like to think of the love of God as having four dimensions. Number one: the revelation that God loves us. The Holy Spirit pours that knowledge into our heart. Number two: the ability to love God back. That is the second dimension. Number three is the ability to love ourselves in the love of God, by the love of God. Jesus said, “You will love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Mt. 22:39, paraphrased). The reason so many do not love their neighbor well is because they do not love themselves well. You will never love your neighbor in greater quality than you love yourself in the grace of God. That is a concept opposed to promoting our carnality. I am not talking about that; we are to deny that dimension of ourselves, our carnal lusts. We are to see who we are in God’s eyes, and agree with it instead of dismissing it. As we love ourselves in the grace of God, we will then, in the overflow, love others, which is the fourth dimension.

So, first, the Holy Spirit pours out the revelation that God loves us, then awakens our heart to love God back. Then it overflows and we love ourselves in the overflow of our exchange with God’s heart. Then we love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is all supernatural. It takes the operation of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest gift and work of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life: to pour love into the heart in these four ways.

Right before Jesus went to the cross in the upper room, He prayed what is called “the High Priestly Prayer.” This is the crescendo statement—John 17, the great prayer of Jesus. Here it is, Jesus praying for the saints for twenty-six verses. There is nothing like it in the Bible—Jesus praying for His bride. In the final verse, the volcanic explosion in which this prayer ends (and then Jesus goes to the garden after this), He says, “Father, I have declared Your name to them for this reason, that the love with which You loved Me would be in them” (Jn. 17:26, paraphrased). In other words, “That they would love Me in the quality that You love Me, in the same measure.” Beloved, this is inconceivable, except for the grace of God. Before God is finished working in us, which He will continue on forever—that is a more accurate way to say that God’s work will continue in us forever—we will love Jesus in the way the Father loves Jesus.

## **A BRIDE EQUALLY YOKED IN LOVE**

Beloved, that is being equally yoked in love. All over the nations, throughout history, God has been selecting and training a Bride. God's purpose is going to come to a crescendo and a place of maturity before the Lord returns. Beloved, I am talking about people in their natural bodies before the resurrection. It says in Revelation 19, "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and the bride . . ." (Rev. 19:7, paraphrased)—we are talking about the Bride on the earth, not the Bride with resurrected bodies. There is a generation that responds in a way where they are prepared—a prepared Bride for a worthy Son.

What a grand plan. The Father has a worthy Son, and He is raising up a prepared Bride, a ready Bride. I can assure you, in the generation the Lord returns—in the generation in which the Bride is made ready by voluntary love, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit—that the Holy Spirit will restore the first commandment to first place. Beloved, that is what is on the Holy Spirit's agenda at this time in history, though right now, at this moment, there is not such a large percent of the body of Christ that is focused on this agenda. But before the Lord returns, this will be the premier agenda of the Holy Spirit worldwide.

As forerunners, what you are saying in your heart is, "Lord, I want to do that which You are going to be universally emphasizing worldwide in a minute from now." Of course, with the Lord a minute might be a decade or two. Who knows? Maybe a little bit longer; maybe a little bit shorter.

"I want to lay hold of it now." That is what a forerunner does. Forerunners get hold of it one short step ahead of the universal emphasis of it—of the Holy Spirit to the Body of Christ worldwide. You can be sure of one thing: the Church will be a prepared Bride before the second coming. For those who have ears to hear, in Deuteronomy 6:4–5, where Jesus is quoting this passage from, it says, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord your God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God" (paraphrased). Jesus is really actually interpreting that: "Hear, Israel; pay attention, he who has ears to hear" (paraphrased). It's as if He says, "Let Me tell you. Let Me give you a hint: it is more than important. It is the first and the greatest of all the commandments." He is commenting on the call to hear and to pay attention.

I mention the fourfold love because I am laying a groundwork to understand the first commandment, because not in any way does it undermine the first expression of this first dimension. The second dimension of this revelation of God's love for us, and then an impartation of love back to God by the Holy Spirit, will overflow in love for ourselves and love for our neighbor, both believers and unbelievers.

## **WE LOVE TO LOVE AND BE LOVED**

Now, why do we love being loved so much? I mean, we love to be loved. There is something about us that we love it. How many of you love to be loved? Well, it is more than that. You love to love. There is nothing more exhilarating than loving and being loved. Beloved, that is our inheritance

forever and ever and ever. The reason we love it so much, both receiving it and being exhilarated and giving ourselves to it, is because we were created that way in the image of God. God is love; we were created in His image.

Foundational to this course—I will mention it a few times, but I just want to save you any wasted time with different folks in different places, because I have heard this debate over the years. It is an absolutely worthless debate—the debate that goes like this: which is more important, the first commandment or the second commandment?

I have heard people say, “Well, you guys are into the first commandment; we are into the second commandment.”

I said, “That is inconceivable; you cannot separate these commandments. Everyone who loves God with all their heart will always love people. I don’t mean they won’t fail. Their hearts will be inflamed; they will love people far more.”

It is inconceivable to be into the first commandment and not overflow in an outlet to the second commandment. It is a theoretical argument, only argued by people who are pursuing neither. Seriously, if you are pursuing the second commandment, you will come up so bankrupt in your ability to sustain it. You need a fresh supply of encounter, of love from God and love back to God, to supply you, and love for yourself to supply you in that fourth dimension.

I have seen people sit around tables and argue it. I say, “Guys, no more. Which is more important: your heart, your liver, or your kidneys? Honestly, you need them all. Whom do you love most: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit?” You don’t answer that. No. Honestly, you don’t even go there.

Which is more important, the first commandment or the second commandment? The first comes in sequence because the first is what empowers us for the second. It is inconceivable to love God without loving what God loves, and that is His people. You will always love believers and unbelievers if you love God, always, always; because to love God is to run straight into that burning heart. Then you love what He loves.

## **WE MUST REALIGN OURSELVES TO FOLLOW THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

Here is the point of this first session. It’s really the point of the whole twelve-session course on the first commandment, but particularly it is the focus of this session to show the wisdom and the beauty (wisdom, number one, but beauty number two), of continually realigning our heart, our ministry, and our life to the first commandment. Beloved, I have to do this regularly—I don’t mean every year or two; I mean every couple of weeks, for real (truly). I don’t do it every day. That would be exaggerated if I said that. I want to be practical, but every few weeks I have to stop and say, “I am already starting to pull away from this focus.”

IHOP–KC exists for the first commandment and the great commandment. That is the first reason we exist as a ministry. It is the first reason in God’s mind why every little home Bible study exists. Now it may not be in the person’s mind, but it is in God’s mind. It is the first reason for every ministry. It is the first reason for every person. When we come into agreement with that, it radically changes our life.

Here is what we are doing as a spiritual family: we are going to consciously, regularly realign our heart with the revelation that this is the supreme commandment. We are not going to apologize for it. We are not going to apologize for our intensity in focus after it, because we are going to have confidence that this is what God wants. I have run into ministries for years that want me to back away from this. Maybe they feel bad about themselves; I don’t know. I don’t pretend to have insight on why. People just get nervous about people locked into the first commandment. “What about . . . what about . . . what about?” I have heard so many “what-abouts” over the years. The final statement is, Jesus defined it as the first and the greatest. On His authority, you can be sure; when we stand before God, He will back up those words.

By the very fact of the definition of love as being voluntary, He says, “I will only renew it in you if you renew it. If you want to realign your heart, I will renew love in you. I will not force you.” Because, as a king, the Father will force everyone to obey Jesus, but as a Bridegroom, the Father will woo us to love by showing the loveliness of Jesus. But this is something in which we see the nobility and wisdom of it.

### **LOVING GOD ON HIS OWN TERMS: THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE**

Loving on God’s terms: this is massive, massive. We will talk more about probably all of these points in the twelve sessions in this course called “The First Commandment.” Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in the spirit of obedience to the Word of God. This is critical. Look right there in John 14:15: “If you love Me,” Jesus says, “you will keep My commandments” (paraphrased). “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (Jn. 14:21). “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word” (John 14:23). What could be confusing about that statement? It could not be more clear: three times in a couple of verses. Of course, from Genesis to Revelation He makes it clear. It is strange how nebulous and how blurred many are even within the body of Christ on this definition.

There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His word. It does not exist; it is a religious figment of someone’s imagination. It is religious sentiment; it is not reality. The Holy Spirit will not bear witness to it on the last day, at the judgment seat. God requires more than singing to Him about love or writing poems about love. He requires more than sentimental feelings about a God that we make in our own image. We are made in His image, but the religious culture is making a god in man’s image and then worshipping that golden calf.

There is an unholy momentum in the nations of more and more believers, or people who name the name of Jesus, making a god after their own image—the image of a fallen culture—and calling that Christianity, then defining love according to worshipping that god of their own imagination. I call it “the god of the commercial Christmas tree.” Nothing against Christmas trees, but there is a commercial spirit in the culture of humanism about the Jesus of Christmas. Now the true Jesus of Christmas is good, but I am talking about that figurative sense of a fallen culture.

We must love God in a spirit of obedience. That doesn't mean our obedience is mature. It doesn't mean our obedience doesn't fail. My obedience fails all the time. I am not talking about perfect obedience. I am talking about the setting of the heart to obey the Word, not just obeying the Spirit according to your imagination. I am talking about obeying the Spirit according to the written Word of God, most specifically in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5–7). There it is, the clearest definition of the Bible, in three chapters.

We must love God on His terms, not ours. The reason I am stressing this is because the Holy Spirit is going to restore the first commandment to first place, because the first commandment

was in first place for a moment in the early church. I don't know how long, maybe some years. But one of the core issues of conflict, even within the people who name the name of Jesus, will be the definition of love. Do we love on God's terms, or do we love on the terms of the humanistic culture that has no reference to obedience to the Word of God except for the verses they like?

### **GOD IS RESTORING LOVE, LIBERTY, AND FREEDOM**

Jesus wants to take total control of your life because of love. He does not just want to forgive you; He wants to control you utterly. That is where your safety is, that is where your glory is: that control. He wants to control you for the purposes of love. That is where He is taking the Church. A lot of people define love, liberty, and freedom according to the fallen, perverse culture in our nation. The Western culture—the secular culture has so seeped into the Church that the Church is now defining love and freedom according to how the culture does and using Bible verses to back it up. That is not the love He is restoring. He is restoring the love that He defines. It is obedience to the Word. It is our glory; it is our freedom. The yoke of Jesus is our freedom. Being love-slaves to this man who is fully God and fully man—that is our liberty, that is our freedom, and that is the easy yoke.

God is not a hippie. He loves hippies, but He is not one. Why am I saying that? It is amazing how much of the definitions of love and liberty in the Church is coming from the hippie culture, even by young people who were not even alive when the hippie culture was happening. They have got this laid-back, chill-out approach to love. Beloved, love in the New Testament is hot pursuit, radical abandonment, total sacrifice, and self-denial. That is the love. There is no hippie culture in the language of the apostles, nor in the language of the Godhead toward the earth.



God loves us with a fierce determination. He gave everything. Jesus gave it all: He laid down His riches to become a man to come after us. So I just want to expose this cool hippie-culture false paradigm of grace and liberty, because the Holy Spirit is wanting to restore the first commandment—the true first commandment, according to the Word of God—and it is our liberty. It is our freedom; it is our greatness; it is our exhilaration. As a people, we are going hard after this with no apology to anyone. The Lord is smiling. We don't do it that well, but we are going hard. We will stumble, stumble, stumble. We will get back up and call sin, sin; repent of it; push delete; and run hard into the heart of God.

### **ORDERING PRIORITIES: AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART**

Loving God is the first commandment. It is what God wants first. Make no mistake about it: it is what He wants first. He wants it first in your life. He wants it first in the nations. He wants it first in the prayer room. He wants it first in your ministry. People are all confused about what the newest trend in ministry is. What does God want?

I tell you for sure, from the lips of Jesus: He is defining Deuteronomy 6:4–5: “Hear, O Israel.” He says, “Let Me tell you what you are meant to hear. Here is what you are meant to hear, O Israel, that the first commandment is first and it is the greatest” (Dt. 6:44–5, paraphrased). It is not the first option. It is the first commandment and it is our liberty. Jesus makes it clear that cultivating love for Him is the first priority on His mind.

Beloved, never, never apologize for developing your love for God. As though you own an excuse to the multitudes of hyperactive people who have no focus on the love of God and who name the name of Jesus. You don't have to apologize for your intensity because they don't want to do it. You don't have to put them down. You don't have to criticize them, but don't get called into a debate.

Jesus said, “This is first.” Be clear about it; be settled; go hard after it. God has everything, but He is searching for something. Is that not strange? He has everything, but He is searching for something. Not that He needs it, but He wants it. There is something that He wants. He's totally complete and happy within the fellowship of the Godhead; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are infinitely and eternally happy in the fellowship of one another. He doesn't want it out of need. He wants it because He is the God of desire. He is a God of desire. He wants it.

### **HE IS AFTER YOUR HEART**

Many people pursue what they want and then they don't want it anymore—relationships included. I mean, they can't live without it and they get in the relationship and they don't want it anymore. With God, what He wants, He wants more and more forever and forever. He never loses that which He wants and desires. He remains perfect and infinite forever. He is searching for something. The eyes of the Lord are going to and fro across the earth, searching (2 Chron. 16:9, paraphrased). His eyes are searching. He wants something but He has everything. He wants something first, more than

anything else. What it is, in one sentence: He is after your heart. Quoting one of Misty's songs: He is after your heart.

He is after your heart. That is what He wants: not your money, your heart; not your talent, your heart. He will use your money and your talent as an expression of your love for Him and His for you, and love for other people. He does not want you to live in compromise and then offer Him your time, talent, or money.

You say, "Hey, I will bargain with You. I'm going to live in sin. I'm going to live in some compromise, but I will do IHOP-KC for a year or two to balance out the scale. If You let me do a little pornography, a little immorality, a little bit of drunkenness, I will even do two fasting teams to balance it out."

He says, "I don't want your singing. That is not what I want. I want your heart. I want you to sing because I love your heart. Do not give your heart away and then give Me your singing. I want your heart. I am after your heart." That is what He is after.

## **WHAT GOD WANTS**

One of the most important questions to ask God is always the question of the hour: "What are you looking for, God? What is it You are after?" Beloved, when we find what He is looking for, we will find what we are looking for. It is love. I am telling you it is love. Now, the heart of the Bride asks for this. The heart of a slave and the heart of a hireling does not ask this question. The heart of obedience that is motivated by love is asking, "What is it You want? What is it You want?"

Since loving God with all our heart is the first priority to God, it must be the first reason we lead a worship team. It must be the reason we have evangelism teams. It must be the reason you lead a prophecy team or work with the children. It must be the reason you want to lead a Bible study: to get people to love God, not to see how big the Bible study will get and how many people will listen to your song. It cannot be about how much you sell or how many people listen to you. It must be about the first thing on God's mind if we are going to line up with truth and line up with wisdom.

Someone says, "I want to make a CD." "Why?"

"Well, if I get a CD, more people will know about me. I will get my website. I will have more people, more influence, more money, more this, more that."

"Those things are not intrinsically bad, but keep going. Why else a CD?" "Well, this and that..."

"Why else? Why else?"

"Well, I don't know, that seems like . . . God's blessing and favor on me." "It is about people loving God, not about bigger crowds listening to you."

## **A HOLY VIEW OF GROWTH**

I am happy for IHOP–KC to get really big. I am happy for IHOP–KC to be small. I want IHOP–KC to be the size it is supposed to be, but I am clear about one thing: though we get off regularly, we must exist for the first reason—to raise up people who love God with all of their heart. That must be why we exist at every level. Numerical growth is good. I like numerical growth, but that is not the point.

People say, “Boy, that church down the road, they are growing so big; it must be the favor of God.”

I say, “That’s a cool little statement, but it’s a little naïve.” It is not my business why another ministry grows or doesn’t grow. God does not ask me. I don’t ask Him.

We are living in a secular, humanistic, man-pleasing culture. If you please man, you will grow. If you please God, you may grow, you may not grow, but your heart will grow. That is what we are

after. If we grow, we grow outwardly, but one thing is for sure: our hearts will grow. We are going after this. I am asking the Holy Spirit tonight to mark you: to mark you so that this thing gets hold of you, and you say, “That is why I am alive on the earth right now, and it is why I have a ministry. It is why I sing. It is why I write; it is why I plan; it is why I mow lawns. It is why I do everything. It is first. This is it.” Lord, Holy Spirit, mark us now. Mark us. Never let us be cured. Ruin us with this priority of God.

## **RUINED: ADDICTED TO LOVE**

Beloved, I don’t want us to get ruined. Some people say, “I went to IHOP–KC and got ruined.” What they mean is, “I sit there, hear good music, drink great coffee, meet cool people, and I don’t want to do anything with anybody else.” Now, we do not want to ruin you that way. I want to ruin you by you becoming addicted to love, receiving it and giving it. Not addicted to good music and disconnected from people. Not disconnected from hard work and the mundane.

Beloved, the more I love, the more loyal I am to God in the mundane and the difficulty. Being ruined doesn’t mean I don’t have to do boring church services anymore. No, if you are ruined you may be involved in many boring church services, because your heart is energized with love. The Lord may assign you to a ministry that is a little bit boring right now, but you are ruined because you are addicted to love. You can connect with that love whether you are in a prison cell, pulling weeds under a hot sun, far away, or working twelve hours a day down at Wal-Mart. If your heart is connected with love, you are ruined. That is how you are ruined.

Some folks say, “I have come to IHOP–KC and I am ruined.” I say, “Well, what do you mean?”

“Oh, the music is unreal.”

I say, “Okay, good. Anything else?”

“Oh, yeah. Boy, the teaching is great—the Bible school teaching, of course. Oh, their classes...”

“Good, good. I like that. But that is not really the definition of being ruined—good music, good teaching in the Bible school. Why else?”

“Cool people.”

“OK. OK. Still, you have not hit it. That sounds like abdication. That sounds like bailing out.”

What are you ruined for? If it is, “I feel His love a little bit and I am abandoned to be a lover of God; I am going to show it to people with all my heart,” I say, “Ah. Now that is when we are ruined.”

### **RADICAL: LOVING IN THE MUNDANE**

We can never go back to living without love being number one, the first thing. That is what being ruined is about. That is what being radical is being about. Being radical is not about doing an exotic ministry trip for three months. Being radical is not about doing something unusual for a year. Being radical is staying with love in the midst of the difficulty and mundanity for decades. Now that is radical. It isn't outdoing somebody and doing something exotic. That is not what radical is.

Some people do one-upmanship on a radical scale. “Radical means something extreme.” That's cool if that's the culture's definition, but when I say “radical,” I mean you live for love from the inside out, where nobody is looking, and you are feeling it maybe just a little bit and you are reaching for it. Maybe the connection is not there, but you're reaching and you're addicted to living radical for decades and decades. Not for a three-month term at IHOP-KC or somewhere else on a ministry trip.

### **GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES**

God is after our hearts. Many are searching to know God's will. They say, “Hey, I want to know God's will.

I say, “What do you mean?”

Mostly they mean, “I want to know my ministry assignment.”

That's OK; that's a good question, but I could tell you what the first issue of the will of God in your life is: that you would grow in love on the inside, positive.

“I'm looking for God's will.”

I say, “Well, about 80 percent of God's will is shouting right at you.”

Now that other 20 percent, and where you're supposed to do it, and who you're supposed to do the ministry with, maybe it's going to take you a little while to sort that out—but 80 percent of it is staring you right in the face. You don't need to give up on the 80 percent because you're in so much anguish searching for the 20 percent will of God, which is your ministry assignment. I have seen more people sit for five and ten years searching for a ministry assignment, not knowing the will of

God, when 80 percent of the will of God was that they would grow in love, feel His love, connect with His love, and go after love.

I say, “I know God’s will for your life.” “You do? Is it a prophecy?”

I say, “Yeah, straight from the Bible. The first and the great commandment, I assure you, that is the first issue that God is after in your life.” “Oh, come on . . .”

“No. Absolutely that’s what it’s about. He is after your heart.”

Christianity is an encounter with a person. Christianity is an ongoing encounter with love. Now, the feeling of love may be minimal. Beloved, do not undermine or minimize the power of a little bit of love—feeling it. A little bit goes a long way. I value the little increments of love I feel.

A guy comes and says, “Hey, I’m going to have fierce dedication, determination, radical commitments to righteousness. Man, we’ve got a noble cause. We’re going to change the city, the nation, the universe. We’ve got a noble cause, a radical commitment, a fierce determination.” Beloved, that won’t hold you steady for five years. It will hold you steady for a year or two; if you get a bunch of folks in agreement, you could keep the steam in the engine going. But if you are not encountering the subtle, continual, even small wooings of love on your heart, you will never stay steady for five years.

### **ENTERING THE GREATEST DIMENSION: PUTTING THE FIRST COMMANDMENT FIRST**

I have been a pastor for over thirty years. I have seen many people on fire for five years. Very few people have I ever seen sustain their zeal for over ten years. There were so many radical people in the early 1970s when I met the Lord in 1971. We were all in high school. There were so many radicals. In college, there was a whole other group of radicals; then I started pastoring a whole other group of radicals.

I look back over thirty years, and very few of them have ever stayed steady for ten years. The reason? They were fiercely dedicated, they had a cause, they had a mission, but they were not encountering a person. And therefore the small, subtle, incremental, every-now-and-then stirrings of love did not touch them. That was not the focus of their heart. Changing something was the focus of their heart, or building their network, or learning stuff.

I say, “I want to change things, build a network, and learn stuff, but beloved, if you don’t feel that urge—just subtle, occasional stirrings of love where you feel love from Him and you feel love to Him, where it overflows a little bit to yourself and a little bit to people—you will never stay in a radical posture of dedication.” You may for five years. You may even stay for ten years. Some guys are just plain old strong-minded. But you will not go for decades. It will take love, because the mission will wear you out without being renewed in love along the journey.

This renewing is small. It's a little here, a little there. It's every day or two; there's no way to measure it: some days more, some days less; some weeks more, some weeks less—those little stirrings of inspiration on the heart about love—but boy, they really add up over time. The great commandment: it is not only the first commandment, it is the great one—the great one.

### **THE GREATEST IMPACT**

Oh, I love this. Jesus is interpreting the Shema Israel: “Hear, O Israel, I am telling you what I want you to hear” (Dt. 6:4–5, paraphrased). If you love God, it is great. It makes a great impact on God's heart. It makes a great impact on your heart. It makes a great impact on the people you touch. It makes a great impact on your destiny in eternity. It has the greatest pleasure, the greatest reward. It is the great one in every single way.

You can put ten more categories of greatness. I challenge you to do that: stretch this thing out to its full limits in the grace of God. It is what Jesus calls “the greatest.” What we call the greatest, typically, is what is the biggest externally. What Jesus calls the greatest is what is the biggest internally. Some of the greatest people in history, in the Bible, had very little impact. I like making an impact on people, but let me tell you the greatest thing about my life and your life. It is amazing. It is glorious. I can impact God.

“What?”

“The Genesis 1 God—He can impact me and I can impact Him, and it lasts forever.”

Now, some of that may overflow and I might impact you. I want to impact you, but I'm not going to sell out the most glorious and the greatest dimension of the grace of God in my life—that I can impact God and He can impact me. I'm not going to sell that out to network until I'm completely worn out and exhausted and backslidden. See, so many friends over the years in ministry are addicted to the growth of their ministry, are addicted to getting more people to listen to them, that they will sell out the greatest thing about their life to get a crowd over the years. They will network endlessly to get ten more people at their event. Some of that is OK. But beloved, I can say things; so can you; and God feels them and He remembers them forever.

Oh, my goodness. You can't touch a person who lives like that. They are untouchable. You can criticize them, you can lock them away, you can take everything away from them, you can ignore them, you can treat them wrong, and their heart is exhilarated in love. You may beat them up. You may mistreat them. You could slander them, but you will never diminish the brightness of their spirit. They are untouchable because they have entered into the greatest dimension of their life. It is the great commandment. It is the commandment that makes them great. It is the commandment that greatly impacts God. It is the commandment that greatly impacts them.

See, me being impacted or you being impacted and you being great are in two different dimensions of greatness. It greatly impacts you, but if you will go after this, you could be one of the great

people in God's eyes in history. The great people of history are not the people who have the big crowds, though they might be. The great people in history are the people who have the great hearts, the big hearts, the big love. Go after it. He is after your heart. The greatest calling is to move God's heart, to impact God's heart. **HAVING A BRIGHT SPIRIT**

Beloved, I want to impact you. I want to impact people, but I am not going to give up my inheritance to impact God to try and impact a few more people. I am going to take my changes in the grace of God and go after Him, and let Him inspire me and let the brightness of my spirit impact far more people over time.

Again, if you touch the first commandment, you will become far more steady in the second commandment and have a far greater impact. People don't just need more of you; they need the brightness of the Spirit in you. It's a little bit risky to say this, but I said it once to a group of homeschooling moms years ago, because we had hundreds of homeschooling moms in our church. I said, "Now, this is a little risky, but you need to hear it. Listen, moms: some of you, you're into homeschooling and your premise is—there's a certain truth to it, but taken to an illogical conclusion, it backfires—that if you're ever-present and omniscient and omnipresent, they'll somehow grow up righteous; that you'll guarantee your child's righteousness when they grow up. I say, 'Why do you not back away a little bit, spend a little time with Jesus, get a bright spirit? What they need is a bright mom, not just an omnipresent mom.'"

Because there are so many of these moms who love the Lord in this particular setting, who are so worn-out and frazzled, with a martyrdom complex: "We're pouring it out to the full degree."

I say, "Why don't you give a little less? Sit at the Lord's feet. It's the great commandment. It's the first commandment. Even you can't bail your family out without God breathing through you. Why do you not be in His presence and bring brightness to your kids? Your children need you for sure, but they need brightness in your spirit."

We had some hiccups over that meeting, but it's true. Some people approach all their relationships as if more of them must be the answer to that person. Well, there is truth. More of you is sometimes an answer to a measure, but more of you with a bright spirit is far more effective than just plain old more of you.

## **THE REVELATION OF THE SUPREMACY OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

What the Body of Christ and the nations are going to need as we get closer to the Lord's return in time is people with authority and brightness, not just people with humanistic sentiment. We need bright spirits that have encountered God in the secret place of our heart. Jesus called loving God the greatest lifestyle. He said it's the great commandment, which means it's the great lifestyle. It is the greatest ministry.

I may touch millions of people in my ministry. My great ministry isn't television and conferences. The greatest ministry I can have is by giving myself to the first commandment. That's the great commandment. That's the great definition of life. That is the most radical, extreme lifestyle. The most noble and the greatest ministry you can have is that. Out of there, you can do whatever He whispers in your heart to do.

Do you know the way you move Him? Do you know the way you move Him? Do you know how greatly loving Him moves Him? Every time you repent of sin, even though you stumble in it, you say, "Lord, I call it sin because I love you. I say no to this." You might stumble again, but when you really call it sin, when you really repent of it, it moves Him. Every movement of your heart moves Him. Sitting before Him with a heart of love—I don't mean a heart of escapism. There is a lot of escapism going on in the body of Christ. I don't just mean in prayer rooms, but in all kinds of ways: people are escaping reality through false doctrines of grace. There are people in the prayer rooms escaping. We are not interested in escaping; we are interested in encountering.

You can sit before Him and move Him. You can give a person a cup of cold water; you could love somebody with an unrecognized act of service that nobody ever gives you credit for. It moves Him. He said, "I will never forget the love you showed Me when you helped them. Never, never will I forget the love you gave to Me when you gave that person that money or when you helped them in that love deed" (Heb. 6:10, paraphrased). Beloved, we move Him, and that is what makes our life great and powerful. You could be one of the greatest people of history. Honestly, you may never be famous, never be known, never be recognized, nobody may ever know you at IHOP-KC except two or three people, but you might end up one of the great people before God if you will go after this.

Beloved, the sky is the limit in the grace of God. So many are so captivated about just getting more people to hear them; if you could disconnect, some of you—some of you are not into this at all—just disconnect from the addiction of getting more people to hear you and know that God hears you. God hears you.

"Yeah, yeah, I know; I'll get to that later."

No. God hears you.

"I want to make an impact."

You are. If you would just sit down for a minute when you tell Him you love Him, you are moving Him.

"Wow . . . that is neat, but wait, wait, wait . . ." You are moving God. Beloved, if you get hold of that, nobody can touch you; nobody can derail you. It is the first commandment.



“The Revelation of the Supremacy of the First Commandment”—that’s all I’m going to say. I just wanted to say the title and end with that in a minute. I love that. It just needed to be said. That was my favorite part.

I’m not joking. The supremacy of the first commandment: what if—and I believe it to be true, a people here (I’m talking about all over the earth too, though, any group that wants it)—what if an entire group of people got hold of the supremacy, the greatness, and saw it like God saw this commandment? What would it do to the atmosphere of that spiritual family? Amen. Let’s stand.

### **MINISTRY TIME**

I’m going to ask the Holy Spirit to mark us, that we would be ruined. I don’t mean just ruined for an exciting ministry, big conferences, great music, cool people. That’s not what I mean by ruined. I mean ruined because we have got the vision of the small, little increments of God’s Spirit to touch us. Little by little, day by day, year by year, decade by decade we are ruined for love; we are ruined.

We are going after it. Even big ministry cannot derail us from this focus. We are ruined. Mundanity, persecution, prison, difficulty, hard hours, long hours, being mistreated, railed on, nothing can derail you. You are ruined by love.

## ***Session 2: Defining Wholehearted Love Four Spheres and Four Stages***

### **THE SHEMA: A BRIEF REVIEW**

Let's go to Matthew 22 and follow along. We are going to read the passage in which Jesus declared the great commandment, the first commandment. Tonight we're going to cover our second session on the first commandment course. It's a twelve-part series on loving the Lord our God with all of our heart.

The Holy Spirit is going to restore the first commandment to first place before Jesus returns. The first commandment was in first place in the early church for a short season; it will be a global reality before the Lord returns.

Just a short review from last week: in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (paraphrased), Moses said, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your strength.” This is traditionally called the Shema Israel. The reason they call it “Shema”: the first word, “hear,” in Hebrew is “shema.” So it starts with, “Shema, Israel”—“Hear, Israel”—and because of those first two words, they call it that.

For almost 4,000 years, the Jewish people have recited the Shema Israel for twice a day in synagogues, or wherever they have gathered around the world, and they have quoted this verse. It is the command to hear, because the Lord has something to say. He is saying, “Hear. I want you to know, Israel, that I want you to love Me with all of your heart, your soul, and your strength” (Dt. 6:4–5, paraphrased). Jesus comes 1,500 years after Moses and He fills in the blank as to what it was that God wanted them to hear. Obviously, He wanted them to hear the basic command to love God, but in Matthew 22:38, Jesus adds His own commentary. He says (paraphrased), “This command, the Shema Israel, is the first and the great commandment.” That was a new piece of information. Jesus was saying, “This is what you need to hear.”

### **GOD'S FIRST PRIORITY NEEDS TO BE OUR FIRST PRIORITY**

The Church of Jesus needs to hear this, for to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, and with all of our strength is the first priority to the Holy Spirit. It is not currently the first priority in the Church, but it is the first priority to God, and He says, “Hear, O Church of Jesus Christ.” Jesus added His exegesis, so to speak. He says, “This is the first commandment on God's heart, and it is the great commandment to God” (Mt. 22:38). The greatest lifestyle that you could embrace is the lifestyle to love God with all of your heart.

Surprisingly, over the years I have had many believers rise up in resistance and complain about too much focus on loving God: “What about everything else?” And the list is vast. Let me tell you, there is a lot to do about a lot of things, because a lot of things in the Bible, we're to do. The greatest thing in God's economy—the thing that moves God's heart the greatest, the thing that He

will reward the greatest, the thing that will move you the greatest, and the thing that will impact people you touch the greatest—is if you do the great commandment. This is what Jesus wanted them to hear.

In the session tonight, we are going to be focusing on the four spheres and the four stages of wholehearted love for God. The four spheres of life from the lips of God Himself: we are to love God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength, as we find from the record of the gospels. The four stages from which love develops or grows in our life: in the first stage, we receive love from God; in the second, we give love back to God; the third is surprising—we love ourselves in the grace of God; and fourth, in the overflow of an energized heart we love one another. We love other people far more effectively if we do it according to the stages that the Word of God teaches. We don't wait until we perfect stages one, two, and three until we get to four. We do all four of them simultaneously, but we understand that the fourth stage will be far more effective if the first three are in place and they are healthy.

### **STAGE ONE: INCREASED REVELATION OF GOD'S SUPERNATURAL LOVE**

Let's look at them. Growing in love: the four stages of love in terms of human experience. Stage number one: we receive increased revelation of God's love for us. Beloved, you cannot focus on this subject too much. Again, over the years I have heard people say, "Well, if you focus too much on that, what about the others?" Here is the answer from Scripture: the more red-hot people get in revelation that God loves them and their response to love God back, they will become far more fervent and far more consistent with a deeper quality of love for other people. It begins with the revelation that God loves us. John said it.

Of course, John the Apostle was the theologian of love. He gave more of the biblical principals on understanding love in all four stages—precise theology in the gospel of John, the epistles of John, and the book of Revelation as well. As the great teacher—this ancient man in his nineties—John says here, "We love Jesus because He first loved us."

When God wants to awaken love in us, He reveals a Lover to us. Let me say that again. When God wants to awaken love in you back to Jesus, and when God wants to awaken love in you for other people, He reveals Himself as a God of love. The way that He awakens love in you is by revealing Himself as the great Lover of the human heart. We cannot skip this stage, because if we put all of our energy outward in loving, we end up burned out and bruised, and we have no supply from which to love other people.

Our supply is not our good will and our self-determination; our supply is supernatural overflow that comes from encounter. The encounter is a minimal encounter, but it is a regular day-in and day-out. It's in small increments; you don't always feel it. Sometimes you do—a little bit, occasionally—but it's steady, ongoing. I don't mean steady as in every minute of every day, but day by day, we feel the inspiration of God loving us and a little bit of inspiration of loving Him back—a little bit of

gratitude as to who God made us in His own sight. That is the energy from which we can love other people.

### **THE FALSE LOVE MOVEMENT**

When men become humanistic, meaning when they get focused on love for man in a way that cuts them off from the essential supernatural supply of encountering the love of God, then they have confidence in their own love—and their love will come up short. They will end up burned out and it will turn into something other than love. It will just become a masquerading of our own image of being loving, but it will not be genuine love at the end.

The reason I'm saying this is, there's a real movement around the earth today, and it is becoming strong in the Church. It is a movement of darkness and it has the words "love" and "man" and "goodwill" in it. The reason it is dark, the reason it is broken, is because it is promoting a love that originates from man without reference to encountering the love of God, as though man's love is sufficient. It is a statement of pride. God will prove it to be a false boast before it is over.

It is sweeping the Church because the language is confusing. The language is the same as the biblical language: "Love people." But we love people in an overflow of encounter of loving Him, because we don't have confidence that we can love sufficiently without regular encounter. It is a statement of humility on our part. It is a statement of need. When I see people minimizing the need to connect with God, it seems as though they are loving, but at the end of the day, in the court of heaven, they are arrogant about their abilities and their virtue. I have no confidence we can pull this thing off without regular, even small increments—that is not the right phrase. Inspirations of the Holy Spirit in our daily life are critical if we are going to love well.

### **THE SOURCE OF LOVING WELL**

Well, it begins with encountering His love. The foundational truth that equips us to love God is the revelation of His passion and His feeling for us. You cannot say this truth enough. Jesus said it: "The way the Father loves Me, in the same way I love you" (Jn. 15:9, paraphrased). Beloved, this is almost indescribable, except that Jesus described it. I look at that and I say, "What?"

He said, "In the same intensity which My Father feels about Me, this is how I feel about you" (paraphrased). Beloved, this is the fountain from which compassion and love of mankind flows. There is no other fountain that love will stay steady in. That is the only fountain. Jesus has the same intensity for us that the Father has for Him. This statement, in John 15:9, is the ultimate revelation of our worth. This is the statement that gives us the right—every one of us, a billion believers across the earth—confidence to claim that we are God's favorite. I am God's favorite. There is not a question about it. So are you.

Why? Because God loves me in the way that God loves God, and that cannot ever, in any way, be increased. I am His favorite. For me to be His favorite and you to be His favorite, we lose nothing,

because nothing is diminished in God by loving more people. Beloved, He loves me and you the way that God loves God. It cannot increase.

I am number one. I love it. Here is the difference between me and some of you. Some of us are in unity on this. I am running with this. This is not a joke. This is real to me. This is not just a cute little sermon point. In the privacy of my life, if I come before the Lord, I say, “Lord, behold Your beloved, Your favorite one, the one whom You love.” I love to say that. I have said this for probably twenty-plus years. I love the feeling of saying that. I take it very personally. I think the Lord says, “Oh, I take it personally, too, because you are starting to line up with what I say.”

### **AFFECTION-BASED, DUTY-BASED, AND FEAR-BASED OBEDIENCE**

There are several types of obedience in the Word of God, but affection-based obedience is obedience that flows out of experiencing Jesus’ affection and feeling a little bit of that affection back for Him. Beloved, that affection is powerful. Affection-based obedience comes out of the revelation that Jesus loves us the way that the Father loves Him. It is the strongest; it is the deepest; it is the most consistent type of obedience. You tap into that level of obedience and you will have the strongest, most consistent obedience. It will take you to the deepest places. Why? Because the lovesick person will endure anything for love. Even in the early stirrings of lovesickness in your heart, your heart is wounded with desire. You must have more. That is what you live for. Beloved, that will carry you far in the race to a life of full obedience, the race that Paul talks about (1 Cor. 9:24–27).

The next type of obedience I will call duty-based obedience. Duty-based obedience is biblical, by the way. All three of these are biblical. They have a varying impact and effectiveness. Duty-based obedience is where we are required to obey when we don’t feel any inspiration. We have a duty to obey the Word of God when we don’t feel anything. I have done that many times. A few times I didn’t feel it and I didn’t obey. How many of you know about that, too? I have done it both ways, but in duty-based obedience I don’t feel like it at all. “I say in my heart, ‘Bah, humbug,’ but I’m going to do it anyway. I’m just going to obey You. I don’t mean just staying out of something wrong. I mean even the positive commands: sitting before You, reading the Word, obeying You, serving; I’m going to do it with no inspiration. Because there’s a duty in the kingdom to do this.” It’s not the most powerful, but it’s still valid.

Then there’s the third type of obedience that I talk about, which is totally biblical, by the way. It might sound at first like it is not. It’s fear-based obedience, motivated by the fear of negative consequences. Beloved, there are really negative consequences for disobedience. They are real. This is not a figment of the imagination. It is real. We will really be disciplined by the Lord and we will be more severely attacked by the devil. I don’t know if the attack is more severe, but our armor is less protective. We are more vulnerable to the attack, is a better way to say it. The Bible appeals to fear and shame. It is not the highest motivation, but it does motivate us. It certainly has motivated me many times. The fear of consequences, the shame of getting caught—that is a biblical

motivation. It's not the highest one, because you will get caught and it will bring shame. It will be horrible. Now the most powerful is affection-based, but when we get into this issue of God loving us and feeding our spirit, our obedience will be the strongest. The reason we sin, all of us, is because our hearts are unsatisfied with God. The reason we look for other pleasures is because the inferior pleasure of sin seems more powerful than the superior pleasures in the grace of God when God touches our spirit. When I feel drawn to a sin, it's a signal that my heart is not satisfied with God, and because I understand that I say, "Wait a second, something is wrong here," and the Holy Spirit is saying, "Yes, that's right. Come near; come near."

## **STAGE TWO: SUPERNATURAL IMPARTATION OF HUMAN LOVE FOR GOD**

Let's go to the second stage of the four stages of love. The first stage is the revelation that God loves us. The second stage is the impartation or the receiving the impartation of the Father's love for Jesus by the Holy Spirit. It's a supernatural impartation. My favorite verse—this has been my life verse. You can take it; anybody can have it. You don't have to have a life verse, but I decided to have one about twenty-five years ago, and I have stuck with it. If you are looking for one, I recommend it. Jesus is praying in John 17:26 and says, "Father, I am declaring Your name to them" (paraphrased).

Here's why: "Because when I reveal Your name"—in other words, "what You are like, Your heart"; God's name and God's heart are synonymous—"when I reveal Your heart to them, the love with which You love Me is supernaturally awakened and imparted in them" (v. 26, paraphrased). Beloved, can you imagine loving Jesus in the supernatural ability of the Father's love for Jesus? I mean, there is nothing higher. How could I love Jesus more than the Father? Whose love for Jesus would I want more than the Father's? I'm telling you, it's a great life verse.

Jesus said, "I will reveal the Father's heart to you. I will declare the Father's heart. I will tell you what His heart is like, and when you encounter His heart"—which, by the way, is stage one—"stage two happens. You will love Me with a supernatural ability" (v. 26, paraphrased). That love is progressive. It's not as though one day it's gone; the next day it's mature. It's little by little, and we only feel it a little bit along the way. It's progressive, but it is real.

It takes God to love God. It takes the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Here is why it matters that you know this: because a lot of folks don't really lock in on this point, they're just waiting to show up in love one day, and they're not pursuing it in faith. I lock into this. I say, "Father, I want to love Jesus like You love Him." He said I could. I pray this verse many times. I ask God for impartation. I wait on the Lord. I am not going to receive a lifestyle of less than this. It's a point of focus, because I know that loving Jesus is a supernatural impartation. It's not as though if I just hang in there in the Church, I will one day wake up in love. No. It's a supernatural anointing that I pursue, meaning it is not natural and it is not automatic. It is supernatural. It is beyond my ability, and I will get more of it if I go after it.

## **LOVING JESUS IS NOT ROOTED IN PERSONALITY**

I don't have it in myself. I hope this doesn't sound egotistical, but I have had many people through the years say, "Man, you are really zealous. You're really going for it. I wish I had your personality."

I say, "Well, I don't know." My personality isn't that great, actually. It causes me a lot of troubles, and they assume that whatever measure of love I have for Jesus is somehow rooted in my personality. Beloved, you could talk fast and talk loudly and do all kinds of strange things. That has nothing to do with supernatural movement of the heart. It doesn't matter what your personality is. I don't love Jesus nearly as much as I would like, but whatever measure I have increased in it is not because of personality. You don't get this by being an extroverted personality. You get it by identifying it as a supernatural reality that you get more of as you pursue it. So I say, "Lord, if it is supernatural, I need help. It isn't natural. Would you give me more of it?" The answer would be, "If you keep asking Me, I will."

So don't look at Lou Engle with his energy and think, "Wow, I wish I had as much energy as Lou." His energy or anybody else's is not what gives the stirring of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, and you get more if you go after it. Lock into it and say, "I am not going to live without it" in your heart. "I am not going to live without more of this supernatural love."

## **GOD'S GRACE GIVES US POWER TO LOVE**

We were created with longing to be wholehearted. Beloved, you were created to be abandoned. If you are not passionate, if you don't have something to die for, you have nothing to live for. Now, a lot of the political movements of history have picked up on that reality. I am talking about some of the great changes of history, of political movements, of revolutions. These were led by young people who were willing to die for the cause, a political cause, and it overthrows nations. When it comes to the kingdom, people end up with this perverse view of grace: that grace means being half-hearted, going half-way; getting around to it, if you do get around to it, and somehow it's grace—a laid-back, chilled-out approach to God. Beloved, that idea will keep you barren and bored spiritually for decades. I have watched it for thirty years of pastoring. You want to go hard after God. When I say "hard," I don't mean "loud," and I don't mean you have to have my personality. I mean being focused, staying with it. You can have the softest, quietest personality.

The greatest love affair in all of history is God with the human heart. Beloved, go after this thing. It is yours for the taking. The grace of God empowers us to get hold of it. The grace of God does not give us license to ignore it. The grace of God gives us power to seize it in an unrelenting way.

Don't buy into the perverse doctrine of grace that is filling the land today. It's the doctrine that tells us, "Chill out, go with the flow, whatever happens, happens," that makes us feel comfortable with compromise, and comfortable with passivity, and comfortable with neglecting the love of God. But the true grace of God makes us ravenous in our desire and our focus. We refuse to be denied. We

will not be stopped, because the grace of God is moving on our hearts. That is the true grace of God. I see this thing emerging in the land; it's getting worse over the decades. It was happening thirty, thirty-five years ago when I first started preaching. Well, it's really growing. It's really cool to be in "grace." It is a perversion. It is a deception. I don't care how many Bible verses people use, it is not from the Holy Spirit, that approach to Jesus.

### **CREATED TO BE ABANDONED**

He is worthy of abandonment. He loves us with all of His heart. He wants us to love Him, because there is dynamic life in the exchange between our hearts when they are wholehearted. We were created to be wholehearted. We were created to be abandoned. If you have nothing to die for, you really have nothing to live for. That, to me, is one of the clear statements of description: not of everybody, but a broad-strokes description of the Body of Christ in our nation. They have nothing to live for. More money and more honor, beloved, is not a cause to live for—"I might get a little more honor and a little more money; I'm going to use the blessing of God to get more money and more honor."

I want to get more on fire, more connected, and have more encounter, more passion, and be more lost in God. That is how we want to use the grace of God. If He gives me more money and more honor, He's going to give me a whole lot of that, plus persecution and maybe martyrdom. They all go together, by the way.

"I will give you more honor."

"Thank You, Lord. I have read the book. I know what that means."

"Okay. You may end up in prison."

"Okay. I just want you to know I have read the book. I know what honor means, but it is good enough for me, if You will give me the anointing to love You in a greater way."

Beloved, you were created to be abandoned. If you are not abandoned—if you are not going red-hot—you end up spiritually bored and vulnerable to darkness, and your heart is continually prone to emotional brokenness, being repeated over and over and over again. The heart is far more vulnerable to the devil's tactics and to being smashed, bruised, and broken with disappointment because we are not engaged, or going hard after the One who created us.

### **THE POWER OF BEING ABANDONED**

We were never created to be half-hearted. There is nothing more satisfying than the power of feeling abandoned. Oh, it's a satisfying feeling, the power of being abandoned. I love to be loved by God; by people, too. I love to be loved, but you know what else? I love to love. I am never more alive than when I am full-scale in love. I am never more alive than in love. Neither are you. You love to love and you love to be loved, because you were created that way by God. You will never be



more alive, more red-hot abandoned, at the cutting edge—at the very edge of your understanding and strength of dedication and abandonment.

They have told me for thirty years, “You’re going to burn out if you don’t slow down.” You don’t burn out from going hard after God. You get burned out because you are bored spiritually, and you’re motivated by the wrong things. That is what burns you out. You get burned out because you’re trying to do the work of the kingdom with a heart disconnected from God, and you’re wrongly motivated, so you’re perpetually disappointed by not getting more money and more honor. But if you throw away the money and honor thing—if you still want it for the kingdom but it isn’t personal to you; it’s the kingdom—then if you get it or don’t get it, it’s not the big deal. Your heart is not bored and you’re not perpetually disappointed because the money and honor keeps getting delayed, or somebody else keeps getting it. They keep getting your spot:

“Well, somebody else got my spot. Now what am I going to do?” The devil has plenty of ideas of what you should do then. You lay that thing aside and you go red-hot, and you won’t burn out, I assure you. You won’t burn out if you go full-blast.

Our nation is obsessed with playing and resting: playing and resting, but never rested and never satisfied. Forget the “play and rest” thing. Go abandoned for God. Live for eternity. Throw yourself into His heart the way He threw Himself into your heart. You will never be more alive. You will never be more satisfied. We were made to love God with all of our heart.

### **STAGE THREE: LOVING OURSELVES IN THE GRACE OF GOD**

Stage number three: loving ourselves. Jesus said, “You will love your neighbor as you love yourself—in the overflow, or in like manner. You will love your neighbor in the way you love yourself. If you don’t love yourself, you won’t love your neighbor” (Mt. 22:39, paraphrased).

I used the same analogy for years: the woman prayed, “Lord, I want to love my neighbor like myself.”

The Lord spoke back, “That’s the problem; you do. You hate your neighbor because you hate yourself.”

Now, there are two approaches, or two completely different discussions to be had on this subject of loving yourself. There is loving ourselves in the flesh and loving ourselves in the grace of God—entirely different realities, completely different. We will never love our neighbor more than we love ourselves in the grace of God. What I mean by loving ourselves is, number one, we know what we look like to God. We know who we are in Christ. We know what we look like to God. Now, the devil and religion tells us that God wrote us off. That isn’t the truth. God is lovesick over you.

## **GOD BECAME A MAN OUT OF LOVESICKNESS**

I mean this for real. His heart was sick in a human sense. Those are human terms. His heart was in turmoil in Him to come after us, and He became a man. Beloved, that was not casual. His heart was turning within Him for us. That is what I call heartsick—lovesick. He said, “I cannot endure it without her at My side. I will pay the price. I will win her for Myself. Father, I will win her for You.” The Father’s heart was churning and the Son’s was churning. Churning in love is what I am talking about, and Jesus became man. He will be a man forever. Beloved, for God to become human forever—He didn’t become a human to put on the robes of humanity for thirty- three years, go to the cross, then get back up to heaven and say, “Boy, that was a wild run,” and lay humanity aside.

He will be human for billions and billions and billions of years, like you will. It is a huge decision. Not only will He be human, He will be a Jewish human for years and years and years. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He always will be. He will always be a man from the tribe of Judah, always. It’s amazing. His heart is churning. He is heartsick. He is lovesick. He had to have us. Beloved, I want to be lovesick back. I want to say, “I have to have You fully.”

## **SEEING OURSELVES AS HE SEES US**

He loves us. It isn’t just who we are in Christ. That is a great subject, a vast subject. That’s not my point tonight, to break that down, but beloved, when we see ourselves like God sees us, it is fantastic. It is more than that. We also value whom He made us in the physical—whom He made us in our personality. I am not talking about the flaws, the marks of sin in our personality or in our body. He made you strategically, and it is a great pressure in the Western culture of the people who hate their bodies. There’s a lot of focus on women who hate their bodies, but men do, too. There are all these eating disorders and all of this massive pressure, because people hate what they look like; they hate it. They are completely disconnected from what God thinks about what they look like.

Look what it says on our personality and our giftings. Here is what David said: “You formed my inward parts in my mother’s womb. I thank You for it” (Ps. 139:14, paraphrased). David doesn’t say, “I wish I was taller; I wish I was faster; I wish my hair color was different.” He says (paraphrased), “I thank You. I take it as a marvelous stroke of genius that only You have the full insight into why You made me this way. I praise You. Why? I am fearfully and wonderfully made. It is marvelous and my soul lays hold of this. I know this well.”

Beloved, when your soul believes well that God created you fearfully and wonderfully—I don’t even mean you particularly like the color, the size, the hair, the eyes, whatever; that’s not the point. You go up a step. You trust the sovereignty of God. He knew what He was doing and He had billions of years of insight thinking of you. He knew.

David said, “I know this well. This thing has got hold of me” (Ps. 139:14, paraphrased). I don’t think it’s an accident that David had this free spirit of abandonment to God, and he was at peace. More than at peace, he rejoiced with who he was as a person. You say, “Well, does the Bible not say

he was handsome?" Yes, but the most beautiful women in the world are among the most insecure women in the world. I have met a few beauty queens in my day. They were celebrated, famous ones. I had heard it, but I was struck by my personal encounters with them how profoundly insecure and preoccupied they were with being ugly. It was remarkable. I'm talking about people who have been on covers of lots of magazines. I've met a number of them, and there were not a lot, but a few, who struck me each time with how profoundly preoccupied they were with the fear of being ugly and how bad they look. I thought, "Is there any end to this? Well, it's the rich guys who always want more money. I guess that's how it is."

### **LOVING WHO WE ARE BY THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION AND OF GRACE**

My point is that David was operating by revelation. You never have enough money. You are never pretty enough, strong enough, fast enough, thin enough, tall enough, short enough, whatever enough. You are never enough, because there is somebody more in a minute. David wasn't talking about looking in a mirror. He was talking about a spirit of revelation when he said, "My soul knows this well. My frame wasn't hidden from you" (Ps. 139:14, paraphrased). In other words, it wasn't an accident. "When I was made in secret, I was skillfully wrought. I was strategically and skillfully made by Your hand. How precious are these thoughts to You and these thoughts to me" (Ps. 139:15, 17, paraphrased). The thoughts of what? The thoughts of who I am in my physical man, in my personality, in my gifts and in my limitations. Beloved, we need to begin to rejoice in who God made us, who we are in Christ, and who we are even in our physical person. I don't mean who I am in my character. I want my character to be better, but who I am in all my limitations. The Lord says, "Don't charge Me with error. Don't charge Me with making a mistake in your life. I didn't. That's the voice of the devil."

We need to love who we are in the grace of God. We need to come into agreement with God. To come into agreement with God is a dimension of holiness. We think that if you go to a prayer meeting, and witness to somebody, and pray for the sick, and feed the poor, that is loving God. Beloved, loving yourself in the grace of God is an act of worship of how brilliant, how wise, and how skillful God is. It's an act of worship.

So, the next time you look in the mirror, say, "Lord, I don't see the whole picture right now, but we have billions of years. You are radically committed to me. Thanks! Let's do it. Let's go for it. This is the day the Lord has made. Let me be glad and rejoice." Yes. David said, "I praise You." Beloved, this issue of loving ourselves in the grace of God, of who we are in Christ to answer our failures and who we are in our imperfect humanity and our imperfect personalities—I'm not talking about our moral parts of our failure of character; I'm talking about our gifts and passions, our mental abilities and our physical abilities. I'm not talking about the moral/virtue parts of our character right now, because we always want to improve those. We say by faith, "I worship You; I love who You made me. I don't see it, but I trust You. That is good enough for me." I tell you, it will awaken your heart in love in a surprising way for God and for others as well.

## **DO NOT ENVY OTHERS**

We must not secretly wish we were someone else, whether physically or spiritually. I am talking about somebody else's gifting.

"If I could only sing like Justin Rizzo . . ."

Now, I would like to sing like Justin Rizzo; I actually would.

"If I could only lead; if I could only make money; if I could only preach; if I could only teach; if I could only pastor; if I could only prophesy, spiritually . . ."

Why are you going there? Do you know what that will do? It will just short-circuit your ability to connect with God in the present tense. Don't secretly wish you were someone else, physically or spiritually.

"Now in virtue, in character, I wish I was more humble..."

That is good to be aspire to be like somebody in character, but not in physical or in spiritual giftings. There is a disconnect at the heart level. There is a serious disconnect. If you'll let me use a secular concept, that disconnect short-circuits an ability to flow in love and to stay sustained in loving, because all four of these stages work together.

I have it in number three; I'm going to say it again: we charge God with error when we want to be somebody else, have somebody else's gifting, or somebody else's physical features, or somebody else's personality. We are charging God with error. Again, I'm not talking about character virtue. We always want more of that. Get your eyes off of others. That is called envy. I know that's a mean word, but that's what it is. It grieves the Spirit and it disconnects us from love. Get your eyes off your failure. Wanting to be somebody else and despising yourself is a guaranteed way to short-circuit the grace of God in your life. Beloved, we have this incredible invitation to love. We have got to get on with love.

## **STAGE FOUR: LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES**

Stage four: to love others. Now this is the glory, this is the capstone. This is the greatest expression outwardly, when imperfect people, by the love of God, love imperfect people.

It's easy to love God who is perfect and invisible. But to love a physical person who's imperfect, who's next to us, that's a challenge. That takes supernatural power. That is more than religious sentiment. That is the power of God, and what Jesus said in John 13:35 is that if you love one another, by this the unbelievers will know there is a supernatural operation of grace in your midst. They will know something supernatural is happening because it is very unnatural to love.

It is natural for a mother to love her child in that sense. It is natural to have sentiment. I am not talking about sentiment. It is natural to hear someone's story and tear up. It is natural to be moved at

a testimony and give one hundred dollars. That is natural. That is not what I am talking about, although those are tokens of love. I'm talking about interfacing with somebody on a regular basis and walking out 1 Corinthians 13: patience, longsuffering—that is supernatural. That is not natural. I am not talking about sentiment; I am talking about the power of God. “By this all will know” (Jn. 13:35), meaning the unbelievers. I remember I did this a couple of times, but then I quit doing it. It was not very effective. But as a pastor, I would always have the guy or the gal come from the other church and say, “Hey, we want to join your church.”

“Cool!” I was always a little ornery. I would ask them a question, knowing they were going to say one of three things, because that's what they always say, the same two or three things. “Why?”

“Well, because our church doesn't have love in it.”

I jumped out there a few times. I said, “It doesn't have love in it? Well, of course it doesn't have love in it. That is the ultimate, supernatural manifestation. That is the capstone. That is the top of the mountain.”

“What are you talking about?”

“That is the supernatural power of God.” They say, “Whoa. Whoa. Whoa.”

I backed off of that after a few years. What they mostly meant is, “People didn't give me what I wanted on my time frame.” That's almost always what people mean when a group didn't have love. “They don't give me the money or the honor that I need on my time frame.” It has to do with sentiment. You go in there and the room isn't friendly.

I said, “Let's bring love up to a whole other level besides this sentimental low standard that anybody measures up to if you're in a good mood with them, and by the same standard they fail.” It's a moody standard that isn't real. They don't have love. It's the ultimate accusation.

## **REAL LOVE IS CONSISTENT**

Beloved, love is substantial manifestations. It is consistent love in close relationships where there is true patience and humility and bridling of the tongue, and only blessing. It is an unusual work of grace if a thousand people have that. It happens, but it's like, “Wow.” Not, “How dare you that you don't.” You bow down and worship when you see that happen. It's because the definition of love is so low, but it typically means sentiment.

But I want to call us to something far more than the definition of people giving you money and honor or friendship based on your time frame. Love is way more than that. Over my years of pastoring, most people evaluate love based on those two criteria. They give them the hundred dollars or a thousand; they give them the embrace; the whole group is loving. If a person doesn't, the whole group is not loving. It is really out of sync with truth. My point is not to try to correct the whole world on that. The point is, I want to lift the standard of reality as to what love is to a

supernatural level, so that we're going for something that isn't just sentiment. It takes the power of God. So when we talk about needing to love Jesus, being loved by Him, loving Him, and loving ourselves, it makes sense because we're aiming at the right definition of love that can only happen by the power of God.

I'm talking about a sustained valuing and serving of close relationships that blesses, that honors consistently. There is that around the Body of Christ, but I tell you that it is remarkable when hundreds of people do it together. It is not a given. It is awesome; it is wonderful. I want to live like that.

Loving Jesus has to end in loving people like that, or it is not loving Jesus. Our foundational premise: people who love Jesus will love each other far, far more. You get people focused on receiving the love of Jesus and focused on going there, and those people over time will love themselves. The entire emotional atmosphere of a company of people will change, and then they will begin to love one another at a whole other level of consistency and depth that transcends sentiment. Sentiment doesn't get the job done. Sentiment is nice, but that isn't a high enough standard. I want the kind of love that's supernatural, that's the overflow and the outworking of encountering a supernatural man. He's fully God and fully man. It's impossible to love Jesus and not love people.

I've had people over the years say, "Well, this group was in the first commandment, and this group is in the second commandment." I say, "That is absolutely the most illogical thing I've ever heard. You can no more separate your heart, liver, kidney, and brain in separate places of the room. You can't do the first commandment without it resulting in the second. You can't do the second unless you have done the first. I'm talking about the biblical definition of the second commandment, not the sentimental, humanistic definition. I'm talking about staying steady in the 1 Corinthians 13 level. The greatest anointing we can operate in is the anointing to walk in the two great commandments."

There are four stages. They go together. We don't do one and then we do the other. We do all four of them simultaneously.

Amen. Let's stand.

## **MINISTRY TIME**

I want to focus in on this issue of loving ourselves. Undoubtedly all of us have an issue of some sort in this. We wish we were somebody else physically, or we wish we had somebody else's gifting spiritually, or their personality. If you're saying, "This is something the Lord is putting His finger on in my life"—it's all of us; it's all of us. But as time goes by—this may sound egotistical, but you just heard how I mean it—I really like me more and more. I mean, I'm dorkier than ever. I look at other things and say, "Oh, man; you've got to quit doing this and this." I see all kinds of need for change. But on another, completely different level, I say, "Lord, I really like being me. Thank You."

Beloved, that is a revelation, and I am not there yet, but I am on a journey. When that touches you a little, you actually have emotional resource to love other people. If the Lord is putting His finger on that in any way in your life—it might even be that you don't feel the Lord loves you, so therefore you don't love yourself through that lens—I would like you to come up here, and we're going to stand before the Lord, and we're going to ask the Lord to break the power of this in our life. Come up and stand on these lines. Everybody has got this issue. Maybe He's touching You with another issue right now. I have gone in and out of this through the years at various levels.

This will help you love God with all of your heart. It really will. I'm going to lead you in prayer. We're going to come before the Lord.

You're right before Him. You're on the sea of glass like crystal, standing before the Lord (Rev. 4). There is the Father, the Son at the right hand. We don't see it really clearly, but that's a mental picture. You're saying, "Father, forgive me." (Say this in your own words, in your own time; we're going to do this slowly). "Forgive me for charging You with lacking skill when You created me, because Your Word says I'm skillfully made, but I've charged You with lacking skill. My body, my personality, my mind, my gifting in the grace of God in the kingdom—I'm not happy with it. I have charged You. I ask You to forgive me. You are thinking of the big picture. You are thinking of my heart. Thank You that You know what I don't know."

Let's take a minute here. We're now going to go to the other extreme from repenting to the other way: "Thank You." It's going to be hard for some of you. "Thank You for my body, for what You gave me in my mother's womb. Thank You. Thank You for the family I was born in." It's going to be hard for some of you. You know what you're doing, even though there might be a lot of pain there. "Thank You for the color of my hair, eyes, skin, and everything. Thank You for what I look like. Thank You for my mental abilities, my personality, what You gave me to work with. Thank You. Thank You for the grace of God on my life. I want more, but thank You for the gifting. I don't want to be somebody else. Holy Spirit, I ask You right now to release Your presence. Release Your presence even now."

## ***Session 3: Defining Wholehearted Love: Four Spheres***

### **THE FOUR SPHERES OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

Well, tonight we are on Session 3 of the “First Commandment” course: the first commandment restored to first place. We are taking twelve sessions on the first commandment. My spirit is just exhilarated looking at these very fundamental truths, believing that the Lord is smiling over us, saying, ‘This is what I want you to talk about. This is what is on My heart. This is what I am talking about when I am talking to you. Are we talking about the same thing?’ I say, ‘Yes, Holy Spirit, we are having the same conversation.’

God created us specifically to love Him in these four spheres of our life: with all of our heart, that speaks of our emotions and affections; with all of our soul: that is our personality, which is the way we express ourselves; with all of our mind: that is obviously our thoughts; with all of our strength: that is a reference to all of our resources.

If we use our resources in the right way in relationship with the Holy Spirit, it will actually enhance our ability to feel love and to return it back to God; but often people use their strengths in a way that is not in relationship with the Holy Spirit. I am talking about believers and the very blessing of God, that they actually have results in their spirit, is dulled and diminished in their ability to feel the love of God and return it back, and then overflow to others.

This issue of strength is a very important one. It is our money; it is our time; it is our influence. We will look at it in a few moments. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength” (Mt. 22:37). Now whenever God gives a commandment, it is the promise of the enabling to walk it out. Now it is only Jesus, He is the only king who gives a commandment that leads to the benefit and the greatest of the people who obey the commandment.

It is a requirement that leaves us with great benefit and with greatness. Our debt of love is our gift. It is the very debt of love that we have to Jesus, when walked out, that becomes the gift that He gives us in how to live our lives and carry ourselves before Him.

In this session we are going to look at some of what it means to express our love to God in these four spheres of life. Obviously, at best it is a mere faint introduction to a very vast subject.

### **DEFINING LOVE**

The question: What does love look like? This is the question of the hour. We know this. Love is much more than sentiment, than religious sentiment. Love is much more than extravagant expressions in a worship service, though those are cool. The reason I think it is important to mention this is, some people, when they think of the bride of Christ, just think, “I want to be wholehearted.” What they are imagining is something ethereal, maybe just smiling and thinking



about love, but when I have pressed people over the years, they do not have concrete answers to what that looks like from Monday to Friday. We have to have clear, practical answers to what it looks like to love.

To love God in a sentence: True love requires heart responses with follow-through. True love requires specific heart responses with follow-through.

Now, not perfection in the sense that we never fail. We can have true love and still stumble as we are reaching to give ourselves to God in these concrete heart responses. (Now, these heart responses are defined by God, not the culture. That is a really critical point we will look at in a moment.) We are not content with love for Jesus; that is just rhetoric. It is words. It is banners. It is posters. “We love Jesus; we are radical.” If it does not have concrete, daily expression, and again I do not mean perfect expression in the absolute sense where there is no failure, but love must be on God’s terms and must be more than a slogan about being on fire. Loving God on God’s terms.

There are many definitions of love: liberty; freedom; freedom in the Spirit. What does freedom mean? There are many definitions of grace in our culture, but in a secular culture that our nation is steeped in, much of that secular culture finds its way into the church culture. I find that there is too much confusion in defining love that has its roots in secular culture, not in the revelation of the Word of God. One of the core issues at the end of the age in the generation the Lord returns is how love is defined, because everybody will use the term “love.” The people who love according to God’s definition and the people who do not will all use the term “love.” The people who walk in grace according to biblical definitions and the believers who claim grace, but do not walk in it, will still use the same term, “grace.”

Everybody says “freedom, grace, compassion, and love,” but only a small percentage of the human race is actually walking it out in a way that God agrees with. My goal is not to point out how bad the other groups are doing it; my goal is to see to it that we are walking in truth, in reality, and not being distracted by the definitions of the secular culture that are inundating the church world at this time.

We define love on God’s terms. This is radical. The reason I am saying it’s radical, I don’t mean, “I have it clear, I understand it all;” I just know that God’s terms are far different from man’s terms. They are radical. The terms of Jesus are bearing a cross and denying our self. Saying no to the flesh is humility in a way that heaven agrees with, not in a way that you get the reward at the banquet for. It is love that has allegiance to Jesus. It is a definition of love that is in obedience to the written Word of God.

So we renounce all paradigms of love that are emerging in the church in this very hour. We say no; we are not interested in it. We are not pressured to make sure that everybody is happy with our definition of love, as long as it is biblical. Much of what is called love is, in fact, other than what the Word of God is calling us to. A lot of folks are pressured by that, and they get swayed by the fear of

man. I will just give you a real specific example: nothing more clearly brings false views of love and grace to the surface than the biblical view of salvation. All people, I do not care who they are, regardless of how much they seem to love, everybody goes to hell forever unless the gift of God through Jesus on His terms is received by them. That is the definition of love.

Sincerity and seeming love: There is a lot of confusion and darkness in it. We do not need to define all the different expressions of it. We are just committed to Jesus' terms of love. For example, people look at suffering and they think that somehow suffering, or even humanistic efforts to help others (which is good in itself, as long as we don't trust in it), they think that somehow that plays into their salvation. The famous movie of *Schindler's List*, the story of the man who saved the Jews from the concentration camp: let me say this tenderly but clearly: if he did not know Jesus, and if the Jews that he saved did not know Jesus from the death camps, they will be in the same hell that Adolf Hitler is in.

It is an issue of justice; it is not an issue of goodness. The only reason that I am saved is because an innocent One, Jesus, took the role of the guilty and paid the debt. Only because my debt is paid, not because I was good or sincere. It is an issue of justice. That justice is so exacting and so clear that if Adolf Hitler on the day of his death accepted him, he would be in the same heaven that Paul is in. That is how extreme and how powerful the gift of salvation is. We have to define love on God's terms. I tell you, there are more and more people in the church that are letting of it, getting swept into humanism in the church with Jesus' language.

Again, I am only interested in the kind of love that holds steady when I stand before the Lord on the last day. I am only interested in the kind of love that the Holy Spirit is excited about as He looks over the earth: "Lord, here we are. We are working together with You in truth."

Believe it or not, the true definitions of love will actually get you in trouble and in conflict even in the context of the professing church, the church that names the name of Jesus. God's definition of love does not involve accepting everybody. We respect everybody. We have respect for believers and unbelievers, for sinners. We respect their humanity, but we do not tolerate and accept their false standards. I don't mean we go beat them up, but we do not pretend to accept them as though everybody has their own way to truth. No: we respect them; we are tender; we serve them, but with a clear witness that they are in error, and they are in deception. Not that you have to say that in every conversation with them, but that is the premise.

There are a lot of definitions of love that have romantic notions of just being happy in God. There is truth to that. Our spirit will be happy in God. But Jesus is not our boyfriend. He is the Bridegroom King. He is nobody's boyfriend. He does not want to be your boyfriend. He does not want to have date nights with you. He really does not. I mean this. In the bridal paradigm, neither is Jesus the humanistic hippie who kind of chills out and lays back. His definition of love is rooted in the Word of God, and that is the definition we are going with.

## **FOUR PREMISES: OBEDIENCE, ADORING TRUST, LOYALTY, LOVESICK DEVOTION**

We are going to look at four different premises. These are not the same as the four spheres of love we are going to look at in a minute. These are not comprehensive; you could lay out several more.

Premise number one: Biblical love requires the pursuit of obedience to Jesus. You could write poems, do dances, have outreaches, but if you are not pursuing obedience, you do not love Him. It is a pursuit of obedience. It is not the obtainment of it in maturity, because we can love Him in our immaturity, and our love is real, but the reach to obey it is real. I have been reaching to obey Jesus for many years and failing many times. Every time I fail does not mean my love is false, it means it is weak, but when I call it sin, repent and reach to obey again, then it proves the genuineness of the love even though my love is immature. Some folks imagine that if they sing songs, do plays, and have outreaches they can disregard the Holy Spirit's leadership in the areas that He is focusing on in their lives, and somehow they equate it with love. It is not love; it is deception.

Jesus' definition of love is the one that will exhilarate us. It will liberate us. It will make us powerful. It will make us great in God's eyes forever. This is the only safe definition of love. It is not a cruel one. It is not a mean one. It is the only good one. I trust His leadership, so I am saying, "I am going for your leadership. I don't get it all. I have an unrenewed mind in various areas. I trust You. What You say is love is good and I am going for it." That is the confession of the church of Jesus Christ. Here is what He says. Look at John 14:15-23. He says it three times in one passage: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). "He who has My commandments and keeps them, this is the one who loves Me" (v. 21). The next two verses: "If anyone loves Me, he keeps My word" (v. 23). There is no such thing as loving Jesus that does not diligently seek to obey the Word. Again, we have immaturity in our love, but our love is reaching. We are seeking to do it for real, in private.

If you want to get it really clear, Jesus defined love as the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle (Mt. 5-7). That is the clearest definition of love. If you are doing that, if you are reaching for that, beloved, you are walking in love. Yes, you reach and fail. That is all part of the growth process, but reaching for it is the critical point. We must deny lustful desires. There are many categories of lust beyond sexual immorality. Galatians 5 talks about the nineteen expressions of the flesh. Those are all dimensions of lust: anger; pride. But the denying of lustful desire, whether it is anger, bitterness, pride, immorality, covetousness, whatever it is, you deny it because you love Him; you are trying to obey Him; whatever it is, is the theatre: it is the stage in which Jesus chose that we express love to Him. He says, "Now that is to love Me." "Lord, I want to do this, but Your Word says do it the other way. I really want to do it my way, any of these types of lust, but I am going to deny it to obey you. I really don't want to obey you, but I am going to." The Lord says, "I take that personally. It is the theatre in which you show Me your love."

Now, everyone in this room, and every believer in the earth has a different struggle, according to our personality and circumstances. Everyone has a unique personality and a unique set of circumstances. It is your assignment to show Him your love. He says, “I have given you this assignment in this season.” He writes every decision for love in His book. Maybe for one person it’s the immorality. Maybe it’s the covetousness. Maybe it’s the laziness. You are saying, “You know what, I am going to rise up and obey.” Nobody ever sees the movement of your heart, but He sees it and it moves Him. He calls it love. He writes it in His book.

So, first, it is the pursuit of obedience.

Premise number two: it involves adoring trust of this Man. It is not just disconnected obedience. It is feeding our mind and our spirit in a way where we learn who He is, where our adoration increases while we are obeying Him. It is not disconnected obedience, which is slavery, but it is adoration and trust. Now, that adoration grows over time, but that in itself is part of love. As I feed my spirit on who He is, I read the Word of God and my adoration and my gratitude increases. “Jesus, I really like you. You are really amazing.”

He says, “I like that. I like that that moves you.”

I say, “Wow. You are treating me so much better than I deserve. So much better. Why? You are so kind; You are so amazingly brilliant and powerful. I trust You. I want to obey You because of who You are.”

There is an adoring trust that is a feature of love. You want to develop that part of your spiritual life. In Psalm 45 the Psalmist said, “My heart overflows with a good theme.” He was talking about Jesus. “My heart overflows. I write my composition concerning King Jesus. My tongue is like an enthusiastic pen of a ready writer. I am exploding with enthusiasm.” Admiration and gratitude is what he’s talking about. Having a tongue like a ready writer means, “I am ready. I am enthusiastic; I am exploding. I have so much adoration. I have gratitude because You are fairer than the sons of men. You are beautiful in Your splendor, Your wisdom, and Your kindness towards me.”

There is a dimension of love that is enhanced as we develop this adoring trust, this awestruck affectionate love. That is what I like to call it. The way we are going to love Jesus forever will be awestruck gratitude. Our love in eternity forever will be motivated by awestruck gratitude. Forever we will say, “Oh, You are amazing; thank You. Thank You. Thank You. I love You.” You are awestruck. “You are amazing” – adoration. “Thank You” – gratitude. “Therefore I love You.”

Premise number three: Love requires loyalty to the truth – the truth as we understand it. Again, as the months turn to years and the years turn to decades we get more light, and our perception of truth increases – truth as we know it in the Word of God. He requires us to be loyal to it. The Word of God is politically incorrect in the eyes of man: the things that Jesus promises, what He requires, and what His plans are; what He is going to do in the earth (just read the Book of Revelation) is politically incorrect.

Much of the church – too big of a percent – is siding with secular humanist thinking, and they are distancing themselves from the political incorrectness of His truth. I am talking about the unrenewed secular mind. Jesus requires loyalty to the truth as an expression of loving Him. When I know something, I don't have to say everything I know in every sitting, but when I know something, He says, "I really take it personally if you don't stand for it when I have revealed it to you."

"Well, Lord, those guys don't really believe that."

The Lord would say, "But I believe it. I have called you to stand with Me in it. Do you love Me?"

"Yes, I love You, but they will get mad at me."

"Do you love Me?"

"Yes."

"Then be loyal to the truth."

Great conflict arises in the generation the Lord returns over the truth of who Jesus is and how He defines love. Beloved, I want to say by the grace of God as a people, we want to be loyal to that which we understand and our understanding will increase as the years unfold. But we are determining we are going to show love to God on God's terms, and that is being loyal to the truth.

There are three truths: there are more than three, but these are the three I run into often that offend the humanist mind that is even in the church.

Number one: His deity. He has the absolute right to define the standards that He holds every city, nation, and person accountable to. He has the right to define those standards as God. "Well, you never know everybody in their own way and everybody according to what they see." No. There is one Man who has total right to declare what is right and wrong because He is God. If He is not God, then that is a different story. He is God.

Number two: He is the only way of salvation.

Number three: He possesses the wisdom to judge the nations. The judgment of Jesus, His loving judgments, are released to remove everything that hinders love. His judgments are an expression of His passion for purity in the greatness and glory of His people. The issue of Jesus' judgment comes into great conflict because the people begin to debate about this group of innocent people in the earth. Beloved, there are no innocent people on the earth. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Everyone deserves not to love and everyone deserves to go to hell. Before God we are all guilty. By His kindness we have life; by His kindness our life is extended. By kindness we have eternal life – end of story.

Under His leadership, and under His judgments that will cause the premature death of multitudes in the generation He returns, there is no innocent group that has the right to challenge His leadership as being lacking in love, justice, and wisdom.

Premise number four: Love is a consuming desire. There is a dimension of being abandoned, of being lovesick. It is not passive. I am not talking about personalities. Different personalities are more energetic, some are more laid-back; that is not what I'm talking about. All the different personalities the Lord has, He's playing this symphony through all the thousands of personalities. I'm not talking about whether your personality is quiet, loud, extroverted or introverted; love is not passive at the heart level. He wants us engaged. He wants us caring, given, and abandoned in our pursuit of Him.

He is lovesick. He wants us lovesick. He wants us to want Him more than anything else: more than a bigger ministry; more than looking good to the people we love. He wants us to love Him even if we humble ourselves and lose out in the arena of man. He wants us to love Him more than increase. The increase will come and it will go in seasons. The point is not whether the increase is good or bad. The point is, He wants something bigger on our heart than having our circumstances set up the way we want them. "When I get the guy or the girl I'm going to marry, when I get the ministry and the house finally lands and I get it lined out, then I am going to kick into a whole new gear." No. We kick into a whole new gear now, and he or she comes now, then, or never, and if the ministry flourishes or never takes off or you get the house or you lose it, we are in this thing for love. There is something bigger than having everything laid out just right. We are in it for love. That is part of loving God with all of our heart.

### **SPHERE 1: LOVING GOD WITH THE AFFECTIONS**

Let's look at these four spheres of life: four spheres in which we show Him our love that has obedience in it, that has adoring trust, that is loyal to truth, and that has awakened desire in it. As a matter of fact, I want to recommend a book by Dana Candler called *Entirety*. "Entirety" means loving God entirely, with the entirety of your being, with all that you have.

Sphere number one: love God with all the heart. Now these, the heart, the soul, the mind, and the strength, Jesus meant them to be distinct. There are some verses where they overlap, but when Jesus laid it out here, He gave a command with the promise of the anointing to do it. This was very deliberate by the great psychologist of the ages, the one Man who truly understands the nature of man. He was not just giving a definition of the make-up of a person's life in these four areas, in a general, "Well, you know, they all mean the same anyway." I have read some commentators who say, "Well, He is really saying the same thing." I say, "I don't think so." Now they all overlap in some ways because the human is one person. Our humanity, our life, has a wholeness and a oneness about it, but these are four different spheres in which we are challenged and anointed to love God. I look at these four spheres and the Holy Spirit is saying, "Mike, I will give you more in this area if you want it." I say, "Of course I want it." He says, "Come after Me, then, in this area of love."

Loving with the heart is the affections, the emotions, the longings, the very impulse of desire. It is that, that current in our being that determines just the way we see life. It is desire on the inside. We have such powerful desires that move us. Now we cannot define all of our desires. Some of them

we can define very clearly, others not so clearly. For others, we don't have language, but those desires in every human being are very powerful and Jesus wants to be loved from that part of our life.

The Psalmist says this: "Because he" (talking about how the man of God has set his love upon God) "because he has set his love upon Me" (the Psalmist writes, speaking for God), "therefore I will deliver him" (Ps. 91:14). Here is the point I want to make: our love can be set. Within the human makeup, under Jesus' creative genius – He created us – we have the power to choose, to set our affections, to set our emotions. To set our heart, is a better way to say; and our emotions will eventually follow wherever we set our self. We determine the course that our emotions will eventually develop in. You cannot today, at seven o'clock in the evening, will that your emotions will change within an hour, and suddenly your emotions are changed. It does not work that way. But you can set your heart on something, and in the next months and years your emotions will follow the course of that setting. It takes time, but your emotions will follow wherever you have set your soul. It's years later, and the guy, the gal is still stuck in a huge, unsettled issue. It isn't a month later; it isn't a year later. It's many years later, the Lord is saying, "I want you to set your heart to love Me in that area."

You will get victory in time, but there needs to be a more clear setting. Victory will not necessarily come in a day, but beloved, the way the human makeup is made, there is such a powerful dynamic that is part of the dignity of the human spirit: if you will set a goal – I don't mean a goal like, "I want to make this amount of money next year, or lead this many people to the Lord" – I don't mean goals like that, though those are good goals. I am talking about a goal that says, "The goal of my life, my being exists to obey God with obedience, affection, trust, desire, and I want to be loyal to truth. I want to obey You in these ways. It is my goal. I am going for it. It is the consuming goal of my life." I tell you, whether it is months or years – I mean, it doesn't take years; the process gets stronger and stronger in a positive sense – your emotions will follow the course of the setting of your heart. Whatever emotions you have today.

There might be some exceptions: emotions related to chemical or physiological reactions, or situations in people's bodies. I am not being strict in the strictest sense when I say "all of our emotions," but generally speaking, the emotions we have today are the fruit of the setting we had ten years ago. Whatever you set your heart on five and ten years ago, you are living in the crop of it right now. You say, "I was only ten years old ten years ago." It is still the same. The human spirit under Jesus' leadership, and His creative design, has the ability to determine the course of their emotions under the Lord's leadership. It is a marvelous thing. You change your goals; your emotions will change in time. We set our love on Him, our affections to love with all of our heart or all of our affections. So when I say "the setting of the love," I am talking about the setting of the heart, the affections.

In this setting we want to remove everything that diminishes our affections, meaning, "I want to love God with all of my emotions." Well, other emotions, various other lusts emerge, and the Holy

Spirit would say, “Those other emotions you must declare war on because they will hinder and diminish your capacity to feel love for Me and return it back to Me.” Beloved, it is not a matter of just setting our heart to walk in love; we have to declare war on the emotions that come and choke. In the parable in Matthew 13, Jesus said it is the weeds that choke the seed. You can plant the seed, but you have to address the weeds growing around it. You cannot have your eyes being involved in that which incites immorality. You cannot have your heart inflamed with covetousness, or your tongue with slander, and somehow have your spirit end up buoyant in love. So I look at these negative emotions as enemies to love. I say, “These things are enemies. They are coming after me. They are going to destroy love in my spirit.” Attacking these enemies is a part of setting your heart to love God with all of your emotions. It is not enough to say, “I want to love You, Jesus.” “I want to love You. I want to love You so much I am going to resist that which quenches my ability to love.”

King David said it. David really got this point. David said, “I will love You, O God my strength” (Ps. 18:1). This was not just a statement of experience: “I do love You.” He said, “I WILL love You.” Now, David loved God in that moment, but David is coming out of Ziklag. For those of you who know the life of David, he is coming out of sixteen months of failure in his life, and compromise. It is the roughest, most negative season in David’s life, spiritually, in his walk with God – the Ziklag years. The day after Ziklag he writes Psalm 18. He says, “I will love You. I don’t feel it like I am going to, but I have set my heart.” What a powerful statement, the day after he was freed out of that sixteen months of compromise in Ziklag.

We can decide things that form our emotions. Now our decision by itself is not enough. It is not enough to say, “I will love. I will love.” It is not just the force of self-determination. “I will; I will.” It is an important, indispensable part of growing in love, but there is more to it than the decision. The decision is indispensable, and no one can make that decision for you.

So I say, “Lord, I want to love You with all of my heart.” The Holy Spirit may say something that is critical. You maintain that goal because some people have that goal for a few months; then a year or two later they don’t have that clearer goal. They remember having it, and they are thinking, “Well, I guess I still do. I mean, I have never changed anything that I know of.” Beloved, you are changing every day and every week. You are either growing closer or you are growing further. There is no static, meaning there is no place in God where once you get it, you keep it. You are gaining ground or losing ground, and the only way you will keep the ground you gain in the Spirit is by taking new ground. The only way I can maintain the love I have walked for in Jesus over the years is by increasing it. If I want to keep it the same, it will decrease. I have to increase the scope of my life that is coming under obedience for my love to stay even and increase. It has to increase to keep from decreasing. There is no such thing as neutral ground, so the decision is critical. It is indispensable, but it is not enough. There are other factors involved in loving God besides the raw decision itself, but the decision is powerful.



David went on again in Psalm 37 and said the same point. He said, “Delight yourself in the Lord; He will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4). What a powerful understanding that David had of how the human makeup works under God’s leadership. “Delight yourself in the Lord.” That doesn’t mean that today you could just have busting, overflowing desire: “I am going to desire you today and before I go to bed tonight I will have new desires.” No. It does not work that way. That is not what delight means. Delight does not mean manufactured desire. The desire is God’s action after David delighted. The delight is David’s part. The new desires imparted and injected into his spirit is God’s part. You cannot, by a force of will, create new desires, but David said, “I delight,” meaning, “I am setting my mind to give myself fully to you. You are my delight, not my kingship, not my relationships.” Those are the issues that have God’s blessings on them, whether it is possessions, position, or relationships. It is good to delight in God’s blessing in that secondary sense, to enjoy them and to rejoice over them. They cannot be the premier delight of our heart. In Job 22:29–30 Job said, “Take your gold, throw it down in the dust, make God your gold” (paraphrase); that is a decision; that is what it means to delight in the Lord. Make God your gold, whether you feel it or not. It is the guy or the gal who says, “You know what, I am going to choose righteousness. I am going to turn off a bunch of stuff and I am going to downsize some of the activity in my life. I am going to go after Him. I am going to fast and pray and go after Him. I don’t feel anything; I don’t like it; the Word of God is boring; prayer is more boring but I am doing it.” That is called delighting in the Lord and making God your gold.

David understood the power of this. I tell you, he is a successful man in the Spirit, meaning he loved God and walked in humility. That is what a successful man in the Spirit is. I don’t mean he was famous and was a king. He loved God and walked in humility. That is what success is and he did it. If you want to follow his teachings, he says, “You do your part. You choose that God will be your chief delight, whether you feel it or not. What will happen in time, He will give you: He will impart new desires to you.”

When the Scripture says God will give you the desires, it doesn’t mean, whatever you want, you will get it, it means the things you want change if you delight in the Lord. Your desires He will give you, Holy Spirit-inspired desires. Do not underestimate the power of setting your heart on God, whether you feel a thing or not. The Holy Spirit will honor this decision. There is power in this decision to love God with your heart. It is a decision to set your heart, to set your love on God. The Holy Spirit waits for us to do it. We don’t do it once; we renew it and we renew it. I don’t renew it every day. That would not be honest. I tell the Lord I love Him every day, but there are several times in the course of the year, maybe five, ten, or twenty times (one year is more than the next), but there are those moments when I say, “Wait; slow down. I have got to realign,” and in a very important ten, twenty, thirty, forty-minute conversation with the Lord (I don’t mean it takes all day to do it), I go, “Wait. My life is not about IHOP–KC, it is not about being a preacher, it is about loving You. Wait. Stop. Everything slow down. I am in this thing to love You.” The Lord says, “Come on. Talk to me; talk to me.”

Some years I do it more because I lose the connection. I am talking about the clear focus of why I exist on the earth. I start thinking, “I exist to be a leader in the body of Christ.”

The Lord says, “No, that is your assignment. I want you to do it with all your heart, but that is not the main thing. That is not your main assignment. Your main assignment is to love Me with all your heart.”

I say, “Yes, I did it again.” I realign myself several times a year.

I want to challenge you. You have got to do this. Don’t think the decision last month or two years ago is the final time. No. You have got to renew it. You renew your love.

## **SPHERE 2: LOVING GOD IN PERSONALITY AND SPEECH**

Sphere number two: We love God with all of our soul. Now our soul is our personality. It is different than just our desire, and the most expressive part of your personality is your speech. It is more than speech but speech is the primary issue this is talking about.

Beloved, this is a big subject. It is certainly more than a three-minute point on session three in a series. This is a huge point. I’m only tipping you off to it if it is new to you. I’m not trying to expound on it and fully lay it out.

What I say in the next seven days, in the next seven weeks, in the next seven months, whatever the time frame you want, whatever I say in the next week is going to enhance or diminish my ability to feel love and to grow in love towards God. It is going to do one or the other for sure. My speech and yours is the rudder on the ship that will lead you into love or lead you into a quenched spirit (Js. 3). I’m not talking about not just slandering. The number one issue of our speech, all of us, is pride and complaint. Slander is down the list, three, four, or five. I challenge you: in the next twenty-four hours, in the next seven days, take every phrase of complaint as an issue about your love to Jesus. Not that He is mad; like if you complain, He says, “Oh, forget it; we are never going to relate to each other.” I am not saying He is mad, but what complaining does is, it quenches the Spirit, and the Spirit is the key to your love being inflamed. I cannot love Jesus if the Spirit and I are not in agreement. He will not agree with complaint. That is by far the number one. It is pride. All complaint is pride.

I am talking about just the category of the normal complaints of life. There are complaints in prayer that are like the imprecatory songs, where they’re crying out, “Oh, God.” There are biblical complaints. I don’t mean in that technical sense, but I am talking about the complaint that is pride because I think I deserve a better deal. “The dog shouldn’t bark next door when my window is open. The guy shouldn’t cut me off on the highway. The other guy shouldn’t mess with my stuff. I deserve better.” It is, at the end of the day, pride: when we bridle our tongue and we just think, “Ugh.” We thank the Lord – not that we thank the Lord that somebody is annoying us, that we are being bugged – but we thank the Lord that He is watching our humility and we are actually having

an encounter, an ability to encounter Him in that moment. I say, “Lord, I really wish they would quit doing that; however, I am not going to vocalize it. I am giving myself to You. I am giving myself to love. I am with You, Lord. My spirit feels different.” Now multiply that ten thousand times. It is not like one vitamin is going to take a sick person and make them healthy, but they take vitamins for years. You do that thousands of times and your spirit will be really different in one year, two years, and three years.

Many people do not love God with their soul. They love God with their heart, meaning their emotions – “I want to do this all the way” – but when it comes to their soul their tongues are not under the government of the Holy Spirit. Again, it is not like Jesus is mad and He doesn’t want you in His family, but the Holy Spirit says, “No. I am going to starve you out by your dullness and barrenness until you do it My way. You have to do it My way and then you will feel My presence.” Not that you earn His presence. It is that you feel His presence when there is just agreement with our spirit and His spirit. It is not about earning; it is about coming into agreement. A radical part of our love, the way people carry on with members of the opposite sex, the way they promote themselves, the way they manipulate, the way they do many, many things is your soul. Most of it is about words. The Holy Spirit says, “Oh, I long to give you more, but I want you to love Me with all of your soul, too, not just your heart, but your soul.”

### **SPHERES 3 AND 4: THE TOXIC SMOKE THAT QUENCHES LOVE**

Sphere number three: This is different from our soul and our heart. It is our thoughts, all of our mind. Now, to love God with all of our mind involves a number of things. Again, this is so elementary, what I have on these notes, and so limited. Don’t read these notes and say to yourself, “I have got it.” No, no, no. These are only like a table of contents. Take these notes and go, “Okay, Holy Spirit. I have got an open Bible. I have got You. You love me. I love You. Teach me these four spheres. I have got time ahead of me. I don’t know how long before I meet Jesus face to face, but let’s get on with it. Let’s grow in all four areas.” So I want to challenge you to go after these four things. I am going after them; I want to go after them more. I am not satisfied with where I am at in these four things but at least I know where I am aiming at.

Your mind is so precious. Your soul is. Your heart is. So far, these are three biggies. Then the fourth one is just as big, the strength. We cannot have our mind filled with dirty smoke. It’s like the guys decades ago, before they had labor laws, who would work in certain environments where the environment was really dirty with smoke or in the coal mines. They were toxic. After ten years they found out that they had these horrible diseases. There are many examples of that, so they made the labor laws. We are living in a toxic mine. It is like a guy working in a toxic mine for ten years: they are guaranteed that everybody gets the disease if they work in that mine and in those particular conditions. That is why they made the labor laws. What we do with our minds on the Internet and on TV and where we take our mind; the long periods of time we spend without filling our mind with the Word of God and the lies that we believe about Jesus; the lies that we believe about ourselves. There is so much toxic power quenching love. We have to love Him with our mind; our minds must

love Him. The way that I want to love Him with my mind: I want to take the hours of my day and I want to invest it in my mind getting clean air; not the toxic air of working in the mines in the decades past. I don't mean you read the Bible all day, every day. But I want to learn to speak the Word more in my heart, the prayer without ceasing: talk to God more, and in my time, when I can get the time, I want to be in the Word. Many times when I read the Word I don't feel anything. The Word doesn't feel powerful, but I tell you it is marking your mind whether you feel it or not. You say, "Well, I don't feel like it; I am kind of down; I am a little burnt out." The definition of burnout is really confused in the body of Christ. Burnout normally means, "I am in a bad mood." You do not want to throw your spiritual destiny away when you feel burnt out because that is going to be almost every other day for the rest of your life. Just throw that burnt-out thing away. I am tired and burnt out. I have been tired for thirty years, nearly. I really mean it. I have been tired most days for thirty years, to some degree. So what? Big deal. I am not waiting to get rested and happy before I start the kingdom of God. I say, "Okay, I am a little tired. So, I know what to do. I am going to read the Word. I don't feel anything. So, it is still marking my spirit." I have learned that over thirty-plus years.

Don't wait to get rested. Don't wait to get happy. You will never do the kingdom if you wait for that. I really mean that. The fourth sphere is all of our strength. Again, this is shark-infested waters. All of these are heavy. What I mean by "shark-infested waters" is, our strengths are the areas God has blessed us in. We have a certain influence, whether it is in the family, the neighborhood, the church, the marketplace, whatever: a little bit of influence, a little bit of blessing with circumstances. Everyone has got a different setup. Maybe it is a physical ability. You have the giftings for that organization to where you can be distinguished because you have the gifting for it. In our setting, if you can sing and play, that is really important, but in the other setting they don't care if you do that. You have got to be able to do something else. There are many different giftings for whatever different setting. My point is, don't lock into here and just think, "Whatever my giftings are, whatever my economic blessings, whatever my favor with men, whatever my influence is, those are the areas of my strength." Whatever your energy level is, just having energy and health is one of your strengths. What He calls us to do is have a very specific relationship with Him. It is called the fasted lifestyle, where we take our strengths that we normally use to enhance our life – and we are supposed to enjoy them; we are supposed to use our strengths to enhance our lives. There is nothing wrong with enhancing your life with five or ten areas of strength that God gives you. However, there are times when He says, "Now, Mike, you see that money where you can enhance your life, see the energy you have to enhance your life: I want you to fast this day."

"I lose a little bit of energy and I lose brain power."

"That is okay."

"I get a little wobbly, a little weak, and I cannot really do what I normally do."

"That is okay, because you and Me have a relationship. You voluntarily fast, which means embrace weakness in that area and over time I will give you more strength through My blessing than you

could ever produce by keeping your strength high. You will have more buying power if you give Me a bunch of your money than if you keep it all. You will have more influence if you humble yourself when you are attacked instead of answering back.”

It will not happen in a week or a month, but over the decades you will have way more influence. It is called fasting. Fasting means we take our strength, we lay it at His feet, and trust the Holy Spirit in the interaction in our relationship with Him because you talk to Him all the time when you are fasting. When you give money away, giving money away is a form of fasting. It is giving your strength away economically. Fasting food is giving your strength away. Prayer is giving your time away. “Lord, here we are; You want me to sit in a room and tell You what You tell me to tell You? You already know it. I’m late today. You want me to take an hour to tell You what You already know.”

“Yes.”

“Do You realize what I could do in this hour?”

“Yes. You could do more.” (I mean even in the positive sense).

“Then I lose my physical energy and I can’t eat; then I have to give my money away. Then the guy is mad at me and I have to bless him, or just be quiet at least.”

“Ah.”

The Lord says, “Now, talk to Me,” because when you fast you talk to God. You have got a thousand arguments to stop doing it. Keep the money, eat the food, don’t pray, get even with the guy, but fasting is the opposite of all of those. When you fast, when you love Him with your strength, it draws you into a dynamic conversation with the Holy Spirit. “Oh, man, I am starving. Why am I doing this again? Because You told me I would have more if I do this. Okay. Okay. Good. I am running late again and have all these people I need to talk to and I have all these problems to solve. Why am I in this prayer meeting telling You what You tell me to tell You? Because if I do this You and me will get further, more will happen in ten years. Okay; okay; okay...”

It drives you into a dynamic dialogue all day long in whatever area you are fasting in. The Lord requires it. What many do is, they take their strengths and they just run with them. They do not love God in their strength. They give God tokens. They throw Him a token offering on the way out the door. They give God a top, but they are not giving Him their strength. They are giving God a tip of their time, a little tip of their money, a little tip of their honor. What happens is, five or ten years come and go and their spirit is diminished in love.

They actually lose their ability to walk in love. The guy says, “I just got too busy. I just got burnt out.”

I say, “No. You did not love God with your strength. You did not fast your strength. You did not love Him with strength. You did not love Him with your soul. You talk the way you want to talk. You did not love Him with your heart. You did not set in your heart to love God. You set in your heart to have a big ministry. You did not love Him with your mind. You were too busy with entertainment, recreation, playing.”

The body of Christ in America plays too much and rests too much and messes around too much. We have got this powerful mind, a Bible, and an open heaven, and God says, “You have got as much time as everybody else does. You have got a mind. You have got a Bible. Do you want anything with all of this?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Love Me with your mind, then.” Amen. Let’s end with that. Let’s stand.

### **MINISTRY TIME**

Well, I am massively convicted right now. I didn’t feel nearly as bad writing it. Saying it, I say, “Ouch.” I’m not joking.

We all need to renew our love, obviously. I am going to take a few moments where we give ourselves to God in these four areas. Talk to Him about setting your heart, using your strength, soul and mind to love Him. Let’s take the next fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes and just talk to Him. The Lord may give it to you, but the goal is not to get a big exciting experience in the next hour to prove that what you did is real. You may not feel anything in an hour, but what you are doing is real. I have done this for years. This is how you do it. You feel nothing. I feel nothing many times but it works and when I look back I say, “Wow.”

You take vitamins for decades you end up healthier. You look back and say, “Hey, I got healthy. How did that happen?” It is the same way spiritually. Just stay with it. You might feel something dramatic tonight. I hope you do but if you don’t, don’t walk away and say, “Well, that didn’t count.” That’s absolutely wrong; it counts what you are doing. Justin please. “Here we are Lord. Here we are Jesus in our weakness.”

## *Session 4: Loving God with All Our Mind*

### **LOVING GOD WITH OUR MINDS: TIME, AGREEMENT, AND MEMORY**

Turn to Mark 12:30, the main passage that we are looking at. I have been really invigorated by this session personally, in my personal life. In this one, we are focusing on loving God with all of our mind.

Jesus said, in Mark 12, “You shall love the Lord your God,” and named four spheres of our life. He says, “With all the heart, that is, the affections, the emotions; “With all the soul,” that is, the personality of which the main vehicle of expression is our speech; thirdly, with all of our mind, and that is what we’re going to focus on tonight. Then, fourthly, with all of our strength, which is our resources.

The reason that God calls us to love Him in these four ways is because that is how He loves us, with all of His mind. This is just indescribable, the implications of God loving us with all of His mind, all of His strength. Now, we can only love God with all of our heart as we seek to love Him in the other three ways. The reason I’m focusing on “all of your heart” is because the unique part of the human design is affections. There is no record in the Bible that angels have affections. That is one of the glorious, unique distinctives of the human spirit. We can feel love in a supernatural way, a deep way, forever. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us the capacity of love we will feel will be God’s own love for God. That’s the measuring line of love; that’s where this thing is going. So the unique dimension of the human spirit is affections. Other parts of creation have a mind, strength, and personality.

Now, the difficulty with our affections is, we cannot control them directly, but indirectly. You cannot just will affection and emotion and then, within the hour, you have it. You can choose to have affections and then you can feed your mind accordingly, and later the affections are formed. You can choose them, but within the hour they are not necessarily present, and are usually not. But then, through the engaging of the mind – and that is God’s strategy, loving God with the mind, soul, and strength – but the mind is the primary lead in this transformation process.

Our emotions can be exposed to the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Now what we want is our emotions alive with love. There is no greater delight, no greater power than having emotions alive with love. The problem with many is that they focus on the emotion instead of setting their emotions and then stirring their emotions through their mind; they just wish their emotions were different. They don’t actually set them in a determined way according to the Word, and they don’t feed their emotions in a Biblical way through the mind. They wish their emotions were red-hot, and they are depressed that they’re not, and they leave it there.

We don’t have to. We can follow the biblical pattern and we can see our emotions stirred up in a supernatural way by the power of God. Now the point of this session, the focus, is to define some of

what it means to love God with all of our mind. Loving God with all of our mind includes several different expressions of our mind. Number one: We love God with our mind by meditation on the Word. Now, everybody knows that, but beloved, meditation on the Word to our emotions and our mind is what fuel is to the car. It is impossible to do this without meditation, regular meditation, yet it is the common experience of most believers never to get around to this on a consistent basis. It would be like a person having a very expensive car, and never putting gasoline in the car. Honestly, we have this most amazing reality called the human spirit. It is the most expensive designer car, so to speak, in the creative order. Nothing is like it, but it will not work without being refueled by meditation on the Word. The devil will do everything to keep us from that: guilt, “I don’t understand the Bible,” “It’s always boring anyway,” “I don’t know where to start,” “I am too busy,” keeping us in a messianic complex solving everybody’s problems because we’re the only ones who know how to do it. Keeping us busy in a whirlwind of activity so we never put fuel in the car, because he knows the power of it.

Another way that we love God: We take time. It takes humility to do this, actually to ask for revelation. It is not enough just to meditate on the Word, but to ask the Holy Spirit for the supernatural intervention to add to our human effort of meditation, supernatural dynamics. Some people read the Word their whole life like the Pharisees. They’re scholars, but they don’t have any supernatural activity moving on their heart with the Word of God. I don’t want to just know Bible information, and even talk to the Lord about it; I want a supernatural activity, the whisper of God moving on my heart.

Another part of loving God with all of our mind is coming into agreement with God in terms of processing our past. Our past is such a major part of our life and our mind. As a matter of fact, most of your mind is related to the past. Most of what is in your mind is not what is happening in the immediate, ten-second present. As a matter of fact, what I said a minute ago is already in your past. Yet, people don’t take seriously the stewarding, the valuing, and the understanding of their past, and how important it is. The miracle of memory is quite an amazing reality. We’re going to get into this in a minute: the place of the miracle of memory, how God redemptively uses it, His design for it, and how the devil wants to move in and use this miraculous, fantastic capacity of the human spirit to whip us and to torment us. Many never identify how unique and glorious memory is, and how prevalent it is to their human makeup and its function.

There’s another thing I want to point out here. It’s not just the miracle of memory, processing our past. There’s a good way and a bad way. There are things that we forget and things that we remember. We have to be precise about both of them. We are called to forget and we are called to remember in processing our past. The other issue that I want to point out is the picturing of our future. That is called hope. The Bible calls that hope. Our present, the way we think and feel today, is anchored in how we deliberately picture our future. Now again, like the past, many people are just ambivalent about their future. They don’t think that much about it. They just want to be happy.

“You know, I want to be happy.”



“Well, break it down. What do you want? What do you picture ten years from now for your life, a hundred years from now and a million years from now?”

“You know, I don’t know. I just want to be happy. I don’t want to be in pain. I don’t want to be left out. I don’t want to be bored. I don’t know...”

A lot of folks are very ambivalent about their future, and setting our future, creating a vision from the Word of God for our future is a dynamic part of loving God with our mind. It is using our mind in a biblical way, called hope, to stir up our spirit in the present tense. Now, we have to do this in a deliberate way: the processing of the past and the picturing of the future. Paul the apostle gives this personal, emotional expression. We get insight into his heart; his experience in the Lord. He said in Romans 11:33, “Oh, the depths of the riches of the knowledge of God. Oh, how unsearchable are God’s decisions” (paraphrase). His judgments are His decisions. The magnificence of them is that they have so many layers of wisdom and meaning that unfold over time; they are unsearchable, meaning we cannot get to the end of them apart from the aid of the Holy Spirit. Even apart from the ages unfolding, no matter how much we understand of God’s ways in this age, a million years from now we will say we barely understood. A million years after, we will confess yet again we had no idea of the levels and dimensions involved in what we knew a million years ago. Our testimony will be continually updated. Paul’s heart came alive in this loving fascination with God and God’s ways. Beloved, we can live in that adoring fascination now, not just in the age to come. Paul touched it now. It is our portion to have an element of fascination touching our spirit. I don’t mean every minute of every day, overwhelmed and awestruck. That’s not what I mean, because there’s a real dimension of being faithful in the routine and the mundane. There is an element of fascination: a journey we are on of discovery, of adoring discovery of who God is. Paul was on that journey. That is a journey I am on, you are on, and it’s a deliberate thing we are on. It’s not just that we’re trying to get an anointed ministry and make an impact. That is good. We want an anointing in ministry; we will make an impact. It’s more than just wanting things to go well. We have the right and the inheritance to have an element of fascination every step of the journey. Not every minute of every day, but as an element of our journey.

Moses cried out for this. He says, “I want to know Your ways. I want to see Your glory. I don’t want to just see what Your heart is like. I want to see what Your mind is like. I want to know Your ways, Your strategies, Your thinking.” Again, as they unfold, there are levels and dimensions. It is fascinating, this thing called God’s leadership over our lives, individually and over all of history, and what He is orchestrating. We have to go after this supernatural element. It’s not enough just to read the data, though the reading of the data is critical, and the turning of the data, the information of the Bible, into prayer and talking to the Lord about it, but we want to ask the Holy Spirit for a supernatural element.

Beloved, “you have not because you ask not” (J.s. 4:2). He will give more if we ask Him regularly (Prov. 2). He said, “Apply your heart to get this living understanding” (Prov. 2:3, paraphrase); “Cry out for it” (v. 4); “Seek for it like hidden treasure” (v. 5) and if you do it, you will find it. Proverbs 2

was a passage the Lord marked my life with in a very dramatic way when I was eighteen years old. I have not preached on Proverbs 2 in several years, but I remember from about age 18 through my thirties, I preached on this thing on a regular basis. It was one of my real pillars as a young man. I want to challenge you to find your name on this passage. I said, “Lord, I want to seek for You as treasure, not casually, not on the go and if I get time and a free hour, hey, guess what? I’ll sit down and talk to you a little bit.” But, rather than grabbing a little free time with God when it appears, you do it the other way around. You are proactive. You form your entire schedule around your quest for treasure. You do it the other way. You don’t take some time if it happens to come, but you take some other things in life if they happen to come. I mean this for real. I don’t want to put myself forth as a hotshot here, but when I was eighteen years old, I was really serious about this; nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, and I look back these many years later, and beloved, I have no regrets about the time I put. I only wish I would have put more in, but I put substantial time in, in the last thirty years, in the presence of God. I missed lots of opportunities: lots of ministry opportunities, lots of economic opportunities, lots of social opportunities, but when I look back over thirty years, I’m really glad, and wouldn’t mind if I would have been even more focused.

My point is, see your name in this passage. Go after it like a hidden treasure. If there were a billion dollars worth of gold hypothetically hidden in the building, and they said, “You can tear every single brick apart, take as much as you want; the first one that finds it, it’s theirs, no questions asked,” you would probably stay up all night. But for the Word of God, will people shift their schedule and be inconvenienced. Well, the wise man, the wise woman does. Paul said in Ephesians 1, “I do not cease to pray that living understanding, the supernatural element, would attend our mind.”

### **DESTROYING WRONG PARADIGMS THAT HINDER LOVE**

Now, in setting the mind on loving God, there are positives and negatives. There’s the removing of the wrong. Negative mindsets diminish love. You can be very sincere in your quest to love God with all of your heart and all of your emotions, but if you will not bring your mind into the process in a deliberate way, you will always be frustrated at the emotional level in your capacity to love God. Your capacity to love God, my capacity to love God, is directly related to what I do with my mind. There is a ceiling that you will run into if you sincerely want your emotions on fire and red-hot, but you don’t engage your mind in the process of loving God. You will hit a ceiling. The ceiling is really low, by the way. Sincerity is critical, but it is not enough. We have to mix sincerity with earnest pursuit that is steady. Not that we don’t have bad days or bad weeks, but it’s steady enough through the years and then there’s a supernatural element as well, but the Holy Spirit will give it if we ask for it. There is a setting of the mind to love God.

When I cleanse my mind of wrong thinking, it is an act of love. I do it deliberately as an act of love, not thinking, “Well, I hope You see this as love, God.” He says, “Let there be no question about it; I take this as loving, loving Me with your mind.”

We remove wrong paradigms that diminish our capacity to love God with our emotions. Shame is a big one. One way we get rid of shame, of course, is breaking our agreement with our compromise, but then holding our confession of the truth of what Jesus did on the cross. Many people think they break their agreement with their compromise, which means they repent but then they just wallow for months in shame and self-induced probation to pay back God for the compromise by suffering for a while.

Beloved, we cannot afford to pay God back for yesterday's sin. We need to confess it, really confess it. We did it; we call it sin. Don't make it something else and use Bible verses to prop it up as something that's OK. Call it sin, repent of it, ask for forgiveness, push delete and get right back into the journey of loving God within the hour with all of your heart as a first-class citizen in the kingdom. The devil wants you to take some journeys for a week or two or a month or two or a year or two into self-imposed spiritual probation called shame. It is a waste of time and it minimizes love. It does not help anything in our relationship with God. Bitterness; lust; ingratitude is one of the biggies.

I have sought, and certainly not to the degree that I need to or want to, but I have sought to stimulate my thinking to produce gratitude, to think about the past in ways where I see God's hand His goodness. There is a verse (Song 2:6) that says, "With [God's] right hand He embraces me," and the allegorical interpretation of the right hand of God is the things we can discern that God does. Then the Bride says, "With Your left hand You hold my head," which means I cannot discern it; it's out of sight; I cannot get my eye or mind around it. That's the activity of God we don't notice. You cannot imagine how many disasters the devil has planned for you spiritually, physically, financially that were cut off by the invisible hand of God. So I want to know His right hand. That is already a volume of material, but I want to know about His left hand, the things I have not seen. So I like to talk before the Lord and say, "Lord, talk to me. I do not need to know the date or the time that You delivered me, but I like to take time to meditate on where I would be in sin, in my physical body, in pain and torment economically if I were not obeying You and the devil had his way."

I tell you, it produces incredible gratitude when you think, "I don't quite know where I would be, but I know it would really not be good." Ingratitude is something we want to war against because ingratitude means our minds have not been engaged in loving God in a way where we fed our spirit with the information that produces gratitude.

Paul talked in Romans 5 about the setting of the mind on the things of the Spirit. He talked in Colossians 3 about the setting of the mind. Beloved, there is a deliberate choice to put information in your mind on a regular basis. That's critical because it's the doorway to our emotions. Your emotions are what you want alive in power. That is what you feel. You cannot be touched when your emotions are alive in joy and love. I tell you, the devil's commercials have no power. But when our emotions are passive, lethargic, and depressed, the devil's commercials have a lot of power. We cannot just make our emotions red-hot, but we can steer them by what we put in our mind; but we have got to connect the two realities. Our mind is what stirs our emotions. It's the way

our emotions get stirred up for good or for evil. This is a subject that absolutely fascinates me: the vastness and the power of the human mind from God's point of view and from the view of eternity. I find that as I understand a little bit, ever so little about the vastness and the power of the human mind in God's design: When God designed the human spirit, what He put in His design when He created the mind, is absolutely magnificent. The point is, He wants love from that glorious reality called the human mind, and the devil wants it. As wise people, we guard the mind because it is such a powerful potential for good or for evil in our experience.

### **THE MIRACULOUS GIFT OF THE ETERNAL HUMAN MIND**

Now, God created us in His own image. One aspect of being created in the image of God is the vastness of the human mind. We will not understand that until eternity unfolds. Although science has studies now, that are remarkable, of how the most brilliant genius is using less than one percent of the capacity of their mind, the real truth is that they are not using a fraction of their eternal potential. That's a subject that is so out there I don't know what to do with it. Science has identified this reality. That's a neat scientific fact. I've seen a documentary or two on that over the years and think, "Wow, that's neat," but the point is not just that it's neat. The point is, if that is true, how important is the mind that we take the reigns of it and employ it in the right way. If that is true, how dear to God is the human mind and how strategic to the devil is the capture of the human mind? One of the reasons that people are pretty ambivalent about their minds is that they don't know the place it has in the human designs; how critical and how powerful it is in its potential. It's like a mysterious internal universe.

Beloved, there is a universe as vast on the inside of your mind as there is in outer space up above. There is a world as vast and complex that is eternal on the inside of you that will last forever and forever. At the very center of this creative genius is what I call the miracle of memory.

The human mind, once it is formed in the mother's womb, never stops forever. I mean billions of years from now; once the human mind is formed, it never, ever, ever stops, for billions and billions and billions of years.

Now the language of the human mind is pictures – images. There's a technology, if you will allow me to use that terminology, on the inside of you, far more sophisticated than the technology that is being developed in the nations right now. It's far more sophisticated because this technology is vast in its capacity and it has emotions attached to it. Trillions and trillions of gigabytes is what the memory of the human mind is. Billions of years from now, you will have experiences day by day, through the billions of years, and you will have recall and remembrance of it because of the vastness of your memory forever.

Now, our memory isn't so great right now, at least our conscious memory. We can remember a certain amount. Some things we like to forget because the devil torments us, but when we get our resurrected body, there will be a recall of events that are in our "hard-drive," so to speak, that are far

beyond what we know. Science and medicine tells us now that our memory affects us at a subconscious level in ways we cannot fully grasp. Now once the mind begins, the pictures begin; the movie studio begins and it never goes out of business forever. You have pictures running in your mind from now to eternity and often there is a running dialogue. Not always is there a dialogue and conversation, but often. There is an eternal movie studio inside of you. It's not just true in the resurrection of the righteous: Those in hell, their memory will never go away. They will remember, billions of years from now, not just their decisions on the earth, but their torment in the billions of years as it unfolds. The movie studio in their mind will continue to activate and be processed and the conversations that will often go along with them in their mind. We have conversations that go with these pictures. You go to bed at night and your body sleeps, but your mind still has pictures. It's called dreams.

I've seen studies on this and can't really recall the actual numbers, but you only remember something like a tenth of a percent of your dreams or less. You are dreaming all night long. Everybody is. Pictures are moving. It never stops. Now, in this eternal movie studio, this isn't meant to be humorous, but you are the producer, the main actor, and the main customer. It's really true of your movie studio. You're the producer of it. You've got a lot of help: a lot of people giving advice, demonic commercials, the Word of God, evil people and good people speaking good words and bad words, but you are the ultimate producer. You are the main actor and you are the main customer of your movie studio forever. God says, "I want to be loved by that studio. I want you to create images under My leadership, My Word, and the confession of your mouth that woos your heart in the bond-fire on My goodness, My love, and My beauty." The imagination projects even the future; the imagination is future-oriented, what you want things to be. Memory is past. I believe one of the reasons God created this endless visuals is to help us commune with Him and to have ceaseless prayer forever. That was the highest reason. Undoubtedly there are many levels of reason as to why God has called this. So when we think of the human mind, I think of the glory and the vastness and the dignity of our creative design.

Do you truly know how awesome you are? You think, "Well, that's funny." No. David tapped that in Psalm 8. His mind was blown away by how important and how glorious the human spirit is to God. Here is the fantastic opportunity we have in the grace of God that is a wasted opportunity by many people and many believers. It's fantastic. Here it is: Supernaturally, by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, we can erase the bad movies and we can replace them with ones that give life and peace. In other words, movies that stir our emotions with such good feelings and pleasure and that please God and that He will reward us with forever. I want to say that again. Because of Jesus going to the cross and the giving of the Holy Spirit, you can erase the bad movies and replace them with new ones if you want to. You can do it to the degree that you want to. There's a process. There's a pace to it. Immediately you say, "OK, I agree; I want it all done tonight by ten o'clock."

The Lord would say, “No. You don’t get to pick the pace of it, but you get to pick ultimately the amount of the re-filming that you want to do in your studio. I’ll let you do that, but you’ve got to do it My way through My procedure.”

It’s the most fantastic opportunity imaginable in this age, but many believers never seize the opportunity. They are just too busy coming, going, chatting, coming, going, working, resting, spending, coming and going. The Lord would say, “You have a fantastic opportunity, if you want it, because if you redo these films they will bring peace to your emotions and power supernaturally.”

Now, it is called in Romans 12 “the renewing of the mind” (Rom. 12:2). It’s by the washing and the renewing of the supernatural activity of the Spirit (Titus 3:5). The painful memories of circumstances that were done to you as a victim, the shameful memories of the circumstances you engaged in as an agent – you chose them, I chose them – they can be washed and renewed if we want them to be. They will not happen automatically, but they will in time if we want it, and their impact on your emotions, we will experience it if we want it. Paul talked about how unbelievers walk in the futility of their minds. He says their understanding is darkened, and therefore their emotions are darkened (Eph. 4:17–18). Many believers have really dark emotions. They love Jesus; they’re on their way to heaven, but between now and the resurrection when they meet the Lord they live in such downcast, dark emotions and they become acclimated to it and decide, “This is how it’s going to be.” They’ve given into it. Beloved, we don’t need to give in to darkened understanding and darkened emotions. God has called us to love Him with our mind and if we do that (Eph. 4:23), we can be renewed in the atmosphere of our mind.

The spirit of our mind is the whole atmosphere, the whole aphis of our inner life. It is a supernatural possibility to love God with our mind. I want this. Of course you want this, but just as I am going a few minutes here, say in your heart, “Lord, I want this. I want to supernaturally love You with my mind. I’m not going to wait for my emotions to be stirred up because I cannot directly make them be stirred up.” Some religious contexts will get everybody going and stir up the fervor. But that is not a supernatural movement on their heart. That’s not necessarily good or bad, but it’s not the same as the Holy Spirit’s activity. There is a Holy Spirit activity and I want it. Look at what it says in Romans 8:6: “To be spiritually minded is the anointing of life.” I love this! It is the anointing of life. It is anointing. In front of life put the word “anointing;” and the word peace put “feels good on the inside.” To the spiritually- minded, not every minute of every day, but it could be progressively more, the rule of their emotional life would be peace. That is the supernatural. It is a light on the inside. It’s not perfect until the age to come, but beloved, I want more of this.

You cannot fake out the Holy Spirit. It’s not the sort of thing you do when everyone is watching. Then later you drink in darkness and hope it balances out as mostly light. It doesn’t work that way. You cannot fake the Holy Spirit out. You cannot fake out angels and demons. You can fake out people, but you cannot fake out the Holy Spirit. He says, “I am not punishing you; I am just honoring your free will. If you want darkness, I will let you have it. I don’t want you to have darkness, but I will not violate your freewill. I’m here if you want the other” It’s not an issue of

punishment. It's an issue of the Holy Spirit honoring the free will of the believer. It's not the sort of thing where you invest in light a few hours a week or a few days a week and then on the weekends you do darkness and hope it balances out later.

Light is a twenty-four/seven venture. Beloved, there is nothing like life and peace. Life means anointing of the presence of God on the emotions. It means more than that, but it includes that. This is what I want and this is what you want. This is what Jesus wants. He wants to become our first thought. This is spiritual, romantic language but most of you will follow it. When we first begin to seek the Lord, thinking of Jesus is an effort. "I'm going to think of Jesus if it's the last thing I do, and we're just in darkness, guilt, shame, lust, pride, anger, debating with our enemies, and we're going to get them back. Oh yeah, Jesus. Yeah, that's right. I love You, Jesus," or, "Oh, this is so much effort to love You. I love Jesus. Ah, I am going to get that guy back. I cannot wait to go to that party. I feel so bad about yesterday. I feel so rotten about tomorrow. I'm so afraid about yesterday. Oh, yes. Jesus, I love You. I love You."

It's such an effort for Him to be in our mind. But the time comes where the spiritually-minded life is in peace, and He is the first thought. I don't mean He is the only thought. I don't know that anybody has that until the resurrection, but when they take that deep breath there is an "I love You" in their spirit. There's a feeling of His pleasure looking down upon it as the first thought. They get off-track; they'll get into a bad mindset, but often the first rebound is to think on God and interact with Him. Beloved, that is what it means for the spiritually-minded for their minds to be in life and peace. That is within your reach in this lifetime, for Him to be the holy daydream. You're driving, you're walking down to the shuttle bus, you're coming, you're going, you're waiting at the coffee shop, you're in between something, He is the daydream of your heart. Meaning, "Oh, that I could have an anointing to love Him," you picture yourself, you dream, and you are in the drama. The drama is not that you are the hero before men, but you are anointed with love and you are captured with Him. That is a holy daydream. He wants to be that. It's possible in this life. I don't mean every minute of every day, but He can be our first thought in our daydream, the sweet escape. That weariness of lust, pride, fear, bitterness, and "Oh, they're going to get me. I know they're going to. It's going to be bad." That fearful, "Oh, I've got so many bad desires, I've got so many fears, and the manipulating, posturing, positioning, conniving, all the ways the human spirit moves, there's a sweet escape from that." That escape is into this thing called the Spirit of life: life and peace.

He is our great getaway. One of the songs that Misty sings in her worship sets: "He is our great escape," our great getaway. It's not a retreat from real life, that's not the point. It's a retreat from fear, lust, and anxiety into presence. You take a deep breath and you're thinking of Him and you have positive thoughts and light about how He is thinking of you.

Beloved, we're going to pray, and then we're going to come back to the notes. Father, we want this now. Lord, we want this lifestyle. This is my inheritance, to love You with all of my mind in this way. I want it; I want it, Lord. This is my inheritance, in Jesus' name.

If we're not pursuing it – none of us do it; we all come short – our love for God with all of our mind is fragile, but if we stay with it, beloved, our mind is so powerful it is very, very dangerous unharnessed by the Holy Spirit, even for a believer. I'm not trying to scare you, but I'm trying to sober you. I've been in ministry for over thirty years, and I have watched many on-fire believers in their twenties, twenty to twenty-five, by the time they're forty-five addicted to immorality, drunkenness and bitterness, and that thing back in their twenties is a faint memory, because they didn't take into serious consideration the power and the danger of their mind unharnessed. They just went along. I've seen this for so many years. I hate this: this false doctrine of grace that makes people feel comfortable in compromise, and makes them feel good about not going hard after God, saying, "Well, it's grace." It's the "chill out, go with the flow, whatever happens, happens, and if I connect with God, I do. Hey, it's grace, grace, grace." I have seen so many in that mindset for so many years; they end up ten and twenty years later not calculating the power of the danger of their human mind, how powerful it is and how powerful demons are. I want to preach the grace of God in a way that gives us power and confidence to forget our shame from yesterday. We have confidence, we repented, and within the hour we have confidence to go full-blast for God. That is grace and we feel motivated to do it, even though we don't necessarily feel a lot, but we're motivated. Beloved, that is the grace of God: the power, the motivation, and the courage to go hard, not the confidence to be comfortable while you're compromising. I've seen that version of grace for years. It is absolutely dark. I want to say that unequivocally. It is dark. People proclaim it thinking of it as cool, and liberty; there is no liberty except on His terms. It is the only liberty that exists.

I have known thousands of believers over the years because for thirty years I have pastured a church of, almost always, several thousand people. So I have always had a large group of folks and watched them over the years. When I look back, I am heartsick over the majority that I have witnessed that were on fire for five years, and didn't stay the course because they got into a deceived concept of what grace was and what it was not. It is about the power of the mind. The mind is so, so powerful. It is criminal. I want to say this as a shepherd. I know that is a little startling, but that's the point. It is criminal, the waste of the human mind that is happening across the earth, especially in the body of Christ, because we have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and we believe in it. It is criminal, the power of the human mind to be renewed, the Holy Spirit's willingness, the power of the Word of God, and the believers who love Jesus but never get around to stopping the clock, to sit down or put a pause on all that they're doing on a regular basis. Your mind is too powerful. It is too dynamic. It is awesome. The opportunity is too awesome to just let it go by.

The close relationship between knowing truth and loving God: what I want you to know. "It's pretty good." No. It says, actually, truthfully, the same thing I have been saying over and over. (That's my gift, is repetition). It says the same thing, but with a little different angle here or there. Why did I write it? It just felt so good to write. I didn't need to, it's just like I want to say it again. So there it is. So you can read that on your own if that interests you, later.



We're just going to spend a minute on these last two points. One is loving God with all of our mind related to the past, and the next one is loving God with all of our mind related to picturing the future.

Both of them are dimensions of loving God with your mind that don't happen automatically. You have to engage over and over again in love with the mind in these two arenas. They are vast. Now we love God with our mind in the past. We forget. I've got several principles here. They're very simple principles, but I have found that many people live life in a hurry and miss the simplest things. It's quite simple. There are things we're to forget through the grace of God in the past and there are things we're to remember. Our natural response is to remember what we're supposed to forget and to forget what we're supposed to remember. The devil works overtime to see that we're motivated in that way.

So you can read that on your own. With twelve sessions on this, we've got a lot more areas to cover on "Loving God with All of Your Heart and Mind: The First Commandment Restored to First Place." There's so much that I'm leaving out a bit of it for you to study on your own, if you're interested in this.

We're talking about the past: the miracle of memory. Here is what I want to put in your mind, this idea: the past is not just an essential truth about who we are, it is a very dynamic reality about our eternal life. There is this supernatural, eternal miracle of memory. Now, let's look at it on just the righteous side so that I don't confuse you. I'm talking about righteous memory. We will be living for billions of years from now in the gratitude of events that happened the day before. I hope this isn't too philosophical. I'm not really a philosopher, but you only live in the present for the ten seconds you're in the present and then it is forever in your memory. I am only in this moment for a second, but this moment will forever be part of my testimony with God, where I am agreeing with God and loving His Word, and that is where we are at a billion years from now, another billion and another billion and your memory, your righteous memory, and God's memory of your deeds and your love are very real to Him. They will be a very real part of your entire life. As a matter of fact, the judgment seat of Christ is about your memory. It's about what happened yesterday. Your past is huge. I'm talking about our righteous past. Our unrighteous past – you know the answer – we deal with with the cross. I skipped that part; it needs to be said, but you know the basic truths of confession and applying the blood of Jesus.

What I am trying to grab your mind with is the value and the prominence that the past has meaning and I want to remember it in a right way. I want my mind engaged. I want to take advantage of this dimension of my creative design. For a lot of folks, the past is just the past. Now, negatively that is good, but positively they don't think much about it. They don't love God in context to it. They don't relate to God in it and over and over in the Bible it says, "Remember, remember, remember," talking about the good things that God did, and even our responses to Him. We are not to have prideful confidence because of our past dedication, but we are to have gratitude based on memory.

Anyway, I just want to point that out to you. The devil wants to cut across this. He wants our past to be a whip against us.

### **LOVING GOD WITH OUR MINDS BY ENVISIONING AND COMMITTING TO OUR ETERNAL DESTINY**

God created the past to fuel us in gratitude forever. This is the last point, loving God by picturing the future. That is another mental dimension of love. It is a dimension that you choose or you don't choose, meaning it is not done for you. It is not automatic. If you do it a little bit, you get the benefit a little. If you do it a lot, you get a lot of benefit. It is up to you, but it does directly affect your capacity to love at the emotional level with all of your heart.

Loving God with our mind, and picturing the future, is called hope. We love Jesus today related to how we think about our future. Beloved, your feelings about God today are dynamically related to your picture of the future, whether your picture is clear or unclear. I'm not talking about your ability to picture how big your ministry will be, who you will be married to, how life will work. I'm not talking about the circumstantial details. I'm not talking about picturing that. There is a little value in having goals in those areas, but that's not what I'm talking about right now. I am talking about picturing the way you carry your heart with God ten years from now and a hundred years from now, in the resurrection, because you will be alive for billions and billions of years. You will be around in a hundred years, a million years, and a trillion years. Why not have a vision for it? It is you, the same you. It's not going to be a different you in a hundred years – it's the same you.

God gave you the right to rule your own spirit and choose to engage yourself in what you want to be at the heart level with God ten years, twenty years, thirty years from now. In Lam. 1, Israel did not consider her destiny, therefore her collapse was awesome. We need to consider our destiny. My destiny is more than what I will be in ministry, what I will be in relationships, with my family and friends; it is more than what I will be economically. My future, my destiny, is also what I will be in the anointing at the heart-level with God. I am talking about picturing my future of my inner man. Those other dimensions are important, too. You cannot plan quite as precisely on circumstantial issues about the future, though there is a value in planning it. Hold it with an open hand, with confidence in the Word of God; plan your future for your inner man with great confidence that God wants to give you the anointing for love and meekness, if you want it.

What we believe about our future and our commitments to our future dynamically influence our capacity to love God right now, today. What I am doing at fifty-three years old when I'm thinking of 63, 73, 83, the Lord willing, I'm picturing my heart being at a higher place of connectedness. I picture that clearly. Not every day but all day, many, many times. I started doing that when I was eighteen, nineteen. I asked, "When I'm thirty... will I ever make to thirty?" Thirty seemed like so far out there it was never, ever going to happen, but I remember when I was in college they would say, "Thirty, wow, gee whiz, man." I said, "What are you talking about? When I'm thirty I want to love the Word. I want an anointing on my spirit."

So my picture of my heart ten and twenty years from now really affects what I'm going to do tomorrow afternoon and Sunday afternoon and Monday afternoon and Tuesday afternoon. It really does. Your picture of the future will determine how you spend time tomorrow. Without a clear picture of the future, what you want in the inner man, your time tomorrow is easy to waste, but with a clear picture, you're going somewhere. "Tomorrow, for four hours, for eight hours, for twelve hours, whatever... you've got twelve hours." Well, actually, I have got twenty-four hours tomorrow. It matters what you do in your increments of time; it really matters if you've got a vision for the future.

We live carelessly with our time without a clear picture of what we want to be. Now, the famous verse that you all know is, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18, KJV). That is the King James, but the New King James says it like many other translations: "Without a revelation," or without a vision, a life vision, "the people cast off restraint." Now the King James says they perish. What it means is, they live without discipline. If you don't have a vision for tomorrow, you can waste time today. If you have a vision for tomorrow, an hour today matters to you. I don't mean you're panicked over an hour, but you're careful about an hour. I don't want to throw away an hour, ever. That doesn't mean I want to be highly productive in ministry every hour. I want to rest well. I want to exercise. I want to relate well, but I want to spend all of my hours doing one of those five or ten things with purpose or meaning, even if it's resting.

I want to rest so I have strength to pursue. I don't want to pursue God and have a ministry so I get enough money so I can rest. It's exactly the opposite. I want to rest so I can run hard the majority of my life. I want to rest well. I want to eat well so I have strength to fast and pray later on that week. I want to give you a vision of resting so you can have strength to be focused and alert for the majority of your life, not the other way around. Not, "Let's get into the big time so finally we can siesta the rest of our life." No. It's exactly the opposite. You rest in order to have strength to run hard. It is the very opposite of how the American mindset is in some sectors of our nation.

Our commitments define who we are. Where do you want to be at the heart level? Do you want to know the Word deeper? I mean, specifically. What books of the Bible do you want to know in ten years? You want a spirit of prayer? How much do you want to feel God in ten years? What are you doing today about that? If you don't have a clear picture about tomorrow, you have an identity crisis today, I assure you. There is a great identity crisis, not just in the body of Christ, but in the whole human family: They don't know what they want to be tomorrow. They know that they want to be millionaires, they want to be famous, and they want their lives to be easy. They do know that, but for ninety-nine percent of people it isn't going to happen. So they're thinking, "I don't know what I want to be." I am not doing nothing. Beloved, you don't have to have any type of circumstantial set-up in a unique way for you to succeed in life at the heart level with God.

Our capacity to love God today is related to what is engaged in our mind about tomorrow. Viktor Frankl was a famous psychologist who went through the Nazi concentration camps. Freud was famous and Freud's psychology was this: "The past, the past, the past; everything about you today

is formed by the past,” and he really overemphasized it. I think that our emotions today are affected by our past, but Freud overdid it. Viktor Frankl had a different idea. After Nazi Germany in World War II he analyzed as a psychologist two different categories of Holocaust survivors. He put them in two categories: those that were emotionally stable and those that were not. His conclusion was that the predominant factor of those that were stable had nothing to do with the amount of torment they walked in. It is not what happened to them in the past. It is what they believed about their future. That was the predominant issue of their stability. That’s just purely natural.

My point is that what you believe you will be ten, twenty, thirty years from now at the heart level with God will dynamically focus and hone your life and give you purpose and settle the identity issue regardless of how big your ministry ever. It is not about the size of your ministry. Go for the size of the heart and the ministry will take care of itself. Our vision for the future includes setting our mind on goals for spiritual development. What are your future goals for your spiritual development? Do you have concrete goals? What are they? Are they written down? Does anybody else know them? Are you accountable to anybody? Can you articulate them, or are they like, “Well, I want to know God the best I can between now and then?” I tell you, that is not a goal. That goal will keep you in ambivalence for ten more years. It needs to be clear; it needs to be concrete: “I want to be a man of the Word. I want a greater anointing for humility. I want to feel your presence. I want to know the book of Psalms. I want to know John. I want to know the life of David. I am going to know these things.” I said these when I was in my twenties: “I’m going to know these by the end of my twenties. I had better get to work!”

What do you believe about yourself tomorrow? Beloved, I will end with that.

These are practical, practical ways you love God with your mind. I say this over and over, but I think it is worth saying. It’s the ninth-year anniversary; it’s twenty-five years ago this year from when the Lord spoke audibly and said, “Twenty-four hour prayer.” We had the sign on the wall for nearly sixteen years: “Twenty-four hour prayer.” People said, “What is that?” I said, “I don’t really know.” Nine years ago we started it. The Lord’s blessing has been on it in various ways, and so I run into people (because I’ve known thousands of people through the years) who say, “This must be your dream come true.”

I tell them, “No. My main dream is not IHOP–KC. That is my assignment. I love my assignment. It is hard, but I love it. My dream is what happens in my heart that nobody can touch.” If IHOP–KC gets really big, or really little, my dream never changes. I say, “No; this is not my dream. If it was my dream it would burn me out, because I would overdo it or under-do it or compensate in weird ways.”

Beloved, our dream, the thing we set our mind on, to love Him with our mind, is the plan in our heart to walk in the first commandment as first place in our life.

Loving God with all your mind. Amen. Let’s stand.

## ***Session 5: The Relationship of the First Commandment to the Second***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tonight we are going to be talking about the relationship of the first commandment to the second commandment. In Matthew 22:36-40 one of the religious leaders came to Jesus (Mt. 22:36) and asked Him a question.

He said, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” and Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Mt. 22:38, NKJV). “This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt. 22:39-40, NKJV). He says, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

### **THE FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE**

Now the foundational premise of this course on the first commandment: We are spending twelve Friday nights, twelve sessions focusing on the first commandment because the Holy Spirit is restoring the first commandment to first place in the generation the Lord returns. I believe we are in that generation; I believe we are in the early days of that. I believe that the Holy Spirit wants the body of Christ contending for the anointing to operate in the first commandment.

Therefore, we have to understand it. We have to reach for it. We have to believe God for it, pray for it. That is why we’re teaching this course on it, but the foundational premise of this course is that people who love Jesus with all of their heart will always love people far more.

### **THE PRIMACY AND SUPREMACY OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

The reason I say that is that over the years as we have focused on the first commandment, I have heard people say, “What about the second commandment?” It’s a very theoretical question, or in some cases even a debate. Some people say, “We’re into the first commandment;” others say, “We’re into the second commandment.”

It is a completely false concept because it is impossible to touch God in love without overflowing in love towards other people. It is impossible to love other people in a deep way without it coming in the overflow from loving God.

So the two commandments are dynamically joined; it’s not just that they’re supposed to be – they are in reality. You cannot do one without the other. The first commandment always leads to the second. The pursuit of the first commandment by itself will always be empty and flat without being

energized and generated by the anointing of reaching to Jesus with all of our heart and all of our strength.

I have here that to put the second commandment first, which is very common, to put our ministry to people before our ministry to the Lord, is to make our ministries an idol. It is to get in the way of the purpose of God. I'm going to say that again. To put the second commandment first, which is common, will not only lead us to burn-out and disillusionment and discouragement, but it actually makes our ministry to people an idol to get in the way of our relationship with the Lord.

Now, to put the second commandment in tenth is another problem, but if the first commandment is first, the second commandment will always be big on your internal radar system. It will be on your screen. The Holy Spirit will make sure that it is.

## **AN OVERVIEW**

Now, what is happening in this passage in Matthew 22 is that one of the religious leaders comes to Jesus. Of course they're trying to trick Jesus, because it's obvious. Everybody knows from the "Shama Israel" (Deut. 6:5) the famous verse: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." Everybody knew that was the first commandment. It was the main one. So what is happening is that they come to ask Jesus the question, and He of course quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, the famous verse called the Shama Israel.

Of course they thought He would quote it, but He adds three new points that Moses did not have. The first point: He says, "I want you to know this is the first and the great commandment." He adds that description to it. They said "the great commandment," but Jesus says it is not only that, it is the first priority to God. It is the first one on God's priority list and the agenda of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, He says in Matthew 22:39, "There is another commandment and it is like the first one" (paraphrase). This idea of loving people is like that; it was a new concept that loving people is like loving God.

The third point He makes in Matthew 22:40. He says, "As a matter of fact, all the purposes of God hang on these two commandments" (paraphrase).

This means that all the purpose of God like the bucket at the end of a rope hanging, and the rope is the love of God.

What Jesus is saying is that all the purposes in the Word of God originate in God's heart from His design that people would love God and love one another. There is no purpose for Israel that does not come from this passion and reality in God's heart of loving God with all of our heart and loving people. This is what was in God's mind when He called Israel to be a kingdom or a nation, a kingdom of priests. This is what is in God's mind when He created the New Jerusalem for us to live

in forever and forever and forever, but all the purposes of God hang or draw their strength and their source from these two commandments.

### **REVIEW: THE FOUR STAGES OF LOVE**

Now, we did this a couple of sessions ago. The four stages of love: Love develops in our experience of these four stages. Of course we pursue all four stages all the time. We don't focus on one and then say, "After a few years, we'll move onto the second one." In our spirit we reach for all four of them simultaneously, but there is a sequence in which they are developed in our experience.

The first stage is that we receive revelation of God's love for us. John tells us in 1 John 4:19 that we love God and love people because they are in the overflow of understanding and feeling God's heart for us. When people say, "I want to love God more," I say, "I will tell you exactly where to go. If you want to love people more, focus on feeling and experiencing how God feels towards you."

### **GROWING IN OUR LOVE FOR GOD**

The second stage: When we understand how God loves us, it awakens an overflow in our heart and we receive God's love for God. We love Jesus in the overflow of the Father, or the impartation of the Father's love for Jesus.

In John 17, Jesus is praying. He says, "Father, I have declared Your name to them, so that the love with which You love Me would be put into them" (John 17:26, paraphrase).

### **LOVING OURSELVES IN THE GRACE OF GOD**

The second stage is that we grow in love for God. Now the third stage, which some folks don't focus on properly, is loving our self in the grace of God. Jesus said that we are to love our neighbor as our self. Loving our self actually proceeds loving our neighbor. Now, this isn't a carnal thing, or a fleshly thing; there is a way in which people love themselves in the flesh.

Jesus is talking about a spiritual dynamic, about loving ourselves or valuing who God has made us to be in the grace of God. A story that I have used over the years is of the lady who prayed and said, "God, I want to love my neighbor as myself." She was praying the prayer and the Lord spoke to her and said, "That's the problem. You do love your neighbor as yourself. You hate yourself; that's why you hate your neighbor."

This is a real thing here. It's a very important reality that we love ourselves by knowing who we are in Christ, and by rejoicing in who God has made us, in many ways. We all have limitations and it's our natural bent to look at our limitations. I'm not talking about our character. We always want to be more godly, more humble, wiser. I mean physical limitations, gifting, personality, calling, and it is very common for people to despise those limitations and in essence they are really charging God with bad leadership in their life.

It really minimizes and hinders love in their life, but when we can agree with God and the way that He values us, and we agree with what He has done in our lives and rejoice in it, it's what Psalm 139 talks about. We talked about this for a whole session a few weeks back; what it does is, it puts us in the position where it energizes our spirit and our emotions in order to flow in love. When we get our self off of others in envy and when we get our self off of our failure and condemnation, we love others significantly better.

So this is the idea, the third stage, of loving one another as we love our self, you could even say in the overflow of how we love our self in the grace of God, or rejoicing in who we are in God's eyes, and agreeing with God's value over our life.

### **LOVING OTHERS AS A MEANS OF LOVING JESUS**

Then the fourth stage, obviously, is loving others. Now loving others is the outward proof and the outward demonstration of these three other realities. It is hard to see stage one, two and three when you look at a person because those are the invisible passions of the heart.

This fourth dimension of love is easy to see because it's demonstrated in actions, but the truth is, all four stages come together in this fourth stage of loving other people. In this our love for God is made visible.

Jesus is the One who said this in John 13. He said His command is that you would love one another, and this is the way that your love for God or your devotion as a disciple is openly displayed. Now, when you love another person, your devotion to Jesus in God's eyes (for not all people say, "Boy, they must really love Jesus"), not everyone connects your relationship with Jesus with your loving actions towards others, but the Lord says more and more people will be able to do that.

### **LOVING THE ONES WE WOULD BE MOST TEMPTED TO DESPISE**

Even more importantly, God does. When I love another person the Lord takes it personally. He takes it as a statement of commitment in my life, or your life, to be a devoted disciple to Him.

Now, one of the things that we have to get clear here is the definition of love, because when people think of loving one another, some automatically go to the outreach ministry where they give food or clothing to the stranger on the street. It's really cool to do that. I value that, and the Bible is behind that, but most of the love that you show in your life will not be those outreaches you go to for an hour or two or longer, or where you give a stranger food or clothing.

The love that you will demonstrate most is to the people that you are closest to and most familiar with, that you might be most tempted to despise. That is where love is magnified most. That is where our love for Jesus is demonstrated, in the most familiar relationships.

It's not like, "Well, next month is the outreach, so then we're going to show love for people." No. We show our love for Jesus by the humility and the servant spirit we have with the people in our



home or the people we live with; the people whom we interact with day in and day out, or the people whom we interact with in the society at large. The guy you go to the store to buy something from, and you buy it and it doesn't work. You aren't happy with the guy and you might speak sharp words to him. The Lord says, "No. Even in those arenas, that is where love for Me is demonstrated."

### **LOVE AMID FAMILIARITY**

It isn't just the random outreach ministry. Of course, for others it isn't so random. So go really regularly, but many people do one here, one there and they're saving up their love focus for giving food to someone they don't know. The vast majority of your love for Jesus will not be shown in that way for most people. Now for some folks, that's what they do all day. That's a different story, but for the majority, our love for Jesus is demonstrated as people seeking to walk in the first commandment, bringing it into first place.

This love is demonstrated in everyday relationships – literally, with the people we're most familiar with. Jesus made a very important principle: He says we are to love our neighbor like loving God. He said the second commandment is like the first commandment.

### **LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR LIKE WE LOVE OUR GOD**

Now, in what ways is loving a person like loving God? Well, the obvious way is in its importance. Jesus is saying it is as important to love people as it is to love God because loving people is a reflection. It is a statement of your devotion about loving Jesus. It actually is a mirror. It is a reflection of the reality of your secret devotion to the Lord. Again, don't limit loving people to outreach ministry. Think of the person in your home that maybe tests your patience the most. Loving that person is a reflection, is a mirror of your devotion to Jesus.

It doesn't even mean you have to enjoy them. I'm being serious. Loving people in a biblical definition isn't related to enjoying them. You can love your enemies and not appreciate talking to them or going on a trip with them. Some guy says, "Well, this particular person in my family, I just can't stand them." I say, that's fair, but you still need to love them in sincerity, in humility, and in secret.

What I mean by "in secret": without drawing attention to the fact that you are doing it. Seeking their good without them knowing it, because in Matthew 6 – Jesus said this over and over in the Sermon on the Mount – He said, do it in secret, and God's eyes will see you, and the Lord will take it as a statement of your commitment to Him.

So this is about loving God. Jesus connected the two together. He said the two are deeply connected. They are like each other. They are joined in a deep way. You cannot separate them in the way that people commonly do.

## **THE OVERFLOW OF LOVE FOR GOD**

Now another: Loving people, loving others is like loving God in that it flows from regular encounters of God's love.

You want to love a person who causes you pressure, who locks you into growing in how God loves you because the stirring of our emotions and the impressions of the Holy Spirit and the subtle activity of the Holy Spirit on our heart, when we study the Scripture-focus on God's emotions and God's passions for us, when we lock into this it strengthens our emotions. They're just subtle stirrings of the Spirit, but this is the overflow out of which we love other people.

## **THE FULLNESS OF WHOLEHEARTED LOVE**

This is where we get the energizing of our spirit. Loving people is like loving God in that it requires all of our heart and all of our strength. There's an emotional dynamic that happens in us when we commit to be wholehearted in love.

I've talked about this over the years, and people seek to obey the Lord in 98 percent of the areas of their lives, but there's that one area they're saying no to the Holy Spirit in. It's in that final area that our emotional dynamics are released at a wholly different level. It's the same with loving people. When we are committed in our heart before God, we are saying we are going to walk in love, the whole definition of love, in 1 Corinthians 13.

We will get there in a moment. I really want to do this. I want to go all the way in loving people. "Now we love people..." The minute you say, "I want to love people all the way," you're going to have a dozen folks describing to you how you should love them better in the way they want. So when I talk about loving people with all of your heart, I'm not saying that you're going to give that definition to everybody who knocks on your door who wants you to do something for them or with them.

When I talk about this dimension, when in the secret place of our heart we say, "I want to do it with all of my heart, I want to love people in the way that I love God," when those two alls come together, then there's an energizing of our spirit that we don't have.

I don't mean that love is easy and perfect, but love has a wholly different flow to it when we burn the bridge, and we are going for the full definition towards God and towards people.

## **THE SUPERNATURAL DIMENSIONS OF LOVE**

Loving others is like loving God in the sense that there is a supernatural dimension. It takes the activity of the Holy Spirit. We cannot live spiritually, superficially, with the Holy Spirit, and be strong in love. That is why, in society, there are the secular, humanist attempts at love, and I appreciate them, actually. I appreciate an unbeliever who's trying to be nice to people. I think that's cool. It's not enough, but it is way better than them being mean to people, but the definition in the

culture of what it means to love, often in the lives of unbelievers, does not have a supernatural dimension that requires an interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, you cannot love people in the same way you cannot love God without a supernatural help of the Holy Spirit. You can decide to, but you cannot actually follow through in terms of definitions of what love really looks like without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

It is a profoundly spiritual thing, this thing called loving people. It is something unbelievers cannot do, from a biblical point of view. They can seek to do it, but it takes the power of God in the inner man to do it in the way that the Bible describes. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the idea of going deep in Jesus is critical to the foundation of genuinely loving people. The thing that you can do best in terms of loving people is to go deep in Jesus.

### **MOTHERS: AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF US**

I know that I've said this over the years to moms. I mean, there is no group of people in the earth who seek to love more than moms. It is all through history in all cultures. Moms really want to love.

Over the years of pasturing I have had to encourage moms where some of them are so devoted to their children that their relationship to the Lord goes really low. I mean, their heart is really good. They just want to be nearly omnipresent with their children, thinking that more of Mom to the nth degree means an enhanced child.

I know that some of you, you could go several places with that, but actually I'm not being humorous on this. What I have told these moms: You will give a lot more to your family if you have a spark of light in your spirit than devotion and intensity of commitment without a vibrant spirit towards the Lord. I said, "You will actually do more for your children drawing back a little bit, connecting with Jesus. Your spirit will be far different when you talk to them, when you are devoted to them."

If it is true of moms, it is true of every other group in the human race, because there is nobody more devoted than moms, but moms, I just want to say this as the chief group in the earth that seeks to love: Without the interaction of the Holy Spirit, you will not love well if your spirit is dull; even though you might mean well, you will not love well.

You may be there and devoted but your spirit will be angry, depressed and frustrated, and that is not the highest and best that God has for you if you are invested in your family. Now, again, if that is true of moms, who are the chief lovers of the human race as far as I'm concerned, it is true of everybody else in every other category. We will love far better with a lovely spirit.

So I have talked to folks over the years. Sometimes they get nervous about people spending time with the Lord, as though if they run into Jesus, the fountain of love Himself, somehow they are going to be callous towards people.

## **A SUMMONS TO LOVE IN ACTION**

You cannot run into that burning flame, that Man, without having the flame touch you for other people. I say, “No. Actually, push them into Jesus. They will love deeper in a far more sustained way if they get that fire operating in their spirit.” Because when we feel the gratitude for how He feels towards us, and when we have the joy of being loved by God that energizes and sustains our compassion for other people – because compassion is more than feeling sorry for somebody in pain, though there is a dimension of that; there’s a natural human compassion which is good but there is something more God has for us: It’s the overflow of the Spirit’s work in our life, and we have gratitude and joy because of the way the Lord relates to us. When this happens, our spirit is far more free and far more energized to sustain a flow of love and compassion to other people.

Now this commandment, loving people as you love yourself, is searching. It is a searching commandment. I challenge you to take that before the Lord as a serious part of your life mandate and your life calling. I am going to love people in the way I love myself, and as a statement and reflection of my devotion to Jesus. I am going to go all the way by the biblical definition of love.

## **TWO PROBLEMS: SELF-PRESERVATION AND SELF-REJECTION**

It will require a comprehensive reordering and restructuring of our thought life and our priorities because by nature we despise our self and we are consumed with our own comfort and honor.

So we have two natural things that happen. Without the Holy Spirit’s help, it is a very common thing for many people to have self-rejection and self-loathing. It’s a problem with the whole human race. You know the guy who says, “I just hate when I do this. I can’t stand so much about myself.”

I say, “Well, that’s an extremely normal, common human reaction and feeling.”

Not only is there a natural operation in our human spirit to despise much about ourselves – self-rejection is very common throughout the human race – there is also a natural desire to be self-consumed, meaning just living for our pleasure, our own natural pleasure and honor.

So to overcome those two natural tendencies, self-rejection and the quest for self-comfort, it takes the work of the Holy Spirit. But when we say before the Lord, “Lord, we are going to do this; we are really going for this because we love You. We really want to be wholehearted lovers of God. We want to go after this thing with all our heart,” this is a statement of loving Jesus.”

## **THE RADICAL NATURE OF THE FIRST COMMANDMENT**

This isn’t just trying to be a better person, though I think it’s cool to be a better person, but this is a direct reflection of your pursuit to love and encounter God in a deeper way. “I am going to go after this; I am going to love people in the overflow of how I love You as a reflection of it, and I am going to do it by the help of the Holy Spirit in the same intensity that I love myself.”

Of course, the minute you go on that journey in truth, the thing that happens in our hearts, and many of you know this because you are on that journey; others of you, you think, “Well, I kind of love; I never think about it specifically, but I must love; I mean, I’m a Christian. Surely I am. I like people, is that what you mean?”

Loving others as you love yourself is more than a general liking of cool people. It really is about humility and servant-hood. We are going to look again in a minute at the definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. It lays out what we’re talking about here, and to love people in that kind of standard.

### **HUMILITY, THE RESULT OF DEPENDENCY AND NEED**

As I search to do that, as I seek and reach to do that in my spirit, the thing that becomes obvious is that I fall short. When Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, blessed are those who are poor in spirit,” we have poverty of spirit and we see our spirit in a very dynamic way. This commandment, this radical commandment to love others as we love ourselves, as the overflow and reflection of our love for God, the theater of how we love God is how we love people according to the definitions and attitudes in 1 Corinthians 13.

This radical commandment touches the core of our being and exposes our weakness and failure. Now, when I draw back from really reaching for this, I don’t see my need and depravity so much. But when I make it my true heart standard to love Jesus by loving people in this way, my depravity comes to light. It exposes my significant need, which creates humility.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF REACHING WITH ALL OF OUR HEARTS**

The Lord says, “You keep reaching for it, but here is another thing.” That’s actually a positive thing, that we see our need in that way, but also the reaching with all of our heart to walk in love in this way changes our emotional dynamics.

Again, I mentioned this point earlier: When we go for 100 percent, saying, “We are really going to do this,” there is an enriched dynamic in our heart that really changes the way we think and feel.

Many believers, and of course unbelievers as well, are so diminished and so stuck on the inside because they are so self-consumed. We are born self-consumed and we typically get more self-consumed the older we get instead of less.

But the way out of that prison is to act in the opposite spirit by loving others as we love our self. The very reaching for it, when we do it in relationship with the Holy Spirit, does this.

### **LOVE THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD**

Love is the source and the goal of the law and the prophets. The law and the prophets hang on these commandments. The law and the prophets means the whole purpose of God. The whole purpose in

God's heart, from creating Adam and Eve in the Garden right through to the New Jerusalem in eternity; think of the bucket in the well hanging on the rope in the ancient world. The rope is sustaining that bucket and it is the source of strength. It is the system support of it. What Jesus is saying is that the whole support system, everything that God's purpose hangs on, is this dream in God's heart that people would love God and love one another forever.

Everything is built on that premise. Everything is built from that paradigm, from God's point of view. Not only is it the source of all God's plan and the support system of God's plan, it is the fulfillment of everything in the Word of God as well.

In Romans 13, Paul is talking, and he says, "He that loves another has fulfilled the law." All of the commandments of the Bible are fulfilled by seeking to love people, because even the law "You shall love the Lord your God" with all your heart is ultimately fulfilled in love people.

You cannot love people in truth except in reaching to love God and asking for the Holy Spirit's help. So in Romans 13 Paul emphasizes, and tells us two times, that everything God is about is fulfilled in this passion and this reach of the heart. Even loving God, the ultimate law, the great law, is fulfilled as we walk this out towards other people. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:5 that the goal of the commandment, the purpose of the whole Word of God, is that it would ignite, motivate, and energize love in people.

This is what was in God's mind all along, not just that we would walk in love for one another, but this is what energizes the whole purpose of God. So he says the purpose of the commandment is love.

## **LOVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PRAYER MOVEMENT**

He gives three different dimensions of how we love with excellence from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. It's an entire passage in the Sermon on the Mount. It is Matthew 7:12 that we are looking at. Jesus is calling them in the Sermon on the Mount to love people. He says, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do it to them, and in this way the law and the prophets are fulfilled" (Mt. 7:12, paraphrase).

He is talking about loving people, but here is the point I want you to see: The word "therefore" in Matthew 7:12 is linking the commandment to love people with the passage right before. So Matthew 7:12 is a logical connection to the principles of Matthew 7:7-11, and it is very significant that the call to love people, the "golden rule" as it has been referred to, is in context of the prayer moment.

Jesus is telling them in Matthew 7, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find. Everyone who asks" – He is talking about the prayer life – "receives" (Mt. 7:7-8, NKJV). He goes on and asks the question: "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?" (Mt. 7:9, NKJV). Then He goes on in Matthew 7:11, "How much more will the

Father give you if you ask?" (paraphrase). "Therefore, love one another," He says in Matthew 7:12 (paraphrase).

### **THE SPIRITUAL DYNAMIC OF LOVE**

Here is the point: There is a very dynamic spiritual reality. Even the call to prayer is linked to loving one another. The reason I say that is because in our culture there are all kinds of secular, humanist movements. Again, I am certainly not against them. I appreciate them, but they get confused because they think their love is the kind of love the Bible is talking about, and there are even believers in the Church who get caught into these movements, and they think that love is just about doing some good deeds for some people occasionally: Give them a little bit of money; maybe go on an outreach occasionally. But love is a far bigger subject than that. It has a far greater demand on the human heart than some good deeds here and there.

The point I'm making is that it takes a spiritual vitality to walk in it. The reason I'm saying that is because as I seek to be a man who walks in love, I'm very aware I have to have a prayer life. I have to have a spiritual vitality and dynamic, or this whole thing is just rhetoric.

I see movements in society that are trumpeting their love, and again I appreciate all the efforts for people to be kind to people, but in my spirit I say, "There is more." It takes a spiritual dynamic. It takes a context of wanting to be wholehearted towards Jesus for this thing to work.

Now in our context of loving people, it's more than just doing good deeds for them, though I want to emphasize the value of doing goods for people. It's fantastic; it's essential. It is biblical, but people are more than physical. They are spiritual and they are eternal. Though I value, and the Bible values, giving somebody food who is hungry, that in itself is good, but it is not enough.

### **THE FALSE LURE OF SELF-SATISFACTION**

Again, the reason I am focusing on this and connecting it to the first commandment is because I have seen believers get content if they are doing a little outreach, and they lose the reach in their spirit for a deeper dynamic in interaction with the Holy Spirit and Jesus.

The more I reach for love, the more I see how much I need the Holy Spirit, but in the secular, humanist paradigm of love, people reach for love and they actually become content with their love, proud and self-satisfied spiritually.

It has the exact opposite dynamic in them that reaching for love is meant to have. The more I seek for love in a deeper way, the more desperate I become for a deeper interaction with the Holy Spirit, the more aware I am of my poverty; the more grateful I am to God.

But the very quest for love in a different paradigm makes people satisfied with their love and proud and it causes them to boast in their heart before God: "I've done all these good things in my life."

Both groups would talk about love and helping people. One of the great movements in the end of the age that will be led by the Antichrist will be a compassion movement. It will be a secular humanist compassion movement that will cause people to be bolstered in their confidence that all is well because they are doing some good deeds to people in need.

### **LOVING OTHER PEOPLE ON GOD'S TERMS**

So as I see in the Church a movement to be more active, I like it. It's good. But I was talking to some guys the other day and they said, "Well, we're just going to help those guys. That's good enough in itself."

I said, "No. We want to give a witness about Jesus."

There's a thing going around – you've heard it – where people say, "We want to love them because it's enough to love them. We're not just being nice to them so we can preach to them."

I say, "What's wrong with being nice to them so you can preach to them? They are eternal beings. They will end up in the lake of fire even if you feed them every day if they don't get the truth about who Jesus is."

I've heard a lot of believers over the years, in my thirty years of pasturing, say, "No. We're not just doing it to open a door." I say, "That's good that we do it as a good thing in itself, but by all means reach for every opportunity when you meet a physical need to touch the spiritual need of this eternal human being."

Whatever need we meet, that person's profound need is to connect with God on God's terms. So even in our quest to love people, we want to love by God's definition on God's terms in the truth that Jesus describes.

In other words, it is love with allegiance to Jesus. You're going to find (we are seeing it already) more and more compassion movements in society that will spill over to the Church that will grow weaker and weaker in allegiance to Jesus but more bolstered in their confidence that they are doing right.

I want to love on God's terms, by God's definition in allegiance to Jesus, in allegiance to His word and as an active expression of my love for Him with all of my heart.

Calling on the Holy Spirit, humbling myself when I come up short, which is all the time, in love, being energized by gratitude and joy by that which I do receive from the hand of God by the work of the Spirit: This is the context and the relationship of loving one another and loving Jesus with all of our heart.



## **LOVE, THE CURRENCY OF HEAVEN**

The supreme value of love is that it is the only thing that lasts forever. The currency in the eternal city is love. The only thing you're going to bring with you through the resurrection is the testimony before God in your heart that God recognizes of your love for God: your love for God directly to God, and your love for God that is expressed by loving people, both of them are love for God, but all that we bring with us through the resurrection.

We don't bring our clothes. We don't bring our bank accounts. We don't bring our databases. We don't bring trophies. All we bring is what God sees as the truth about love that was in our hearts towards Him.

The direct "I love You" towards Him, the heart of devotion, but also the love towards Him that is expressed in denying the flesh and obeying Him, and its expression in loving people because you love Him; loving people because you love Him and loving people as we love our self which is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that will take asking, seeking, knocking, and crying out for the supernatural provision of God.

First Corinthians 13 describes a secular humanist approach to love. It says in 1 Corinthians 13:3, "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, if I give my body to be burned but don't love by God's definition of love, it profits me nothing when I stand before God" (paraphrase).

So you can move in the power gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-2) or you can move in compassionate deeds towards others, but if you aren't doing it in love for God, because you love God, and if you aren't loving as you love yourself – that is the reach of our spirit; I don't know that we ever fully attain it, but that is the reach of our spirit – if we do it that way, it profits us because God remembers it forever. That is how it profits us.

The people may not even receive it while you are doing it. You may show love to people; they may reject it or misunderstand it, but God remembers it. That is why it profits you.

## **THE ONLY THING THAT PROFITS**

The only thing that profits you ultimately is what God remembers. It is what God esteems and remembers. First Corinthians 13:4-7 is love by the biblical definition, and you cannot fulfill your obligation in the Spirit to love by going on a few outreaches.

I'm for the outreaches, but you cannot do a few events and there you've got love settled. "Check the list: I did the love thing last month. I wrote the check to the needy person giving the appeal on the TV show."

"No. Although it's good that you do those things, that's not enough." Paul describes the character of love here in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. He gives two basic definitions of love. One is passive and one is aggressive. Then he gives descriptions, but really he talks about love in two basic ways.

## **LOVE SUFFERS LONG, AND IS KIND**

He says, “Love suffers long.” That’s the passive definition. “Love is kind.” That is the active definition. Then he gives all the other attitudes and activities that manifest those two realities.

“Love suffers long.” What does longsuffering mean? It means you suffer long. That’s what it means. It means when the person deserves a judgment, a harsh judgment, you don’t give it. To suffer long is passive. There’s nothing you do. It’s what you’re not doing. You’re not venting. You’re not paying them back, and you’re not giving them what they deserve in the negative sense. It suffers long. Now go right to your family members or to the place you work. That is where this is worked out most dynamically because of loving Jesus.

Then there is an active definition of love. “Love is kind.” It’s giving people what they don’t deserve. So when you are longsuffering, you are holding back what they do deserve. They deserve ill treatment, but you are holding it back and in kindness you are giving them what they don’t deserve. They don’t deserve it. This is how God treats us.

Then it gives all the different positives and negatives behind it, but that is the essence of God’s definition of love. This takes the work of the Holy Spirit. It takes a commitment to love Jesus in the secret place of our heart to do this in secret; without announcing it; without making a big secret of it. First Corinthians 13:8 says, “Love never fails.” This doesn’t mean that love is always effective in the eyes of man. What it means is that because God remembers love, it does not fail. It has a reward that goes past the grave and remembrance.

## **THE GREATEST AND HIGHEST CALLING**

Much love that you show to a person, they won’t appreciate. They don’t even recognize it as love, but still it does not fail.

This doesn’t mean it always changes the person. It means it’s remembered and honored by God forever. In that sense it never fails.

Again, this doesn’t mean it doesn’t fail in the sense that it always impacts the person. God loves the many and they do not receive it. They end up in hell. God’s love does not fail. People fail to receive it but the love is real. The testimony of it lasts forever, that He really loved them and reached to them with all of His heart.

It goes on to tell us in 1 Corinthians 13:13 that love is the greatest. It is the greatest before God. It is the great commandment, to love God, to love people, which is really two sides of one coin.

It is the greatest and highest calling. You could preach in stadiums; you could have the biggest worldwide TV ministry ever, the largest number of people being touched, but the greatest calling

you can operate in is the calling and the anointing of love: love to God and love to people, which in reality is the same reality.

Amen. Let's stand. I'm going ask the Lord to come and touch our hearts as we give our selves to Him.

## ***SESSION 6: Loving God with All our soul***

Tonight we're beginning our sixth session on the first commandment course. We are looking at the first commandment, the great commandment that Jesus called it, you shall love the Lord your God and He lays out four different spheres of life in which we shall love the Lord our God. With all of our heart, which is affections, all of our soul, which is what we are going to look at tonight, that is our personality. With all of our mind, we looked at that a time or two ago and all of our strength, we will probably look at that in our next session.

### **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART REQUIRES LOVING HIM WITH OUR SOUL**

This session, the point of it is to give definition to what it means to love God with all of our soul, or all of our personality. The primary idea in the Bible for loving God with our soul is expressed by loving God in humility. And the number one battleground, so to speak of humility in Phil chapter two, the grand chapter on humility is our speech. That is the final giant to go down, is our speech. That is the one that is the most difficult one to bring under the harness of the Holy Spirit, but as we do the Holy Spirit releases an abounding love that Paul prayed for in Phil 1:9. Because what the scripture teaches, is that what we say, either enhances or diminishes the Holy Spirit's ministry in our inner man. It is not just an idea of staying away from wrong things or doing wrong things, when our speech begins to come under the restrain of the Holy Spirit there is a multiplying of love and power that touches our inner man and there is no area in which humility is more tested and proven than in the area of speech.

Now in the gospel of John, which we are not going to look at tonight, we have such a graphic picture of Jesus' speech. Sometime you want to just go on a Holy Spirit treasure hunt in the gospel of John on the words and the speech of Jesus. And it will give you insight into the quality and humility that He operated in.

Tonight you know though we all know that our speech is out of order, most people know that and most people are burdened by where the level of the Holy Spirit's leadership in their life is in the area of their speech. I know that is the main area in my life and it has been for years. That is the one

area where I go, “Oh Lord!” I want to bring my inner man under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and again this is the area of which humility will be tried and proven and deepened in the most practical way.

But our costly choices to choose humility because we love Jesus, I’m talking about humility now not only because it is in itself valuable but because it is a specific way of which Jesus is loved. When I speak different Jesus is loved and honored and He takes it personal, He takes it in a personal way so that is the connection I’m wanting to give you in this session tonight on the First Commandment, I love you with all of my heart.

Jesus loved us with all of His soul as expressed in humility. Now more than words, its attitudes and words. But words is where we can capture the essence of where our humility is. Obviously it is an attitude, but words is the place it becomes obvious.

In understanding Jesus’ humility, it inspires us. We’re going to look at Phil 2, the grand chapter in the Word of God on the heart of Jesus. There is nothing like it in the Bible.

Philippians chapter two, it gives us a picture into God’s heart. And it gives us a window into where we are going to be in the resurrection and fullness, in the full glory of the meekness in Phillipians chapter two. But as I studied and meditated upon Jesus’ humility it not only instructs me on what pleases me and on what the Holy Spirit anoint, but it inspires me as to how much He loves me. There is nothing like the humility of Jesus to awaken revelation as to how God feels about you. Now humility and meekness is the same word, it is the same concept and meekness is not weakness. You heard that over the years, I’m sure, but meekness it’s definition is power under control. The idea of a horse that’s out in the wild that when the horse is trained and brought under the restraint of the bridle it is described as being meek when the power of the horse is brought under restraint. The horse doesn’t lose its power, but it is called meek because the power is under control. And Jesus is the ultimate picture of power totally under the control of love. He controlled His privileges under the standard of the banner of love.

The life of the Godhead flows forever out of meekness. The revelation of the meekness of God. We worship a humble God. God’s humility is profound. I only know a little bit of it as I study the scripture, but I want to point you to the subject of the humility of God. Not His great power or His great wisdom - his profound humility - there is nothing like it in the universe. And it is eternal and

it a self replenishing fountain in His own personality. God exerts no effort to be humble, it is who He is.

When it says God is love, you could put the word God is humble. Humble and love is really the same thing. He is infinite in measure, eternal in duration, He is an infinite eternal self replenishing fountain of humility.

Everything that He does, He does in humility and from humility. Even His endtime judgements are profoundly rooted in the humility of His heart. That is why when the enemy raises up a complaint in the land against Jesus in the end-times, at His judgements and even some of the churches buy in to that complaint, it is because they have no revelations of the humility from which His own judgements that He confronts evil in the end of the age in the generation that He returns that they have no revelation of the fountain of humility from which His judgements flow.

Jesus in Mat. 11:29 - the only time with His own lips He described His character. Never ones did Jesus say I am love. Now the Bible says He is love and He is love. Never ones did He say I am power, the only characteristic that He ever used with His own lips in the Bible to describe Himself is meekness. Or in this translation lowliness of heart. He said: "come and learn from me", He goes, "I'll train you in life, I'll train you how to be a king and priest on the earth, I'll train you how to enter into your full inheritance. Learn from me, for I am gentle and meek or lowly in heart or humble at heart."

Meekness is not just something that Jesus does, it is who He is in the very essence of His being. Now notice the phrase, He says He is lowly in heart or the word lowly is humble or meek. Now you and I in this age - we reach for meekness by faith. Meaning, when we don't feel it, we still choose it. We choose it, because we know it pleases Him. We reach for meekness and our meekness is more by faith and over time it transforms our emotions and we feel it and we have an overflow of meekness that happens automatically. Now I'm not there, I'm not really there. But Jesus is meekness, He was meek in heart. Meaning it was the automatic response, the overflow of how He felt. And as He looks at your life and takes leadership over your life, He has meekness towards us in His leadership. But He is meek at heart and that is what we are going to look at in Phillipians chapter two. I mean the premier window into His soul is Phil 2:6-8. Three verses, because we are looking at a larger section that Phil 2 tonight, but those three verses give us divine insight, not only into Jesus' meekness, but also because Jesus reveals the Father, Phil 2:6-8 gives us

a window into the Father's soul like very few passages in the Bible gives us this kind of insight and we see what the Father is like, through seeing what the Son is like.

But in this age we are meek by faith, which means we make the choice, because we have confidence in that which pleases Him, but we don't feel, we don't feel the pleasures of meekness very often. We mostly feel the sting in meekness. We mostly feel the sting in it, and not the pleasure in it, but it is good, because we feel God's pleasure.

So my pride gets stirred up, I choose because of love for Jesus to operate in meekness, and there is a sting, but I know that He has pleasure in the choice. And that is what strengthens us. "Lord I love You, I want to love You with all of my heart", and you can't love Him with all of your heart without loving Him with all of your soul and that brings us to this vast reality of meekness and the reality of speech, words under the restrain of the Holy Spirit.

Well I'm looking forward to the day where my humility by faith, a decision with confidence that pleases Him, when it actually touches my emotion, and I have felt a little bit of it over the years, where I felt more pleasure and emotion in the choice of humility. Not just the fact that He likes it, that is where mostly I get strengthened, but I mean now that I actually feel it, it is the work of God in the human soul. But beloved, one thing I am confident of, for billions of years we will overflow in meekness by feeling the power of it effortlessly like Jesus does. It is one of the ultimate statements of being conformed to His image. It says in Mark 10 Jesus did not come to the earth to be served, but to serve. Now Jesus did not put on servanthood as a task, it described His emotions and His mindset. Again at this age we put on servanthood as an outward task and the Lord's pleased with it, we feel the sting of it, but we stay with it, because we know He smiles and He takes it personal.

The Holy Spirit functions as the support ministry within the Godhead. I mean the Holy Spirit is remarkable. He is fully God, but He chooses to stay behind the scenes and give all the glory to the Father and the Son. Now beloved the Holy Spirit is as much God as the Father is. the Holy Spirit has as much right for honor in the public arena as the Father does, but the Holy Spirit is forever completely happy in meekness, happy in hiddenness. As we grow in our relationship with the Holy Spirit in the age to come, "Holy Spirit how do you feel about this, like when is it over? In a million years, do you change roles?"

“No”

“How about a billion years?”

“No”

“How do you feel about it?”

“I’m as happy in my role because I love meekness, it is who I am. It is how I feel, it is what My heart is like.”

Look at this in John 16, Jesus with confidence in the Holy Spirit’s meekness and what we really talk about tonight is the humbleness, the humility of God. But we are focusing on Jesus, because Jesus is the window into the soul of God the Father, the Son and the Spirit and whatever is true of Jesus is true of the Spirit and the Father. But the vast subject is the humility of God because we want to love God in the way He loves us and He loves us with humility. I want to love Him with all of my soul, because He loves me with all of His soul. And that is my inheritance and that is your inheritance to have this kind of reality to love God in this way. Now look at John 16:13, Jesus with the confidence and the Holy Spirit’s happy humility, He will not speak out of His own authority. Now we’re kind of use to this kind of humility and we’re kind of like well ya of course, but think for a moment, the Holy Spirit is the One hovering over the earth in Genesis one . With such power, Jesus speaks and the Holy Spirit creates . The Holy Spirit is the active creative force released at the word of Jesus under the authority of the Father. Now you would think that one with this kind of authority would not need to be restrained, but He doesn’t need to be restrained, because somethings wrong, He is restrained because something is right. He lives to make known the Father and the Son. Though He is as much God as the Father and the Son.

Continuing on the humility of God. Jesus’ humility, we get a picture into His heart. At the end of the age, Jesus returns and then He sets up His kingdom on the earth for a thousand years on the earth and for a thousand years He is bringing every sphere and every nation under the dominion of the Father. And then at the end of the millennial, then comes the end of a thousand years where Jesus delivers up the Kingdom, the thousand years, all the nations are obedient, every area of every sphere of life of every nation is now being disciplined and Jesus takes the glory of the nations and He delivers it over to the Father . Most remarkable passage, verse 28, now when all things are made subject to Jesus, we’re talking openly on the earth in a manifest way then Jesus will subject Himself to God the Father and the reason Jesus wants the Father to be all in all. Jesus wants the Father to have all the credit for all of Jesus’ labour . So that at the end of the millennium when all the nations



are disciplined in the full sense in the absolute sense of the world and the nations are adoring Him and every knee shall bow in every area of life, Jesus says, “now Father all of this, I give it as my gift to You”, and then He bows and submits to the Father. He said, “I really only wanted it so that I can give it to You”.

Now we are getting the grand picture , Phil 2, we will start a verse or two before, but it is really verse six to eight which is the window into God’s heart, into Jesus’ heart, which again is a window in the Father’s heart which is again a picture of what we’re going to feel like if we’re fully transformed in the resurrection.

Humility isn’t something we endure until the second coming, humility is the way of God forever. Jesus isn’t gritting His teeth and then finally at the second coming He gets to be who he truly is. Jesus has never done anything that was not truly Him. In the book of Revelation, they worship Him and they say that He is faithful and true. He is true to Himself and everything He has ever done and humility in this passage is one of the great examples. Well Paul is exhorting the Phillipians to walk in love and so we’ll just kind of get to the context , but we are really aiming at verse six to eight but we will kind of get into the flow of it He says, “let nothing be done” verse 3 “let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem the others as better than himself.”

Now heres the phrase I want you to get, “let each one of you not look our for his own interest, but the interest of others.” That’ s the phrase. Jesus is consumed with the interest of others. Paul said look out for the interest of others, verse 5 “have this mindset in you that Jesus has”.

Beloved this isn’t something that Jesus did as a task, for eternity past Jesus has had this heart, even before Adam, before the human race, Jesus had the interest of others on His mind even before they were created and Jesus is a picture of how the Father feel and how the Father thinks. It is this mind of Jesus, the most precious reality that we can think of is the mind of Jesus, the interest of others. Now in verse six to eight, Paul in a rare way is going to draw back the window so to speak the veil and we’re gonna have a, by the spirit of revelation, a look into the mind of Jesus. What motivated Him, what He was doing and in that we look into the mind of the Father and in that the Spirit of course and even our own destiny in the resurrection. This is how we will think and feel for ever together, billions of us. And the reason we care about that now , that even now I don’t have the

refreshing emotional feeling of overflow when I choose humility, I mostly feel the sting of it. Because of the strength of pride that is naturally in my spirit. The sting of being humble is because our pride is so strong, it is so natural, so innate in us. And though we can make progress over the years, we are not really gonna get done with the problem until the other side. But choosing humility because it pleases Him, because He likes it, He takes it personally. When I choose it and I feel the sting, I'm going "I'm only doing it for one reason, I'm not doing it because so I look humble, I'm doing it, because it makes You smile, it's the feeder of which I show love to You" and He says, "good keep doing it, reach for it, because there is nothing more like me, than this." And when you reach for it, I mean the statement that the highest form of flattery is imitation, the highest affirmation you can make towards somebody is to imitate them and so the imitation of this, we so esteem this in You, we so value that you love this, we're going for it, though our natural form of pride stings us every step of the way. The Lord says, "love me with all of your heart, love me with all of your heart, do this."

Beloved it is worth it. And in a minute, I don't want to get you ahead of where we are at, He's gonna apply it in chapter two verse 14 where He says, "make your speech have no complaint in it and no disputing and bring your speech under the Holy Spirit's leadership and you will be a blameless human being" He said this in verse 14. That is where this thing is going, that is what this means to us in applying it in the context of loving God with all of our soul.

Verse 5, "let this mind be in you", now He is going to give the three verses, six, seven, eight - Jesus being in the form of God - in other words, Jesus eternally possessed divine glory. There was never a time when Jesus was not fully God. Jesus is the uncreated God like the Father and the Spirit. So when it talks about Jesus being in the form of God, it's a statement of His eternal pre-existed deity, before the incarnation He forever eternally was. He is fully God like the Father, but here is what it says He was equal to God like the Father, being in the form of God and being equal to God are parallel ideas.

Being in the form of God, speaks of the glory that He possesses, the privileges, the power, and all the attributes. And being equal to God is a parallel idea to that. But look what He did in verse six, being in the form of God or equal to God, Jesus did not consider it something to be grasped, now the New King James, the translation I use, has the King James word, robbery, "Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal to God", almost all scholars and translators today are in agreement that is not the best word from the ancient King James. Almost every translation, modern

translation, uses the word, “Jesus did not consider it His equality to God, something that He grasped and held on to when He considered the reality of the incarnation.”

In the eternal councils of the Godhead when the Father and the Son and the Spirit are talking of the Father’s plan of Jesus coming, He understood He will not be able to bring the privileges and the glory of deity into the incarnation of the first coming. If He was to accomplish the plan of salvation, and satisfy the justice of God in redeeming a fallen human race.

So it is like the Father and the Son and the Spirit, I mean they all have perfect wisdom, so I don’t know how their conversations go, but in the councils of the Godhead, it was Jesus (I just kind of put a human language on the conversation, I’m sure it didn’t happen this way) for you to become a man, to become carnate, to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, or Mary as a virgin (she was only a virgin at the time, she went on and have other children after that) Jesus if you are going to do this, thought Jesus forever is God and He never lost His deity at any point, but He had to lay aside the glory and the privilege that He was so accustomed to from eternity past in order to take up on the role of the incarnation of becoming man. So He didn’t consider it His equality in the glory of God, something to hang on to. He never lost His deity, but He lost the ability to operate in the prerogatives and the privileges of it, while as a man except when the Holy Spirit would anoint Him under the Father’s authority. It is a brand new experience for Him.

Verse seven, “but He made Himself of no reputation, He took upon the form of a bondservant, He came in the likeness of humans”, now this is radical, of course we know this, but we can never ever grasp this enough by the Holy Spirit in this age.

He came in the likeness of humanity, verse eight, “being found in the appearance of a man”, so that is point one. He humbles Himself, He is of no reputation, He takes upon Himself the form of a bondservant. He humbled Himself, but then He took it up a nudge and He became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. It was one thing to become human, and not be able to draw on His divine privileges and glory as a man, except the Holy Spirit release them through Him as a man. But it was another thing in order to accomplish redemption, He had to take up on the death of the cross, the curse. The death on the cross was not just cruel, it was a form of a curse. It was humiliating beyond measure, anything we could ever imagine. But because he did this, verse 9, therefor God highly exalted Him.

## **GOD'S DEFINITION OF LOVE: THE HUMILITY OF JESUS**

We'll just look at a few of these concepts. The humility of Jesus in the incarnation openly displayed His abandonment to us. Verse six, seven and eight gives us insight into the level of the abandonment He has in love towards us and of course this gives us insight into the abandonment we want to answer back when we love Him in return. Because our abandonment in loving Him is also deeply rooted in humility as well.

Jesus was in the form of God, paragraph B, that means that from all eternity, Jesus being in the form of God, shared glory with the Father, like what He said in the high-priestly prayer. He said, Father glorify me with Yourself. Glorify me with the glory that I had back before the world was created, the privilege and the glory of deity, give that back to me in the resurrection. Because for 33 years He did not operate in that privilege because He wanted us, He had our interest on His mind.

In the incarnation, Jesus had two natures. He was fully God and fully man, with no contradiction. 1 Tim 3 says it is the mystery of Godliness and here is the great mystery right here of how Godliness operates in a fallen world, here is the fountain of Godliness, here is where the source of it all comes. God is manifest in human flesh. Now Paul says it clearly in 1 Tim 3 that this is a mystery that in this age I'll add, we will never ever bring together those two realities, fully God and fully man in one person. It baffles our minds, it stretches us beyond what we can comprehend. But here is a little sentence I heard a preacher say many years ago and I have used it for over thirty years, and I offer it to you, that although Jesus was never ever less than God, He lived as though (in the incarnation I mean) He lived as though He was never more than a man. I am going to say that again, I want you to think on this, I like you to learn this, because you can get a whole lot in this one sentence. In the incarnation, after He became human, although He was never less than God, there was never a moment He had anything less than total deity, but He lived in a relationship of dependance on the anointing of the Holy Spirit, He lived as though He was never more than a man, in other words, you and I can only move in the power of God when the spirit moves on us in answer to prayer.

Jesus as a man had all the power of deity within His own command, but if He was going to offer Himself as a high-priest for humans, he had to perfectly live His entire time as a human. If He ever stepped out of this sphere of the limitation of humanity, except when the Holy Spirit anoint Him in answer to prayer, if He ever stepped out of it, He was disqualified as a High Priest that could save

us. So if He stepped out of it one time, one time ever, in the justice of God, He could not save us. I don't mean if He sinned, obviously if He sinned, He couldn't redeem us, if He functioned on the earth as God. Because in the justice of God, in the plan of God, and it is a big subject, He had to live fully in the constraints of humanity under the anointing of the Spirit. I mean I can imagine what was in His mind, you know after He is anointed or before He was anointed at age 30 - "Father, I remember", because memory is such a critical part of personality and if it is a critical part of your personality and your humanity, how much more is Jesus' memory alive and clear.

I can imagine Jesus, "Father, oh Father, oh this is different, but I'm doing it because I want them". And if He stayed in the confines of human limitation, and He did not sin, both of them - those are two different issues - He would qualify as a human High Priest. And then He could make a way for you and I forever to be in the glory of God.

So though Jesus was never ever less than God, He lived on the earth in the incarnation as though He was never more than a man anointed by the Holy Spirit who had to wait on the move of the Spirit in His life through Prayer, through believing prayer.

It says that Jesus, in verse six, did not consider it "robbery" is the King James word, but again the vast majority of all the translations, modern translations uses the same term, He did not grasp the privilege of deity, though He had all the privileges of deity within His grasp. He didn't grab it, He didn't take it, because, verse four, He was seeking our interests. It is what Paul told them, He said "seek the interest of other, have this mind in you that was in Jesus. And then describes in vers six to eight the dynamics of Him having our interest. Now the reason I think it is a worthy subject in itself, the humility of Jesus, but I care about the subject of the humility of Jesus and teach it in this context to inspire us to reach for it. Because we know how much it pleases Him and it is part of the definition of loving God with all of our soul.

I want to stand before Him one day and I want to present to Him a heart of love and a heart of wisdom and I want to say I didn't just go to lively worship services and sing and kind of get caught up in the meeting, which I like that for sure, but I want to be able to say after x amount of years, "I offer to You a heart of love, with all of my soul." Not just the fervor when the music was anointed. But far away when no one was looking, far from the eye of any other, I wanted to reach for You with love with all of my soul. That requires, the reach of humility that extends even to our words.

Now here's the glorious saying, Jesus didn't reach for His equality with God, because of His humility, but Jesus never concluded that the incarnation and all of its humility, He never concluded it took anything from His core identity of who He was.

He didn't get to operate in the power that He was so familiar with for eternity, He lived under constraints, but His core identity, He lost nothing because at the end of the day when it is all said and done to understand Him, He was about love and humility and others, not just displaying power. Thought it cost Him to restrain His power, He didn't lose anything in terms of His core identity with who He is, because at the core, He is a servant filled with love.

In the incarnation, I'm still in paragraph E, He denied Himself operating in the privilege of deity, though He was always God, but He did not deny His core identity, rather He expressed it in that humility. So some would look at this and say, Jesus gave up the core of who He was and He didn't. His core identity as God who is humble was never affected in the great humility that He walked in. As a matter of fact, His deity was expressed in that humility. A dimension of His deity was given open display because of His choices for humility.

He did not see the incarnation as a scandal of injustice. I mean, if you and I in our natural mindset, if we did not receive the honor that we think we deserve, the money, the privilege and the honor, it is a scandal of injustice. I mean, people are - believers as well as unbelievers - are quickly enraged if they come up just a little bit short of the honor or the possessions and the privileges that they rightfully deserve in their own mindset. But the stooping of Jesus, what He gave up, to live as man, the privileges that He did not take hold off, it was not a scandal of injustice to Him at all. It was an expression of who He was, it gave Him opportunity to display openly for all the nations, the truth of who He is. And that is the Jesus we love.

He did not empty Himself of deity, He was always God, but He couldn't use the power for His own ends. He couldn't use the power independent of the Holy Spirit moving on Him. He could raise the dead, but only if the Holy Spirit moved on Him, but in reality He had the power to raise the dead, without waiting on the Holy Spirit. But He couldn't use it, because He would be disqualified as a human High Priest. And He did it for you and I. So He couldn't use the power for His own ends, nor could He initiate the use of the power, it had to be given to Him by the inspiration of the Spirit under the authority of the Father, through believing prayer.

Now here is the remarkable thing, if this is not remarkable enough, this is just beyond my comprehension, but when Jesus chose to become human, He had to remain human forever. Billions of years from now, billions, He will still be human. The decision had such consequences, and such duration, it reached into the eternal ages. But that is not it, it is not only that He will be human for

billions of years, listen for billions of years, Jesus as a man, in His human leadership over the nations, because He rules the nations as the King of kings at the second coming openly as a man, He will only be able to do it as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit. So when He took hold of this reality of the incarnation, it would be real forever and He would live in terms of His human responsibility, even in the age to come, under the anointing of the Spirit like we do, rather than independent of waiting on the Spirit through believing prayer. He rules the nations in the age to come, through intercession, like we do. I mean He is God, He created in Genesis one . What is Jesus doing interceding forever to loose the power of God? He is God! “Why are You doing this?” “This was the arrangement that justice demanded. If I was to redeem humans, I had to be human. If I was to be the human King forever, I had to live as humans did in relationship to God, though fully God forever.’

“Jesus, how could You possibly have made this decision? We can’t even calculate the implications of it.” And His answer would be, “ I did it because I had the interests of others on My mind.”

God’s core identity is love expressed in humility. Now Jesus has all the power and He is totally unique. But His main identity is not in His display of power, His main core identity is in the manifestation of humility in love. He could restrain His power, and never ever affect His core identity. Now the reason the devil came to Him, to tempt Him in the garden, I mean in the wilderness, the devil came to tempt Him and the devil tempted Him with power and with being unique. Because those are the things that move the devil. When Lucifer fell in Isaiah 14, he clutched at power and he wanted to be the unique one. Jesus did not yield to that, because that is not what His being is about at the core reality. His core reality is to operate in love and in humility before God and before us. So He was unaffected by this.

Now in a culture that values gaining our identity from our uniqueness, we are all unique, there is no question about it, but beloved our identity, the reason we’re valuable and the reason we are known, by God or man according to the will of God, is because we are loved by God and we are lovers of God. Not because we have a unique twist in our approach to life.

Jesus was the most unique. But He came and it says in verse seven, He came and He made Himself of no reputation. He took His uniqueness and His glorious God, God was hidden in the obscurity of humanity. When Jesus walked in a room at 25 years old, here He is, fully God of Genesis one, and not one person in the room knew that He was anything more than an ordinary man. There was nothing unique about Him, He said He took on no reputation.

“Well Jesus I mean you could have really, You could have dazzled the human race in so many ways without sinning, because it was true to who You were.”

I mean He will dazzle the human race at the second coming. Every eye will see Him and they will be dazzled by Him. But in order for Him to win us, in the Father’s justice, He had to live perfectly as a man, in all the restraints of it to accomplish redemption.

Jesus was God, hiding in the obscurity of humanity.

It was precisely because Jesus was in the form of God, that He sought to come and serve. Now some would say, He was in the form of God, He laid that aside and therefor He served.

No, it is because He is God, that He wanted to serve. His serving was not a negation of His deity, it was an expression of the core reality of who He is.

What expresses His glory most, more than power, more than dazzling nations, the thing that expresses Him most is humility. And that is what moves Him when we love Him in that way.

That’s what is most pleasing to Him. That is what is most like Him. When Jesus put the towel on in John 13 to wash the disciple’s feet, there was nothing ungodlike about that, that was strange to the apostles, they was like, “wow this is intense”, and Jesus could have said, “it is only because you don’t know what I am like and my Father’s like. This is so much who we are forever. This is not just an example, this is an expression of who I am.”

When Jesus comes back at the second coming as King over the nations, Beloved, He will be as much the humble Jesus, with all the power manifestations, as He was with the power consume and the power restraints. The manifestation of Power at the second coming, and through the millennial Kingdom, and the restraint of power at His first coming, will not in any way change the full manifestation of His character of love. He is the exact same Jesus in manifestation. When all the Kingdoms are His, He will only rule for the good of the nations. When all the power is His, He will only be thinking of the Father’s glory and your good in the glory of God and in the will of God. This man, who is He? Who is this man? Let’s go to page four, I mean, page five if you would, I’m just going down to the last point here.

## **LOVE FOR JESUS: HUMILITY IS EXPRESSED THROUGH OUR SPEECH**

Now Paul, his given this great insight into the heart of Jesus, for as much of what we’ve skipped, you can just read it on your own, but more than anything is this, I want to draw your attention to this goldmine of truth.



Now Paul is going to apply it to them in a very personal and specific way.

Phil 2:12 - it is the next verse after the great passage of Jesus' humiliation and His exaltation, the very next verse, He says therefore, now that I have shown you Jesus' humility, in verse 6 - 8, His exaltation in verse 9 - 11, therefor, now that you see the picture of what God's like, therefor work out our own salvation. You and the Holy Spirit figures out how it works in your skin. With your schedule. You know people might come and say, "how should I do this or that" and you can give general principles, but at the end of the day, every believer must work out the application of it in their own personality in their own mandate with God.

He says work it out, in verse 14 He goes right to the point, he goes work out this humility, he is talking about the humility, because to work out the salvation in this context, with the therefor, it draws us back to the verses right before. He is saying work out, flesh out this humility in your own life with fear and trembling, in other words, don't do it casually.

Much of the church knows nothing about fear and trembling, meaning they approach their salvation so casually, and any preacher they can hear, that will get them off the hook from pressing into God, they'll take that preacher. Any voices they hear that says, "Hey lighten up and go softer, pamper your flesh more and they call it the grace of God" Many people will take anybody that quotes a Bible verse that gets them of the hook of pressing into God.

So what Paul tells them, work out how humility works in your salvation, but do it with the fear of God. Do it with a trembling heart, knowing that the way you decided will affect your eternity forever. Even as a believer, I mean we'll be saved, but it will affect our eternal place in the Kingdom.

Paul says don't take this thing lightly. Don't look for a way to get off the hook, look for a way to get into the Spirit of truth and drink deep.

He goes on in verse 14, he said, but here is the issue, the number one issue of humility. Do everything without complaining and disputing. That is his number one application of humility. Humility is an attitude, but the window into our hearts, the clearest window in our heart is our words.

Now this word it just tortures my flesh, the word all, a-l-l (Mike spells it out). Work out your salvation or work out your responsive humility to Jesus, but in the working of it out, make that your speech, you do everything about complaining, bring your speech under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and it will release supernatural work in your heart.

So no complaining about life in general and no disputing, which means complaining about each other. So complaining is just about circumstances, disputing is about relationships. Same thing.

Verse 15, and if you do this, you will be blameless and you will have no fault in your walk with God.

Now many believers are content with enjoying God at a worship service, and kind of going along with the flow of what happens, just in their life, and they don't approach their salvation with fear and trembling, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit never touches this issue of complaint and dispute in their spirit.

But beloved, I want to walk faultless, blameless. I want to walk blameless in humility, I want to love God with all of my soul.

Then he tells us the secret, verse 16, of the key, it is by feeding on the word, holding fast the word. You'll never do it without holding on the word, meditating on the Word. A heart that is too busy to read and meditate on the Word, is a heart that will never be empowered to stay restrained in the arena of speech. And if we don't live restrained in speech, we end up quenching the Spirit that we love. He still loves us, but He says, I am not going to move on you until we are in agreement. I won't move on you in the deeper ways. And He wants agreement in the arena of our speech. I mean that is the final frontier of everyone's life, as far as I'm concerned. I'm sure there might be an exception. Look what it says in James chapter one, it says, "let every man be swift to speak, let him be slow to get angry" - that's his speech -

And how do you do it the same way by receiving the Word of God implanted by meditating on the Word. Because meditating on the Word, exposes our spirit to inspiration, and that inspiration and regular installments of it, regular feeding of that inspiration, it empowers our spirit not to be loose in our speech.

We'll end with this, Ephes. 4 - look what he says in verse 29-30. We're talking about loving God with all of our soul. He says let no corrupt speech, that is the complaining and disputing of Phil 2:14, "let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only what is good for edification, that it would impart grace, not just to the hearer who hears you, but it imparts grace, do you know who you listen to the most? You know the voice you pay most attention to - your own. Whether you know it or not. Your own voice determines the condition of your spirit, your own words, more than anybody else.

When I think what that guy says impacts me, Beloved nobody impacts your spirit more than your words. So the hearers are not only the ones out there, which that is what is on Paul's mind, but I'm just applying it, because it is true, you are the primary hearer and benefactor or you are the primary loser if your speech is not under the Holy Spirit's leadership. Because look what he says in verse

30. He says, don't grieve the Spirit. And the way the Spirit is grieved is by casting off our agreement with His leadership in the area of speech. I mean there's other areas as well, but that is the final frontier. The area of speech is the window to the true state of our soul. We can get our eyes under control, we can get our money under control, we can get our appetites under control, the final frontier of meekness is speech. That is why it is brought up over and over. I want the Holy Spirit's power to enable me to love Jesus. I want to love Him. I can't love Him just by willing "I wanna love You, I wanna love You, I wanna love You..." In need power.

The Holy Spirit says, "you can't get power if you are pushing me away. Your only change is Me. And I require that we agree with each other on speech. If you don't want My leadership in speech, I still love you, you are still saved, but I won't help you near to the degree. You're quenching the Spirit of revelation that will release love in your spirit for Jesus."

So I go, "Lord, You know it is like a lot of attentiveness to bring speech under the control of Holy Spirit, but I so want the full inspiration of loving Jesus. I want to love Him with all of my soul. I'm willing to lay hold of this thing Lord."

And that is what many of you are saying as well.

Let's stand.

## **Session 7: Loving God with all of our Strength (Mt. 6:1-23)**

### **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART REQUIRES LOVING HIM WITH OUR STRENGTH**

Turn to Matt. 6. Tonight we are going to continue with session seven on the First Commandment course, loving God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength. We have looked at each one of these four components or dimensions of loving God.

God's called us to love Him in these four spheres of life. Tonight we are looking at the area of strength, which is a reference to our resources. That we love God in context to our natural resources. Which is more than money, it is our time, it is our physical strength, our abilities, and it is not because God needs our money, it is not because God really needs that particular contribution. It is because when we offer it to Him in love, I mean He does use it, and it is powerful in His esteem. But there are so many human dynamics that takes place when we obey the Lord in these arenas of our strength. When we press to obey and to love Him, I'm loving Him now by giving above and beyond that what most people think. I'm calling that the fasted lifestyle. Where we give to God in a way that we feel the weakness because of the extravagance of how we are seeking to love Him in these natural ways, in these areas of our natural strength. I mean in the part that we don't grasp is the human dynamics that take place inside of us in the struggle in the reach to give ourselves to God in these ways and we are going to look at a few of these tonight.

But the reason this is so important to understand, because some folks they just think of loving God in a worship service, and they kind of love Jesus through the week, you know in a general kind of way, but we want to love Him with our strength in the way that He prescribes and trust Him that the human dynamics that He does not describe but they do take place. That they will bring us to deeper love, deeper experiences of love.

Now many of you in this room, you have sought to love the lord in this ways, I know my own testimony, the ways I've laid out in this handout here, I've sought to love Him and I found the rub points, the pressure points in money, in time, in words, I went "ouch, Lord" and He says "come on love Me" and I went, "wow, I didn't know about that fear or that uncertainty or that point of humiliation that I feel right now." He says, "love Me, come on all the way with your strength by

fasting in these arenas and we are going to look at five different expressions of the fasted lifestyle where we are fasting in the area of that actual strength as an expression of love, as a way to love Him, but more than that, or in addition to that, not just are we loving Him, it positions us to receive the work of the Spirit, the grace of the Spirit, to empower us to love Him more.

So as we seek to love Him in these five ways, He actually takes the intention of it as love, but it also positions us to receive more of the grace of the Spirit so we are empowered supernaturally and actually follow through in love.

This session we are going to define a little bit, you know it is bigger than one session, some of what it means to love God with our resources, with our strength. The area of food, time, money, words, energy, and our influence or you could put our reputation, and the position we have to influence other people. The Lord says, "I want you to show love to Me in everyone of those arenas, and in doing that you will position yourself for Me to strengthen your spirit by the Holy Spirit."

Again there is many natural, many undefined human dynamics psychologically, they take place in our emotions, physiologically, physically there are things that take place, spiritually, socially, things happen in our human experience when we endeavor to walk this out with follow through.

And the Holy Spirit is working with us in these areas and though the Bible doesn't lay them all out in a psychological way. When you seek to do it, they become apparent how it is, I mean the deep parts of our being that come to light, in the way that we are empowered when we seek to love God in these ways.

Matt. 6:1-23 gives us five different expressions of what I like to call the fasted lifestyle. These are five areas of natural strength where we fast in. I wrote a book with Dana Candler, which is called the Rewards of Fasting, it is a small book, maybe a hundred pages or so, its not very big at all, I want to recommend it, and the reason I am recommending it is that it's what I am talking about here in this short session, but it gives a lot more detail though it is a small little book. And I want to say this, you will never mature in love for God without endeavoring to love God with all of your strength. Until the area of strength is intentionally part of our pursuit in loving Him we will always come up short and stay immature in our love.

The issue of fasting is non-negotiable for New Testament Christianity. And it is not because He is mean and He really wants to see if you are sincere. He knows there are human dynamics that happen psychologically, spiritually, socially in us that if we don't fast in these arenas, those dynamics will not happen to the degree that He wants to. So He commands us to fast as the great

Psychologist and the One who understands the design of the human spirit and how it functions and how it interacts with the Holy Spirit.

So His call, yay more than call, command to fast in these five areas, is a statement about the design of the human spirit and how we come to fullness in our interacts with the Holy Spirit. It is a statement about that much more than a statement about God who just wants to see if we kind of you know be touch and really go for the hard stuff. Because I hear some people talk about fasting, they talk more of God and the stern coat, and they really get with it, they fast and they rah rah rah, it is kind of like a football half time speech to the team to go out and go for it. And I'm thinking no the Lord's calling us to fast far more from the vantage point as the creator and architect of the human spirit, He knows how we function and He knows the social and psychological and spiritual dynamics that will unfold when we pursue fasting for a lifetime in these five areas.

So in the end of the day, it expresses our love for Jesus but more, it positions us to receive the Holy Spirit's empowering to love Him. So I do want to love Him in these five areas, but I want to receive, I want to be in the position to receive the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

The anointing to love God is the greatest possession the human spirit can have. The anointing to feel God and to love God back. Beloved there is no greater reward than when the Holy Spirit pours love into the human spirit. Now, you can't always tell when it is happening. Now you can feel the tenderizing sometimes, but the Holy Spirit pouring love in our spirit can not always be discerned in measure and in qualitative ways, quantitative ways. But He is working, He is pouring love, He is releasing love in us if we are reaching to love God in the way the Bible says. That is why it is important, we love God on God's terms. You know I have said to God, "Lord, if I was God I don't think I would have do the food fasting thing, I've got to skip that part and go more into the longer worship services". And the Lord's answer would be something like, "well you don't know the design of the human spirit, you don't know all the dynamics that come to light and you don't know the way my spirit interacts with the human spirit. So if you don't reach in these five ways, you won't be in the optimum position to receive the pouring out of love in the human spirit."

Of course the day you are born again, you receive the Holy Spirit, but the pouring out of love means the manifest presence to strengthen your emotions in your mind, in your inner man.

The greatest reward of love is the power to love. The greatest reward that I can have and that you can have as a love of God, is the power to love Him. What a powerful thing, I mean imagine, what

is your greatest dream? It is not about fame and fortune, it is the ability to be loyal in love to Jesus. If you walk in that anointing, Beloved, you have everything. Your life will be over, your natural life in a minute, whether it is a day, or a hundred years, it is a minute either way. And if you can have in this live the power to walk in loyal love to Jesus, Beloved you are most successful among all the people of the earth.

The grace of fasting, we want to go after it, and what I mean by go after it, we ask the Lord for it. Have you ever asked the Lord for the grace of fasting, not just food, but in all five of these areas? Some of you may say you have never thought about it, “well that is why we are having this class”. This is a critical prayer. Father give me grace for fasting. The Holy Spirit might say in what way of fasting? Food? Money? Time? Words? What kind of fasting? All of them. You says, “okay, oh Lord I really want this, but be easy on me because I am a weak man in the flesh.” He’ll give you grace for fasting, in all these areas. But we have to ask for it, if we ask for it, we’ll get more. In a little while we are going to pray for grace for fasting, we are going to pray for grace for fasting of food, but not limited to food because Mat. 6 is all five of these areas.

God gives more if you hunger for this grace. If you seek it, He’ll give you more. If you seek more grace for fasting, you will get the ability to fast more and if you fast more your positioned to receive more of the power of the Holy Spirit to love God. And that is the focus that we have in this course. Fasting as it relates to loving God with all of our strength because I could talk on fasting as well as others could, about its impact in many areas of life and the Kingdom, but I’m talking about fasting as relates to loving God with all of our strength. A - L - L, all of my resource I want to express love and position myself to receive the grace of God in my spirit. If I reach for you Lord and the human dynamics that take place.

This is one of my favorite passages, of course you get a hundred favorite passages, right.

1 Cor 15, this really has been one of my favorites over the years, It is describing Jesus as a man at the end of the millennial Kingdom when all of the nations of the world are manifest as obeying Him. Every single nation in ever institution of every nation, in every part of the earth, they obey Jesus a thousand years after His leadership as a man, fully man, fully God, but as a man on the earth after the second coming, a thousand years later. All of the institutions are Christianized and obeying God and loving God. Talking about a man of strength, He has strength in every capacity - economic strength, really good reputation, lot of influence, in every single way possible as a man

and here's what it says, 1 Cor 15:4 "Then comes the end" it means the end of the millennium, "Jesus delivers up", or you can say offers up, "the Kingdom", he is talking about every nation fully Christianized in every way, He offers it to the Father.

Verse 28, "and when all things are made subject to Jesus," - when everything on earth is under His authority, I mean think of the greatest revival in the book of Acts and how it touched a little portion of Jerusalem and just multiply that times thousands, and every nation of the earth talking about everything subject to Him as a man on the earth. At the end of the millennium, Jesus subjects Himself to the Father for one reason, He wants the Father to be all in all. He says, "Father I did this, I conquered the nations for You. I wanted it for You. I died Lord to redeem them, but I wanted them all to love You."

This is the ultimate statement of loving God the Father, with all of a man's strength is here in this example of Jesus.

Revelations 4 , the elders they really get caught up in this inspiration. Now these elders are humans, and they take their rewards, their crowns are there rewards from their obedience on the earth, and they give them to God. They don't lay them down and say, "we know You are going to give them back, so come on give my back Father, give it back!" No, when they cast the crowns, they really gave all that they received as a love gift, it's yours God. Of course it is impossible to out-give God. But they keep casting it down and its for real, it is not kind of a show. They are overwhelmed at how glorious and kind, they want to give all of their strength to Him in love.

### **POSITIONING OUR HEART TO RECEIVE GRACE: VOLUNTARY WEAKNESS**

Now we are going to look at one of the fundamental ideas, you have gotta get this idea down, if you don't get this idea down, then fasting doesn't make sense. Fasting is voluntary weakness of your areas of natural strength. Let me say that again, fasting is to voluntarily take these five areas of your natural strength and give them away to God and then to be in weakness. Waiting for the Spirit to touch you and for God to return that strength back to you in His own timing. We really give it away and we wait. "Lord touch my heart, as I endeavor to give myself and give that strength back to me". He says, "Oh, I will, maybe in this age a hundredfold, maybe not a hundredfold in this age, but a thousandfold in the age to come, just trust me, give it to Me and trust Me to give it back when I want and trust Me to touch your spirit in the process so you mature in love."

This is what giving our strength is about to God. Now in this voluntary weakness, we are positioning ourself to receive grace. Because it takes God to love God. I cannot love God just by



gritting my teeth and making a decision. I do have to make a decision, but it is not enough to just make a decision. If the Spirit doesn't help me then that decision, there is not going to be power, it is not going to be effective. The Lord says, "okay, the Spirit will help you in whatever measure you want. But the Spirit will help you in a greater measure if you do it My way, that is called fasting." And many believers don't buy into the fasting in these five arenas and the Spirit helps them some, but they have very little maturity in love, even as after decades. It is a supernatural work and we can have it in a higher degree, a higher measure, this work of God in our spirit to love God, because it takes God to love God, if we will give ourselves to Him in these five areas.

Now we are going to heaven one way or the other, we are going to live in the heavens coming to earth, we are going to be part of His Kingdom, but it is not just a part of His Kingdom when you die physically, I want the anointing to love Him in this age to the full degree that God would give the human spirit. He says, "good then come in these five areas with all of your strength."

I don't know what that means, that word "all" in the flesh is a big word, like all of my strength, come with all, how much? "Whatever measure you come in, that is the measure I will meet you in?"

"Oh, Lord these are big areas!"

"Love me with all of your strength and I help you to that measure."

Well Paul in 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, its one passage of scripture, I mean it is one subject, Paul is talking about His weakness and you have got to read 2 Cor 11 and 12, not just 12, read the whole context, he is talking about his weakness. But when he talks about his weakness, he is not talking about moral weakness, Paul is not talking about failure, he is not talking about sinning, he is talking about voluntary weakness, giving his strength to God, because of love for God and then letting the Spirit touch his spirit and let God return the strength back in His own timing, that is what Paul is talking about.

Now he covers fasting, prayer, money, time, all of these things, but he is going to press the issue of persecution. Of how he relates to his enemies. That is the issue that Paul is going to press here in 2 Cor 12, but chapter 11 and 12 is all five of these issues, you'll find in 2 Cor 11 and 12 the fasted lifestyle issues or expressions of weakness. Paul says "a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of satan to buffet me." Verse 8, "I pleaded with the Lord three times, take this thorn away". Jesus appears to him, this is how I am imagining, stands in front of him and say, "Paul I've got a new revelation for you, My grace" - and grace doesn't mean forgiveness here, its power. Grace means forgiveness sometimes and power the other times, or enabling. And mostly in the New Testament, grace means the enabling of the spirit and it incorporates the idea of forgiveness of

which the word mercy is the main word. Mercy is a subunit of grace. Mercy is the forgiveness part, and grace involves forgiveness, but more than forgiveness, enabling. So Jesus says, “My enabling or My power is sufficient for you in this trouble, Paul for,” (here it is, here is the grand revelation) “My strength is made perfect to you in your weakness.”

What a statement. Now first you want to think of the concept perfect strength, perfected strength, how would you like to walk in perfected strength? I look at this, strength made perfect, oh my. “Lord I want it”

He says, “throw yourself into loving Me with all of your strength. Embrace weakness, lay your strength aside in your pursuit of Me, love Me with all your strength and you will experience more of my perfected strength in this age.”

Now what Paul is not saying, I mean Jesus is talking here in verse 9, He is not saying, “My strength is made perfect in your weakness, in your moral failure.” He is not talking about sinfulness here. He is talking about the fasted lifestyle. He is talking about them voluntarily embracing weakness and the weakness that Paul was embracing, is that he was preaching the gospel in a hostile area where persecution was inevitable.

You know many guys would just go to the other area, Paul says, “No, I’m going, I know it is the Holy Spirit inviting me into this region, I’m going in it.”

I mean I wouldn’t encourage somebody just to go to a hostile area just to prove that they would, but Paul was being led by the Holy Spirit, and the Lord says, “Paul, I’m going to give you perfected strength, because you are saying yes to weakness, your voluntarily laying your strength down in order to trust me. And I will return the strength to you.”

Now in Paul’s case, later on, not in this case, he was actually killed in Rome. “Lord I thought your gonna, his physical strength is extinguished. Well Lord, I thought Your gonna return the strength,” He says, “Yes, Paul will have a resurrected body forever, I’m going to return it beyond any measure you could imagine.”

But it is not just that God is going to return our strength, we give Him money, He gives us money back. We pray, He touches, He moves, His invisible hand moves. But it is not just that He returns the strength back, He actually releases grace on our spirit, He gives grace or enabling in our spirit, the strengthening of our human spirit with might.

Paul said, because of this, we are at the end of verse 9, “I boast in my weaknesses”. He goes, “I’m all for it”. Why, so the power of God would increase in my experience.

What he is saying through the language of what I am using tonight, when I fast more, that is the infirmities, when I embrace voluntary weakness more, I experience more power in this age. And

that is the wisdom of this passage. That is what Mat. 6 is about. Which we won't have to time look at all of it, but as always I give you more notes that will cover so you can read it on your own. And of course, my desire is also that you would take some of these teachings later, many of you will teach Bible studies, small ones and big ones, that you take these notes and use them, because you know our copyright is your right to copy. So you can take all of this stuff and make your own notes with it. And train others, that if they will embrace weakness, they will experience more strength. More of the power of Jesus in their experience in this age, not just the age to come.

We invest our natural strength in these five areas. Now the problem, we invest our natural strengths there is a time delay before the Lord return the strengths back. And that time delay is when all the human dynamics happen psychologically inside of us. We give our money, one thousand, you know T minus 10 and T minus 9 and T minus 8, "Lord are you giving the money back?"

"Yes"

"Like when?"

"I'm not telling you, but I want you to give more money."

"Ahh, I haven't seen the return on the last one,"

"Oh, I've got My records are perfect, I'm gonna give you way more than you give Me. So keep giving."

"Well, I was thinking that I'll give more after You give me a new installment"

And the Lord says, "Well no, it's not gonna work that way. You've got to keep fasting in the money. You keep sowing and trust me."

Many human dynamics come into play. Fears immerse, our motives comes to the surface, good ones and bad ones. But good ones too, not just bad ones. Because it is in that working of that muscle that you might say, "I'm gonna love you with my strength, I don't care when the answer comes, because I am Yours."

And the Lord says, "Oh that moves me, I take that personally".

So it is not just negative motives that comes to light, so do positives, because the perseverance, the delay I mean of God's answer, creates a tenacious reach in your spirit to stay steady, that the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen you, but it also solidifies your motive in love and it moves God's heart, more than we'll ever know in this age.

We do it in prayer, we pray and says, "Lord I will like the answer to the prayer".

He says, "You'll get it, more than you can ever imagine in My time."

Keep praying.

“Okay?”

Because prayer takes time.

The challenge we are going to see in 'n minute about prayer, is that prayer is a very costly thing, a strength in terms of investing our time, and beloved your time is one of your greatest strengths that you have in this life.

I mean how many times I can think of over the years, and many of you can say the same, “I just did not have the time to sit quiet before the Lord, to be in a prayer meeting” and the Lord says, “Yay you do”

If I do I misses opportunity

“That’s okay. Give Me your time”

‘Well, I’m gonna miss this social opportunity, this networking opportunity, this financial opportunity”

The Lord says, “it’s okay, I’m worth it. Give Me your time and trust Me to touch your spirit, and trust me to return that opportunity back tenfold and a hundredfold, but in My timing.”

So I’ve been in many a prayer time over the years and go, “Oh, I could get stuff done that would make my life stronger,”

And the Lord might say, “stronger for a minute, but not ultimately, because I’m gonna multiply every hour you’ve given over the years, I’m gonna multiply it back in My relationship to you, you’re gonna have an increase and in all the effectiveness that you could have done if you would have skipped the Prayer time. But it will be in My timing, not in your timing.”

And how many times had to make that decision, hmmm the Invisible God with the delay factor, that is where all the psychological dynamics take place. God’s invisible and He delays. If He was visible, and always on my time, then there would be no element to fasting. Fasting my time is what I do in prayer meetings, fasting food, which really fasting food is what we will look at in a minute, is really not so much about hunger, fasting food is about strength. You loose your physical strength. And when you loose your physical strength, you loose your productiveness. I can’t get as much done, fasting, the Lord says, “No problem” He goes, “I’ll multiply it”

“Well if You were not invisible and You did not do the delay thing, it would be easier.”

The Lord says, “Yay, but then the pressure wouldn’t be working on your spirit to purify your motives and solidify what you really want. I’m giving you a hundred chances to change your mind if you don’t really want to love Me in that area. The fact I’m invisible, the fact I’m delaying, you can bail out any time you want, but if you really want Me, stay with it.”

“Oh, here I am, I’m gonna stay with it, in money, in fasting food, in fasting time which is prayer.”

This idea we're gonna look at, we're reference it in a minute, the blessing our enemies, "ohhh that's a tuff one"

I would rather tell the whole truth about how bad that guy is.

The Lord says, "don't, forgive him and bless him."

Fast your reputation and your words.

"Argh, Lord would You not be so invisible and not delay so long?"

The Lord says, "No, I'm working a process in your spirit. Number one, I take it very personally that you really love me, you're staying with this. And I am moving on your spirit, and I'm gonna return everything that, that guy took from you by speaking evil against you. I'll return it all far beyond anything you could have had if you would have done it on your own."

### **FIVE EXPRESSIONS OF THE FASTED LIFESTYLE (MT. 6:1-23)**

Here they are in Matt. 6. They are quite simple and to the point. Now these are five ways we express fasting. Not just food. Now this is a long term lifestyle, I call the fasted lifestyle. Not just the day of fasting food. Fasting food for a day is good. But if you fast your money, it is called giving, and your time, that is serving or prayer, and your reputation, that is blessing your enemies and forgiving the people. And by the way, enemies are not just the mean guy on the other side of town or whatever. Your enemies are anybody that is resisting your plans. It might be the person right there in the row in front of you. That wasn't a prophesy. (Mike is laughing)

"even Mike said it"

"No, that was just an (laughing again)

No, but our enemies is anyone that is apposing or resisting the plan that is in our heart to go forward. The enemy in the general sense is anyone that is blocking your goals. In any way, goals for a good reputation, because that guy is talking bad about you and he is in the ministry, he is in the Ihop Family here, why is he talking about me.

The Lord says, "just bless him"

Arghhhhhh,

I tell you the blessing the enemies, I find of the five is the hardest. When it is all said and done, I don't know, I think maybe the food is the easiest one. No and the food is not easy, but we take the food as the hard one, but if you are really going down the line, in the area of money, to obey God with all of your strength in that area, or in your time, you know it is after the meeting or before the

meeting or on the weekend or during the week, whatever got all this time and the Lord says, “I want your time, I want your strength”

“Yay but everybody else...”

He says, “give Me your strength and I will return it back to you, your time, with your words,”

The Lord says, “I have given you My strength and I assure you I will answer you on all of these areas.”

One of the reasons that many of God’s people don’t go and love, I mean I’ve been a pastor for over thirty years, they think of loving God is what they do at a worship service. And not what they do all week long, I mean they wanna love God, but they never and as sincere as can be, but they never ever get past just the most superficial love, because they don’t press into God with their strength.

All the areas of strength in their lives. Or they don’t do with their mind, we looked at a session the other day, or their soul with humility. They don’t embrace the attitude of humility.

The Lord says, “but I’ll give you love, if that is what you can’t live without, I’ll give it to you.

Supernaturally, but you’ve got to do it on My terms”

Beloved I know there’s many of you like this. I want everything that God will give the human spirit in this age. I do not want some preacher to get me off the hook with some kind of mouth angled grace preaching that keeps me spiritual superficial for decades and I feel good all the way that I am doing okay, I never mature. I want the grace to be abandoned. Not to feel good while I’m carnal.

So much of the grace preaching today is distorted. It is making people feel good while they are carnal. They feel good about their carnality. I want to feel good that God loves me when I’m weak, but as I repent, but I wanna know that He is going to strengthen me when I go deep in Him.

The greatest men of God in history, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, there’s others, they were all into the fasted lifestyle. I mean if apart from their testimony in scripture, if you saw them on the stage of history, they don’t really figure in anybody’s book, if they were not in the Bible they wouldn’t figure as important to anybody, but these are the guys that God calls the greatest ones in history and in essence they were the ones that pressed in to the fasted lifestyle.

I mean John the Baptist, the greatest man ever born of a woman, eighteen years reaching to God in the fasted lifestyle and his ministry only goes eighteen months and his numbers are minuscule

compared to ministry standards today. If he was in ministry today, if he wasn't in the bible, he would be written off by the church as a failed ministry. Now he only made it eighteen months and not that many people actually did anything he said.

You know John was a good boy, he mend well, that boy had a good future if he would have gotten out of that wilderness mode, hung out with the pharisees, got in the system did a little bit more networking, showed himself a little bit friendlier, he had a future.

Jesus comes on the scene, this the ultimate picture of a fasted lifestyle, this John the Baptist, said he is the greatest man ever born of a woman, and that is the sort of thing, it is those kind of esteem Jesus would have said about Moses and Elijah, Because of the fasted lifestyle.

Forget what everybody is telling you out there, the Word of God is the standard God goes by.

I'm locking into this roadmap called the Bible and I'm going for it. Burning all my bridges, putting all my eggs in one basket that it's true. Throw my strength, my money, my time, everything. I'm going all the way. And I'm putting all of my hope on the fact it's true, and there is an eternal life and all the strength is returned in multiplied measures beyond anything we can ever imagine.

"Yes! God, Yes!! I did it, I did it"

You got X amount of decades to live on the earth to decide if you want to do it all the way, part of the way or a little bit of the way.

I want to go all the way and I know many of you do want too.

In giving, giving money, we're actually fasting our financial strength, when you give somebody money, in the Kingdom of God I'm talking about, part of your resource base are giving it away. You give them that money, it is not yours anymore. You can't influence with that money anymore, you gave it to them.

So your going, "Lord did You see?"

It's because its the dynamic , the invisible God who delays.

"I gave that money, I don't have it now, I could use it now"

The Lord says, "I know"

"Are You gonna give it back to me?"

"Yes"

"More than I gave?"

"Oh, yes"

"soon or not so soon?"

"You'll see"

“Ohhhh I don’t like that answer”

“You’ll see, but I want you to keep giving.”

You give your financial strength.

And in serving and in prayer we are giving our time and again our time is our, is a huge resource to us, is our time. I mean, money is power, but time is life. You can get money back, you can never get time back. Your time is your life.

You sit in the prayer room, or your serving kind of in the back row, nobody sees you out of the way, God sees you and your serving or you are pouring yourself out. The Lord sees it, you can never ever give that hour again. You can’t lose it if you gave it to God and you can never recover it if you didn’t.

In food we are giving our physical and emotional and our mental strength. Again, I mean food, there is the element of hunger, but it is not the real essence of what fasting food is about. It’s about being spacey and kind of like “I know what I’m trying to say, but I just can’t say it, and I go come on, come on, but you don’t have the energy to engage in the productive ways that you’re used to but you are asking the Lord to make up the difference because you’re embracing this weakness.

We do all of these as expressions of love to Him. And I’m repeating myself, to position myself.

We are doing it to say we love you, but we are positioning ourselves to receive more of the inspiration of the Spirit. And He does return it all back to us. All of the strength we give to Him, He returns much of it in this age, delayed, multiplied and delayed, but the vast majority of it He returns in the age to come. But even when He gives us in this age, you know its like I’ve given money many, many times and He’s given me not twice, but ten times. I think, “Lord, that’s really good.” He goes, “mmm, not so good, it’s good compared to you and the guys on the earth. If you give an investment and get tenfold back, to the human mind that is good, but I’m about to give you a billion times back in the resurrection. This ten times is gonna look different when you see how much I’ve got stored up for you economically.”

And so I like the tenfold, but don’t get so excited about the tenfold, you lose sight of the billion fold that is yours economically.

So yay we get some return in this age, but it is only a little bit even if it is only tenfold.



## GIVING MONEY: OUR FINANCIAL STRENGTH

Giving money, giving our financial strength, Jesus said when you do a charitable deed, now in Mat. 6 all five of them were there, the charitable deed has the charitable, the economical dimension and it has the deed, the service dimension, this one has two aspects of the fasted lifestyle and different translations will say it different, but both of them are repeated over and over in the New Testament. There's the money part, the charitable part and there is the deed, the service part. And in this particular verse, Mat. 6:3, He puts the two concepts together. Now the key, God sees in secret, not just that you're in secret, God's in secret, like God are you really watching? Are You really? God's in secret and you're in secret. And He says, "I don't want you to make a big deal out of it, because you are doing it for Me, with Me. You are not doing it for them. If you do, the psychological human dynamics get minimized and cut short. Your doing it because you love Me. I don't need your service or your money, I don't really, I've got plenty of guys to do that job, and plenty of money. I want your heart, something's happening in you. That is why it is critical we don't make it known to others. The human dynamic with the holy spirit is cut short.

This is about encountering God, not about getting ahead, on the church Org chart, that is not, or in the market place org chart. It is about interacting with the one who sees on His timetable. He says, "don't talk. If you talk the whole process is minimized. It is not that I'm mad at you, but the human dynamics that I wanted to work in you, don't work if you are getting all the coo-do's from everybody for what you're doing. I want you to do it without any response, and for me for that muscle to be strengthened, over and over and over and over and by doing that pushup, thousands of times, your inner man get galvanized in a resolve for righteousness and my Spirit will strengthen you.

Don't short-circuit it by hinting the story so people give you the credit and then the whole pressure of reaching is now minimized. The reach of your spirit to do it for God and only God. That is okay if people find out, like you know the one guy finds out and you're like, "Oh no! you found out!" No, just chill, not 'n big deal.

Jesus really hits this thing hard, you know in the issue of money in Mat. 6:19, He goes, treasure on earth. Don't lay up a treasure on earth, lay it up in heaven, verse 21 gives the psychological dimension here, He goes, where your money is, but really our treasure is all of these five things, not just money. Because as you seek to do this, which many of you have, you know that all of these are your treasure. Not just your money. Where your treasure is, where you give, where you invest these five things, there your emotions, your heart will be invigorated, inspired and expanded. Your

heart will be wherever you invest these five things. Now He is talking about money, for sure in this passage, but since it is in the context of all these five things, it's the next verse after it, because the five are listed in verses 1 - 18 and in verses 19 Jesus says, let me talk about the treasure and He is talking about money, but He says your emotions, verse 21 are dynamically connected with what you do with it.

“Lord fill me with Love”

And the Lord says, “Position yourself to be filled with love”

“No, I don't wanna position myself, I just want to sovereignly fill me with love while I'm doing something other than.”

“Position yourself, pour your treasure into Me and I'll move your heart.” Verse 21

“No, I wanna do what everyone else does, but I wanna be filled with love. I wanna wake up filled with love one day”.

The Lord says, “No, I want you to do it My way. Because where ever your treasure is, your emotions will get stirred up in that direction.

That is interesting, she only gives these two pennies, and the guys come along in verse four and they give millions or whatever. Jesus said, “the two pennies is worth more than the millions, because the millions were out of surplus and she gave more, because it cost her more and I don't care about the money, I don't need your money, it is your heart I'm after. She gave more, she expressed love that was more costly to me than the rich guys did. The rich guys gave a lot more, but it was surplus. It didn't cost them. They didn't even notice it was gone.”

It is not the amount, it is the costliness of the sacrifice. Because the costliness is what the statement of love is that move God's heart.

David understood this. When he was going to make a sacrifice before God in 2 Sam 24 he said, “I'll buy the field.”

And the guy goes, “I'll give it to you”

And David goes, “No, I'm not going to offer an offering to God that cost me nothing,”

Because David was going to offer a sacrifice, he was offering to buy the land to make the sacrifice.

And the guy goes, “I'll give you the land, my goodness, you are king David, I'll give it to you”

And David goes, “No, I'll never offer something to God that did not cost me personally in a significant way, I won't do it. It must cost me.”

That was an amazing revelation that David had of what Jesus told about the widow.

So I'm talking about you know the eighteen year old student can be giving in a costly way that just might be pennies compared to the other guy who is giving out of surplus and to God his giving more, but here's the problem, I've seen this in the thirty years, many young guys have that spirit of devotion, because it is easy to give when they have a hundred dollars or a thousand, but that same guy thirty years later, can't give when he has a million. When he was twenty and only had a thousand, he could give half of it, when he has 'n million, he still struggles giving that thousand dollars, when he's got a million. I've watched it many times.

David said, "I've set my affection on God's house"

David gave a hundred billion dollars, he said, "I won't offer anything that doesn't cost me."

Now, he was the head of state, and had lots of spoils of war, but still, David said in 1 Chron 22:14, "I have taken much trouble to prepare. I have gone to the extreme, because my affection is on this."

And his affection wasn't on the building the House of Prayer. His affection was on God who was the object of the House of Prayer.

This issue of money is really important. I've seen many sincere people, but they can't get it right on this subject. I mean, they don't even tithe. But when they tithe it is not even out of a surplus, they can't even, they have so much money but it doesn't matter. The Lord says, "I want your heart. I want all of your strength. That doesn't mean give all of your money, but I want you to give until you feel it in your devotion to me."

You can read this on your own, Malachi 1:6-10. Really amazing passage about money. Where God told the leadership, He said, "I don't want your offerings that are halfhearted, you keep them. I don't want them." He said, "I want it to cost you. I want it to be something that matters to you."

Because I got you all interested now, I'll read it. I mean it is a really poignant passage of scripture that hits the nail right on the head. God says a son honors his father, a servant his master, well if I'm the Father, where is my honor, if I am the master, where is my reverence?

Thus says the Lord to the leadership, "you despise Me!"

And they go, “We despise you? How could you say that, we are in fulltime ministry. We’re offering the sacrifices.”

He goes, “I’ll tell you how you despise me”

Verse 7 “you give defiles food on My altar. You give the food that spoiled it. You give the food that nobody wants. You give the food you can’t use anyway.”

He goes, “I don’t want that. I don’t need that offering on that altar. I want you. You give me the thing you can’t use anyway or that you won’t miss.”

they said, “what do you mean we gave you defiled food?”

He says, “Here’s what you say, the table of the Lord is contemptible,” which means, because the table of the Lord means the offering, “it’s a burden for us to have to bother with this thing, about giving our good animals to the table. We don’t wanna bother with the good animals,”

He says, “I heard your conversations. It is a burden to you that you have to give to me.”

He goes, “I’ve heard you”

He goes, “then, when you do give me an offering, you give me the blind animals and the lame ones. the ones nobody wants.”

He goes, “while you have your governor over for dinner, pull out the diseased lamb and then offer it to the governor.”

The guy goes, “no”

He goes, “well then, why are you doing it to me?”

“Well God You are not eating it anyway, the governor is eating it.

“I want that which is costly to you. I don’t care if it is the two cents, the two mites of a widow, or the hundred billion of David, I want that which cost you economically. I want you to love Me with your strength.”

Verse 10 - The Lord says, “I wish somebody will just shut the doors of the temple. Just shut the doors, don’t even offer this, it offends Me, that you just want to give Me what you don’t use anyway.”

Beloved, the body of Christ is so like this today across the Western world. I made a determination when I was in my early twenties, I was gonna live a simple lifestyle and I was gonna give God the lion share of everything He gave me, the rest of my life, economically.

I said, “Lord, I’m gonna give you my strength and my money, my time and whatever money you give me,” and I’m not gonna tell you what I have done or haven’t done, but I’ll say this, it is a decision that I do not regret having made thirty years ago.

I said, “I am going to give You the Lion share, the vast majority of what You give me.”

I determined that as a young man, twenty one, twenty two, something like that.

It was because of these kind of passages, I wanted to love Him with all of my strength. Am I doing it? I don’t know, I try, I hope.

I might stand before the Lord and He goes, “hey that was good, or He may say, well that was good almost,”

“Oh no, don’t say almost”

So you don’t know until you get there exactly, but I wanna challenge you on this subject. Don’t go with the status quo of how the body of Christ treats money. Go with the extreme expression of love before God.

### **SERVING PEOPLE: OUR STRENGTH TIME AND ENERGY**

The out of the way service. Everybody can serve up front. You are giving time and energy you could have used to build your own agenda, but your serving the out of the way thing. And it doesn’t just mean the poor man on the street, that too. But even just the guy in the Fellowship that nobody is helping out who needs help. It is that guy, don’t just look for the random homeless person on the other side of town. The guy you actually live with. The person three rows over, that is the one as well, don’t just wait for next month for the outreach, hypothetically.

We wanna serve, because we are giving to people the time we could have given ourself.

Now I wanna say this, some people do that and they take all their time before God and they give it away, because have time before God and they think that is personal time.

No, God demands you give your heart to Him. Give your playtime to that person, not your time with God. Give your recreation and entertainment time, don’t give your prayer time away to somebody. Give your networking time, your socializing time, your entertainment time. Don’t give your fasting and prayer time away when you serve. Give your playtime and your networking.

“Well if I do that, the rich guy comes and I can’t meet with him and the doors don’t open”

The Lord says, “that’s okay, serve the brother anyway and keep your prayer time.”

I am only saying this because I am trying to be helpful. I am not trying to be mean, I actually, I know the way that this works. I’m actually being truthful because I am trying to help you. I am fighting for your greatness. I’m contending for your greatness in God’s love.

### **FORGIVENESS AND BLESSING OUR ENEMIES: OUR WORDS AND REPUTATION**

Now you would think here in the House of Prayer I would spend more time on the prayer part. But for time sake I think you’ll understand, but Prayer is a time investment. It really is. And there is emotions, because you can sit in a room and do nothing. To engage take some emotional energy. So it is time and it is an emotional engagement. It is not enough, I don’t want you to sit in a chair and pass an hour or two, I wanna engage. It takes energy to do that and it takes time to sit there.

When we bless our enemies, we are fasting our reputation and our words. By fasting words, we refuse to come to our own defense.

When we restrain our speech, we don’t use our words to defend ourselves, we use our words to bless.

An enemy as I have mentioned is anyone who blocks your goals. It doesn’t have to be an unbeliever, it doesn’t have to be a guy with horns, it is not the devil. I mean just that one guy, you know the one that is in the room, he is blocking your goals. He is in the way, he is causing you to loose out on a few things.

The Lord says, “I want you to bless him and trust me to make it up to you.”

“Yah but how will anybody know, if I don’t tell?”

The Lord says, you know I talked to one lady she goes, “I’m just doing it because it is the truth.” And I said, “so you are really into the truth?”

She goes, “Yay”

So I goes, “lets ask God to tell the whole truth about you.”

“Well I’m not that into the truth”

I say, “your not into the truth, you want it to go good for you.”

I say, “I appreciate that, but it is not because you are so zealous for truth. You want things to go good for you. Because if you are zealous for truth, all of the negative about your life, you would gladly tell everybody on a microphone.”

She said, “I guess maybe it is not the truth, maybe you’re right.”

I said, “let’s do this, let’s bless the guy, and let’s wait.”

She said, “Yeh but I can’t wait, I’ve already waited. I mean it was Monday he did this, it is Thursday, I’ve been waiting.”

I said to her, “a year from today, let’s talk again.”

## **FASTING FOOD: OUR STRENGTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY**

Fasting Food, it is about physical strength. But there is something about our spirit becomes sensitized when we fast physically.

## **THE INTERNAL REWARD OF FASTING: THE ANOINTING TO LOVE JESUS MORE**

When we fast, our spirit becomes sensitized.

Tenderized when we fast food. We fast in all these five areas.

## **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

Some practical suggestions:

First of all, fasting is basic to Christian life.

Some people say, “Man you’re with this group that do fasting, it’s radical.”

I go, “no, no, no, no, it is not radical. It is normal Christianity.”

See if they think it is radical, then they think it is optional.

Fasting is not radical. These five things are not radical. This is normal Christianity 101. There is no Christianity that is devoid of these five things. It is not radical. These are not optional. This is the way of the spirit in the kingdom in this age.

I wanna encourage you, fast a day a week, try two it is better. Ask for the grace of fasting.

Tithe, but don't settle with tithing. I've never been contend with tithing. You wanna tithe, you wanna belief God for twenty en thirty persent, you wanna give your strength because God is watching. It is not that so much people is watching, but God is watching.

Say, “Lord I want you to trust me with billions of dollars, so I'm gonna show you that this thing I want it for you”

He says, “I'm watching you, I'm watching you”

In your prayer bible study time, get a bible study plan. I want to encourage you, if you don't have a bible study plan, (I did this some years ago, it's been a while since I've done it) because I've got another plan, read ten chapters of the new testament every day. You will go through the whole New Testament once a month.

I did that for a couple of years. A guy told me that, I said, “really,”

Because you know the one reason a lot of people don't read the Bible, they don't know where to start.

So the guy said here's what you do, “you read ten chapters and the next day you just pick up where you left off.”

I went, “that is brilliant.”

I was only about twenty and I thought that is brilliant.

it worked.

Now I wanna talk to a couple of you zealots.

Then a guy told me, he said, “I do, I read twenty chapters a day and read through the New Testament twice a month.”

I went, “Oh”, I was about twenty one, twenty two, I went “Oh no, a human can't do that.”



Now I don't know if I made it a year, but about a year I did that. I said, "Hey if that guy can, I can." And I determined nobody was gonna be more committed than I was. Yes, there was a little extra elements to the whole thing going on, but it still worked.

One thing I wanna tell young people, over my years of ministry, so much spiritual life is lost in the evenings. And weekends. And I realize in internships you're kind of hemmed in. That is one of the reasons we do Friday and Saturday nights. It really is. In my years of pastoring, so much spiritual ground is lost on weekends. It's painful to me, because somewhere it is kind of the unspoken law of the kingdom, weekends is free time for the flesh.

If it is free time, go deep in God. Go deep in God. When you're done with the programs, I wanna challenge you, take this fasting of your time called Prayer in the Word and go deep in God.

I've been since, I mean a lot of you have been in these programs and gone and I just want to say this to you, I have determined that when I was about I don't know, maybe eighteen, nineteen, twenty, something like that, I'm fifty three now, so it is a long time ago, that I was gonna spend every Friday and Saturday night for the rest of my life, with a few exceptions, before the Lord in Word and prayer. It is thirty years later plus, and 90% of the time I've done it, every Friday and Saturday night for thirty plus years.

And I have zero regrets.

I was twenty one, twenty two, twenty three. All the guys were out doing that and I was in the little prayer room. Three people for years, five people and I said, "no I'm gonna give the strength of my weekends to God."

Then I woke up one day and I was Thirty two, thirty three.

I woke up another day and I was forty two, forty three

Now I am fifty two, fifty Three and I'm still doing it and I'm gonna do it until the Lord returns.

Amen, Let' stand.

## **Session 8: First Commandment: End-of-the-Age Ministry Paradigm**

### **THE BRIDAL PARADIGM OF THE KINGDOM**

Thank you in the name of Jesus, we ask you for the Spirit of grace and the Spirit of power to come and touch our heart and Lord I ask you even now for impartation, in Jesus name, Amen.

The eighth session of this course of the first commandment were gonna be looking at loving Jesus through faithfulness in ministry. And what I'm talking about is the first commandment expressing it in our lives as ministers of the gospel, whether your audience is one or ten or a 1000, we're all ministers of the gospel. So my focus tonight is expressing wholehearted love to him in the faithfulness to the true message.

One of the descriptions of the overcomers of the book of Revelation, they are faithful witness and the issue of compromising the message is a very prevalent issue today in the body of Christ, the compromising of the message because of the fear of man, and because of the fear of the loss of advantage and opportunity. And the fear real, we really will lose opportunity if are faithful to the message. It is not hypothetical, it's real so in this session I want to talk about loving God with all of our heart as messengers.

Again whether our audience is one, whether it's on an e-mail, whether it's to the little boy in the neighborhood that you're witnessing too, it doesn't matter what the audience is what I'm talking about is a intentional expression of love to Jesus because I mean by being faithful to the message, the truth of the message. And secondly, which is not my primary message in this course, showing love to people by being faithful to the message. Because we change the nature of the message, when we lowered the standards of truth. Though the people may be pleased in the short run their spirit in their spiritual life is injured when the truth is not spoken to them.

There's a prevailing, I mean it's a tide of wickedness that's emerging in the church today of compromise of the true message and the motivation I am confident for certain, or part of the motivation is the fear of man and the desire which is the same thing to gain an advantage from people's approval.

Beloved let me tell you when we do that we are making a statement about the quality of our love to Jesus, and we are injuring the people that were lying to, and I believe that the compromise of the

truthful message, and there's many different expressions of it is really an issue of failure in love to Jesus.

I don't believe it's, mostly at the leadership level least, I don't think it's mostly failure of clarity, lack of clarity, I believe it's failure in love. I believe the clarity is there but the cost is too high so we draw back. We lowered the standards we blur the lines and we gain the applause of people but the grieve of Jesus's heart.

Again the issue in the book of Revelation in the generation Lord returns, is the issue of faithful witnesses. Now Jesus calls himself a faithful witness several times in the book Revelation is referred to that, he personally says it and He is refer to that by others. What Jesus is saying when he calls himself a faithful witness. "I know the price you pay for love by being truthful. I know what it means to hold the line when the anger rises and the rejection sets in. So when Jesus calls himself a faithful witness He is not just saying, He's not just making a statement that what he says is true, He is certain that statement is made, He is saying, "I understand what it cost you to be a faithful witness. I am, I was one on the earth, in the flesh and in my humanity and it cost me and I know the pain of it and I know what you're going through and I take it personally, I take it personal when your a faithful witness.

I find that the closer that my ministry paradigm or perspective paradigms just a fancy word for perspective, if our ministry perspective, if we see the big picture that Jesus is a Bridegroom, and that is what this parable is about and the people are his bride forever and it's a relationship of the most tender in deep love, this is the message that were focused on and this is what were contending for and this is what were standing for, it it's worth paying the price of rejection and the rejection is not hypothetical, the rejections real. It is the problem with some people in leadership, they think that the cost is hypothetical. No everybody who stands for the truth will be rejected by believers and unbelievers alike they will be, they will receive scorn and ridicule.

I want to stand before the Lord and say, "I loved you with all my strength, all my heart," that's what this course is about, and "I did it not just my personal life but I did in my public life, my public witness." And I am not saying this is some bravado thing but I'm saying it for those that I'm associated with long-term. I expect a onslaught of criticism even within those who name the name of Christ, all kinds of negative statements in our future because we want to buy the grace of God, love Jesus by being faithful to the truth.

This is not a small thing. Our loyalty to truth is rooted in our intentional love for Jesus and agIN, its love for people that focusing on the love for Jesus part, but the love for people part is a very worthy once.

We injure them spiritually when we lie to them, we have the evangelist summit this weekend. One of the biggest areas of which there's lies is the subject of evangelism, one of the biggest areas of lies and the second or the two biggest once I can think of is first in the area of evangelism and second the second biggest group of liars of the church are the prophets. I mean this, if I had to pick it, I would say first it's the people who tell the message of salvation and second, it's the people who tell the message of the future of what's coming. And the people who lie about salvation, they tell people several different lies, I don't mean the evangelist, everybody talking about salvation, we're all supposed to.

Number one is by telling the lie that all religions end up, they all get saved at the end or nearly they all do. That's an absolute lie. There's only one way of salvation and it's through Jesus so that's lie number one, that we all get there sooner or later and those lies are being told by evangelists on television more and more on the airwaves and it is like it's a grievous lie.

Lie number two which is more prevalent today but that this first lie is increasing, is a lie that you can be saved without repenting. The idea that if you repeat a prayer, Jesus is committed to say "yes". Beloved many people pray and ask Jesus into their heart and he says, "no".

He does, He goes "no, you must come to me on my terms I am not coming to you on your terms or the terms of the evangelist, or the church leader whatever. But because of love we're gonna tell people a message of salvation that is anchored in allegiance to Jesus in truth. We're gonna tell them there is no other way, because there isn't. There's only one man who was perfect that he took the penalty of the guilty, the innocent one became guilty so that the guilty ones, us could become innocent as a free gift. It is not a matter of religious elitism, our religion is better than yours.

It's an issue of justice. If any other religion can produce a perfect man, that is willing to take the wrath of God for the others then we have something to talk about. It's issue of justice not religious elitism. When I talk to leaders or people of other religions, they go, "you think your religions is better than ours, your intolerant and you have a spirit of superiority and pride."

I go, "no, it's an issue of justice. In the court of God is there anyone that will answer for your guilt? There's only one I can answer and it's just an issue of justice. He paid the penalty, we get the free gift of salvation. If he didn't our religion wouldn't work, it's about justice. But then again, the next problem, and it's about allegiance to Jesus, that really it's, because the fear of man that motivates God's servants to dump the message down and dilute it and reduce it, really it is the desire, often not

always, sometimes it is legitimate confusion or deception. Sometimes the messengers really just are confused or they just are deceived but I believe mostly it's an issue of not wanting the approval of man, and wanting to get a response that they can boast in.

The Lord says, "I love you but I take this personal when you do this, it's personal. There is no such thing as salvation without faith and repentance. You don't come and repeat a prayer and you're guaranteed your saved. No I've seen people repeat a prayer and just by the grace of God they really got saved. But I have no right to tell them that I have no knowledge of that. I don't know what's going on in their heart.

We must tell them they come with a full yes in their heart, now an unbeliever, a new believer's "yes" is real small, but it's there all, it's as big as they have. They don't even know the issues hardly, but their "yes" is big to them even though when they look back it was just a little is a little bit of insight, but it was all the insight they had and that is wholeheartedness.

We must call people not to perfection, they're gonna fail many times, but to a cry in their spirit to get themselves to the Lord. That is the message that we must hold the line on. God is so good and powerful, I've seen people, they didn't even pray the prayer and they got saved. They heard the message and just somewhere in the movements of their heart they go, "Oh God" and they start crying and there they are. And we go, "Hey just wait a second you didn't give us a chance to lead you to a prayer.

My point is as ministers of the gospel whether one on water one on ten or one on a thousand, we must be loyal to Jesus in love by being faithful witnesses.

Well the biggest area of liars in the body of Christ I believe is in the area of evangelism. I really do. Not evangelists but the area of speaking the message of salvation and the second one is the area of the prophets. Not necessary prophets per se, talking about the future that mostly good is coming and only good. Now here's the good news, great good is coming, but it's coming in context to great trouble. It's not either or, it's both and they are happening simultaneous together.

The definition of a false prophets is someone who says, "peace, peace" when on the Lord's agenda it is not peace. Now peace as a principle in the Bible, is a high value in the Bible. I mean Jesus is called the Prince of peace, He is the one that makes a way of peace. He's whole kingdom is about peace.

But a true message applied in a wrong timing, in the wrong context is a false prophet. In the Old Testament the false prophets were defined several times and that's the most that's one, I can think of another one that is prophesying of the idols and stuff, but that is one of the prominent definitions of

the false prophet. They're promising peace in a wrong application in a wrong timing the wrong setting and their lying about the Lord's agenda.

Now it's, now if you go the other direction you tell the truth about salvation and the truth about trouble that's coming you will lose so many friends on earth but you will have lots of friends in heaven. Hmmm that's cute but I'm not trying to cute, you will lose many friends on earth if you tell the truth about the nature of salvation and you tell the truth about the trouble in the future, you will lose many friends. But you do it not in a kind of heroic bravado spirit, you do it out of love. There's a man that loves you and you love him and He is at the right hand of the father, He is fully God, He is fully man.

Now this parable in Matthew chapter 22 is the parable, a well-known one, that the kingdom of God is likened to a king, which is the Father arranging a marriage for his son and so Jesus, here He is in the final message before his final public message Matthew 21 and 22. Here He is, it's His last time before the nation of Israel and he declares to them this parable. Now this parable, we're gonna read it real brief and then break it down, has an application. It has two main applications, this parable is a message to the messengers it's a, we learn and we apply it as messengers of the word of God, we get insight into the nature of the message we're proclaiming.

And then secondly it's applied to the recipients of the message that they should not compromise when they hear the message but the messengers are to be focused on the message that on the Lord's heart. And Jesus is gonna lay it out here as the ultimate faithful witness.

Now we want to be one more word on faithful witness we want to be a faithful witness to Jesus not a faithful witness to a secular culture. The culture which is permeating the church. The church in America is so permeated with a secular compromising culture, there's very little difference in most gatherings of believers between the culture outside the walls or the culture in the walls. It's permeated with darkness and compromise and what I hear constantly from the pulpits is a witness, a faithful witness to affirm the culture. It's a man pleasing a testimony to get an applause from the culture. So you got to decide, are you gonna be a faithful witness to the values of the following culture, that you will echo them, repeat them, affirm them or will you be a faithful witness rooted in love to the King of Kings.

You cannot do both. And again the book Revelation repeats, I mean often emphasizes that the overcomers, they will be so truthful to the testimony that God gives them that they will not love their life even when it causes their death. Revelation 12 verse 11 they will give the word of their testimony they will get a true witness to what God is put in their heart, based on the word of God.

And it says they won't love their lives even to a degree that it cost them a death at the hands of their persecutors.

Let's look at just a little bit of the parable here, Matthew chapter 22:1, "for the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king", that's the Father, "he arranged a marriage for his son". Now the Father from eternity passed from the past, ages past has been planning a wedding. Now this is gonna give a different angle, a different lens, a different paradigm, this is what a paradigm is, a perspective a point of view into the nature of the kingdom Jesus and let me tell you my Father has been planning a wedding from eternity past. This whole thing is about a wedding.

Verse three, now the first point of focus is the messengers, the servants. He sent out messengers and the message, the nature of the message was to call the people to a wedding. Now I don't believe in calling the people to a wedding you need to say the word wedding. I don't believe that's the point, the message of the wedding means that Jesus has opened his heart to a deep relationship. He wants a deep and profound heart-to-heart relationship in love, that's the message. You don't always have the opportunity and a short witness to explain the dynamics of the wedding, but you can tell the truth of the wedding which is the open hearted giving ourselves to him because he gave himself to us at the heart level in love, that's the message.

Women are the sons of God and men are the bride of Christ and what that mean as sons of God, God has made available his power, His throne, He has opened up the power of his throne so therefore men and women we are sons of God, that means we have access to his throne, his power. As the bride of Christ, He has opened up his heart, we have access to His heart, His emotions as the Bride of Christ. It is not about being male or female neither one of them. It is about having access to the throne, your moving power as sons of God, or you have access to his heart you touches emotions, Bride of Christ. And that's the message were calling them to. We're not giving them a kind of a quick fire insurance clause, though it is biblical to warn them to flee the wrath of hell, it really is biblical, you know some guys kind of in the vein I'm in, they kind of get carried away, we're not just interested in escaping hell, beloved we are very interested in escaping hell, we really are. In don't want in any way minimize that reality, we do want to escape hell. But the message is not first about escaping hell, its first about encountering the heart of God in a bridal relationship forever. And again you don't need to say wedding and bridal to make the point, that is our first thought, not to say the first thing you're going to say, but that's whats in your heart when you're looking at that.

“Holy Spirit showed me a way to tell them not only what they will be saved from, hell,” we want to make that clear, “but what they would be saved too, encountering the heart of God for ever in a marriage relationship.”

Our message involves that which were saved from and that which were saved too.

In Luke chapter 3 verse seven John the Baptist asked the Pharisees, he goes, “who warned you to flee the wrath to come?” he says, “you're coming here you look like you're repenting,” he goes, “I got a feeling you're not”. That's the kind of indication you get in Luke three, but John was, he hit the point, he goes, “who told you that you needed to flee the wrath?” So we need the wrath of God in the message, there is something were escaping, it's true it's real and it's a powerful part of the message that's nearly extinct in the church today. I guarantee you, those of you that are in this summit and however hard the teaching, a promise you your hearing the whole message, because today mostly evangelism is about feeling better about your circumstances.

Your life's a mess, if you accept Jesus you won't be depressed and the money thing will sort out later, you'll get some friends. You might be under press soon, the money thing may sort out, you may get a few friends are none of those may happen in the immediate. Salvation is not mostly about making things easier, now although I have witnessed things getting easier for people many times, while they get harder in other ways because of their faithful witness to the Lord, so it's both ends. But our message is a witness of that which their fleeing rooted in eternity and that which they're gaining that's rooted in eternity, and of course they both have temporal applications now but they're both rooted in the realm of eternity, and as a faithful witness we want to declare this.

So verse three, the Father sent out servants and heat the nature of the message is unmistakable they are to call the people to a wedding not just to observe it, but to be a part of it in an intimate way as the Bride.

Verse five, the people made light of it and we'll look at all the verses later on in the notes, and I'm giving you an abbreviated overview of the of the parable so you get the feeling of it. Verse five the people made light of it and they went there own ways. Verse 8 He sent out his servants again, and what He said are the same message, the wedding is ready, it is not just the message, you will get more money, you will have more friends, you will feel happier soon, if you pray this prayer.

Now, that wasn't the message, though I love it when that happens when people get happier soon that's cool, but that isn't the core point of what I'm offering them. I'm telling them there is a wedding, there is a God who is so good, whose heart is so wide open, and He's lovesick over you but only on His terms. You know why he demands his terms? For many reasons, but one reason is



his terms are the only terms that cause love to grow. He is love. His terms, there are no other terms in which love would grow. There are no other terms. Not like He's the boss so it's my way or the highway. It is true, it is his way or the height, it is true but it's not about flexing his muscles, it's about him insisting on love.

He says, "it is My way, but I know something you don't know, the other way won't end up in love long-term, it just won't I promise you I know the the end from the beginning."

But notice in verse eight the call the second time, is to a wedding, verse nine, He says again go to highways go to the byways, as many as you find, invite them to the wedding. Not just to get more money, to get happier, and to get more friends, tell them there is an eternal wedding. Again you don't have to use the term wedding, I don't think that's the point, but the reality is what were aiming at, the nature of the message is that they would not just be saved from something temporal, a hard life, they would be saved to something. That is encounter with God that they get in this age and matures throughout eternity that is pleasurable beyond description.

Then at the end of the parable, in the same context, it's a little bit later on, Jesus gives the great commandment you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart all your soul your mind, the point I want to make Jesus gives the Shema Israel, the great commandment love the Lord your God with all your heart, He gives it in the setting of some hours later he has some dialogue, they send some guys to test Him, but it's in the context of the message of the kingdom being like a marriage relationship, He calls them to wholehearted love, the two are connected.

Now again we're not just calling the people to love God, that's the point of the whole course, but tonight were being more specific I'm calling the messengers to be truthful to the nature of the message. The message is about a wedding, and Jesus tells them in verse 7 it's about loving Me with all your heart and strength, why it's because I love you with all of My heart and all of My strength. It's about being equally yoked in love forever.

Can you imagine the indescribable reality of the Genesis 1 God, the God who did, who created Genesis one. He loves me! And you! With all of His love He loves you, with all of his mind he loves you, the Genesis 1 God.

Beloved this is indescribable good news. This beats Thanksgiving easier the next two years in our circumstances, it is way better than that, but I love it when things get easier in my circumstances. I like that part, but that's not the core, that's not the entry into the kingdom. Although Holy Spirit may lead to in the occasion to be the opening door conversation and those issues, the Holy Spirit is very creative we're not gonna put Him in a box, but the whole time, even if that's the open door we know where were going to take them conceptionally. To love God with all their heart, because He loves

that with all of His heart, because that's how he loves us and it's a crime of ingratitude for us to be before our Creator and to shun Him in the glory of who He is at all He's given us. It is a crime of incalculable measure that one so beautiful so good so perfect would take such interest in me and I would have no interest in returning it. That is an unthinkable concept in terms of the reality from the heavenly court's point of view.

And I'm saying this to our visitors, we never did through the notes so you don't look at me and go, oh my goodness we are just on the first paragraph. I say no I leave the notes for you to run with, on your own.

Revelation 19:7-9 Jesus, here He is, He's on his last public message, He's standing before his, or he knows is it. Now Matthew chapter 24 & 25 He's gonna talk about the end times, but he does it to the disciples in private. This is His final message, he surely saved the best wine for last. His final message was to give a perspective or a paradigm, same idea, a paradigm of the kingdom from a bridal lence. He's talked about the kingdom as a merchant who is investing His money, as a farmer who worked in the field, as a soldier at war. There's many paradigms of the kingdom but he saves the best one for last. He goes, "now let me tell you the grand picture, it is like a wedding".

It is a wedding, it's not just the picture, it is reality. Beloved, when I meet an unbeliever and I look them in the eyes and I think, indescribable glory is waiting you. It's not just you need to get your life a little happier, but I'm thinking do you do you have any comprehension who you are? I don't say all that to them and throw them off a little bit, but I'm looking at them and I can just feel the Lord's joy, and I am going, to you have whispering in my heart and it's not going to happen every time this way, but I, or Im am on an airplane and I am just looking at the people around, and I go indescribable value. They can't begin to comprehend the story that will unfold in their life if they connect with truth.

Yes they will be escape wrath, but they will enter into a realm of tidal wave of love that will consume them, they will just be overwhelmed forever, and it's not just love like everything goes good love. Things really go good, especially in days to come, really good but it's more than that it's an interaction with a man and an interaction with his Father forever, by the Holy Spirit. Forever, forever we're gonna be unspeakably happy for ever, because of the man that loves us and we love Him, because of the interaction. And we're gonna have some really cool houses and streets are nice and the parks are awesome, lots of cool things, but beloved we will have an unspeakable glory, the measure of it. This is what salvation is about.

We don't have any reason to lie to people, to dum the thing down towards all about them getting more money and more friends right now, and to dum it down by telling them that if they pray a prayer it's a settled, then eight months later they give up and they go, "I've tried Christianity." "Now you didn't, you've never tried Christianity".

"Yes I did, that one church told me I did and it didn't work".

"you never tried it, they lied to you"

"Dit they tell you to give your whole heart?"

"No they said if I prayed the prayer, it's that."

"they lied to you. I don't know if they ment to. Probably under the pressure the moment they wanted to get hands raised, and so hey let's go for it."

I don't know why they lied to you, but they did. You give Him all your heart, I promise you it will work, because he's given all of His heart to you.

Revelation chapter 19, John sees now what Jesus was talking about in that parable. John sees by an open vision, for the marriage of the lamb, the marriage of Jesus is coming. Now when Jesus is giving this parable, he knows he has a marriage that's coming. It's not hypotheticals, it is not parabolical, I mean in the sense it is parable but this is not just kind of a etherial idea Jesus is crying out. There He is with the joy set before Him, the people that are responding He endures the cross, He sees the joy of a responsive people, not a very large number, but he sees the beginning of them. There's a marriage of the Lamb, it is coming, verse 8, no verse 7, and the wife is going to make herself ready and the way she makes herself ready is by her wholehearted obedience, the desire for it. I'm not even talking about the obtaining of a not talking about reaching for wholeheartedness. I have not attained to all that I'm reaching for, but if the reach in our spirits is consistent, not perfect but the reach in our spirit is consistent, there's a reach for wholeheartedness, there's a sincerity that's according to the truth.

The Lord doesn't measure me by how much I've attained in every area. He measures my love by the reach to obey him. the reach. And when I fail, I don't cover it up and look for a Bible verse that makes it look okay, we call it sin and we renew our war against it. And the Lord takes that personally and it moves his heart.

So I'm not talking about a standard of maturity that nobody is going to walk in, you know, if you attain to this kind of maturity you are the real deal. No I tell the new believer, now you reach with all of your heart, and again if it's a small "all", but it's the whole "all" they have.

And the Lord's moved the Lord's delighted, the Holy Spirit's presence was on them. It says in verse 8 that on the last day we're gonna wear garments that reflect the quality of our desire to obey Him while we are on the earth.

You and I will have garments in the age to come and they will all be different, nobody's garments with the same. And our garments will openly proclaim the tenacity in our spirit to obey him through the years. I don't know how the Lord figures it all out, but He's really smart, He's a 100% accurate and I'm sure it's gonna be fair, it's gonna be right.

But here's the point I want you to know, your garments will not be like the person that's next to you. They will all be unique. They will be more that everybody has a white robe. It's like we have this glorious city and all the details and some people imagine everybody for billions of years, they all wear the same white T-shirt. God forgot the clothing thing. He had the streets of gold, the mansions, the food the music, the ages.

"I forgot the clothing thing and everybody for billions of years wears the same white T-shirt. I wish I would've had my mind around that at the beginning".

He didn't forget the clothing thing. Every one of us will have garments that reflect our love and it's not for the purpose of boasting before others, but it's a declaration of how dear He is to you. You will wear it openly forever. Beloved it's worth it, it's worth going all the way, it's worth paying the price in the fleshly sense, to press in and to break through.

The God's purpose for creation is to provide a family for Himself. The Father wants a family. But not only that, it's the same sphere of reality, He wants an equally yoked Bride for His Son, He wants an eternal companion for His Son that would reign with him forever. They would be equally yoked in love.

Can you imagine your destiny is to love Him in the same intensity that He loves you. And they equally yoked, doesn't mean the same measure but it means the same intensity with the capacity that you have.

We will love Him like he loves us, His "all" is bigger than our "all" because He's uncreated and eternal as God though He is a man, the mystery of the incarnation.

So be equally yoked in love doesn't mean our capacity is ever the same, but the intensity within our capacity will be the same. Can you imagine living this way forever together. I mean your happy in love, I'm happy in love, we all have our own story with Him and we're sharing with each other. It's gonna be phenomenal, but it starts now. But it starts now, not just then. Our testimony is already been established now.

Jesus referred to himself as a bridegroom. His apostles were called friends of the Bridegroom. The ministries, the first apostles, He goes, “you don't understand this yet, but your message at the end of the day is to be a best man in the wedding, your message, your role is to get people to see who I am as a bridegroom, and then to teach them how to receive my love and return it back and then to get out of the way”. That's what friends of the bridegroom is.

All this is ministries, we're friends of the bridegroom. That's the ideal. We introduce the fiery love of the Bridegroom King, we help them understand it, teach them practical ways to respond. Then when their heart opens, we get out of the way so there's nothing between the embrace of Jesus and his individual believer.

It's not about getting them dependent on us. A friend of the Bridegroom or a best man, they want to get out of the way and help the connection take place in the marriage ceremony. That's what we are as ministries, we're faithful witnesses to the bridegroom God. We're faithful to bring forth people in love. We're not gonna convince them from the Bible that compromise is normal and good. We're gonna tell them that compromised causes them to lose part of their inheritance and He loses some of His inheritance in them, and it never works.

We're faithful witnesses to the Bridegroom God, and we're faithful witnesses to the Bride. We don't lie so that they applaud us. We tell the truth the best we know by the grace of God.

That's what a friend of the bridegroom God does. They're committed to not lying when they lose an advantage for telling the truth. And I assure you, you will lose advantage in this age by telling this truth. It's really cool here, everybody here agrees. It is not so cool out there.

Now I want to point out paragraph D, it is important. Just as you read this more you know that that the most is not so we won't really get to that Matthew 21 to 25. Jesus comes into Jerusalem in Matthew 21. Here we are in a 22, the same message actually. It's the same day, Matthew, 21 and 22. He's talking openly in Jerusalem. And in Matthew 24, 25 He still Jerusalem at the Mount of Olives, but it's now a personal talk, but it's one continuum it's one reality, and then He goes to the cross, Matthew 26.

But here's the point I want to make, when Jesus comes in Jerusalem on that donkey, now what a famous messianic prophecy which means a prophecy about the Messiah, was Zachariah 9:9.

In Zechariah 9:9 it says the Messiah, in essence, will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. So Jesus, you know for His teen years or whatever, I don't know exactly how this works, but he's been thinking about the day he would ride into Jerusalem on that donkey. He knows He is the Messiah and He

knows Zachariah 9:9 is about Him. He is the word of God, He was there when Zachariah first received the prophecy.

So here He is on that day, He's going, "Oh Father, here it is, wow I'm on the donkey, going into Jerusalem, this is huge." And the people are crying "Hosanna, hosanna".

He knows they're going to betray Him, they're gonna turn and He's gonna die. He's positive of this, but He knows it's a foretaste of when He comes on the white horse next. His next time into Jerusalem is on a white horse as the conquering King.

But he knows his Zachariah 9:9. My point is this these four chapters, Matthew 21, 22, 23, 24, 24 against that these five chapters, they have an eschatological tone to them. They have an eschatological, an end-time. He has, most of his teaching has an end-time application to it. He is on the donkey, He is captured with the significance of what's about to happen in his death and its meaning for world history.

When you read Matthew chapter 22, this parable, don't just look at sterile principles, and you know some people break the parable down in just a purely academic way. Catch the emotion of what Jesus had. His in Jerusalem at his last time on the donkey, He knows his next time is the horse. He know He is going to the cross He is going to have a bride, it's about a wedding, it's forever and he's doing it as a man in the flesh. It's a real human body and in and real natural time and space and histories, He's on the earth doing it. He is not just inhabited the ages past looking forward to it happening and the drama is very intense.

And that's the setting where he calls them to love them with all of his heart, because He is in the flow of the wedding proclamation. It is about love. So I want you to read these chapters with an end-time or an eschatological tone to it, because you'll miss a lot if you don't read it through that lense.

### **THE KINGDOM MESSAGE: EVANGELISM AS AN INVITATION TO THE WEDDING**

Look at the passage again, verse 3, He sent out his servants to invite them to a wedding. They were not willing, verse 4, again He send servants, and here's what the Father said, "tell them, see I prepared my dinner my oxen, the fattened cattle are killed, come to the wedding."

We're supposed to tell the unbelievers and the believers. I am telling you tonight, see, for the father said, "see draw their attention, there's a dinner. It is called the marriage supper of the Lamb. There's a dinner and its ready, see. Do you see there's a dinner and it's ready. You're invited to it. And in the language of that culture He said, my oxen and fattened cattle are killed. This is a abundance, there's

an abundance. This is a dinner that's lavish, that is extravagant. The fattened cattle and the oxen, this is the most expensive meal that a normal family in Israel would maybe never ever be able to host a dinner at this level. Their reading it, extravagance, extravagance, extravagance. The Father is saying, "tell them I am extravagant in detail. There will be an abundance. The dinner is beyond anything they can grasp in the full grandeur of it."

Everything is ready and what Jesus is saying everything is ready what He's saying is, "I'm about to pay the price".

They don't know what he means what he says everything is ready, but what He means is, "I'm about to pay the price in a few days, where nothing can stop the wedding from occurring."

He is faced with something like to go to Jerusalem, He was resolved, He says, 'it's as good as done, there's nothing that could turn it back, the wedding is ready and it's lavish and it's extravagant and that's what you're invited you'.

That this is the content that the messengers are to be focused on. My question is this, as evangelists, as prophetic people, as pastor, as apostolic people, as teachers, is this your message? Because the Father said it three times, "tell them each time, come to a wedding". Don't just get an easier life now, and not even just escape hell then" that is huge, we gotta keep that clearly in the message. Again I can't stress that enough because in our culture that is really to move. But were calling them to the grandeur, the big picture not just from something now, but to something that begins now and it unfolds in eternity and that is connectedness with God's heart at the deepest level imaginable.

### **GOD'S GLORY: HIS DESIRE FOR ALL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WEDDING**

The Father sent messengers. This parable is revealing Jesus' core desire for us in salvation. This message is revealing the core truth of what salvation is all about. This parable is giving us the highest focus of ministry. There's no ministry focus higher than this one. This is the one that leads us to the great Commandment, and this is the message that Jesus wants us to be faithful witnesses of.

Again you don't have to say wedding and you don't have the say marriage, you don't have to say Bride. But you're calling them to the reality and it's not like every sermon you give, every witness you give, to a person whose coming to look. You don't have to give the whole message every time, and go, "oh no, I am an unfaithful witness, wait, wait, there's a wedding, there okay you got it".

So I'm not talking about this kind of a frenzied panic to make sure you get the sentence in. I'm talking about it's a core reality. When you're ministering, that's the core reality. That is the core, the

epicenter of the truth that's germinating in your spirit so to speak, I mean that's where the storm, the glory of God is stirring lie a storm inside. You're wanting to explode and tell them about this.

The bridal perspective changes the way evangelists preach salvation, which everybody needs to do. The way that pastors counsel, which everybody needs to counsel so, the way the teacher teach, we all teach a little bit, even if it is one on one, or one, you know to the three-year-old that's in your home, that's a teaching ministry. Don't think you need a microphone to have a Teaching ministry. Or how the forerunners prophesy or how the apostles plan churches. We do it through this lens.

Why do we want to build a big ministry? The answer is that it brings to Jesus the reward of his sufferings. We want a ministry with impact, because Jesus has an inheritance in them, they have an inheritance in Him, it's not about how many people you can get in a building to prove your value to other ministers.

Jesus is saying, "don't tell them join our church so finally at the ministry meeting I could feel powerful".

No! The message is about a wedding. We have to stay focused on the message, we cannot leave the message.

Again you don't have to use the language, but that's the core reality were speaking out of. This truth affects how we view people. We don't view people as a statistic that we put up on the church planning chart or the salvation chart. Though I think numbers are important, but the real people that Jesus has an inheritance in, they have an inheritance in Him and you get to be a witness to it. And if you're a witness to it, you and even you with that person forever you will talk and rejoice in that witness. You know the people that lead you to the Lord, you'll know them for billions of years. It's not like you get an eternity resurrected body and they want by and you go like, yeah, yeah, yeah, where, where was that at? No, no, we have resurrected our minds we are under the anointing of the Spirit, perfect bodies. The testimony you give, whether you're the one that led them to the Lord, all of that will be remembered forever in the fellowship of the saints. It is a beautiful thing. You don't want to lie to people though, I do not want to lie to people about Jesus. That people asked me real uncomfortable questions, does that mean I have to quit this, I go, "absolutely, you absolutely".

Well I don't think I want to"

"It won't work for you then."

They go, "oh well I want like that relationship anyway"



You cannot lie to them under pressure. Now I go, no you have to get that up, because it's holding you in bondage to darkness and the one that wants you knows love, is committed to love and \ you will receive love more and give love more if you do it on his terms.

“No, I don’t want to do that, I’ll do everything but that”

I goes, “you know what, you can’t come into the kingdom.”

“Well I’ll get another religion”

“Well the religion is broke, it’s dead, it is dead religion”

“How do you know if this is the truth?”

I mean you get people pretty stirred up if you hold the line. It’s kind of easier to pat them on the back and tell them everything is perfect, everything is rights.

But beloved, again for love's sake we hold the line. For love sake, because we love Him. It’s the way we preach on salvation, it’s the way we preach on holiness we don't preach on holiness, it is not angry holiness. You know kind of shaken them over hell on a rotten stick, kind of hoping the stick breaks.

I mean some holiness preachers are just kind of mean. You know the more stirred up and the more kind of frothy they get the more anointed they think it is, I guess.

But it’s kind of just mean and afterwards they kind of high-five the guy, “hey man I give it to them.”

“Yeh you did what jugular to them next time.”

No it’s not that kind of stuff.

We’re talking out of a burning heart of God for them, but He requires a wholehearted response back and he's giving them a free entrance and he will give them free forgiveness for single day. The mercies are new but they have to declare war on their failure. They have to agree with Him.

Beloved you can be forgiven millions of times and well, whatever many times, it's not about how much we succeed, it's about the cry in our spirit to be sincere and real and we can receive mercy every single day, new with confidence that we are received and love and our love towards of Him is genuine.

Because our love for Jesus isn't just real when it's mature. Weak love it still real. He loves us in our weakness as part of the love message.

In this I’m just gonna tell you what I do, I give the three, the passive and the hostile response because in paragraph A, some people are passive in the rejection of Jesus, and some people are hostile in their rejection of Jesus.

And Jesus is saying, “don't be tricked by either one of them, because we're mostly aware of the hostile rejection but the passive rejection often goes down, we'll pat it on the back and we'll tell him it's okay.

They don't want to come to Jesus, because of their farm and their business. Lots of people in the church, their farm and their business is ahead of Jesus. They don't only came to Jesus on our watch, we made them elders in the church. Jesus said, “tell them they've made light of my offer.”

It's a passive resistance. Now I don't know who does and who doesn't and the inward workings of the heart, but lots of people with farms and businesses telling no with their actions. we're calling to something bigger than just to have a bigger farm if you put Jesus on your resume.

God has a very aggressive response to the people who are killing His servants, His judgments.

The Lord's intensity of his judgment is a reflection of his intensity of love. His judgments are to remove everything that hinders love. Some people think that the message of love in the message of judgment are opposites.

Beloved the book of Revelation is the same message as the song of Solomon. the message of the God who's red-hearted love is the message of the God of judgment, because his judgments remove what hinders love.

I teach Friday nights, tonight, on the first commandment. I teach tomorrow night on the book of Revelation. Some go, ah, it's kind of one or the other. And I go, “not really, it's the same message, different Bible verses. It really is the same message.

So I have a little bit on that.

## **THE NECESSITY OF RESPONDING IN HUMILITY AND LOVE**

There's two responses of people who show up in the religious gatherings. There's a guy who show at at the gathering with a wedding garment, I mean, He don't have a wedding garment, he wants the enter in into the celebration, the wedding celebration, the celebration of salvation, but he is coming on his own terms, but he wants to be called religious, he wants to be spiritual, he wants to go for this thing, he wants to go to worship service, he wants the enter in, but he wants to do it on his own terms.

And Jesus makes it clear, his final public message to the nation of Israel, He goes, “you can't”

You come approach this grand truth, you must do it on My terms, not on yours. And there is two different ways people do this. It is what I call, where's it at?

The garments of religion. It's the lie that says all the religions lead to the same God. Absolutely not true.

“Well I'm devout in my religion, I'm sincere.”

That gets you nowhere.

If there's not somebody innocent who shed blood so you could become innocent as a free gift. It is not about sincerity and religion, it's about a man giving you his own gift of innocence, called the gift of righteousness to you.

So one man is his proud, he says, “No I'm religious and that's good enough. I don't need to do it exactly the Jesus way”.

And Jesus said, “I'll assure them now they will be kicked out of the ceremony in due time.”

I don't mean excluded where they can't be invited to come in, that is not what He is saying, He is saying, “tell them that that approach to me is unacceptable, it doesn't work, it is not real. They are still unbelievers, they are still outside the kingdom.”

And then there's the other one which I call the garment of compromise. It is the guy, he was to come to worship services but he won't line up in truth and a desire to obey Jesus.

Again we all fell many times, it is not about the measure of your failure, it is the measure of your sincerity. We fail, but we call it sin, we get back in the war against it. We declare war about it and we have a confident place in the grace of God.

Well these are the two different ways people want to be in the celebration of this, I mean, there's nothing more wonderful than the celebration, the wedding reality. People want to be around it and of course we want unbelievers in meetings for sure.

But Jesus says, “don't lie to them about being saved and connected to me, because I won't lie to them when I meet them face-to-face. Don't lie to them, they have to be wearing the garments that I describe, not their own garments.”

So I'll it with that. The point I want to make, the point I'm really stirred about is that this is the first commandment course. I want to be a faithful witness and if the church gets mad, different people in the church, and it happens and it will happen, it happens to everybody's, so it's not like you know make yourself out to be a martyr. It will happen everywhere if your faithful you will have believers saying, “bahamba” and you will have unbelievers and you will have unbelievers saying, “bahamba”

plus some, but it's not about how many people we can get to be happy, it's about being a faithful witness, it is about love. The whole issue is about loving Him and we love him with all of our heart in ministry by speaking the truth.

Amen

## **Session 9: Practical Ways to Pursue the First Commandment (Mt. 25)**

Father we ask you for the release of your spirit even now, we ask you Lord to awaken our heart and to inspire our mind in our spirit and we thank you in Jesus name.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Well tonight we're gonna look at the ninth session in this series on the first commandment. Tonight we're gonna look at practical ways to pursue the first commandment. And our passage we're gonna get to a few minutes is in Matthew chapter 25, where Jesus exhorts us to get oil. But before we do that, I want to lay down some practical principles which is really the core of the message tonight. Over the 30 years I've been pastoring and seeking to train people in loving God, I can say clearly that the way to love God, and I'm I've been asked that many times, how do you love God? The people, some imagine there's some mystery to it, and I want to say this is really simple, it's costly but it is simple.

Now there are four or five principles that are ideas that we need to get right, but you can learn those in a few minutes and if you don't know them you're gonna hear them tonight. But my point I really want to stress is the simplicity of the process, so we don't reach and grope in the dark, looking for a secret for years.

Matter of fact Moses, is the one that said that very clearly straightforward in Deuteronomy 30, when Moses was talking about loving God with all their heart actually, that is the actual context in Deuteronomy 34:6.

Then he goes on in verse 11 to 14 he says, "this is not so mysterious that you have to ascend to heaven in a heavenly encounter, or someone has to come from heaven down to the earth to give you secret information."

He goes, "the word is in you, it is in your mouth". He goes, "it's as close as you speaking to God from your heart."

And the point he was making to the children of Israel, "it's not so mysterious that you need some special revelation or some special supernatural experience". He goes, 'the word is in you, it's

even in your mouth. It's as close to you, the answer as consistently speaking from your heart to God.”

And so over the years, as I've talk to people, many assume there's a mysterious kind of seven secret steps or something. And at the end of the day I find the biggest problem that I've encountered, is that people, who love God and they really desire to walk with God, I mean it's really within their heart, they lack faith, or let us use the word confidence, because the word faith and confidence you can use them interchangeably many times, most times.

They lack faith in the simple process that God prescribes in His Word. That's what they lose confidence in, because they don't grow in the way they think they should and at the pace they think they should, so after a few months or years they disconnect from the process. Where they would have stayed with it, as the years unfold it would have radically transformed them.

So they give up quick and they think maybe they're especially bad, that they're messed up more than anybody, or they assume maybe it doesn't really work for anyone.

And the Lord's answer is the simple phrase, faith you needed confidence in the process to stay with it. And as simple as that is, I know over these years that is really the core problem, in context of people who really do love God. They are very sincere. In our weakness, in our brokenness we can sincerely love God and all of us can make it if we stay with it.

So I'm gonna layout just a few principles tonight by way of reminding, and part of one of my goals is for some of you to conclude, “oh I know these things, may it just is as simple as staying with it, hah.

And it will be literally as an awakening in your spiritual life to conclude that simple point that I just made. Now again the process is simple it is costly, but it's not confusing, it can be hard in terms of decision-making but it's not confusing is just costly.

All of God's commands include, inherent in the command, is a promise that God will give a supernatural enabling to obey that command. When he says, “love Me with all your heart”, the very fact He commands it, He is saying, “I promise to help you if you will cooperate with me”. It takes God to love God. I've said that over and over, it takes a supernatural dimension to succeed in loving God. But the Holy Spirit is eager to help the weakest among us, which is all of us, if we want it, and if we will obey a couple simple principles but more than that if we have confidence to stay with Him.

Confidence in the word is what I mean, that the process really is effective over time under Jesus's leadership.

Romans 5:5, Paul says the love of God is poured into the heart by the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit.

The love of God is poured into the hearts, and what that means is our emotions will feel the subtle stirrings of God's love for us, and our emotions will feel subtle stirrings of love back to God, and both of those dimensions of subtle stirrings are supernatural.

They're subtle, they're slight, but over time they radically change us. You know it's the analogy I've used over the years taking vitamins. You take vitamins for month, probably it's gonna make no impact, you take vitamins for decade, if it's the right ones, it will make a big difference for decade.

These subtle impressions of the Holy Spirit, these subtle stirrings, those moments where it dawns on us ever so briefly, He likes me! And it dawns on us, the feeling I like Him. Those are the operations of the Holy Spirit.

He'll give thousands and thousands of those over the course of time and that is the supernatural work of God. Those stirrings will grow if we continue in our weakness to respond to the Lord in the way the Word of God prescribes.

Now love for God does not grow automatically in us. We need to be intentional about cooperating and cultivating a response heart, because of just the weeds of life in a fallen world. And the reason I'm saying weeds is that Jesus used that analogy in Matthew 13:22. He says the weeds will choke the heart. He is talking about all the cares of life and in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam sinned, the Lord told him that the weeds would come forth. He would have to work the ground under the hot sun with weeds coming up, was the essence of what He told him. So just even as a sincere believer, just life in a fallen world, if you don't intend to grow in love for God, you will not automatically increase, you will automatically decrease.

If you do nothing your body will get in worse condition not just suddenly wake up in great shape, how many of you have start figure that out? I've figured that out a long time ago. So we have to be intentional about it.

I'm just gonna kind of give you little bit ahead of time of where we're going. I'll say it in the negative and then we will say it in the positive in the in the course of the message here.

The reasons, common reasons, common obstacles for why believers, sincere believers, people who love Jesus - this group, groups like this group.

The reason we get off course in our pursuit of the First Commandment, one big reason - condemnation. After we repent, we still feel condemnation, and that will minimize your ability for those subtle stirrings of the Holy Spirit to work effectively in us.

Condemnation - we have to cast off condemnation by speaking against it according to the Word. Even believers who know that, they'll fail, they repent after they failed, now we have to repent after we failed, but they'll live in the residue of condemnation for days, weeks and months. And those quench the supernatural subtle stirrings of the Holy Spirit on our emotions. And they quench growth in love.

Another reason, a huge one for sincere believers. Mismanagement of time.

What I mean by that, is not like there trying to God and sinned, they just get busy and therefore they don't take time to sit before the Lord, and just the weeds in a fallen world dynamic works, and our heart grows cold. And they don't mean that to happen but one month turns to year, and a year turns to three and they look back around and somehow time ran away.

That is one of the biggest issues of why a sincere believer ends up being dull in their spirit. They don't use their time effectively, they don't even know it.

They're aiming at getting a mysterious supernatural experience to solve all their woes in the goal spirit, and the Lord is saying, "manage your time and let My Spirit stir your heart, in a more steady regular way."

Managing your time by making time to be in the Lord's presence. I remember a pastor once, he said, "when I hear you speak", he goes, "I get this idea that you think there's a correlation between the amount of time you spend with God and how much your heart grows."

And he was saying that as a criticism, he was saying that to make sure I didn't feel rejected. He goes, no I'm not saying you are saying that, I'm just saying it sounds like it, because I mean our heart grows in God by grace and what he meant by grace, is we do nothing and we wake up with our heart growing in love.

Rather than their accurate definition of grace is, we cooperate to grow in the love of God and in the process of cooperating grace works.

And I said "well I'm glad you think that because it's true."

He goes, "what about grace?"

I go, "grace doesn't mean it happens automatically, grace means that the Lord's presence is released in the midst of our weak labors and our weak endeavors."

He went, "maybe that's the problem in my life", he really did, he goes, "I'm waiting to wake up one day with grace."



I go, “the grace it's in you, even in your mouth, it's near you. Speak your heart back to God”. And that's what all of these principles, I'm going to lay out in a minute, they really boil down to saying to God, “I love you, I'm sorry, I agree, I believe.”

It's a little whispers of the heart. The word is in your mouth, activate your confession, whether it's a private whisperings of “I love You”, to God, or the standing against the work of the enemy to condemn us, or warding off temptation. The word, it all comes down to the whispers in the heart. It is what we say in our heart. Whether you say it loud or whether you say it quiet, it really is the language of your heart before God.

The words are in your mouth. So mismanagement of your time is huge you in the life a sincere believers. I'm talking about people who really love Jesus, but they just can't quite get around to positioning themselves in a place where they can receive the energizing of the Holy Spirit.

Another reason is because people despise the process, and the reason they despise it, they have exaggerated ideals about how dynamic it's supposed to be.

They read the book, or they heard the story that one guy, who every time he said the name of Jesus, the power of God fell on him. It was ecstasy and it was like wow, wow, wow and the poor guy reading the book believed it.

So because it's not dynamic all the time, they assumed they must be wrong so they despise the process. They go, “Nah, it's not really worth it. There is no point taking vitamins every day for years, I just want to get a one-shot healing and make everything perfect tonight.”

And a lot of folks because of, exaggerated ideals about how it's supposed to work, that disconnects them. Because I don't mean they are mad at God, despising the process. I mean they don't value the small movements of their heart towards God. They don't seem important, they seem like a waste of time, like God didn't care anyway.

Beloved, God cares about the small movements of your heart towards Him. He really does, that's how the whole thing works in pursuing to be a person who walks in the First Commandment.

Another reason, to give you some negatives, this is common reasons why believers get off course, simply neglecting to renew their commitment to be a lover of God.

The guy says, “why I did that at that one conference two years ago. I went to the front and said yes.”

Now I don't renew my commitment every day, I would be exaggerating if I said that. I don't want to exaggerate. But every, I don't know, I don't have it measured, but every week or two or three or more or less, I take time and I specifically re-state my vision. “God I want to go deep. Jesus I

want my whole life, it is not about Ihop growing, it is not about finance and money, or prominence. My number one thing is the anointing to love You.

And I say it's a re-align my heart to my real-life vision. And if you if you do that every year or two, your heart will begin to have dullness working in. You need to re-align yourself on a regular basis, whether it's weekly monthly, just don't put it on the calendar and then say well it's been a while since I've done it. But conclude in your mind that the kind of this, the times those moments, and I don't mean a minute and a half, two, three or five minutes, I don't mean an hour either, where you sit down and say, "wait, I want to say again why I have life and breath on the earth right now. I want to walk in the anointing to love You, more than anything else in life." And those realigning times every few weeks or months, whatever the time is, their critical to do that. I know people over the years that have said, "you know I have never done that".

I think, "ahh that hurts my heart."

I go, "well how do you expect to grow in love?"

"I don't know, grace God, isn't that how it works?"

And their idea of the grace of God is a disconnect from human process and an automatic just kind of waking up, everything different. Now that happens in the resurrection, but it doesn't happen in this age that way.

Now this would be a a common thing, here at the IHOP world. A common mistake is to see your prayer time as your first commandment time, and your people time as your second commandment time. That's completely a mistake and complete wrong thinking, completely. And I've heard that over the years, their first commandment time is when they sit before the Lord. Their second commandment time is when they get up and they leave their prayer time. No, that's completely wrong.

Sitting before the Lord is the place you get energized. It's where you get fueled to go out to do the first and the second commandments. 98% of your set first commandment time is not sitting in a chair. You sit in a chair to get fueled up to go do the first commandment.

Now the fact that you enjoy some of the times you're sitting there, and the fact that you say "I love you", a few times sitting there, doesn't mean that is the essence of your first commandment time, because when you're serving people in your out and about, you still say to Jesus "I love you". You whisper it and you still do that labor, because you love Him.

So some people say, "well you know, I do my first commandment time, my second commandment time."

I go, I”don't ever, ever confuse the, mix that up again.”

Because when I am helping a person I am doing it far more effectively by looking in his eyes on me, smiling and I'm doing it because I love Him and that I'm far more energized to love them.

When I disconnect from the fact of serving people is an overt act of loving Him, where I can whisper “I love you” and those few times in the act of serving and reaching out. When I don't do that when serving people, we do it with the spirit of performance and it burns us out.

When our serving and relating second commandment is disconnected from the first, you will do your activities with a spirit of performance.

You'll get angry if you don't get the right response of the people. You'll get angry and depressed and offended if you don't get recognized, or thanked, or if you get criticized. But if you do the serving of the people with the idea that His eyes are on you, you are really serving Him first.

Then when they are mad, glad and sad and all the unpredictable cycles of life, your heart is still happy. Because you were doing it, it was an act of the first commandment.

So then you come out from the rigors of the world loving God and loving people. You sit in the chair to get fueled up to go back out to do the first and second commandment.

So the sitting in the chair part is about getting fueled.

Sitting before God is to get oil. The reason you sit before God, the reason I sit before God, although I like it, I like it more than I used to my early days, I did it because I had to, and then in my middle days it was kind of half-and-half, and now sometimes I don't like it so much, but I like it a lot more to used to and it's a lot more regular that I feel his pleasure in his presence. But it is still not at the place where I want it. But the reason I began to in my early days to sit before God, and one of the reasons I do I mean I do like it, but there's a bigger reason, it's a statement humility.

You sit before God “in the prayer room in a personal devotional way” as a statement humility here's what you're saying when you do it, you're saying “I believe in Jesus's testimony about my life that I cannot love well without being supernaturally energized to do it.”

Your sitting in a chair because you believe you can't love well if you don't get fueled up. You can't love God well and you can't love people well.

I want to love, the second sentence, with clarity, I mean with discernment. I want to know what's going on in God's heart. I want to love with clarity. I want to love with consistency. I want to love with the right motives.

It's not enough just to be active with people and say well I did my love thing, I was busy with people.

Again a lot of that is human activity with the spirit of performance. It is not even about love, it's about not having people get mad at you. It's not about love in the full way, if we are completely disconnected from the idea that His eyes are on us, and we're doing it for Him and with Him.

I don't mean you think that every time, every minute you are serving, but as you are kind of girding up to go serve, thinking that He likes this and takes it personally that your touching Him, you're actually serving Him.

That's what gives power and consistency to love when you're serving people. It is arrogance to assume you could love people well disconnected.

So somebody will say, and I've heard it for years, well I got to get out of the prayer room to go love people. Now there's truth to the fact, they need to go love people, but don't take your prayer room time, or let's call, let's not make it sitting in a room in a building, your time alone with God. Take it out your videogame time. Take it out of your playtime. Don't take your fueled up time with God, don't throw that away to go to other things. Take your playtime and change that out for serving.

We never need to pick between loving God and loving people, we really don't, because loving people is loving God. But a lot of folks that I've talked to in the body of Christ, I'm not trying to be mean to them, but there's a presumptuous arrogance that they would boldly say, they rarely sit before God, but they assume they love well. They may be active, that doesn't mean they're loving well.

Because, and it is not my opinion to figure out who does what, I don't go there, I don't figure out who does it and doesn't, I'm giving you just insight into how this works. Because you can be active with people socially, in serving and be getting angrier and angrier at people the whole time. You're not loving well, you know your active, you might be socializing beyond measure, but you're getting more offended in your spirit as a human being. As the years go on you're getting more proud, you're getting more dull in your spirit.

Beloved that's not loving well, and that presumption is rooted in the idea that Jesus had it wrong. In John 15 he said, "if you abide in me it works, if you don't abide in Me, you can't do anything."

They don't find that. They say, "watch this, I'm gonna serve well and I'm not in abide in You."

Again they can stay active, they can stay a highly engaged, but they get angrier or more offended and more arrogant and more dull as the years unfold, and that means though they are active, they're not loving well.

And what we are interested in is loving well, and the only way to love God well, and the only way to love people well is by the God of love to energize our spirit regularly. And so this is a critical thing.

So you need your time before God, not because your selfish, because you are committed to loving God and people well, and you're convinced that Jesus was right you can't do it well without his help on a regular basis.

And His help, yes He helps us in flight, in the process, but He says, "you sit before me and get energized and I will help you love Me well and I will help you of the people well.

I've talked and I've read unto this for years and years, just the confusion with this.

And the folks that are over busy are assuming they end up with a martyrs complex. Very busy, burned out, angry and a martyrs complex, and mad at the others.

Beloved that's very opposite of loving, if they would dial down, connect with the Lord they would love far more consistently and far deeper. And they wouldn't love in spurts, they would love for decades with consistency.

Yes in our weakness will be failures in our love, but there will be consistency in it as well.

## **II. PRACTICAL WAYS TO PURSUE LOVING JESUS**

Simple number one, don't neglect this. This is huge. You must make the determination that's what your life is about. Not just my fifty-year life, that's what my life is about this week and what my life is about the next several decades. Its long-term and short-term. We stop and we determine, we make a decision. Our response to love Jesus starts, I mean our response to his love, because He stirs us first.

In our response to him stirring us to love Him back, begins with a choice, a decision. Some might imagine that the Lord will stir up and then they kick into automatic robotic status and they just start loving God automatic.

No, He stirs but that's stirring won't go to the next level if we don't make a intentional decision to love Him. And that love is always in the spirit of obedience and I am not talking about going to more worship services, saying I love, you I love you with your words. Although I do believe in

that it's powerful, but it's I love you, it's an affectionate spirit towards Lord, but it has concrete obedience to Jesus as defined in the sermon on the mount.

We regularly realign our hearts, I just made a point a few minutes ago, and I don't mean just I love you, it's more than that. It's loving you, walking in the anointing to love you, is the first priority. It's it's that phrase, it's the first priority. I mean everybody in the kingdom wants to love Him, in that general way. I'm talking about moving it from the general status, to the specific. I want it to be first priority in the long-term and short-term.

Because a lot of folks have the vision to love Him as first, but in the years to come, they get the breakthrough.

In this issue of making a definitive decision on a regular basis, is critical. The Psalmist said, or the Lord said to the Psalmist in Ps. 91, "because that man", if David wrote Psalm 91, "because he set his love on Me, therefore I will deliver him."

There is a place where we set our love on Him and do not underestimate the value of that decision, and the need to do it repetitively. We set our love on God, how?

It's really not confusing, it's just a determination. I don't feel a lot right now Lord, but I've set the goal of my love short-term, long-term not just to love you, but to love You to make it a top priority. And I mean it, I want You to help me. That simple declaration of the heart in saying it to God will begin to move you forward in a more rapid growth pattern in the Holy Spirit.

It says of Mary of Bethany, Luke 10, Jesus says Mary has chosen the good part. You have to choose it. Nobody can give God all of your love. Lord I want to give you all my love, because nobody else can give you love for my spirit. What I give God, is totally unique and what you give them is totally unique, only you can give it, and He wants it.

But you have to choose it. I'm talking about the day, the moment your inspired and you're not inspired, but there's a choice, and the Lord said Mary chose it.

Sometimes that choice is easy and exciting, sometimes that choice is hard and costly. Sometimes it's just boring and the Lord says, "when it's hard in costly, when it's exciting and dynamic, and just when it's boring and routine, choose to love Me, and it moves My heart, all the movements of your heart in this way."

David said in Ps 18, he goes, "I will love You". That's a simple, it's not as a worship song, that was a real aligning of his heart. Some of you know and and this needs to be an IHOP 101, everyone needs to know this next sentence I'm gonna say, Psalm 18 is a critical, I mean a very important Psalm in a critical hour in David's life. David had just come out of Ziggag, 16 months

with an element of compromise in his life, not his whole life, but he had an element of compromise, it's the only time he ever had it for a sustained period that we know of in his life. And the day that he repented, his opening statement right here, "I will love you". I mean this was a huge declaration from his heart. John the apostle at the end of his life, he said I'm the guy that leans on God's heart.

In other words, I want to be as near to God as possible. That wasn't just a casual statement, that was a definitive life goal of John the apostle. I will lean, I'm the man that leans on His heart and I'm the man that wants to get as close to God as possible in this age.

Beloved we set the vision to have as much of God as He will give the human spirit in this age. That's what I'm talking about, determination. I'm not talking about you grit your teeth and therefore you get a breakthrough, I'm saying that posture of mind the setting and the deciding and the realigning of it, is one of the key principles, not mysterious it's very simple to understand, it's costly, sometimes it's exciting, sometimes it's hard, sometimes boring, but no matter what mood we're in, that determination is a critical non negotiable foundational reality in becoming a person who loves God with all of your heart. The determination, the setting of the heart.

The revelation, receiving revelation. Not just making a determination, a commitment, but receiving revelation. Revelation of God's heart, equips our heart to love Jesus back. Revelation of God's heart, it fuels are heart up. This is the fuel, this is the oil that fuels the engine if you will, the gasoline, this is what empowers us. Because we will only love God with all of our heart to the degree we see He loves us with all of His heart.

When the human heart is stalled out in love, we feel dull and passive, feed yourself on the revelation of how He feels about you, that will awaken your spirit. And again, you don't go from scale one to ten, from a one to a ten in one moment, you go maybe from a 1 to 1.1. It's incremental, it's small steps forward but it really matters over time.

Again it's the vitamins analogy, if you take it for a month or two, it probably won't do much good, take it for a decade, it actually will start to make an impact if they are the right ones.

We love God because we understood He loved us first. When God wants to awaken love, He shows His love to that person. But it works for us as well, if you want to awaken in love, focus on the emotions of God for your life. Because if you want to love, then understand love coming towards you. I wrote a book called Passion for Jesus, and over the years people will ask me, they will say, "hey, how do you get passion for Jesus?"

And the book is really a little bit of a misnomer, the title, because the real title of the book should be Jesus' passion for us. The whole book is about Jesus' passion for us. A couple times I think I eked out, hey it's such hard to love God. Most of the book actually, I was saying how God's heart was set to love us.

Because I know that's the foundation of passion for Jesus, is understanding His passion. Well it takes time, you can't get that revelation on the run. This is the place we get fueled, right here. We set time aside, whether you're in the corporate prayer room, or at home, or in the car driving and you got music on, there's different settings, it is where you are consciously opening your spirit to God without a 100 other things going on, in a focused way, and your studying the word and saying it back to God, praying the word as your studying it, you are declaring your intention to obey and love Him, or thanking Him that He loves you.

Just so simple things. Fuel if you will, touches our spirit, little bit. But if you will believe in that process, when 10 years becomes twenty, it didn't take 10 years to make an impact, you get an impact in weeks and months, but I'm saying a decade or two goes by, you look back and say my emotions are very different .

You can buy time in the kingdom, I've watch it for years were people they go ten years in the kingdom and you know, they are still there, 10 years later in the kingdom. But they have not interacted with God's heart and they are actually very common more bitter and more dull than they were 10 years ago, but they have loved Jesus the whole time. But they haven't exposed their spirit in a focused way to the presence of God. A little bit of worship on Sunday morning, they'll go in and kind of open their spirit, they sit down. Beloved you cannot live on that minimal amount of focussed encounter with the Lord. Now we can encounter the Lord to touch his presence in everyday life, as we're serving and doing many other things, we can touch His presence and our eye is on Him. The fact that his eye is on us, and it matters.

But I'm talking about those focused times where we take the Word we speak it right back to God. And then we receive his testimony towards us. It's critical, it's critical we have those times.

To that pastor that asked me "it almost seems like you had a correlation between time as to how much you grow". I go, "absolutely there's a correlation."

"Well what about people?" Obviously the statement you hear all the time.

Know that you love people way better if you take time to do that. You love them deeper, you love them with greater discernment, you love them for years if you do that.



Again you don't take your God alone time, and exchange it for you're going out with people time. Take your playing around time, and networking in ministry, and working long hours to make more money, take that time. There's plenty of time in a week to do that.

You know every now and then I'll give a message like this, just about every week actually. I mean you just put yourself right in the way of this thing. I mean it's first commandment every single Friday night, I mean you are just like a total target here.

So you know I have students come up, "I'm gonna quit Bibles to be time with God"

I go, "no you're awake 16 hours a day, you don't need to be in the program 16 hours for the next 10 years. I mean you give you some hours, you got time to go to Bible school, you really do.

You don't have to go from an hour every other day to 16 hours every day."

I go, "there's lots of baby steps in between there." I said "I don't know, there could be that one guy God calls to do that, but you give the Lord some hours, some it's more than less on a daily basis, in this context is our occupation do that, you have plenty time to go Bible school, you really do. You have time to have friends. But you do have to be measured, where the thing goes bad is the, I just say I like a say it a bit mean to be direct, it's the criminal waste of time and mismanagement, is criminal it really is. I have seen it in the body of Christ for years.

The ease at which people throw away 15 minutes and 30 minutes multiple times throughout a week, I mean many many times, week after week, year after year it is criminal. Because God is so good, the Word is so deep, their spirit have such a capacity, if they would only see this some time and be in His presence, the power of God on the capacity of their human spirit. Your spirit was made to be invigorated by God, but you have to get some time there.

You don't have to do, you know real dramatic things, quit everything. You don't need to do it 16 hours a day to do it right. Get rid of the other things, seize your schedule. You will be surprised how many 15 minute and 30 minute increments that you can get a hold of in the course of a week or month. I mean you'll find if you are an average person, hours and hours and hours, that's without doing anything radical like quitting everything. Go get that first, go lasso and go seize the time that is wasted, but aim at 15 and 30 minute increments, not even four hours like four nights a week. I'm talking about something far more specific.

You know some folks just kind of bebop around in life every night, you know, they don't quite know what to do. I'm not even talking to that crowd, I'm talking to the crowd that it doesn't mean anything to throw away an hour a day. You don't want to throw away an hour a day. What about rest? Now, you can rest in the will of God, that's actually a useful, a beneficial use of time. That is a biblical use of time, rest.

But our culture is inundated with the right to play. It's like a minute built in right that everyone has for recreation and play and they read the grace of God through the lens of freedom to play more.

Beloved God, He's not offering you grace because He is mad your playing, He is saying, "I have something gold to give you, but I won't give you if you don't sit before Me, I won't give it to."

It's not about if you really get grace, you play more and if you don't have grace you kind of endure God more. That poor guy he didn't know what grace about, he is sitting before God, enduring Him. No that is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about grace will invigorate your spirit. I mean you don't want to figure out how grace operates so you're less engaged with God, whatever interpretation you have of grace, you want an interpretation of grace that helps you engage with God in a more consistent way.

Not live in the flesh more and feel good about it. Because God is too good, His spirit is to dynamic and your human spirit has such capacity for God. We can't go decades when it is criminal waste of time, that so many believers and obviously unbelievers as well. It pains me to watch it it year after year after year of being a leader in the body of Christ.

Personal petition, prayer time. There are a number of verses, I have a couple here. You can put 5 or 10 more. Where in the New Testament they prayed that love would increase. Do you actually ask God for a greater anointing to be released on your heart, your emotions, we are talking about your emotions now. The Holy Spirit lives in your spirit, but I'm talking about His manifest presence stirring your mind and emotions, stirring your inner man.

If you ask for love to abound it will, if you don't give up. Don't do it for three weeks and quit, do it for 10 solid years and if you're an unsatisfied customer come talk to me.

Don't try God for three months intense. If you're gonna try Him, which is okay, do it for at least ten years. Because three months is the American version, the American culture version of trying something. Do it the biblical version and try it, but try it for ten years, and if God's proves to not be reliable then you have an argument, but good news that will be irrelevant conversation.

Because you will find Him to be true. But my point is this, in my prayer time I ask God many many times, "Father empower my spirit to love you more".

And the Lord might say something like, I'm sure it's not exactly how He says it, "well if you're gonna be that way about it, I will."

Beloved use the prayer of faith to enrich your own spirit in love. Don't just use the prayer of faith to get a physical healing or more money, that's good too. Use the prayer of faith to grow in the anointing of love in the inner man. Ask Him for love to increase, there is many prayers.

One I don't have here are one of my favorites is 2 Thess. 3:5 when Paul said “direct our hearts into the love of God”.

Direct, take the reins of my heart and lead me into the vast ocean of Your love. And again don't give Him a three-month trial run. Give Him a 10 year one and see if it doesn't really work.

And the reason they do it three months and quit, isn't because they don't love God, they don't have confidence in the process the point I started off with, they don't have confidence in the biblical little by little process that it actually matters to God, that the love they're giving God don't think it really matters to Him.

It's not that they don't love God, it's not that they are board with God, they don't think God cares about this little movements over the month and years.

Beloved he cares massively about the little movements of your heart over the years.

The fourth principle, the confession, the confession of your faith. In a time of temptation, in a time of failure, when we repent, now you have to add the word when we repent. Some folks they fail and they confess as the Lord's beloved, and the Lord says, “well you are, but you would really work a lot better if you added that extra step in, break your agreement with your sin.”

Now that sounds kind of funny, but it's real. Lots of folks they hear a quote “the bridal paradigm”, and paradigm means perspective. The bridal perspective of the kingdom. And they taken outside of the boundaries of the Word of God, and Jesus being a bridegroom means He is happy with this no matter what were doing. No! His heart is trouble with love when we break our agreement with Him.

But when we do come back into agreement, that is called repentance, we declare war on the compromise, we renounce it. In other words, we say, “Lord that was Sin, I'm not gonna find a Bible verse to patch it up, it was Sin, it was.”

The Lord says, “good”.

“I repent of it”

“Good to”

“I receive your mercy and I am Your beloved, I am your favorite.”

The Lord says, “you got it right, you can stand with confidence as a first-class citizen right now in My presence.”

Absolutely Beloved, we have to use the confession of truth in our heart, when we failed, because it recovers our confidence and the recovery confidence gives us the ability to fill those impressions, those subtle stirrings that I started off this message with.

Those subtle stirrings make all the difference in the world. "Oh I love you" John said here in John 21. He goes, "I'm the guy Jesus loves. I'm the disciple whom the Lord loves."

Beloved that's your, everyone's confession if you want it.

My favorite one, though that is to be my favorite one too. I love that, don't you like that, John signing off in John 21, he is signing his signature on the Gospel of John and in stead of saying, "I John wrote the book". He wrote, "the guy that Jesus loves, wrote the book."

Well, who is that? John goes, "guess it is me! I know who I am." Beloved you have the right to use that.

The other favorite favorite verse on that is is John 15:9 were Jesus says, "I love you like the father loves me."

Ahhh Beloved that you can't go beyond that. Jesus loves you like the Father loves Jesus, like what!

Beloved you are his favorite. God, nobody can be loved more than the Father loves the Son. If I'm on the status of how the Father loves the son, if that's that's the ground I have, I am His favorite. His heart is big enough for all of us to be his favorite without diminishing love towards anyone of us.

When you sin, you confess it. Don't, again, find a Bible verse to make the sin okay, because you might fake your friends our or fake your conscious out, but your spirit still stay dull.

I don't want to find Bible verses that empower me to live dull. What's the point? I want to find Bible verses that give me confidence to be renewed when I blow it. And I have blown it many times. But I know what it means to repent, and I mean I do this, this will be kind of touch for some but you just need to to do it. Over the years, I've done this for 30 years, I've used this verse. I may have blow it, come before God, I mean just still in just the the yukkieness of the emotion on my heart. I repent, here I am Lord, Your beloved, your favorite one. I'm the one You love. And then I go, oh it hurts, and then I go, "no devil in the name of Jesus go".

"I am your favorite one." Oh that hurts, in those early days it hurt me to say that. My religious spirit was just healthy enough to feel better about my life if I suffered in condemnation for a little while. You put myself in kind of probation spiritually for three months, come out of it you know I paid my debt. And I just started speaking right into this. I sin and I mean just 17 minutes ago and hear I am and I go, oh God I am your favorite one. That's me and just throughout the day, I

am your beloved, I am the one that You delight in. Oh boy, it hurt at first, because my mind was so un-renewed, I had my confession long before I had the revelation. But I tell you ,you get that confession your heart will get into revelation in in time.

Here we are, Ps. 18. Remember what I said a few moments ago about Ps. 18, that was the one were David, 16 months of compromises in Ziglag, and he starts off a few minutes ago he said, “I love the Lord”

Well here he is 19 verses later, because that was verse one where he said, I love the Lord, after 16 months of compromise. The first day back, the first day back David tells everyone God delivered me, because He likes me, He delights in me. His friends, they were all believers too, go, What! we were with you for 16 months, David. He go, “I know but I repent and he delights in me that's why He delivered me.”

The audacity for him to claim that the first day back. David said, “I know God, I'm back. We're together and got my confidence back in God”.

Oh Beloved, you get your confidence by a clear confession of truth, after you repent, I mean you can have that confession only minutes after you repent. If you really got nerve just do within a minute, I mean try to do it in under 30, 60 seconds. Repent and get right back in it. But due to weakness it may take you 10 minutes or an hour to get your confidence back, but don't take three months, whatever you do because it will quench the stirrings of emotion of the Lords stirrings of His heart on your heart and then you won't grow in the First Commandment.

Well we are not going to get the Matthew 25, but you got it written out for you and that's okay.

Fellowship. So much of your inheritance and your healing is in the hands of others.

The revelation of the love of God I will get part of it direct, and part of it out of your lips. I will get part of it direct, and part of it will be in my lips when I'm talking to you, and part of it will be in your lips when you're talking to me.

And the Lord's made it clear, He entrust a dimension of His love in the dynamic of people connecting. That I find so much in God by talking to believers and unbelievers friends and strangers alike, I don't mean every conversation has Bible verses, that's not what I'm saying. But in the flow of life, if you try, if you seek to walk in the light, that is the key, you'll have fellowship. And the Fellowship means there's a two-way contribution to each other's spirit.

Beloved let me say something really strong. Hanging out together is not the same thing as fellowship. Two people with a dull spirit hanging out together with no light in the relationship, they will probably end up duller in their spirit because they hung out together.

No for real, I've heard young people and old people alike for years say, "well I've got fellowship".

I go, "I've been there, that is not fellowshiping. That sitcom humor with a lot of darkness, complaining and accusations and low grade ABCD as well."

The jokes, the things they talk about, and I'm talking about Believers, I'm talking about leaders in the church, and that is not fellowship. That is endulling each other's spirit in order to walk in Fellowship.

Fellowship means my interaction with you, and yours with me, it builds our spirits up. It doesn't mean every time were together we have a spiritual gigantic experience. That is not what it means, but the love of God is coming from me to you not just is it only touching you, it's touching me when I talk to you.

I'm talking to you out of my heart and it's building you up and me up. And you're talking back is building you up and me up.

There's a dynamic of love that happens in fellowship, but it's fellowship when we're in light, and light doesn't mean were fully mature it means were sincere about being wholehearted at whatever level of maturity we're in.

Two, one year believers can walk in light together and spark each other, but having said that, two thirty-year pastors can completely defile one another's spirit without ever saying overtly evil stuff. Just the darkness and the cynicism and just the secular mindset that is so often even in leaders the body of Christ.

Do not equate hanging out as fellowship. So what you ask, now I'm not saying to dump all your friends, but ask yourself this question: "is there any spark of life for real, I don't mean a stretch that it have kind of credibility to it, I mean is it for real. Is there a spark of life going either direction in your last three or four times together? If not, that doesn't mean dump your friends, it means you determine you're going to go to the next "outing" and you're gonna walk in light. And walk in light means your gonna set your spirit to live in light. And before you get there and as a conduit of light, that doesn't mean everything they say, hey how is the football game? Well God was glorified in the victory."

That is not what I'm saying. I'm not saying you have to give biblical terminology to your conversation. Smalltalk is okay. Smalltalk is a very normal part of life. But if it's only Smalltalk in there's no light in it, it's not fellowship. And it's dulling your spirit and their spirit.

But having said the negative, the positive is, part of the revelation of the love of God for my heart is in your lips, and part of the revelation love of God for my heart is in my lips, but only when I talk to you. There's a great dynamic in this whole thing. Let's just go another minute or two, we're gonna finish here.

### **III. SETTING OUR HEART TO LOVE JESUS**

The idea is to love Jesus for years, sustained for years. I'm not talking about you know a summer at IHOP or a year at Bible school. I'm talking about setting your heart to do this thing for decades no matter what. If it's moments which is exciting, moment which is hard, if it is hard, it is costly to obey. There's a big ouch, because what He's demanding, it hurts.

And there are times when it's just boring and routine, but no matter what season we're gonna go for this thing. We have to have a sustained vision to go deep. It takes focus, it takes effort. Our soul will prosper if we stay with it.

Here He is in Third John, He is talking about a soul that is prosperous. Is that a dynamic concept? Our soul is wealthy. We don't end up with a prosperous soul because of the diligent three months. We end up with a prosperous soul, just like in business most people don't make millions the first three months. Most people that have made millions of business, by far the normal way is the sustained pattern of doing it with wise principle. And our soul gets wealthy if we stick with it. Again ten full years. Don't do it hard for summer, say you know what, I'm gonna go all the way with this thing. Beloved you will end up with an anointing to love God with all your heart, and you will experience that whether your sitting in a prayer room or not. And again, your prayer room time is not your love God time, that your get energy from God time, so you can love God when you go out, and love people when you go out.

Are you an extravagant lover of Jesus? If you are, here's the question, you don't have to say it in this way, but here's the question: what is the most that God will empower you to give him?

The question isn't how much sin can you get away with without losing your salvation, that's not the issue. I talk to different folks over the years, and their whole argument is how much they can get away with without being completely thrown out the kingdom or whatever.

I go, completely wrong question! The question is how much will God empower you to be abandoned, that's the question you need to be asking. That's the place where light is in your spirit. Even if you don't break through in this area or that area, that question brings light to your spirit. It doesn't matter how many years you have done or even how mature you are. It's the decision of the wholehearted, that's the light issue.

I just want to look at David. David said this one thing, all the days of my life, all the days of my life.

You know I talk to folks and they say, "I want to be radical."

And what they mean is they want to do something extreme for a few weeks, a few months. I go that is not radical, that is kind of fun, that's kind of cool. But you can't be radical by doing something three months, no matter how extreme it is. It's radical if you stay steady for 10 years. Radical is about longevity not about the uniqueness of the exoticness of your adventure.

Lots of folks can do kind of cool even, I mean even important kind of exotic kind of endeavors. Going to the middle of the Amazon, you know build a tent, witness it all, da da da da. Well that sounds pretty cool, it sounds radical. Well radical is not exactly the right word in my opinion. I think it might be really important. What's radical, is if you are there ten years later. That is radical, radical is about longevity with consistency. David said, "all the days of my life".

I will end with this, Daniel, I mean look at Daniel he said, Daniel knelt down on his knees three times that day and prayed and gave thanks to God as was his custom since his early days. Daniel was over 60 years working in that in Babylon and three times a day since his youth, he is in his 80's, he was in his teens, now beloved that's radical. Three times a day and 60 years later the guy is still going. Like I'm going for it.

Amen. Let's stand.



## **Session 10: Running for the Prize: Being Complete in Our Love**

### **LOVING JESUS ON HIS TERMS: BY SEEKING TO OBEY HIM**

Father we come before you the name of Jesus. We ask you Lord, release the activity of the Holy Spirit upon your Word, even now we ask you in Jesus name, amen.

This session 10 of the first commandment course, I just want to alert you right now that in my opinion, this is the most important of all the sessions that I'm teaching on the subject.

I believe this to be the most important subject in your life, actually even more important than understanding the end times, as important as that is and the focus Lord's putting on that in our community.

This is most important message, is one of the most overlooked messages in the church, and one of the most neglected messages in individual's lives. And I just want to put this before you that you hardly ever hear this topic and yet it is the most important topic to you as a born again believer.

It's the issue of running for the prize, Paul spoke about a prize. He had a clear prize in his mind, and that prize, we'll look at it in a few minutes, the actual verse in first Corinthians 9, is that he wanted to receive the testimony from the Lord on the last day. The testimony that he was complete in obedience in all the areas of his life, that the Lord would look at him and say, "Paul you did it, I gave you X amount of years to live, as a believer."

And the goal as a believer isn't even ministry first, though ministry is important. The goal, our number one reason God gives us extended days on the earth, after we are a believer, to give us an opportunity to receive the testimony that we were complete or comprehensive in our obedience in every area of our life. And the Holy Spirit actually gives us time, and He woos us, and that's His plan for our life, though most believers are never focused on that concept in their life. They're focused on pressures being alleviated, which I understand, their ministry getting established, which I understand, money breakthroughs, relationship favor, those are all important, and are all part of God's plan. But nothing is more important, from the Lord's point of view, in my life than I would stand before Him and He'll say, "Mike I have one main question first, of all the areas of your life did you bring them completely under My leadership? All the areas, were you, I don't mean were you

perfectly mature, but were you reaching with a focus tenacity to bring every area, your thoughts, your words, your money, all your struggles, were you reaching actively to love me in this way?" And whether I attained to the breakthrough in every area is not the issue, the issue is, was I consciously seeking to do that as my main goal in life, because that's why the Lord gives us extended years as a believer.

It's not first to make impact. He make a whole lot of impact to somebody else in one day and touch a whole nation, if He wants. He doesn't and He wants to make impact through us, He really does. It's very important to Him.

But the first reason he extends your days, is to give you an opportunity to give Him that testimony, that you contended in your life for every area to be in the pursuit of obedience. Not even a full breakthrough, but the pursuit of obedience, the active pursuit in every area of your life. And you're gonna see in a few moments, this was not a small thing the Paul. Paul repeated this concept so many times. over and over. I mean, I don't know what subjects he said more often than this. I mean there's probably a few, and yet you almost never hear this concept referenced in the body of Christ. And more trouble, well that's troubling, how often do you spend time in a day, in a week, in a month, thinking on how to bring those final areas into the pursuit of obedience. And maybe some of you think I don't even think that much about it, and that's what I mean. The most important subject is for me and the Lord meet eye to eye one day, that's the first question He's going to ask me.

"Did you seek, did you endeavor, did you content, did you reach in your spirit towards Me, to obey Me, to love Me in these, all these areas of your life, not did you fully get the breakthrough, but did you make it a priority of your heart, the focus of your life to go after them?"

And I want to be able to say by the grace of God, "yes"

Now I want a breakthrough in all those areas, but I want to say I was contending to obey in all of them, and if that is the answer I get by the grace of God, then I will receive what Paul called the prize.

And the prize is the Lord's testimony that you did it, and the prize is the ability to offer that response to the Lord. And of course there's many implications in terms of eternal rewards and many other things, but that's not even my point right now. But it's the identify in your mind, that is the primary reason you have extended days after you are born again. The main reason you are alive on the earth is to decide if you want to be part of the family God and when you decide to be in the family, to decide if you want to, the quality of love you want to offer to Jesus on that last day. That's your next decision, the quality of love that it is you want to offer. And the Lord says, "I will give

you lots of opportunities, and I'll even give many of you extended years. But I want you to do this, I would you offer Me love in every area of your life through obedience.”

We can only love Jesus on Jesus' terms. And there's a lot going on in the body of Christ and a lot of humanistic language in the culture of the church today. A lot humanism in the in the church culture, but I just want to be clear about this, we can only love Jesus on Jesus' terms as He defines it.

And he defined love, as being rooted in the pursuit of obedience and the spirit of obedience. What I mean, loving in the pursuit of it, and it's better to say in the pursuit of affection based obedience.

And it's obedience I want to obey You, because I love You.

That is how Jesus defined love, that we would pursue obedience with affection, affection based obedience in every area of our life.

John 14, He says this so many times and the reason this weighs my heart down as a shepherd, he says it so many times, and then Paul the apostle makes this point so many times, but you rarely hear it, hardly a whisper, a little here, a little there, and the body of Christ is going a hundred miles an hour.

So I'm gonna just give you some of the verses, we know the verses, they are not new, but they need to be emphasized. Not just in the pulpit, that they need the emphasized in what were contending for in our private life. Most people, they think they pray about, money problems, relationship problems, health problems, those are important, and “Lord please give me a breakthrough in my ministry”. And the Lord's saying, “those are good, but what about the breakthrough in your heart that I am most concerned about, that most defines who we are together”.

“Oh yah, I need that breakthrough, I really do, but Lord please give me the money, please give me the healing, give me the new relationship with the regular relationship and please give me the anointing on my ministry please”.

And the Lord says, “what about you having the anointing to give your heart fully to Me, before you meet face-to-face one day, because that will be your gift of love you give Me on that day.”

Oh I do love You, I love You, but I need some more money, I need a bigger ministry, I need to be treated better.”

And the Lord says, “Oh how I wish the offering the that you would give Me on the day we meet, was your first concern.”

Because the offering that we give Him when we present our life, is the offering of our love. That is the first concern in His relationship with us. And that was the first concern in Paul's heart in his ministry. I mean, he really appreciate it. His apostolic ministry, he took it very seriously, but he was

after of prize, a very specific prize in an individual way. And that was to offer himself to the Lord, to give an offering of love. I don't mean a one time, like the final year he really got committed, he wanted to offer decades of pursuing affection obedience to the Lord. He wanted to offer to Jesus here is decades I sought to love you on your terms. Here is my offering of love.

And of course then the Lord would answer it in a way that would just completely melt Paul and the Lord would give him eternal rewards that would, the eternal rewards are very important, but the rewards, the part that excites me most about them, they are expressions of Jesus's love for us. When He gives you garments in the age to come, those garments are really awesome, but the garments are declarations of how you felt about Him, and how He felt about you during your love on the earth. Your life on the earth, the way that that you love Him.

And what I mean, I'll say that more clearly, the garments, we'll all have different garments, in the age to come. We will all have different degrees of glory, and they will be based on the way we gave our love to Him, and those rewards are really His feeling about the way we loved Him. I mean, He loves us, no matter what. But He goes, "I just want you to know how I feel about the way you sought Me for decades."

And His rewards are declarations of how He feels about our diligent, costly, sacrificial pursuit to love Him. It really moves Him and it needs to move us more now, because it will deeply move us on that day. It will deeply move us on that day. There are many believers they are saying why didn't anybody get me focused on this. I was focused on money breakthroughs, ministry breakthroughs, relationship breakthroughs and healing, why didn't anybody get me focused on the breakthrough of mature love in my heart before Him.

I didn't know I would be here one day to offer myself as my supreme one time gift. You'll offer yourself that one time. "Here I am Lord, the offering of my love for my decades on the earth."

And whatever that offering is, it is, and it never changes. It is a one-time offering forever and this consumed Paul. It absolutely consumed Him. You'll see in a few moments. Jesus said, here He made it clear, "if you love Me, you keep My commandments."

He says in verse 21 of John 14, he that has my commandments and keeps them, that's the person who loves Me."

But it's not about sentiment in worship settings, although I like sentiment, I love the feel in worship settings. But it's not sentimental feelings, it's the decisions that resolve to obey Him, because it is a decision in our spirit to express love Him.

There's no such thing as loving Jesus without sincerely seeking to obey His word. It is a complete fabrication, there is no such thing. Many people say "I love Him, but these areas I'm not getting around to it,"

And the Lord would say, "you want to love Me, you have sentiment towards Me, but you do not love Me, you do not love Me."

And then this will be so shocking to so many people on that day, that's why this is absolutely the most important subject in your life, it really is, and in my life.

Expressing our love to Jesus, includes denying lustful desires and pride. The biggest lust in all of our lives, is pride. Pride comes so easily to us, and humility is so foreign. I'm not talking about social etiquette, were we kind in public act humble, we're polite and have protocol. I'm not talking about that, I mean real humility from the heart, it is foreign to the human spirit. But whenever we reach for humility, to show you because we love Jesus, we're humble to one another because we love Him it, moves Him.

The struggle we have to overcome any kind of lust, whether its pride or physical or a covetousness with money, whatever struggle we go through, that is our assignment for X amount of years on the earth. That's the arena of which the Lord has given us to show love to Him on that last day. He takes it very personally when we pursue obedience of those areas.

Now, there is different ones that are addicted to various things. I mean I can give a list of 10 or 20, you could get the same ones. I don't want to give a list. Every time you pull back from that, "I love you, I want to obey You," it moves Him, it is not in vain. Do you know the way you move His heart, every movement to Him. Even without a breakthrough, I'm talking about the reaching, it moves His heart.

Now Jesus, now here he really said it, and just straightforward language in the sermon mount Matthew 5:48. Now Matthew 5:48, the sermon on the mount you know, is the main teaching of the kingdom of God. It's were Jesus took three chapters, He laid it out for three chapters what the kingdom of God, what the character in the kingdom is to be like.

And the high point of the sermon on the mount is right here Matthew 5:45, I mean 5:48. He gets right to the top of the mountain. This is the point, the pinnacle point of the sermon on the mount. Here's what he says, "be perfect as your Father is perfect."

Now when we hear that, many people read that wrong, so they just automatically disconnect. They roll there eyes and go, "whatever that is so out of reach, that's not even worth praying about."

No really, that is so, that is because they misinterpret it. What He means is that you are, the word perfect is the same as the word complete, they are used interchangeably in the new testament. And you'll see in a little while and I have quite a bit on an appendix on the internet, likes five or six more pages of all the verses where we are called to be perfect, or we're called to be complete.

Over and over and over the apostles prayed and preach this teaching that we would be complete in our love or our obedience, or be perfect. And the word perfect means mature. Now what Jesus is talking about, he means this. This is not a hypothetical unrealistic demand of Jesus, and you know that every promise that God gives in the Bible, I mean every command, every command has the promise of the enabling of the Spirit to keep it. There is no command that the Holy Spirit will not give you power to keep. If you want power for that.

You may not walk in it right away, but if you reach it, you stay with it, you say when you fail confess, repent, reach again. Oh it moves His heart every time you do that. He's not disgusted at you when you fail and get back up, when you get back up and run into his heart, He goes, "look at it, he wants to obey me he, wants to give himself to me in this area, look at that."

And it moves the heart of God, I assure you. But this issue of being perfect, means to be, to walk in all the light the Holy Spirit gives you in that season of your life.

Now He says, "walk in all the light you have in the way that God the Father walks in all the light He has."

Now he has all the light and there's no difference between what God understands and what God does. He walks perfectly in all of His life, that's the absolute, the absolute of the absolute level. But in a relative sense, we walk in all the light we have.

Now a new believer only has a little bit of light. They only have inside in a couple of areas. The Holy Spirit only talking to them on an area or two. Did you know a new believer, one day old in the Lord, can obey this passage in the first day they are in the kingdom.

Maybe there's three issues they can't do and they go, "I'm going all the way being perfect" as there heavenly Father. They are walking in all the light, they don't have much light, they're all is real small, but it is their all. It's the everything that they know, they give.

And a brand-new believer with a really small, it's kind of hard to say that, I've gotta to figure a better when say that, a new believer with a small all, can be equally yoked to a mature believer with a big all. Because the all is what makes us equally yoked.

So a one day old believer can be equally yoked to Jesus, because that one day old believer is giving all they know, every area they are seeking to obey in, and Jesus every area that in His life He's walking in the light in.

And so in that sense were equally yoked. And He doesn't ask us to be equally yoked in maturity, He asked us to be equally yoked in the pursuit of obeying all the light. He really means be perfect.

And that's why I get disturbed when I hear grace teaching and and it is filling the church today. It is absolute destructive and it undermines people's ability, it injures your heart and undermines their ability to enjoy the kingdom of God.

The grace teaching that empowers people to feel good about compromise and their spirits stays dull all the time. The vast majority of the body of Christ in America is so dull in their spirit, they don't have energy to reach for anything dynamic in God, or new or outside of the norm, because their spirit so dull and so weigh down with darkness because their interpretation of grace, has been that which makes them feel good while they are sinning, instead of the grace of God empowers us to give all.

And the pursuit of all is what makes our spirit vibrant and is what causes us to feel power in our spirit.

Now again, you may not breakthrough in all the areas, but the pursuit of obedience in all the areas is what He asked for. In this age walking perfect is relative I mean it's really relativity. In the age to come it is in an absolute sense, but in this age it's relative.

To reach for 100% obedience is very different than attaining it. I am reaching to obey God in every area of my life for some time, I don't attain that but I reach for it. And here's what it means to reach for it. I reach for it and when I fall short of it, instead of finding a bible verse to justify it, I call it sin and then I repent and I renew my resolve to obey in that area again. When the Lord looks at that, He says, "I like this, this is good. You are seeking to love me with all of your heart.

When we obey the Holy Spirit's light, He gives us more light. David said it so this is one of my favorite Psalms. He said, "in your light we see light." Oh what a statement! He said, "Father when I'm in light and I obey the light, I get more light."

And then when the light increases your experience in God increases, because your capacity to experience God increases. We don't want a version of grace that empowers us to live in compromise. Our spirits stays dull and defiled the whole time, and burned out.

We wanted a definition of grace that's pressing us to the limits of humility in secret, because that's what moves God when we're seeking to obey him and costly ways and to humble ourselves in ways we never get credit in the eyes of man. That moves His heart, He takes that very personally as love for you to Him.

This is so dynamic, THIS is what Paul was after, en this is what you're after, it's what I'm after. Enoch before he even died, there is not very many guys that get this that I know of, before he died God told him "you get it Enoch you pleased Me."

Before he died he received the testimony that he did it. It doesn't just mean he was generally pleasing to God. That means that all of his life he was in pursuit of obedience. Now we're gonna find that a few moments, Paul the apostle receive that testimony at the end his life in prison in Rome. The Lord told him he would get the crown. Now in the years preceding that he wrote a few times, he says, "I don't know for sure, I still got a few years to go."

Because you don't know, you don't finish the race until the time of your death. And many guys run well and they stumble in their final years. And stumble doesn't mean a gross sense, it means they settle into a mediocre reach in their fervency for God. I've seen many people walk hard for God for 10 and 20 years, and then that the last five or 10 or 15 they're just kind of idle.

They don't have to have the same energy to go out and do all the different activities, but have that the reach in their spirit of their former years. And so the way that this operates is that we don't receive the testimony until it's at the end. And then when our race is finished, the Lord gives each one of us and evaluation.

I'm talking about born-again believers that are saved. He says, "you gave, you went for all full obedience. You did it, you sought to love Me, and those last three areas in those last few decades you were going hard after those areas. I've watched you, I've recorded it in my book. You moved my heart that you wanted to bring even those areas under my leadership."

And Enoch receive the testimony before he died that he was pleasing, which in this course here, the first commander course, he received the testimony that he sought to love God with all of his heart. God says, "that's my story about your life."

Can you fathom what it would be like, I don't mean just receive "forgiven". I mean that's cool, I like forgiven. But what if the Lord, your born-again and you have a resurrected body, He looks at you and says, "your dedication was outstanding and you pressed all your days to obey Me in secret. I saw you and that incorporates moments of failure."

Because the Lord's editing process in the grace of God, and I mean this, it incorporates weak and broken people. It's not the perfection of doing it, it's the consistency, the perfection means all the areas you consistently endeavored to obey in. That's what the perfection is talking about.

Can you imagine the day you meet Jesus face-to-face and you will, in a minute. You're gonna meet Him face-to-face in a minute, and whether that minute is in an hour or whether it's in 50 years, you will meet, many of you will meet Him in a minute or in a 100 years let us say it that way. It's a



minute and whichever way it goes, whatever He's thinking when He looks in your eyes about the quality of your love, is the only thing you will care about from this life.

What He is thinking when He looks at your eyes what He's thinking about the quality of the love you gave Him, that your offering Him. And many people will be saved, but the quality of love they are offering will be very, very weak.

He will love them and He will appreciate it and He will receive them, but that's not enough for me. I want to offer him decades of radical pursuit of obedience in thoughts, in what what I put my eyes on, what I say with my words, what I do with my my hours, what I do with my money, I want to take all those areas and offer them to Him for decades of pursuing love with those issues.

And if I have that testimony and if He backs it up and says, "you did it". Oh my goodness you can't imagine what would that mean to you if the Lord says, "you did it." With all of the weakness figured into it.

Because is not about doing it perfectly so you don't want to misunderstand the word perfect. The word perfect means complete, it means all the areas of your life you are seeking to obey Him. It's perfect and complete in terms of its comprehensive areas of your life. It doesn't mean you never stumbled in those areas. You stumbled in the areas many many times, but you got back up and re-signed up for 100% obedience, not to make a show before man, to do it because you loved Him. There was affection based obedience. You said, "I love you, I don't feel that much towards you right now, I can't feel your presence, but I got a decision in my spirit, and I'm gonna love you and I hope for a breakthrough of feelings, but you know what, between now and then I'm gonna keep doing what you said is love.

That's what I'm talking about. It's the wisest thing you could ever do. That's why I started this by saying this truly is, not trying to be melodramatic, the most important subject you will ever grapple with. Because you only have one time to offer your life to Jesus, one time only, I'm talking as a believer.

James said the testing of your faith produce patience, and let the patience have perfect work inside of you, let it fully impact you, let the patience fully impact you, let it have a perfect work in you. Why, then you will be perfect and complete lacking nothing. He means lacking nothing in your, there's no area of your life that you are failing to respond to the Lord in. Your eyes, your time, your humility, your words, your money, you lack no area in your life that you are not pursuing obedience in.

And that's what it means to lack nothing. So he goes in verse three and he said that the testing of your faith, in other words if you respond right, the testing means pressures, so the pressure bears down and there's all kinds of types of pressures, if you respond to the pressure right it produces patience. In other words patience is, sometimes you can mix that word up, I mean lose the sense of it. It means perseverance in obedience to God's will. Patience doesn't mean your patient like in your relational style with somebody, you don't interrupt them, your patient. That's nice, but that is not what this means. It means you persevere in wanting to obey the will of God. That's what patients means mostly in the New Testament.

So what happens if the trials come. The trials have a, if you respond right because many people, believers even, they get bitter and they get into self-pity and bitterness. And so if that happens, they just say until you know somehow they get out of it by the grace of God. But if you respond right it produces a focus in your spirit and in your mind, trials do.

You start asking the question what am I even on the earth for, what is this about, what's really important, trials bring what's important to focus. And then, again the implication is you responding right, then you get this focus which is called patience, and you realign your heart. These trials, a thousands times you keep talking to the Lord, "why is this happening?" And, "oh I love you Lord I really committed to You."

And it causes your spirit to get realigned. That patience, that perseverance in the will of God is working in you. It is working and what it is, it produce complete obedience. Sooner or later you become complete and it means complete in obedience. That focus will begin to touch every area of your life, you will lack nothing there will be no area, your thoughts, they may not be 100% under the Lord's leadership, but you want them to be.

It is no longer an issue, well I was going to take a few days and just go kind of just do whatever I do with my mind. No my thoughts or yours, my time is yours, my hours are yours, my money is yours, all of it is yours. That's what it means to be complete, lacking nothing in the offering of yourself to God in obedience.

That's what James is talking about. Now what happens to many people is that they get trials and they get into self-pity bitterness and then they get into gossip, they get into complaining and the things just spiral way down, instead of complete in their responsiveness to God, they go the other direction and they get ensnared in bitterness and it is more doors open up that are negative and instead of being complete, they become incomplete in their responsiveness to God.

So verse 5, James says of you lack wisdom ask God. And some people read this verse and thinks James is talking about trials and suddenly he's talking about, you know how to get divine direction

what college to go to. No, he is not talking about direction for your ministry or who to marry or what car to buy. He's talking about wisdom concerning the issues you are incomplete in, in your obedience.

He said, ask the Lord, when you're under a trial, what is the issue you're bringing me to a greater focus and resolve in and talk to me. And the Lord says, "you are getting it. Ask me about this and I will give you insight into some difficulties and it will catapult you forward and as time unfolds you'll offer a greater testimony of love to me on the last day."

Now David did this in Psalm 139 and Psalm 19, he asked the lord, "talk to me about the areas I don't see that I'm gonna meet You one day, and then your gonna talk to me."

And what David is really saying is, "shock me now Lord, don't wait to shock me then."

And these are two awesome, I mean really awesome prayers of king David, where he was asking God for insight in the areas of his life that were incomplete in obedience.

Very few people would actually pray these prayers consistently. Lord, tell me, is there pockets of resistance in my spirit, my pride, my money, my schedule, the way I talk, the way I look, the things I do, is there any pockets of resistance in my life from offering full of, that's what those two prayers are talking about.

### **THE PRIZE: OUR TESTIMONY OF BEING COMPLETE IN LOVE AND OBEDIENCE**

I tell you this is the most important subject in our life, this whole thing. I'm just saying the same thing over and over. Now we are getting to the point that I introduce that Paul was running for the prize, and this was the prize, clearly the prize. And it had eternal rewards with it.

The prize was not a bigger ministry, was not a breakthrough of money, wasn't even a get out of prison, send met an angel. His prize was the testimony that would stood before God. The Lord Himself would bear witness that his offering to Jesus, that Jesus, when he stands before Jesus, would say you gave me all your heart. That was the prize Paul was after. Clearly and all the rewards that go, and again, those rewards are not just your a big shot in heaven. Those are just statements of how Jesus is moved by the way you endeavor to love Him in this age.

Paul says those who run in a race they all run, but only one receives the prize. Now it is not one of us receive the prize. There is only one type of running to receive a prize. There is only one way and it is the pursuit of the wholehearted, the testimony of full obedience. That's the only way that

wins this prize. He goes run it the way that you get it. He is telling all the saints, he is not saying only one saint will get it. He says all of you run to get that.

Don't be so concerned for the breakthrough of your money, breakthrough of your favor, breakthrough of your anointing in ministry, get a breakthrough in the heart and the others will come. Lock in and go after Me in this way.

Verse 26, "therefore I run this way, not with uncertainty because I am a totally focused man." He goes, "I know what I'm after, I am after a prize."

And beloved, if you leave this meeting tonight you say, "I am calling for this prize, I don't care what it cost me, I am going, I don't care what I lose out in time and money in honor, I am going for this prize, I'm not going to live with uncertainty. I'm gonna live with focus from now to the end and I know I'll have some some hours and some days when I don't have this focus, but when it comes to me, I'm gonna realign my soul repent and sign back up to a life of focus."

He says in verse 27, "I discipline my body, I bring it into subjection so I would not be disqualified." He is not talking about disqualify from salvation, he is not worried about losing salvation, he doesn't want to be disqualified from the prize. And to have prize, it's our money, our time, our physical appetite, it's all of it needs to be endeavoring to obey Jesus. He says I got to do it. He says, "I'm gonna be dead in a minute and I'm gonna be standing before Him and I'm gonna run for it. Paul's prize was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day, his love was perfected.

Now it is two-fold. He wants to offer to Jesus the testimony that he gave his all, for decades, not that the final 10 minutes. But you know what, I appreciate the final 10 minutes. You know I've talked to people in they say "you know this, guy, you know he is in the special care unit, he's been there for months or years and he is not even of a sound mind and why does God even want him alive, why doesn't he take him".

And I say, I'll tell you the reason. The lord's giving that guy, that man, that woman, in a way that we don't perceive a chance to line up before they meet the Lord.

Those people, many of them have an ability to communicate with the Lord all these hours, in ways they can't communicate with us, they are still communicating. Many of them with the Lord and they are signing up. They are saying, "I love you, I'm yours and they are repenting in there way that they know they have to as believers.

So it's not about ,well you know they not being very effective. You don't know what's going on their spirit. You don't know the testimony that they are establishing when they present themselves before the Lord.

The value of life is so, I mean that's why we fight for life. I mean every minute a human being is alive, is another minute to touch and enhance that testimony and that testimony last forever. I mean life is really valuable on so many levels. But that's one level that is very important.

So we get to offer to the Lord the testimony of our love to Him, that we thought to obey Him and we contended in every area. And then the Lord answers how He feels and then He rewards us in the overflow of that answer. Can you imagine what the Lord, what He might say to you, and the joy, maybe nobody ever heard of you, maybe you are just lost in the crowd, but not in His eyes you are not lost in the crowd.

And He says, “ I saw you, you didn't get the accolades, you didn't get the attention, nobody paid any noticed to you, but I did, and every time you sought to obey Me and every time you humbled yourself ,every time you denied the flesh because of Me, your love for Me, I wrote it in My book, in My heart.”

Beloved every single day, every morning, every night, every afternoon matters to God, because He remembers it with love if we give love to Him. No matter how boring and mundane the day is, we can give ourselves to Him in that day, and He remembers it forever, I love it.

### Philippians chapter 3

Now this is a few years before Paul dies and he goes, “it's not that I've already attained it, or I am already perfected. I do not count myself as having got a hold of it yet. But I press for the goal of the prize of of the upward call.”

Now Paul's writing the book of Philippians, he is in prison in Rome, he gets out of prison, and he goes back to prison a few years later and dies. He's at the end of his apostolic ministry and so he is saying, “I haven't attained it yet”.

“It? What is the it you do not have yet?”

“I mean I know you're born again.”

“Ah yeh, I know I'm born-again.”

“You know you got like a really cool ministry.”

“Yeh I'm an apostle, have been for several years, wrote several books bible.”

“Okay I got that down. What is it you haven't attained?”

“I have not finished the race with this testimony that I completed all of my days in wholehearted obedience. I don't have that yet, because by definition you can only get that right when you die. I don't have the testimony from the Lord yet. I may have another year, I may have 20 more years.’ Paul didn't know, he ended up, he maybe had 4 or 5, I mean nobody knows for sure but he went ahead and he got out of prison and then he ministered a few years more and then went back to prison and a died in Rome and wrote 2 Timothy 4.

But he says this, “because I haven't attained it, I'm not perfected, I'm not at the end of my race, I don't have the story at the end yet, because it's not the end.”

I mean he is not talking about being born again, he is not talking about being anointed and ministry, he is talking about the number one thing on his mind, the prize.

Then he goes on to say in verse 14, “I press for the prize”.

He is not trying to be an apostle, he already is one. He is not pressing to get out of prison, and to be an apostle, to write more books of the bible, he already does all that. There is a prize on his mind that he's going for and he calls it the prize of the upward call of God. And it is not just that he would be rewarded in the age to come, surely there's a reward dimension to it, but it says that he can offer the testimony of complete obedience, as you'll see in the appendix, if you check in on the website, there's so many verses where Paul prays for it and preaches with this in view.

It is a few years later, second Timothy now. He's back in prison in Rome, I'm saying maybe its 4, 5, 6 years later, nobody knows for sure. And he's in prison now he says in 2 Timothy 4, that's the last chapter he writes, 2 Tim 4, he says, “the time of my departure's come, I am at the end, I know now the holy spirit's told me, I'm not getting out.”

Now he got out when he wrote the Philippians, he got out ministered a bit, he goes, “this is it, but the Lord's told me something, I got it, I got the crown, I got to the crown of righteousness isn't the gift of salvation.”

You'll hear guys at funerals say that, “well brother so-and-so is getting his crown.”

Brother so and so probably didn't even get the crown. The gift of salvation which is free, is worlds apart from the crown of righteousness that comes for those who have reigned in life in righteousness and they're gonna be ruling in the age to come.

The vast majority the believers will never get a crown, they will get robes and they will be in the city and they will be really happy, but a small number get this crown.

And Paul says, “I got it, the prize, the statement from heaven, I gave my all and I went to the end. Yes! Yes! Yes! I the got it.”

Beloved this is what you right now, 20 years old, 30 years old, sit in a chair you're going, "I want this."

"Yeh I don't know if I end up with this ministry, or that bank account, or that relationship, I like some of those things, there's nothing wrong with wanting some of those things, but they are not gonna get in the way of this prize."

He said, "I'm going for the prize."

The lord gives us a certain amount years to bring every area under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We're talking eyes, what you look at, what you say, how you spend your time, how spent your money, what you aim for? And because when you bring it under, it is not just that you love Him, it's a definitive declaration of love that moves Him.

This is the pursuing the first Commandment we're talking about tonight. All that are in this room are wise.

Paragraph E. If you are wise and many of you are, you will make what I'm saying tonight the single premier focus of your life, regardless what it cost you in ministry opportunity, financial opportunity, relational opportunities, social status, you make this the premier subject of your life. It is called going for the prize. And it is not about the anointing and ministry, although you may get really anointed in ministry because if I'm right, and I think I am and we are in that time of history, a lot of you are going to be really anointed in ministry, but that's not what this is about. this is about something entirely different than that.

I just like to lay them out there so I am not just talking about a particular issue. I am talking about our speech, our speech did not come under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The vast subject, our eyes, or appetites, our time, our money. James said in chapter 3 verse two, if you get your speech under control, he says you will be perfect. And perfect doesn't just mean, it means all of the areas of your life. That is what I am getting at, all the areas of your life will come under control of the Holy Spirit. If your speech, if you have no complaining, zero complaining, none, no criticism, no accusation, no complaining you have thanksgiving, you have affirmation and humility, no slander, nothing. I mean, I'm sure this is the one that kills me all the time, I goes Ahhhh!

James 3, I stare at it.... Ahhhhhh!

I go, "how many years have I got left? I got to get this one under. For real, I'm tortured by this verse.

But if you can get your speech, I don't mean get profanity out of your vocabulary, that's not what I am talking about, I mean bring your speech from the biblical point of view under the control of the Holy Spirit, you will take care of sexual problems, covetous problems, bitterness problems, all those problems will come into line, if get your speech under the Holy Spirit's control.

It will bring like a magnet, it will bring every single area like a vortex pull it right into the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Because what it takes, the spiritual vigor and the attentiveness to get your speech under control, will bring every single area in line just like James said. James was an apostle and he said, "trust me this is the real one, this is the final frontier of obedience in love. right here to Jesus."

It's the last one to go. You'll conquer covetousness, and wasting time, and indulgence in the flesh, and immorality, you'll conquer those long before this one goes down. This is the final one that resist being captured in the Holy Spirit, but your saying Lord, we're going for this. all the way, all the way.

He says, "good, why?"

"Because I want to give myself, I want to give the testimony that I loves You in every area of my life on the last day."

That's the thing that moves the Lord's heart. King David said in Psalm 101, he said he had this idea of perfect too. Again perfect means comprehensive, it means mature, it doesn't mean perfect in the absolute sense. He says I'm gonna walk perfect and my way, look at this in the most familiar place in this home, his gonna walk in a perfect heart. Beloved in your home is the place you are most comfortable to be carnal. That's the place where the relationships are crash, where they can complain and bite at each other verbally and not have humility toward each other. Because it's my home, I can be arrogant and complaining and all those things, it's my home. Dawid said "in my house I want to have complete obedience in my house." And then I want to take it up a notch and he said in verse three, "my eyes, particularly in my home my eyes will come under the leadership of the Holy Spirit."

There's power in pursuing a hundredfold obedience. I've learned this over the years, this next point. There is a dynamic, there's a, I don't understand it all, the way the dynamics of the heart works, if you go for 100% obedience and you leave one area out, you lose about 50% of the power impact on your heart. The last 2% is where the vibrant spirit comes in. I'm gonna obey God in the morality area, I'm gonna obey God really into it in the speech area, and I mean, I'm not saying you obey Him and in the speech area a 100% your but you endeavor it, I go for it, I'm going to do it in the



time area, okay that gets a little iffy, okay, okay all the time is yours okay, but I'm not going to do it and all of the money, but most of the money. That one point will cause the vibrancy in your spirit being lost.

The one point is what keeps the power surges from touching your heart. And I'm not talking about a breakthrough in all the areas I'm talking about a pursuit to love and obey in every single area. It changes the dynamic of your inner man, you dream different, you think different, you say different prayers when you're going for a hundredfold.

When the guy gets in your way and takes your stuff, it's a whole different thing when you're going for something other than your stuff. If your place in ministry, and your money and your honor is your "biggy" then that really is going to throw you off, but if "I got to get my tongue under control, yah he stole my money, but I got to get my tongue and my time under control, yah I heard it, he stole my money, but I gotta get my spirit..."

Your whole imagination is totally different if you're going for the hundredfold love and obedience to the Lord. That's where the power touches your spirit. That's where the feelings of the Holy Spirit begin to increase. That last 2%, if there's anything I tell you, well there's a few things I hope that I'm getting through to you, but that is absolutely, I'm gonna do everything, but I'm get drunk every now and then, not very often.

"Naaaaaaghhh, you can't do that."

"Where in the bible does it say you can't get drunk?"

"Oh that's a dum question."

You're not trying figure out what you can get away with. You're trying to figure out how to bring every, all the reigns of your being in unity with the Holy Spirit. You're not trying to figure out what bible verse to get away with something.

It's completely the wrong question.

God gives you many opportunities and me as well to make the decision over and over and over again. So we complain. He goes, "good". For real.

"Lord I don't want to complain."

He goes, "good, I'm going to give you a thousand and more chances". For real.

"To establish what you want."

Thats kind of cute, but it's real.

He says, "I'm gonna give you a thousand opportunities to tell Me what you really want." For real.

"Well I blew it in the morality room, I blew it in this room, that room".

He says, “okay, okay you get a thousand more chances. I want you to stand before me with the testimony that you want to give Me, and you get to make the right one a 1000 times too.”

Not just “what! I made it, Yes! I didn’t do this or that!”

The Lord says, “come on I want it to be your testimony now.”

It says here in Romans 5, we exalt and rejoice in tribulation, because what tribulation does, it is that verse we looked at in James 1, it produces focus or perseverance. Perseverance means pressure makes your inner man get focused. And if you respond right, it makes you persevering in righteousness.

Now pressure if you don't respond right, it makes you bitter, and again lets say what we said earlier it can go the other way, but with this perseverance you're working the muscle over and over, you get proven character.

The Lord says, “I’ll give you thousand times to show yourself diligent in the way you use your time. And I’ll forget all the times that you're not.

Beloved there's a time to rest. Rest is in the calendar and even in the rhythm of God. But our culture is intoxicated with playing,, and resting and relaxing and taking time off and chilling out. I mean we’re intoxicated with it and I like to say this strong, in a criminal way as people who have the Holy Spirit living us, that live forever with the decisions we make on the earth.

Why on earth do we want to throw days and evenings away in foolishness. We got a Bible, we got the Holy Spirit, we have eternity and a day to stand before Him to offer our heart, and what we say to Him, moves Him. I don’t want to take three nights or ten nights or fifty nights to go do a, b and c. I want to engage my spirit with Him and His purpose and His people in a way that has life in it, and yes I want to rest, I want to relax, but I want to do it in the rythms that build my spirit up, not that deplete my spirit.

I'm talking to you as a spiritual father, I’m giving you smart stuff here. This isn't like, wow that was heavy. No, this is liberating, this is the yoke of Jesus that will make your spirit bright. This is not heavy. The heavy stuff is the guys that do the half-and-half and they live depressed whole Christian life and a dulled spirit all the way. This is just the hating the presence of God wishing they loved it, but every time they got quiet it was horrible because their spirit was so dull and beat up and bruised by their compromise. Now that's a heavy message.

The scripture presents two aspects of being complete before God. We’re made complete instantaneously at the new birth, and we become complete progressively in our obedience. There is

two complete different ways the bible describes being completed. And that's what I have on the appendix.

There's many ways where the call to be complete is many terms of the New Testament. You can read that on your own.

Paul prayed, he preached so that people would be complete. He said, I pray that you'd be complete. What he meant is that there obedience, the responsiveness would be complete before they meet the Lord in every area of their lives.

Look at Colossians 1. We preach warning everyone, that's what I'm doing tonight. Presenting everyone complete in there obedience. He is talking to believers, a believer is complete in Christ the day they are born again in their legal position being justified by faith.

He is not talking about believers adding to the finished work of the cross. He is talking about believers becoming complete in their responsiveness to God before they stand before Him.

He said, I pray that I'll see you to perfect what's lacking in you. He is talking about, "I want to bring the truth and I want to help you to be responsive to God in every area. There's areas you're not responsive to God in. I want you to be complete and just prayer after prayer.

"Epaphras labor's fervently".

Ahhh make them complete. He is praying not to know what church building to buy, and when, what, where to go to school, that is not laboring they would stand perfect in the will of God in direction on to buy something.

He is talking about that he's laboring in fervent prayer that they would have a breakthrough of complete responsiveness to the Holy Spirit.

Now that's good to know direction, where to go what to buy, what to do, but that is not what he's laboring for. He's laboring that they would have a breakthrough in their spiritual life.

The rich young ruler, he told Jesus in verse 20, "I did all the commandments, what do I lack?"

Beloved that's the question of the hour. That was a great question, that is the question King David says, when he says, "Oh Lord" in those prayers I gave you in Psalm 139 and Psalm 19 earlier in the handout here.

King David prayed, "search me, and try me, show me."

This rich young ruler goes, "what do I lack."

That is a question you want to ask. That is the question of the hour. And Jesus says, “you want to be perfect?” Meaning, He doesn't mean your life would be perfect in every way. “You want your obedience to be complete, before you stand before Me one day? The money issue, I know you're cleaning your morality, your solid in your business deals, you're in the Word, you're doing the sabbath, you're doing this age, it is great but you're not complete or perfect.

and it is a word, it is the same idea. The money issue, for you to be complete, you got millions, for you, not everybody you have to give it all away.

He goes, “No!”

And Jesus says, “do you have any idea who you're talking to and how little millions of dollars is compared to what I am about to give you if you will do this?”

And he is not talking about eternal life, he is talking about that you have the testimony, because you don't have to give the money away to get saved, but “you would have the testimony that you obeyed Me in the completion and all the reigns of your life came under My leadership.

First john, I won't read it, but he talks about perfected love over and over. And perfected love and complete obedience, is the same deal. Perfected love is the same deal.

Now I'm gonna go to the last paragraph, I just want you to have this, I'll end with the story. It's a personal experience that I had in October 1970. I was 23 years old, it changed my life. I had a supernatural experience with the Lord, and I will leave you with this.

I go to bed one night and it starts off in a dream, but it ends up something else, and I'm kneeling before the Lord. And I'm kneeling down and I'm looking up to Jesus and I'm aware I'm awake, I don't know how this is happening, because this is the first. I'm having a trance, that is what is happening. Well it all comes down to that, but it doesn't really matters the definition of it. But it's the first time I've had one, the experience of it, I've only had two or three of my life, the 30 some years of walk with the Lord, but this is the first one. I'm kneeling down and I'm looking up to the Lord and I'm saying to myself where am I at, I'm awake. And the Lord looks at me and He looks right in the eyes and He has a stir, not a mean look, but He isn't smiling either. And He said, “saved but your life is wasted”.

And I am completely shocked by the statement and I answer back to him.

I said, “you have the wrong person”.

That is what I said, because when I was 23 years old I have been devoted to the Lord. I mean really energetic for five hard years. I mean, I was fasting and praying, I'm was going hard, like many of you guys are going. I mean for five years I have been and I'm thinking I was known by all my peers

as the, you know the one guy going all the way for God. And I was confused for what He is telling me, because I mean I had the reputation I was really going hard. And I'm going, I said, "you have the wrong person."

I actually said this, I goes, "no, no this can't be true, this can be true."

And He doesn't say anything, He stares me right in the face, that look at can remember to this second some 30 years later. I guess it is 30 years, almost exactly.

And so I look him in the eyes, I go, "no, no."

The word comes me, the thought comes to me, it is impossible to manipulate the man Christ Jesus.

I said, "Oh No" and I heard this phrase, it is impossible to, you can never change His mind on anything, never, there's no persuasion you can give Him, if He is given the word.

Oh! It was horrible. I was, that word hit me like an arrow, and I'm kneeling and I said, "okay, can I have another chance. Can I have another chance?"

He is staring at me. Kind of strong countenance. He wasn't mean, but he wasn't smiling either.

I said, "can I have another chance?"

And the thought came to me again, very strong and it was the Holy Spirit, the verse from Hebrews 9 is appointed unto man once to die, then the judgment and then the evaluation, so you don't get another change.

And I was sobbing and I was going, "Ahhh No! No!" and I was weeping and now this vision experience left and I was going to bed and now I'm in the experience I'm kneeling. Now I am across the room a few feet from the bed, kneeling and my shirt is wet with tears. I went, what is going on here?

Ad I said, "what was that?"

I go, "I don't know what that was all about."

It took me a little while to figure it out. It was so real, because it was.

And then the Lord spoke to me, "that is what I want you to avoid when you meet Him on that day. I gave you this experience so you will not have that conversation on that day. Because even you can have that conversation within, even though you love the Lord, you must walk in an unusual devotion to Me, all of your days."

This is what is He is calling me to. And from that day forward I tell you this, the number one thing that I fear in life is regret. I fear regret more than anything. I don't want regret on that day.

Beloved we can lose all kinds of things, but you never get to have that day twice, never. And if you'll regret on that day, even as a believer who is saved, He said, "you are saved, but your life is waste."

He told me I was saved, and when I stand before Him, what He is thinking about my life, now it is 30 years later and however many years until then, what's in His mind when He looks at me on that day, is the only thing that's really important about my life and my ministry right now.

Amen, let's stand.

## **Session 11: Loving Jesus without Offense (Mt. 11:6)**

### **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART REQUIRES WE OVERCOME OFFENSE**

Mat. Chapter 11, we are going to talk about loving Jesus without any offense in our heart. We are on the series of the First Commandment, the Holy Spirit restoring the First Commandment to first place in the body of Christ, before Jesus returns.

That is a fact, the first commandment right now is somewhere in the top ten of the body of Christ, but it is going to be number one before the Lord returns.

Let us pray. Father, I ask You for the release of Your Spirit, even now I ask you for Your blessing upon the hearing and the speaking of Your Word. Amen.

One of the primary foundational truths in the Kingdom of God is that Jesus' leadership is good. I mean the whole kingdom of God is built around this truth. His leadership is good. Now what that means, is that Jesus always uses His power according to perfect love and infallible wisdom. The wisdom cannot be improved, and the love is perfect.

Every time He uses His power, He manifests His power, it is always motivated by perfect love.

And it is always according to perfect wisdom. Wisdom that cannot be improved, nobody can make a suggestion that would make the plan better.

This is one of the great foundational truths in the Kingdom of God. Now when we understand this truth, very simple truth, it gives us confidence. We have trust in Him, but beyond that, it creates or stirs gratitude in our spirit towards Him. It makes us so grateful for how He treats us. The way that He leads us and how He treats us is the same subject.

When we understand that everything He does, for us and to us is motivated by perfect love, and infallible wisdom, it makes us say, "thank you, thank you, why do you love us so much?"

And then it becomes our joy to lavish our love back on Him. Sacrificial obedience is no issue when we are motivated by gratitude. Now we will only walk out the first commandment, we will only have the ability to love Jesus to the measure that we have gratitude.

And the devil knows this. If the devil can minimize our gratitude, then our love can be cut short.

And that is one of his main strategies, one of his schemes to hinder love in your life and in the body

of Christ as a whole, by accusing the leadership of Jesus in our mind. He wants to convince us that His leadership for our individual life is not motivated by love, and it is not according to wisdom. As a matter of fact, he will tell us, “you’re not getting what you deserve.”

That is true, but he means it in an entirely false way.

We are not getting what we deserve, we are getting way better than we would ever deserve. But the devil will come and tell you that Jesus is neglecting you, He is ignoring you, His promises are not true, something is wrong. And what he wants to do, he wants to convince us that Jesus’ leadership is not good. So that we will be offended at Him.

Now many believers, have a small residue of offense working in their heart and they don’t even know it. Many believers. Now some believers are just offended at Jesus. They are just mad at Him, because of something that happened in a relationship, or something that happened in the realm of finance, He didn’t come through like He should have, or maybe it is a physical issue of healing, or maybe it is ministry, “Lord I have been faithful for all these years, and You’ve never anointed my ministry, You’ve never release favor.”

And there is many people that have big offenses towards Jesus. I am talking about leaders in the body of Christ, but there is many more, that have unperceived offenses. It is a residue of offense that is in their heart, and it is dulling their spirit and they don’t even know this is what is hindering love in their life.

This is going to be one of the major battlefronts in the generation the Lord returns, the issue of is Jesus’ leadership good? Or is it not good? And by being good, I’ll define it again, that He uses His power always according to perfect love and infallible wisdom. That is what good leadership is. It is not only that Jesus is motivated right with love, His plan is absolutely perfect.

Now let us look at Matt. 11

This is one of the most strait forward passages on this subject where Jesus is speaking to John the Baptist’s disciples. Now most of you are familiar with this story, but I’m going to interpret the story differently that is common, and I don’t want to say this with arrogance, but I think it is commonly the story is told with a complete misinterpretation of what is going on.

The story is about the time that John the Baptist is in prison and it says in verse two that he heard about the works of Christ, so he send two of his disciples to say, “are You the coming one, or do we look for someone else?”

Now the way this is often taught is that John is in prison and even John, because he is human, is experiencing doubt. This is not at all what is happening. Not remotely what is happening. John



has no doubt whatsoever. John knows he is going to die. Jesus knows John is going to die, but John's disciples don't know that John is going to die. And so John hears in verse two that the miracles are happening, and he has been waiting his whole life, for the time where God would release the Holy Spirit upon Jesus.

Now the miracles are breaking out and the report is going forward, so John is in prison and he says, "this is the time to send my disciples". So he goes, "I want you guys to go on a mission. Go to the preacher from Nazareth and ask him, "are you the Messiah?"

And so they go, in verse four Jesus answers, and Jesus understands what John's doing, John is not concerned for himself, he's concerned for his disciples. John knows where he's going and he knows his disciples are gonna be in utter confusion in a very short amount of time, and so John is actually preparing them to relate to Jesus in a right way after this crisis is going to come. The sudden death of John the Baptist is going to throw off all John's disciples. So Jesus said, "go tell John this", verse 5 "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the dead are raised."

Now what Jesus did is he quoted two of the major promises from the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, from Isaiah 61 and Isaiah 35, when the Messiah comes these things would happen. Now when Jesus did these miracles, these young men were so excited they said something like, "that's right out of the Bible, we learned this in synagogue class when we were just boys. You are the Messiah, we've seen that with our own eyes. We know these passages."

Because these were very common well known passages to every young Jewish boy that grew up through the training system of that day. So they, verse 6 Jesus says, "before you go, I want to give you one point of teaching."

"okay what is it?"

Blessed is he who is not offended because of me."

And they think, "why would we be offended at you, your the Messiah, John's been telling us about you. Your raising people for the dead, the hope of Israel has come, why on earth would we ever be offended at you?"

And he said, "just remember that you are blessed if offense does not enter your heart towards Me."

Now people are offended at Jesus for two main reasons. They are offended Jesus because of what He does, and they are offended at Jesus because of what He doesn't do. How He doesn't intervene in the way they think He should, if He was really a good leader over their life.

Now Jesus is not going to intervene, and John is going to be killed. And these disciples are going to have to struggle through the issue of offense.

“If you're really God and you're really good, why did John die and what does this mean about my life?”

I can imagine them, a couple of them coming back, these two guys, “John, John you know they are talking to him through the prison window, “we saw it”

John ‘says,” what did you see?”

“He raised the sick, healed the sick, the blind, just like Isaiah 61 and Isaiah 35.”

And John says to himself, “I knew He was gonna do that. I knew that He would answer this for me.

What did you learn about Him?”

“He's the Messiah, He's the one.”

John says, “you see that you with your own eyes, right?”

“Yes!”

John has just functioned as a good Shepherd, he has prepared them for what's coming.

I can imagine John saying, “did He say anything else?”

They go, “no, no not really, oh yeh this kind of cryptic little proverb, it doesn't make really any sense.”

John say, “what did He say?”

“He said that we would be blessed we didn't get mad at Him, why would we be mad at Him?”

John said, “remember that, that's a very important principle.”

Because the point of this story was not to encourage John, it was to stabilize the young forerunners that were being raised up, because the way they handle and processed this crisis in their life was going to determine how they would relate to Jesus from then on.

### **Let us go on to verse 7,**

Now Jesus, because He has so much loyalty to John, he knows the crowd is misinterpreting this whole thing just like preachers have done. And I don't try to be mean about it, I just care about presenting this in the right way.

They think John's wavering in prison and he is not, at all. And so Jesus looks at the multitudes in verse 7, Matthew 11:7, He said to the multitudes concerning John, “what did you go out in the wilderness to see, when you went out to hear this man preach? Did you go out to see a reed shaken by the wind?”

He goes, “do you think John is bending like a reed under the weight of the wind? Do you think he's wavering under pressure?”

He goes, “No! John is not wavering, he's not a reed shaken by a wind right now. The winds of persecution do not move John at all.” He said, “did you go out to see a man in soft garments?” Then He goes in in the text and say, “for guys that live in soft garments live in palaces. Is John a man of comfort, is that is that was on his mind, comfort? Is he fearfully trembling like a broken reed, or is he longing for comfort to live in a palace? If John was after those things, all he had to do was be quiet. Herod liked him, Herod would have put him in the king's palace, instead of the king's dungeon if only he would have just been quiet. John wasn't remotely interested in being quiet.” He said, “John's not a man shaken by the wind, neither is he a man who lives for comfort.”

So the crowd goes, “oh, well then what was all this about? These two guys coming.”

And I don't think Jesus gave the whole answer, but it was for the sake of those disciples. Verse 11, if there's any doubt at all, He says John's the greatest man ever born of a woman. There been many martyrs through the years and John's faith was certainly equal to all of them. Jesus with his own lips called him the greatest man to ever live.

John was not shaken but John was concerned that his young disciples were going to be shaken. Not shaken by pressure from Herod, but shaken by offense in their relationship to Jesus.

Beloved that's far more serious, because if we get offended at Him, we cannot grow in love. And the devil knows this, the devil wants to accuse Jesus to our minds. And the way that Jesus treats us personally, so that we get offended. Because what God is doing is raising up a company of forerunners, all of over the earth, who are going to make sense of Jesus's leadership in the end times across the nation.

Now beloved, you and I are not gonna be able to speak on a global level, or even a regional level about the leadership of Jesus being good, if we struggle with His leadership in our personal life. The same reality that causes us to overcome offense in the way He leads us in our individual life, is the same truth and reality that we will use when we speak about Jesus in a forerunner capacity for his national, global and eschatological purposes.

The way God is raising up and training forerunners to speak about His good leadership, is in the laboratory of their own life discovering His good leadership.

When things don't go well in the money realm, the relationship realm, the physical realm, or the minister realm or whatever other realms and the devil comes and says, “I told you that you could not trust Him.”

We declare our love and our confidence and we take our stand because believing in Jesus's good leadership is a decision we make, we posture ourselves and then the gratitude grows out of that and then the love flows out of the gratitude.

We will never have more love for Jesus than we have gratitude for His leadership. And the way we have gratitude for His leadership is by understanding how good His leadership is. So if the devil can get you offended at Jesus's leadership in your personal life, you will never be a successful forerunner representing Jesus on an eschatological level, whether it's to your region, or to your city or to your friends, you'll never be able to convince them, what Jesus shakes everything that can be shaken.

No, back to Matthew 11. I forgot one verse, very important verse. Matt 11:12 - Jesus goes on now and makes John the Baptist a picture, the prototype of spiritual violence. He said, "John is a man of spiritual violence". And it's not physical violence it was the abandonment, his resolution and his dedication. He was violent, meaning there was no cost too great to get in the way of him in a hundredfold obedience. No matter what it cost him.

Now I watched over the years young forerunners, they will bear the rigors of a lifestyle of fasting and prayer, and living in simplicity and in humility, I mean they will bear the rigors of this. I've seen them do this for some years, but when it comes to the issue of Jesus's leadership in their life, I've seen them get offended. They can do the fasting and prayer but when the relationship doesn't work right, the money doesn't come through, the healing doesn't happen, all of a sudden this small but real residue of offense begins to well up them.

Now my point is this, it will take us not spiritual violence to lay a hold of the facts of Jesus's good leadership when our emotions are raging within us. Beloved that will be spiritual violence to get a breakthrough on this area in our life ever as much as the prayer and fasting humility dedication, that we're normally thinking of when we think of spiritual violence.

Now let's go to John chapter 2. Now John chapter 2 is a very interesting passage of Scripture. Jesus goes into the temple. Now He cleanses the temple two times in his three and a half year ministry. On the beginning of His ministry, He goes in, which is John 2, He takes the wip, turns over the tables, gosh there is complete pandemonium in the temple. And then three and half years later, or three years later, He does it again. So He cleansed the temple twice.

It is right here in John 2 and again in Matthew 21 at the end. This is the first one, it's important to understand that.

Now if you can recognize in John 2 the miracle at the wedding in Canaan. Jesus's first miracle happens the event before this. So my point is Jesus is just now beginning His miracle ministry. The word is not out at all, He did a private miracle at the wedding and then he goes to Jerusalem.

Nobody knows who He is, He is an unknown preacher walking into the temple. And the temple is a massive structure like the municipal Auditorium, but even more. It was one of the most magnificent buildings of the ancient world. Very expensive and opulent and all these powerful leaders and then this unknown preacher walks in. This 30-year-old young man nobody knows Him, He knocks all the tables over, He takes a whip, uses it, then the leaders come to Him in verse 19, and Jesus said, “destroy this temple, and He is talking about his body but they don't know it, and I'll raise it up in three days.”

And they said, “it took 46 years to build it, what do you mean three days?”

And Jesus leaves. Now his disciples are new with Him. They have only been with Him a short time and they're not even all in place yet.

I could picture it, “Jesus, now I know this is your first time out in ministry,” it actually is, “but you know if you would approach this differently, it could be really different. If You would go in, ask for a meeting with the leaders, get a handful of them, give up words of knowledge, the secrets of their heart, heal a couple, take them to the graveyard, get a few raisings from the dead, then open your Bible, point out the prophecies of the Messiah, the messianic prophecies about Yourself, and go here I am, here I am, then give them a word of the Lord. Here's the word of the Lord, change the money deal in the temple, I'll give you a week to pray about it, I'll come back to check and see with the Lord tells you.”

Now that's how we normally would approach something like that. Jesus is not concerned, they have no way of comprehending anything He's going to do. Nobody knows they don't, and his disciples have no way of comprehending it, because they are brand new with it.

He has only done one miracle right there John 2, just a little bit earlier at the wedding. So now there's two groups that are in a real issue. Group one, they are offended at Jesus, the Pharisees, and what Jesus did gave them all the reason they needed to just be done with Him. But the other group, the young disciples, they are in turmoil and they are saying something like, “that couldn't have been wise. You didn't even give them a chance. But maybe you know things we don't know and we're so attracted to You, and You seem so of God. And they are in anguish and the anguish that they had actually drove them into a deeper connection with the Lord.

Whereas the Pharisees, the same information of the same event, gave him all the right they needed to just write Jesus of, and be done with Him. So the principle that I write here, Jesus often offends the mind to reveal the deep things in our heart. Jesus knew they hated God, He wanted it to come to the surface. He knew His disciples loves God and he knew that as the Caterpillar in the cocoon, the

struggle they would actually, their love for God would actually increase and be solidified through this offense of their mind. The longing in their heart for God came to the surface.

Now Jesus wants to bring our hunger to the surface and He wants to bring the unperceived offenses we have against Him to the surface so we can get them healed. Because we can't grow in love towards Him if our heart is offended towards Him. And so the Lord will allow our mind to be offended so that our heart is wide open.

What are you going to do when Jesus's leadership in your life doesn't add up with what you think He should be doing. What we do, because we love God, some process like this - you will relate to it. It's like "Jesus, I don't get what's going on, but I must have the wrong information and you must have the right information, I trust you, I love you, I know I'm missing something and I know you're not."

That is the humility and that is the awakened hunger that Jesus wants from these disciples. Now Jesus is leading history this way.

When I read the book of Revelation I go, "Jesus you're doing that cleanse the temple thing, on an eschatological global level. They are never going to figure it out."

He says, "if they love God, they will make it to the truth. And besides I'm raising up messengers to make it easier for them."

If they love God, even though it's all confusing something in their spirit will make them go on a quest for truth. If they don't love God I will give them all the information they need to write me off completely, because when their mind is confused and offended, the deep movements of their heart will be openly seen on the surface.

John 20, now Jesus is visiting, I mean He is appearing after his death before the apostles with His resurrected body and Thomas, you know the story Thomas goes "hey, I don't believe it".

So Jesus walks through the wall, Thomas goes, "whoa" and he touches Him and Jesus's resurrected body is really physical and material, it's a real body. I mean Jesus said in Luke 24, "don't you see My body is flesh and bone. He is talking about His resurrected body. Beloved you're gonna have a real physical body forever, like you do now, just a lot better version than what we have right now.

So Thomas touches Him, you know the story. But Jesus gives a very special insight about love in this passage. He looks at them and He says, "Blessed are those who believe Me when they don't see the end result yet."

They believe without seeing, now they saw Jesus, but they haven't seen the end of the story yet. They haven't seen the breakthrough yet.

He goes, "thou art blessed".

Because what he's really saying, "blessed are those who decide to trust My leadership, and in doing this they will express so much love towards Me, it will move my heart deeply.

Now the blessing isn't just that they are spiritually, and they increase in their spiritual life, yes they get a blessing for believing, but the blessing is not just what they experienced. The blessing is what they offer to Jesus, because they trusted Him without seeing. They get to offer the testimony of love that most people don't offer the Lord at this kind of level.

So He goes, "let me tell you something, you will have a blessing for your own personal life, the way the spirit touches you, but you will also have a blessing on the way you get to offer yourself to Me in love. It will move Me in a unique way if you do it, if you believe me and you love me and you trust me before you see the final result.

Now Beloved you're going to be alive billions and billions and trillions of years, right? And that's only the beginning. You can only believe without seeing for a minute of your entire life, say you're 70 years on the earth. A billion years from now you'll look back and you will understand the power of this promise. You can only love him without seeing for the few moments we're on the earth in this age.

Like I said last night, this is the only time, a moment in time, 70 years is a moment compared to billions of years. You could only shed blood for Jesus once, because after this age you can never shed blood again. You can only believe without seeing and you can only shed blood to show your love for Him, I'm talking about the martyrs who counted themselves worthy to suffer for Him.

Those are two things you won't be able to do, for the next billions and billions and billions of years you could only do them now. And so the Lord's looking at us saying, "I will take it very personally, I will take it in a very personal way, if you trust Me and show love to Me before you've seen the final product. It will move Me and it will bless you as well.

### **ABOUNDING LOVE THAT OVERCOMES ALL OFFENSE**

Now one of the favorite prayers, we pray this a lot, I'd say probably Ephesians 1 is the favorite prayer at IHOP. That is not official, but it kind of seems that way, that's a good one to be the top.

But Philippians 1 is another. Paul prays that love would abound, that their love for God and love for

people, now he is praying about love for people, but your love for people can only abound in the overflow of your love for God.

He goes, “I pray that your love may abound.”

Verse 10, that it would be without any offense, that it would be no offense in your love you. You would not be offended in any way in your abounding love. Now this is one of our prayers. This is a forerunner prayer, because the only way we will be able to testify of his good leadership to the nations, whatever level the Lord gives you, is if you can bear witness of it as truth in your own private life.

The prayer of David, it is a great prayer. David the man after God's own heart. Psalm 19, this is to be on everyone's personal prayer list. David prayed, “who can understand His errors”. What he means is, he goes, “I get the things I get. I know the five things I'm struggling with but who could understand all of them, the other ones I don't even see.

He goes, “cleanse me from secret faults”.

Now, He doesn't mean secret, that he knows them, that he's hiding them from everyone else. He is saying, “cleanse me from things, the unperceived compromises that I'm not even aware I'm doing, show them to me. Then I will be blameless. He goes on in verse 13. We want to ask the Lord, show us the pockets of pride and offense in our spirit towards Jesus, because we want our love to abound with no offense in it at all.

### **OUR CONFESSION: IN PERSONAL OR CORPORATE LIFE (IN TIME AND ETERNITY)**

Our confession. Now there's one verse, I'm gonna give you number of verses and you can use them all, equally effective. These are like swords in your hand where you strike against the accusation of the enemy. Now you get to pick anyone of these swords that you want, they're all equally effective. I am just going to give you a few of them, to war back against the devil's accusations against Jesus's leadership so that you can in fact abound in love and the first commandment would be first in your life, because with this issue unsettled, with even a residue of offense we can never love Him with all our heart, we'll always be dulled and hindered in our pursuit of love.

Many believers aren't even aware of this, this great thief that is stealing their love.

The anchor in our heart, I call it an anchor confession, our life is anchored on this. Here it is simple, the Lord is good his mercy endures forever.



This song with this statement is the most quoted statement in the whole Bible. There is no song in the Bible that is even close to mention this many times. It has a unique place in God's kingdom.

What it means real simple, the Lord is good, He's good. We are saying He uses His power only with perfect love and infallible wisdom. Wisdom that can't be improved upon. When the devil comes to us, we answer back "the Lord is good".

And he says, "your mistreated"

"The Lord is perfect his leadership. He is good. He is good to me."

And if the devil sees you can't be moved off of his truth, he will leave it for a moment, come back to it later, leave it for the time. But he will switch to the second truth, to the second lie, I mean.

He will say, "okay so the Lord is good. But you're disqualified so the benefits of His good leadership won't help you anyway. So he switches from the devil first accuses the Lord, but when we settle that, then he accuses you. He says, "what good is it to you when the Lord's good, because the benefits will never work in your life."

We go, "we have an answer. His mercy endures forever. Whatever sin I do, His mercy triumphs over it, if I will come to Jesus and repent and renounce that sin, His mercy endures and outruns my sin and conquers its. When the sin, the anguish of our sin that is in our heart, and we hate it, the mercy of God endures it, it outlives it. So the devil comes, tells you to give up and give in. And our answer is, the Lord is good His mercy endures. We have both subjects covered, the Lord's leadership and the Lord's tenderness towards us, so we're not disqualified to receive the benefits of His leadership.

Now this song was sang at very strategic times in Israel's history. It was sang at the tabernacle of David. Remember when David got the 24/7 and all the 4000 singers and musicians, he put them on place.

The dedication song for David's Tabernacle, "the Lord is good his mercy endures forever".

David understood the value of that declaration. Whilst David dies and his son Solomon takes his place, but now they move out of the tabernacle or the tent because David's Tabernacle means David's tent, David had all the singers and he had the drums and the sound system, all in a tent in his backyard.

But when Solomon came along and took over, Solomon built this massive temple and move the whole operation into the temple. It took a few years to get that done, but now when Solomon is dedicating the temple, what song does Solomon use?

The same one his father used a few years earlier, “the Lord is good his mercy endures”. And when the 120 trumpet guys went ta da da da, and the singers sang that song, the Shekinah glory fell, it fell twice. Both times when they sang this song.

So some more years pass and a king named Jehoshaphat gets raised up. Jehoshaphat is a good king, he really love God. The enemy attacks Jehoshaphat, most of you know the story here in 2 Chronicles 28, it’s a famous story, they surround him. The word of the Lord comes, the Lord says, “I’m gonna help you.”

so Jehoshaphat put the singers out in front and what are the singer sing? I mean, imagine George Bush calls Kansas City, “hey Mike, what is happening?”

“Well we are having our global bridegrooms fast this week”.

“Yeh, we’re not gonna be able to make at this time, but we’ve been trying to track with you.

“Hey we got a big military conflict stirring up over the Middle East, could you send Misty and Marcus, Corey and Leisha. Could you send them and maybe, we got a lot of tanks, but we’re gonna have them like get the worship team upfront and sing some of those songs you sing at IHOP, it is so awesome.”

“Yah, I’ll send Misty right on over and we’ll send Tim and the whole gang.”

I mean, this is bazaar. It is a great Bible story, but in reality?

I mean, what if the president called the worship ministries and said give me your teams and put them out in front of the war and the military guys will be behind them. So the guys are out there, I mean it is real life. This is the day before, they go, “how do yo feel about this?”

“Well the guy said God told him.”

“But isn’t this what David did?”

So this guys try to figure out his song list, for real. They got to sing a song, I mean that is real human life.

The guy goes, “you got a song list?”

“Well I wrote this one song last week.”

“Nah, I don’t really like that one, have you got another one?”

“Yah, tell you what this is so huge let’s go back to the song that David and Solomon sang at the dedications, ‘the Lord is good, His mercy endures forever’”. And the glory of God broke down again.

This is the confession, it doesn’t have to be that sentence, but those truths. His leadership is good, we take our stand and we will not back away and we declare it to the devil when he comes to

accused Jesus in our mind. Jesus said you are blessed if you don't get offended at me because your love will abound if you don't get offended at me.

And again, many sincere believers, they are not offended at a major level, but they have a residue of offense operating in their spirit and it hinders their love. They are still a little bit hesitant about that thing a few years ago, where the money didn't work out right and they felt a little bit abandoned by the Lord.

They go, "I love you, but I'm a little hesitant Lord. You are a little bit on probation, but not really because I do love you. But a little bit."

I mean it's hard to get language, because we love the Lord, it's hard to say were offended.

Another way to say the Lord is good, is Romans 8:28. Paul said, we know all things work together for good, all things work together for good for those who love Him.

It's not just they work together for anybody, but for the people who commit themselves to be a lover of Jesus.

Now the all things, Paul said I promise you God will overrule whatever the bad is. What a statement. This is the same sort, the same weapon in essence as the Lord is good. We strike against the enemy. This is our confession.

Song of Solomon says it, His banner over me is love. It is the same thing, His leadership over me is in perfect love, because for his banner to be over us, it means the way he leads our life is about love. You can use any of those, there's many many Bible verses you could use.

All around the throne they talk about the worthiness of Jesus. Beloved this is gratitude, they have so much confidence in Him around the throne, He is worthy in this age of our unqualified trust. He deserves our total trust with no doubt. He is worthy of it. He is proven Himself worthy to be trusted. If we lose our life in the conflict, it was a great decision under his worthy leaders. It doesn't matter what we loose. If we obeyed Him, it was perfect love and infallible wisdom in the way that he let us and for billions of years the story will be told and we will say, "Yes! Your worthy to be trusted without qualification."

It is describing the saints. This is the saints at the end of the tribulation. Jesus, the event right before Matthew 15, the seventh trumpet, the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They are all together, the event before this, Jesus captured everyone for one thing to the heavens to the other, so the saints are altogether on the sea of glass in that rapture transition state. So all the saints from one side of God's purpose to the other, they are all together. That is what happened in the event

before here. it happened in Revelation 11:15 when the trumpet is blown, this is the next event that John sees. He sees all the saints, not all of them, he sees some saints, but we can just imagine just a bunch of them were there. And they have watched the tribulation unfold with judgments and they've watched the rage of the antichrist with his martyrdom. I mean with his murderous threats and killing the saints.

So they've seen the judgments of Jesus and they've seen the rage of the antichrist. They've seen the whole thing. It is at the end, the seventh trumpet just was blown. All the information is now in and here's what the saints say about Jesus, "great and marvelous are Your works, Your leadership is fantastic. Now that we see the whole picture, You are amazing in Your leadership."

When all the information is in, this is what all of the people of God will say.

"Your great in wisdom."

"Wow, you know I didn't understand it all, but wow I get it, You're great in power, You're great in love. You were moved by love, we see it now and we marvel at what you have done in leading history into this transition."

And then they will go on and say, "everything you did was just and true. You did not violate truths on any point. You were true to love, You were true to humility, You were true to purity, you were true to justice, you were true to everything you claimed."

When all the information is in, they will say, "and your judgments have just been manifest so there's declaring this after the judgments and after many have been martyred. When all the information is in, this is what they are thinking about Jesus.

Now here's my point, why do we wait until then to have that confession? This is our confession now before all the information is in.

Beloved I want to enter into the blessedness of believing and loving without seeing the full picture complete. You can only do that once, only in his life, only in this age, in the next age, the next billions you can't do that.

We end with this. Revelation 13, it says the antichrist opened his mouth to blaspheme against God and to blaspheme His name. The antichrist is gonna blaspheme Jesus. Now that doesn't mean he's just gonna say Jesus and say profanity. It is going to be far more insidious than that. He is going to, in very clever ways, sophisticated ways, he is going to prove to the nations why Jesus is utterly false. Why Jesus does not move by love and nor does He move by wisdom when He releases His power.

The antichrist is gonna blaspheme God, the Father and the Son, and blaspheme the name of Jesus. Now the spirit of the antichrist is gonna be operating through all of his messengers and that spirit in a low measure is already operating in the world today.

They are blaspheming the claims of Jesus and not just His claim to be God, His way of salvation, the fact that He insists on purity according to His definition, His standards and the fact that He will confront openly everyone that refuses love according to His standards.

I mean this makes the nations so angry. Now this spirit is actually operating in many people even in the church. They will blaspheme Jesus's love and wisdom as he confronts the evil powers that will not submit to love and they even blaspheme where they put down. I'd say today it's not at the level of blasphemy, but it's still the operation of the same spirit at a low-level.

What happens to the saints? Verse 7, Revelation 13 - it was granted to the antichrist to make war on the saints and overcome them. Now the antichrist overcomes believers, some believers, I think it's millions but I think hundreds of millions are not overcome. It means they are physically martyred. When the antichrist overcomes believers, that's physically. in the next verse, we end with this, it says the opposite. It says that believers overcome him. Now which is it? Does he overcome us, or do we overcome him?

Both of them are right. He overcomes us physically but we overcome him spiritually. We do not yield in love or in our loyalty to Jesus. So he may kill our body and overcome us physically, but we triumphed over him by not yielding in our allegiance, in our love to Jesus.

And in that way we defeat him. And how do we overcome, of course we know by the blood of Lamb, but like there's several things here, but I am just gonna hit the one. By the word of our testimony. The word of our testimony is "the Lord is good".

And when the Lord is enforcing His standards on the earth of purity and love and He is confronting in His judgments everything that gets in the way of His kingdom, we take a stand.

And when he is being blasphemed, from without the church and within the church by the spirit of darkness assailing his wisdom in his leadership, we make the word of our confession, the word of our testimony, He is good. We trust his leadership. His banner over us his love, and we will take our stand true to the end.

And in that way we are assured to grow in love. This is the way, a critical point in growing in the First Commandment in our life.

Amen and amen

## **Session 12: Cultivating the Oil of Intimacy (Mt. 25:1-13)**

### **Cultivating the Oil of Intimacy (Mt. 25:1-13)**

Let us turn to Matthew chapter 25. This is one of the real highlight chapters in the Word of God on the first commandment, on growing in intimacy with God and on empowering our heart, getting our heart empowered for the long haul, walking in the first commandment.

Father we thank You for the word of God, we ask You for your blessing upon it even now, in Jesus name, amen.

#### **I. THE CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS (MT. 25:1-13)**

Here on this twelfth session on the first commandment course, it is our final course. We're talking about the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins in Matthew chapter 25. That's the classic chapter, if this is a new chapter to you, this is the classic parable in which Jesus exhorts us to the value of getting oil. And oil speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit touching our heart, and the strengthening of our spirit, the connection of our heart to the Holy Spirit.

This is so we're energized, so we can do the first of the second commandment. Now getting oil is not the same thing as the first commandment. I mean there is a love dimension to getting oil, but getting oil is an extrication to get our spirit energized. And the application is without an energized spirit we can't do the first commandment and therefore we definitely can't do the second commandment. Because some people confuse the process of getting oil, sitting before the Lord as the first commandment time, and it isn't. That is your humility time, that's when you say Lord I am weak and broken, without being energized I can't walk out the first commandment and I'm acknowledging that and I'm reflecting it in my schedule, that's why I'm sitting before You.

And so the idea that I hear regularly, I'm in the prayer room, that's my first commandment time, but now I got to go out of the prayer room to do my second commandment time. Completely a wrong concept. In the prayer room for the intimacy, you're getting your spirit energized so that when you leave the prayer room you can do the first commandment and the second commandment. Yes, you do say "I love you" in the process, but the first

commandment is far more than the whispers of “I love you” and your heart being energized.

The first commandment is really maintained in the rigors of real life outside of a personal prayer time. That's where the first commandment is tested, that's where it's manifest and that's where it grows. And so the reason I'm saying this is because some people feel guilty in an inappropriate way, because they need to get their spirit energized and they think “if I'm really loving and I forget the getting energized part, I'll go out in love.”

That's like saying I'm not gonna bother putting gas in my car, I'm just gonna drive. And the driving of the car is where the first of the commandment are, the getting the gas is called humility, it is called I need help if I'm really gonna walk this out.

And so in Matthew chapter 25, that's the real classic chapter in the Bible, a parable that is calling us to have our spirits energized by the Holy Spirit and to have a heart connect, so we can walk out the two great commandments.

Now the context, it's very important, I mean this is a magnificent passage, Matthew 24 & 25. It is Jesus's final teaching, He is speaking to the 12, I mean besides the upper room. Here He is still, He is at the Mount of olives outside the city Jerusalem and and He gives His final teaching right there and it's about the end times, Matthew 24. But in Matthew 25 He applies the in time teaching particularly to leadership. Now it applies to everybody but in its context He is applying it to training leaders that will function in an appropriate and a Godly way and a victorious way in the context of the end times.

Matthew 24 is all about the end times. Matthew 24 Jesus says what's going to happen.

Matthew 25 is what we're going to do in our personal lives, because of what is happening in the end times.

So Matthew 24 - what's going to happen in the in the nations.

Matthew 25 - what are you going to do about it personally in your walk with God.

So the two chapters go together, it's one teaching. And we end up getting confused in these chapters if we separate them from one another. That's okay to study them separate but understand in any one of these three parables and in Matthew 24, 25 you must link it back to the end time topic, because that's what Jesus is talking about a Matthew 24.

And it's been, these teachings have been relevant for 2000 years since Jesus gave them, but they have their greatest relevance in the generation He returns. These were teaching specifically for the unique dynamics of the end times. So these parables were tailor-made I believe for this generation. My point being, you want to take these in a special priority and with a special seriousness for this our history. Once again it's two chapters but it's one teaching that Jesus is giving.

In parable one Jesus is telling them that his delay may be shorter than they expect.

Parable two, His delay may be longer than some expect.

In parable three the delay may be harder than some people expect. So to some people the delay will be shorter, it will surprise them. To others the delay is harder. And that is what you get these three parables and you could read the descriptions of those parables with little bit more detail on your own.

In the end times particularly right here in Matthew 24 and 25, this is a classic example that in the end times the Holy Spirit will emphasize three specific aspects of Jesus's personality and Jesus's ministry. Now He is going to release revelation on all facets of Jesus that is revealed in the Bible, but there's three particular ones that the Bible identifies as having a heightened focus in the generation the Lord returns.

That being Jesus as bridegroom, King and Judge. now He's always been a bridegroom, He's always been a King and He always is the judge. I mean from his ministry, His earthly ministry from the cross and resurrection, He's always had these three ministries.

But there's one generation where He will function in these three in a manifest way and a heightened way, a way far beyond any other generation in history. And in Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus reveals Himself Bridegroom, King and Judge and we're gonna find out tomorrow as we do the book of Revelation, Matthew 19 he reveals Himself bridegroom, King and Judge. It's the same thing, Matthew 24 and 25 tonight and then tomorrow night in the book of Revelation series, it just so happens those are the two premier chapters, one in the Gospels and one in Revelation where Jesus shows himself Bridegroom, King and Judge. So those chapters they actually parallel each other and they are really good to study together.

Okay what's the context of Matthew 24?

The tribulation - Jesus is talking about, He says in Matthew 24:29, "immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun and the moon will be darkened", verse 31 "He'll sent forth His angels and He will rapture the elect, He will gather the elect."

And this is after the tribulation of those days, because as you know we are here for the tribulation, matter fact through the prayers of the saints we are releasing the tribulation.

The tribulation is not something done to us but rather something release through us, through prayers, because the tribulation is something that is inflicted on the antichrist by the praying church under Jesus's leadership.



And so the Saints are here, and that's a new point to some folks, but those of you around here for more than a week you've heard it a handful of times, that's not new to you, but the point I want to focus on is that the context is the tribulation judgments, the difficulties, the stress that is going on in the nation and contacts to the tribulation the advice that Jesus gives the most, is the simple word watch.

Now this almost sounds overly simplistic, like you might you know when I first began to connect with this idea I was a little bit thrown off by it, I go, "now Jesus", I mean I was a young pastor when I first connect with this idea, I go "here we are You're teaching us about the tribulation and the main exhortation you have," He gives this several times and He gives it in other teachings when He's talking about the end times. Matter of fact He gives it in the book of Revelation several times, Jesus himself does. He says the same word, not only in Matthew 25 in these parables, but also in Revelation and in other end times teachings were Jesus is speaking. He says, "watch therefore". He says it over and over. As a matter of fact in paragraph D I give a bunch of verses. It is like, "Jesus isn't that a little simplistic, the judgments of God are shaking a nation, the antichrist is raging his persecutions against the church, all these these pressures are mounting and the glory of God is being poured out, the greatest end time revival in history and the main thing you have to say, is watch." I mean one guy would think Jesus would say, "store up water, store up food, store up guns, get your cave out of the wilderness."

No, He doesn't say anything like that. Another guy would think he might have some other advice. He gives this seemingly oversimplistic pastoral advice, "watch". Like, that's it? You do that you get connected to the Holy Spirit in a fresh, in a vibrant way and then all the information you will need will come to you, as you stay in the Word. He is saying this, because if you stay connected to the Holy Spirit, if you watch and you keep an open Bible, because watching involves looking at the Bible too, it involves connecting in your heart with the Holy Spirit, and it involves look with an open Bible.

"Are you telling me Jesus of I stay connected to You and keep my Bible open," which I mean by that you're reading it, that is what I mean by keep your Bible open, your reading it, you're watching, your searching out the holy transcript of God's heart, that is what the Bible is, it is the holy transcript of God soul, you're studying what the Bible says, your connecting to the Holy Spirit, you have a watchful spirit, your heart is attentive, that's what it means to watch.

An attentive heart, you're paying attention to the Holy Spirit's movement on your heart. We call it fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit. So you're watching the movements of the Holy Spirit in your own heart, you're watching the signs of the times, an anointed observer.

You're paying attention with the eyes of faith, what's happening in the community and society. And you're watching what the word of God says so you're watching internal the movements of the spirit, your paying attention to what He is whispering, you're watching external in terms of what's happening in society an anointed observer and you're watching the word of God, those three components are involved in this word "watch".

So you're an anointed observer of the Word, an anointed observer of society, an anointed observer of the movings of the spirit on your own heart. So that is what we are watching. Watching is a huge word and after you watch you respond with prayer. You respond with simple prayers like "I love you", "help me", "tell me what you really mean by this verse, I don't get it".

They are simple prayers, I'm not talking about fancy prayers, just prayers like, "okay I'm watching, I'm watching the movements of the spirit on my heart, I'm watching society, I'm watching the word of God, I'm watching. I have an attentive watchful heart and I'm responding in prayer with some "I love you's, I love you's, I love you's, and help, help, help, help, and what about this and what about that? Simple dialogue with the spirit while you're watching.

If you do that, here's what Jesus is saying, "if you get connected to Me that way, you'll have all the information you need on time, and you'll have all the courage you need to walk out the information I give you. But if you don't watch you'll get the wrong information and you won't have courage, you'll have fear. But if you do watch, you will get direction and your heart will be empowered, where you won't yield to compromise.

This is the huge-est exhortation, "watch therefore". Again in my early days of pastoring I thought, "Jesus you're not, I mean I know you mean well, but this is a little simplistic, I mean, come on! The most difficult troublesome and glorious hour in history because of the greatest revival, that's really all you have to say, is your main point is watch!?"

He goes, "Yes, and I know a lot more than you know and if you do what I tell you, you will be surprised, you'll have the right direction and the courage to obey it and you'll have the anointing to operate in ministry as well, you'll have the whole deal."

Beloved whatever you do in the generation the Lord returns, do not neglect watching.

That's in the book of Revelation He says it several times, you better watch, you better be in the place to have your spirit energized. Again watching is not synonymous with the first commandment, it is the gasoline for the car, for the engine.

The first commandment is what we do with that fuel. So in a place of humility you must say I need fuel, I need oil in the engine so to speak. I cannot go all out and about in such perilous times, and such glorious times without a fresh anointing of the spirit.

And people that seek to be about this without taking time to connect with God, in the end of the day even though they might have real good motives for being out there doing so much, at the end of the day they're arrogant before God. Because they think they can pull it off without taking time to watch, they think they can do this thing right disconnected from the vine, that the branch somehow will bear fruit. And Jesus says, "in this one time in history I promise you, you better be connected and that's a statement humility, if you really want to be of use to others stay connected."

My point being don't let anybody come by and talk you out of your stay connected time, telling you "hey what about love? What about loving God, loving people?"

Say, "that's why I'm here, because I'm humble enough to know I can't walk love out without an empowering. That's what this parable is all about."

## **II. KINGDOM LEADERSHIP AT THE END OF THE AGE: DEFINING WISE LEADERSHIP**

We're gonna look, now Jesus is going to define what wise leadership is. He says, "now, this is what wisdom is". I'm gonna tell you, He gives 13 verses. And many sincere leaders, He is talking to leader specifically, although it applies to everybody of course, many sincere leaders, they do not take time to be wise according to Jesus's definition. They are, their activity outruns their resource in God and though that looks noble at the end of the day, it is presumptuous and it's proud. To get activity that outruns our resource, the reality of the strengthening of our heart in the end of the day it is presumptuous to think we could do it in a hostile time in history without a extra strengthening of our spirit.

He says in Matthew 25:1&2, "then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to 10 virgins who took their lamps they went out to meet the bridegroom, five of these virgins were wise and five were foolish." So he lays it out, first of all he likens these 10 ministries to virgins. All of them, now this is the gift of salvation. Every one of these are believers that have been made clean by the blood of Jesus. I don't care what you have done before God. Because of Jesus He has cleansed you as a chaste which means, pure, as a pure virgin. Male or female, young or old, no matter what happened yesterday if you'll receive the gift of salvation, He will receive you in bright holiness as a gift, you will stand before him with that kind of confidence.

Wow that is an awesome truth, so Jesus says, "tap into, lay a hold of wou you are before Me". But the point I'm making here these are all believers.

Point two paragraph B, they all have lamps. Lamps in the New Testament when it is used symbolically, speaks of ministries. Lad, you're shining the light for others on the pathway, where it's dark you're bringing the light for others, your lamp is shining. So they all have functioning ministries, they have an anointing that's helping other people, all ten of them. So they start of well.

They go out to meet the bridegroom, they all have Revelation of Jesus as Bridegroom. They not only go to the Bridegroom conferences, they teach at them and lead worship at them. These are guys and gals that are connected to Jesus in the bridegroom Revelation. Now much in the body of Christ from the world is not connected to Jesus in that way. They see Him as Savior, which is fantastic, they see hHim as healer, heal the body, even their heart. That is awesome. They see Him as provider, He gives them money every now and then. Cool, but they don't see Him as Bridegroom, as one who has deep desire for them personally.

Well these guys, these 10 ministries, men and women, they are not only born-again believers virgins, not only do they have anointed lamps to bring light. They have Revelation of the heart of God.

Again they don't just go to the conference, the Bridegroom conferences, they don't just write the bridegroom songs, they sing them and they teach at the conferences, they really is into this reality of Jesus's heart.

My point is, it's people like you, people like me. Were for it.

Jesus said, "then" it is the very first word, He said, "then the kingdom will be likened to 10 virgins."

So the question you ask is when is then, you know then, what are you talking about? Well you go to the verse before, the word "then" points back to Matthew 24. In the end times, then the kingdom of God will function this way. Now interesting, for 2000 years of church history, never has the Holy Spirit universally emphasize the revelation of Jesus as a Bridegrooms, it's never happened.

There's always been a few guys and gals throughout 2000 years, little bit over here a little over who saw this revelation of Jesus the Bridegroom. In other words, the burning heart of God's, His desire for us.

But there's one generation in history where all ministries before Jesus returns will have this revelation. So already you know you've got a task to do, because you know if you look across the body of Christ, you think "man so many don't have it". But one thing we know

they're all going to have it before Jesus returns. So we got a big task ahead of us as well as many other ministries we're all in this together to get the bridegroom message out, because there's one generation in history where the whole body of Christ will understand that this revelation, and as a as a bride the spirit of the bride will be an intercessions, saying, "come Lord Jesus".

We'll be crying out to Jesus with bridal revelation so we have the context. They are all virgins, they are all born-again believers, they all have ministries lamps, they all have a deep revelation of Jesus the Bridegroom, and we know this parable has particular application, "Then". When is then? In the generation the Lord returns, that's when this parable really has a special application. Though I must also repeat over and over it's had an application for 2000 years, but a very intense one and a unique application in terms of its emphasis in the generation Lord returns.

### **III. FIVE WISE VIRGINS: ACQUIRED OIL AS THEIR MINISTRY LAMPS SHINED**

Just to repeat it, He says five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. Now He goes on to describe what He means. He defines wisdom and folly in verse 3 and 4. Those who were foolish, they took their lamps, but took no oil. Verse 4, they did it the other way around, they took their oil in their lamps.

Now again oil speaks of the spirit's presence in our heart, it speaks of the Holy Spirit's presence energizing our heart. Oil is not the same thing as "I love you God." There's a lot of "I love you God" in the process of getting oil. I mean we're talking to Him all the time, we're talking to Lord, we're interacting with the Holy Spirit.

So yes there's an "I love you part", but I don't want you to departmentalized oil as your "I love you" time, because oil is the time where your opening the Word, oil the time you're feeling the energy of the spirit is present, oil is the time we your heart is becoming softened. It's is the lubricant of the Holy Spirit making your heart the opposite of brittle. It is pliable, it's flexible, it's moving in rhythm with the Holy Spirit. It tenderizes us, we feel more of God, which means we're energized. I tell you, when you feel more of God, you love way better. Not that we get to wait till we feel more before we start loving. We love now, but I just tell you, you're a lot more successful in love, all of us are when we feel His presence. and so I give some definition, some application to what the oil means.

It is your personal encounter with the Holy Spirit, which is your strengthening, your energizing, it's your supply. You can read the rest of it on your own.

Now let's look at the foolish, what is the definition of being foolish? Foolish means they took no oil, they took their lamps but no oil. Now notice, when they walked out the door the number one thing on their mind was getting their ministry bigger, their lamps were their focus, their ministry was their focus, their connection with God had faded into the background. They put their lamps as their priority, their ministry growing was the priority, the connecting with the Holy Spirit faded into the background.

Now we know in verse one the oil was working, the lamps were burning, but in verse three they were neglecting their connection time with God. And here's the problem with the temptation, the challenge with anointed ministry, when you get a little bit of anointing of God's presence on your ministry the demand increases. And when the demand increases the guy or the gal, they kind of like, "well everyone's knocking on my door, I better I mean everybody needs me, and they all want me, I mean it's the blessing of the Lord".

And the Lord says, "watch it, watch it, watch it, it is My presence on you."

If you get out there and you lose your connect, the very blessing of God in one season sets you up for failure in the next season. When we have the blessing of God on our ministry, we have to, have to, have to maintain the reality that the reason the oil is flowing is because we're connected, because we're taking time to get connected.

You don't get connected on the run, to get connected to the spirit, it is a renewing thing that happens regularly. Not every day, all day, but on a regular basis we take time to get reconnected. And the reconnecting process is normally very slight and subtle like, somebody may say, "when did you get reconnected, how is your prayer life?"

"Well a little bit boring today to be honest".

But the connection can still be happening. So don't get caught up in measuring you know if you cried for an hour, you really got connected and if you sit a little bit bored you didn't get connected at all. It doesn't work that way.

You get before the Lord and the connection is taking place, and sometimes you discern it real powerful and sometimes you feel like yucky but it's still connecting. It still works we don't have to measure it to know that it's working. If we said there before the Lord with an honest heart, it is taking place.

Now look at verse 4, it's exactly the opposite. The wise took their oil first and their lamp second. Their first priority was being energized in their spirit, and now this isn't in a statement of selfishness, this is a statement of humility. They say, "I don't care how good

looking my car is, how much power it has in the engine, if it has no fuel it's gonna be a real hassle pushing that car uphill.

And a lot of folks they think the further they drive that car, the better regardless if there is fuel in or not. There comes a time where you're pushing the car outside. And having done that a few times in the natural, you don't want to get in that position in your ministry.

So getting oil, I just want to impress you, is about humility and taking yourself seriously, your weakness, and taking your needs seriously. It's not about selfishness, don't let the vast amounts of people who don't get oil, they don't value the getting of oil and they will accuse you of selfishness, because they have no personal experience of the need of oil. Because they've already concluded to live without it. They're happy to just push their car all the time, which more times than not, they quit pushing that and they just become spiritual couch potatoes, and they just sit on the couch and watch TV and entertain, they don't even get to do ministry anymore. They talk about the old days. Because you can't push that car for many years until you get tired and you just decide, "you know what, it's a season where I'm burned out".

Well anybody's gonna get burnout if you push the car on the outside. A lot of folks will come talk to you, they don't have oil in their life, they don't see the value, they see you pursuing it and they will accuse you of being selfish instead of honoring you as being humble. Now the point isn't to get them to honor you, that isn't the point. The point is don't be swayed by oilless people who were charging you and say and accusing you because you're getting oil.

To say, "I love you", "God loves you", "I'm a weak person," "I need gas in the car", "I love you".

You don't have to be defensive, you don't have to argue, you don't have to fight, you don't have to send e-mails, you don't have to have restoration meetings, you don't have to do nothing. Blow Him a kiss and say, "I am so weak and so fragile without gas, this car is really a burden to push."

They go like, "what are you talking about? Is that one of those Kansas City things they told you?"

"Well I heard some guy in Kansas City tell me, but it is really a Bible thing."

I mean, it is not just Matthew 25, it's really John 15, abiding in the vine, that's the principle. The principal oil is stay connected to the vine.

And there's more people doing this, since it's really wonderful. We need to see more and more. But I'm watching more in the last two years, guys and gals that as there ministry

grows, instead of doubling up their networking to make sure it doubles and triples yet one more time, they make sure they got a connected the Spirit. They pull back from the increase to make sure they are connected. It is brilliant, I'm watching more and more people, not just hear but around the nations, valuing this reality. It's in itself a sign of the time that this kind of wisdom is in the body of Christ.

### **THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY IN THE END TIMES: THE THREE-FOLD CRY**

So the story continues, now while the Bridegroom delayed, they also slept. And at the midnight hour a cry was heard, and here's the cry "behold the Bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him.

And all those virgins, all 10 of them, they rose, trim their lamp, which means they cut the bad part of the wick off. So they kind of cut it off and threw it away so it burn brighter. So what's happening in this passage?

In verse six, which is paragraph A, at the midnight hour of history, because verse 6 is at midnight, a cry is going to be heard. Now this is the cry of the forerunner. This is the nameless, faceless voice crying in the wilderness.

"Behold the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him."

Now this is a threefold message that the forerunners are proclaiming.

Number one, He's coming. The message that He's coming, which means He's going to intervene in power. It's the message of revival. Because for Him to come, means there's going to be a manifestation of victory and power, we call that revival. Or there's gonna be the releasing of judgments against the wicked who resist Him. Either way, whether it's the positive revival or the negative judgments, which are all about love at the end, and the whole process is all the love, not just at the end. The message that Jesus is coming, there's a major breakthrough of Jesus coming around the corner, that's the message.

In the end times Jesus is going to come to us in progressive waves of revival. You know in Revelation 22:17, the famous verse, "the Spirit and the Bride say come." Jesus comes to us several ways. First he comes to our heart, that is called renewal. Our heart gets, that's intimacy, He comes to our heart. He comes near us, is a better way to say it. He comes near us in a personal way. Jesus come! He comes near us, wow my heart feels build up. The 2nd way, Jesus come to us or geographic area we call that revival, the breakthrough of revival. And then eventually He comes for us in the sky.



So when we pray “Jesus come”, we have three different things, come near my heart, come to my region or my nation, and come for all of us in the sky at the rapture. So the cry “Jesus come” really is a threefold Cry. But in this particular case, the forerunners preach, “He's coming”. In other words, there's gonna come breakthrough. The greatest revival in history is going to happen. Now this coming of Jesus is, He's gonna come in progressive waves of revival. What I mean by that, He'll release a wave of the Spirit, I'm not prophesying, if it does end up accurate, it's excellent, but in the next two or three years there might be a wave of the Spirit breaking sovereignly across our nation.

Like, wow! Then the wave lifts, does that mean God's mad? It's just the Lord's wisdom. He sends a wave of revival for a year or two or three across the nation, then He lifts His hand and he lets the body of Christ build and get things in order and then assimilate all that, that wave of revival was about. They learn the message, they implement the godliness in their lives, they build churches and ministries and families and marriages, based on how the Lord visited in that presence.

Then a few years pass, then another wave comes but it's a different wave and it's even sometimes a strongly wave, And then it lifts and you know, we apply it to our life and all of our ministries and families and marriage etc.

Then a few years later the next wave comes. In church history is a series of waves of revival through history. Now the closer we get to the coming of the Lord, the waves are coming in they are getting bigger and more frequent.

There are, again I have no way of knowing, five or ten (totally made-up number, so please don't quote that) five or 10 major waves of the Spirit that might come before the Lord returns.

There's a number of waves that are yet to come before the Lord appears, in my opinion, before He appears in the sky. Maybe more, maybe less, I don't know the point I'm making, is there's a series of them.

So our first messages, “He's coming, He's coming, the breakthrough is coming, get ready the breakthroughs coming, the glory of God's about to break into our nation.”

message number two

He not just coming for breakthrough, He is coming as a Bridegroom, He is coming as a God of desire and a God of jealousy. He is not just coming with tenderness, He is coming with jealousy, he's coming is a Bridegroom. He is not just coming with power, that's the coming, He is coming with desire.

They're going, "well that's different."

A wave of power is one thing but when Jesus manifest his desire behind the power, His tender desire for you, and his jealousy about you, about your life.

"I want all of you!"

Like, "wow okay He's a bridegroom".

Be warned, this isn't just a little renewal season. He is coming as a bridegroom full of desire. So that's what the forerunner says, "He's a Bridegroom."

The third message, go meet Him. In other words, make the necessary efforts in your personal life to position yourself to encounter Him, go out to meet Him.

That's what I'm really telling you tonight, this message, I'm saying, "go out to meet Him."

To go out to meet Him, means you're getting engaged in the necessary effort and process to encounter Him. That is what the Prayerroom is about. For your personal life in God.

You're going to exert effort, some people have a real wrong idea.

"Well the Lord wants to touch me, He knows where I'm at."

The Lord says, "well if you're hungry for Me, you know where I'm at."

But I know a lot of Christians who says, "if the Lord wants to touch me, He knows where I'm at" and they go about their business.

And the Lord says, "no I only give at the heart level based on hunger. If you hunger I give more, if you stay hungry I give even more, and hunger begets more hunger. Come after Me but I want you to exert yourself before Me in a costly way."

And what I mean exert yourself, I don't mean the mode of energy exerting the moment your'e praying, but I mean it takes effort with your schedule you sort it out, you press through a wondering mind and all phone calls and every distraction and the guilt and then you don't understand the Bible, so you've got to learn the Bible, so that when you sit there it makes sense. Now I don't know all that stuff because I read that in a book, I just want you know.

I have been doing this for some years and some of you that are about 20 thinks, "man that guy, he just knows the Bible."

No, I was so confused when I was 20 years old, I use to sit there, I mean this for real.

"Jesus I love you"

"The Bible so boring, so confusing".

"Holy Spirit I do believe in you, I have not seen any evidence of you in a long time, but they say your here somewhere."

No! I'm not joking. And I said, "Lord", I remember saying this, "if You would make the Bible easy it would really go a long way. I know it's too late You already wrote it, but if You would have made it easy"

I know that sounds cute and corny, but it was real. I was so confusing I know Lord it's too late, it's 2000 years later but You should have wrote it simpler.

I remember when I was 18, 19, 20 I was really going hard for God. I was trying going to spend an hour or two a day, sometimes more, sometimes less trying to sit before Him and the Bible was boring and prayer was so boring and everything was so pressing, but I felt guilty all the time.

I see you relate to it, I'm really in the right place. Okay it really does change, it really does change. I promise you it changes, just stay with it, exert the effort.

Now again, I'm not talking about when you're there for the hour that you're just, you know steaming with the energy and heat pouring out if you. I mean it takes effort to get there and takes effort to tell your friends. No it takes effort with your schedule, it takes effort to turn the phone of, it takes ever to focus a little bit, it takes effort to learn the Bible so when you're there you can focus, it takes effort not to get up go to the coffeeshop back and forth three time. It takes effort effort to Journal a little bit, all this takes effort. And then you got to get to the guilt and the devil bombard you with anxiety. Just leave it, trying to have an oil time, the whole world's against me right now. Well it it is normal, it really is, that is how it is for all of us, but it really will change. I want to assure you, you stay with it really, really will change over a little bit of time. somebody says, "I'll answer the question, how long is a little bit of time? Sometimes longer sometimes shorter but it will change.

They all slept, it says there in verse 5. They all slept. AND all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. Well again, the cutting off of the wick and the cleaning up there lamps, etc.

Now the important part to understand is in this parable, some parables sleeping is bad. Sleeping is the opposite of being awake in the spirit. In this parable the affirmation is on getting oil or not having oil. The exhortation I mean, is on getting oil were not getting oil. It's not on sleeping are waking so don't bring the other parable into this one, because the issue of your doing good or bad is it getting oil.

Here they all slept even the wise ones slept. The sleeping is really critical, that is why I am pointing it out. It means we have to cultivate oil in the context, in the midst of the natural processes of life. We all have to mow the lawn, exercise, watch our diet, pay taxes, do the laundry, manage relationships, da da da da da. I life left and everything left me, God would

be awesome. If I never got hungry, never got moody, everybody was happy, the money was always there, the government left me alone, the neighbors dog didn't bark, I would soar. Well it's never going to happen that way in this age all of us get oil in the midst of the natural. They had to sleep, they had to trim the lamps, they had to do the natural stuff. That's what this means, it is not negative and so in the midst of the rigors of the routine mundane life.

So we get this romantic notions we get rid of the routine of life and then we would be closer to God than Moses and Elijah combined. This is not how it works, because they had the same rigors. They had to sleep, they had to trim their lamps, they do all the stuff. They had to take care their body, but a few years go by, your body does funny things to you.

Okay take care of relationships, funny things happen. Don't to the money thing right funnier things happen. We have to do all this stuff, organization, taxes, responsibilities, showing up when we say, having a headache when you do, the whole bit.

We've got to manage the getting of oil in context.

Real life in a fallen world, but Jesus sees it and it counts to Him if we do this. It really matters to him if we press. And we don't have to feel like were connecting, but He wants us to reach for the oil.

## **V. JESUS EMPHASIZED THE GREAT NEED TO CULTIVATE OIL IN THE END TIMES**

Matthew chapter 25, verse 8. The foolish said to the wise, "give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out". But the wise said, "no, lest there should not be enough for us and for you, but rather go to those who sell and buy oil for yourself."

A very very important passage. Number one I want to make clear I'm prophesying but it's logical prophecy, how about that? Is there such a thing, this is a logical prophecy.

According to this verse, verse eight many lamps are going to go out. Many ministries around the world that exist today will not exist in 10 or 20 years. Many ministries that are going today, that are being against thriving, their lamps are going to go out. Because what can draw a crowd today won't move anybody in 10 or 20 years. Because what draw a crowd today, especial in the Western world, if you tell people they can kind of do what they want to do, and you promise them more money and an easier lifestyle, you get crowds.

But 10 and 20 and 30 years from now, you tell them life is easy, I promise you more

money, do what you want, everything works. They are going to say, “what delusion are you living in.

And there will be so much sin breaking out and demonic activity, and the glory of God will be at such a level, the spirit of the people will demand something that has reality and substance in it.

You could get by and have a real big ministry on cotton candy right now. Again, just tell people what they want to hear, tell them everything is going to be great, you’re gonna have lots of money, lots of friends, your gonna be real anointed, your gonna be great.

He’ll go, yeh I’ll come and I’ll bring my friends and come over and over and buy the tapes, I guess there is CD’s now.

But in a few years there's gonna be so many people in addiction and bondage to demons and so many crisis, and the glory of God is gonna be poured out, and the revelation of Jesus at such a level. The spirit of the people be so hungry for reality, that the cotton candy ministries will go out and there's plenty of them in the land today.

Those lamps are going out. I just prophesying it to you, but it's an obvious prophesy. It doesn't really take a whole lot of discernment to say that.

So they said, “hey our ministry went out, our lamp went out. How about give us your oil? In other words the oil always your personal life and God. The oil is your secret history in God.

Did you know every one of us have a secret history in God that nobody knows about. And I’m not talking about a dark history, but that you have responses to God in the last months and years, that are in God's book, that are part of your story with Him that nobody knows the way you and God talk from your heart.

That oil is your personal secret history in God. I can’t lay hands on you and give you my history in God, you can’t lay hands on me and give me your history in God.

No we can pray and Holy Spirit can kind of all renew somebody for a moment but if they don't get the oil themselves it won't happen. You can have ministry and prayer time and get a little encouragement , a little jumpstart, but if you're gonna get oil you have to get it in your own dialogue with God. Nobody can give you their oil, it is a completely wrong idea. I can’t lay hands on you and give you five or 10 years of walking with God and you can’t do it to me or anyone else.

You can only get it in the interaction of your own heart with the Lord. So they go, “no, no we can’t”.

Now this is one the most powerful words the wise will ever say. They go, “no”.

And the foolish go, "what do you mean no? Now you're like anointed and things are going great, what do you mean no? You can't say no because I got a legitimate need I think you are awesome."

"The answer is still no. And the reason the answer's no, I don't have enough strength and resource to give out all day without connecting. Because I don't have oil myself, I don't have self-replenishing oil, I get oil the way I'm telling you to get oil, I take time to go get it. I don't have it in and of myself I get it day by day. I don't have enough time, I don't have enough strength, I don't have enough emotional stability, I don't have enough within myself to maintain it if I give it all away, I'm too weak."

And beloved that's a statement of humility and they will go, "ba humbug, how dare you tell me no and how dare you say you're a loving Christian, you just told me no."

And then where every believer has to figure out, is that - are you in a walk with God or are you in a popularity contest?

And a whole lot of folks, all is by nature, by nature our first response is to be a popularity contest. We don't know it, but we say no to three times and they go, "how dare you". We go, "ouch, okay, okay".

The Lord goes, "Oh I guess you gave up that awful quick."

You must protect your time to encounter God. Jesus said in the end times unfold the greatest crisis in revival in history, you better watch, you better watch, it is the one exhortation He said over and over, you better stay connected.

"Yeah but they're mad at me. I got to go and make sure I'm doing everything everybody wants me to do."

Well if your big life vision is to keep everybody happy with you and to be spiritually thin or superficial go for it.

If your life vision is to have depth and reality, you're going to have to lose the popularity contest occasionally. You really are gonna have to and more than occasionally.

That answer "no", I tell you that I've had that dagger in my heart 1000 times over the years.

"No!"

"What?"

And I'm sitting there and I'm just so managing, "are they mad?" or "am I glad?" "Are they here, are they there?"

I can't even pray, because that "no" is reverberating inside of me. And the Lord says, "just stay with it little guy, you'll get used to it."

To stay with it, that "no" is huge right there. But the wise have to say it or they will never stay wise, they will become one of the foolish.

But if you're easily moved by guilt and the need to look right in front of everybody's eyes, that "no" will be a cross that will crucify you 1000 times, and we actually we're all like that. We want to look good and we want everybody to like us and that "no" is a cross but we have to say it if we want to have spiritual depth.

Jesus exhorts us. Now here He says, "go buy the oil", verse 9. He said the same thing in the book of Revelation, He goes, "go buy the oil, go buy it". Now He doesn't really mean go earn it. What He means by buy it, you're to go in the God prescribed way to acquire it. And the way we acquired it is by we take some time, we turn our phone off, we turn our things off whatever, and we sit there and we face our barrenness, our guilt, our all of things, we have to lineup right, there's a price we pay to settle our spirit and talk to Him with an open Bible.

It is costly, it is an investment that cost us and that's what love is about. Jesus is not saying "pay the the price", He is saying, "invest your soul in love because want Me, but it will cost you." It really will cost you.

Now I remember the time, I don't tell the story often, but where this "no" was the big issue of my life. I have been, I was in my mid-30s almost 20 years ago, I was traveling with a real famous guy. And you know he was an old guy in his 50's, and I was a young guy, I was in my early 30s, and he said I wanted to take you to travel around the world. The Holy Spirit told me to. So he went to all these big conferences in Germany and England and Australia is five and 10 000 member conferences all over the world and he said the Lord told me to bring you. So I went with him for a few years and all these big conferences in all this kind of fanfare was happening. And I was there and I did this for about three years. Lots of doors were opening and lots of new relationship were established and just a whole lot of buzz was going on about the things that we were doing. And so the Holy Spirit spoke to me and he said I want you verse nine to tell them "no". I said "okay".

so I met with him, his name is John Wimber. I said "John" I remember sit in this car, this van when I had this very significant conversational almost 20 years ago. I said, "John I can't travel anymore." Because we did like one or two conferences a month, I Mean worldwide, these big huge ones all over the world, you know, South Africa, just everywhere where the Western world was. I did maybe one or two a month and maybe a month I wouldn't do it then one or two or three the next month. You see it was such a rigorous passé. And I said "John", I sat in the van and I said, "I can't do anymore conferences." He says, "well I've got to signed up, your'e already in the brochures for about 5 or 6."

So I said, "I'll go, I will keep my word, but I would like you free me. And if you don't free me, I'll keep my word, but I will not take up anymore."

He says, "okay I'll free you" but he says, "what's the problem?"

I go, "I'm backslidden". He thought I was in some scandalous kind of thing going on.

He goes, "what?"

I go, "no, no, I don't mean that way, I mean I'm backslidden."

I said, "when I pray and read the Word, I don't weep anymore." I said "for several years however many, most days when I quieted my heart I would feel his presence and I would weep. I haven't wept in prayer in a year.

And he said, okay I appreciate that, is that it?"

I go, "yay."

I goes, "that's backslidden to me, and I am not living this way all of my days I will do this."

He goes, "I appreciate that, that is cool, I free you."

I goes, "Hah"

He goes, "I like that" and he freed me. I went back home and canceled everything and I just buried myself in the Lord's presence. Of course I had a big church of you know, about 3000 people. I have a lot at home, but at home and the road and back, ahh it was just chaotic. And my commitment to my family and all these things, I had to just cut a whole bunch of things of and I begin to spend long hours again with the Lord.

This was like '91 and only the Lord new that IHOP was gonna start six or seven years later, whatever the whole process of the IHOP. Because things were stirring for a year or two before Ihop actually started.

My point is there are significant time where you must say "no" and there's thousands of little times you have to say "no", or you won't end up with oil at the end.

## **BEING PREPARED FOR THE NEXT WAVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

I just go through this real brief and then Wess Hall will come up and pray for the students as the semester is over.

He says, "now while they went to buy, while the foolish ones went to buy, in other words they went on the process of connecting with the Spirit. They said, you know it's gonna take little while, it doesn't take years but it takes a little while. They went to buy, they were engaged in the process of getting their history with God up-to-date. And the Lord wants



some of you in the process to buy. He want you would to get your history with God, your secret history with God up-to-date.

Many wants us to maintain this. Well anyway the bridegroom came.

Now this isn't the second coming in the sky, this is one of the waves of revival broke out.

And those who were ready, the wise ones, the ones that were connected to God's heart they went in to the wedding.

But then after that the door was shut and afterwards these foolish virgins came to the door, "hey open up the door for us" and the Lord says, "assuredly I say you I do not know you."

Now this passage, paragraph A, is not about them losing their salvation, Some commentators will read it, they'll say they lost their salvation."

He is not saying "I never knew you", He is not saying, "you're evil, you're wicked" like He says, and I have it all written out here, three or four other times He says your evil, your wicked he said that to unbelievers.

He is saying, "I don't have intimacy with you, I don't know you, I don't know you in the way I need to know you for this season of revival."

Now the key to understanding this passage is the ancient custom in Israel for the wedding feast. The wedding feast would ideally go for seven nights if the family had enough money. Every night they would have a feast at the in the big one was the last one. The first night were the people closest to the couple, then the second night they were invited, the people that got invited the first night were invited everything right. The first night was the small number the second night will be bigger, nice feast. Third night, feast again, a little bigger groups, forth night, fifth nite, but only those that were closest were invited to the celebration in those nights of the week.

And in the same way the Holy Spirit's releasing waves of revival. This wedding celebration is going to crescendo to the great wedding supper in the sky, the great marriage supper of the Lamb that is the final one, the great one.

But there's a buildup between now and then. And the Lord is saying I will open a door, I want to use you, I want to me to celebrate in this revival, because I want you to communicate to the people these things about my heart.

But these other ministries, these foolish ones, they go, "hey we want to be anointed in this revival right now."

And the Lord says, "I don't even know you in the bridegroom intimacy. What would you do if you preach it or sang it or led it, we don't know each other this way."

"Yes you know me as healer, you know me as forgiver, you know me as provider, you don't know Me in this way.

No go sit and learn and receive. Because we al sit and learn receiver our whole life and billions of years from now, we will be sitting and learning and receiving. So we never grow out of that, but he say, "no, I don't know you right now in this".

So I'm telling the Lord ss the waves of the spirit mountains up in the years leading to the coming, "Lord I want to know you in every wave of the spirit I want the truth. And that doesn't mean that he will use me in a main way in every move of the spirit, but I want to be ready so the door of opportunity can be open, so that in truth I would know Him and I would be communicating to others.

That which me and the Lord had in reality in my private life. That's what he's say and then he ends.

He says, "now therefore watch". He goes right back to that parable, "go watch, go have an attentive watchful heart with an open Bible and let your heart connected to me.

amen and amen