

## ***Session 3 Turning to God with All of Our Heart***

### **I. REVIEW: CULTIVATING A FIRST COMMANDMENT LIFESTYLE**

- A. Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37-38 is one of the most significant statements in Scripture. It is God's mission statement for the human race and is the most reliable measurement of success.

<sup>37</sup>“***You shall love the Lord...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.***”

<sup>38</sup>***This is the first and great commandment.***” (Mt. 22:37-38)

*We are still on the theme of loving God with all of your heart, and I am using the phrase from the book of Joel, “Turn to Me with all of your heart.” That is a parallel passage to loving Him with all of your heart, and we will get to that in a few moments.*

*There are four parts of our humanity that Jesus calls us to love Him with: our heart, our soul, our mind, in verse 3; then in Mark 12:30, He says, “...with all of our strength.” He adds the word, strength. And so there are four dimensions of our humanity. On Friday nights we want to cover each one of them, maybe spend a session or two on each, and give some practical ideas about how to love God from that part of our human makeup.*

*By the way, in this fast that we are going on, which is starting pretty soon, March 1, we are going to continue the Friday night meetings. The Wednesday night CBETS end-time teaching we are postponing for six weeks, but not the Friday night EGS. Friday night is geared for a fast: Loving God with all of your being. That is what I want to study, preach, pray, and I want you to hear it, preach it, pray it, everything, because that is the direction we want to go during a fasting time.*

*Of course, everyone will be fasting in a different way, so do not feel like you need to hear what your neighbor is doing so you can do what they do. Just ask the Lord for direction, and maybe you will do it a little bit, maybe a little more than a little bit, and maybe a lot or maybe not so much. Just do what He inspires you to do.*

*Well, I call the first commandment—loving God with all of your heart, soul, and mind—the mission statement for the human race. I say that all of the time, and we want to make it the mission statement for our life.*

- B. ***First and Great:*** Loving Jesus is the Spirit's first priority and the greatest calling.

<sup>19</sup>***...whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom...*** (Mt. 5:19)

*This is review from last week. God calls loving God the first priority in the Spirit, and it is the greatest life calling. We have ministry assignments which are really important, but our greatest calling in life is to pursue this.*

- C. We are *all* called to love God with *all* our heart. This includes engaging our heart with Jesus—by pursuing Him to know, love, and obey Him enthusiastically.
- D. We set ourselves to love God by determining that our *primary dream* (life vision and definition of success) of our life is to walk out the first commandment. Our *secondary dreams* and definitions of success are related to our family, friends, vocation, ministry etc.—they flow from loving God.

<sup>14</sup>“***Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him.***” (Ps. 91:14)

*This is a very significant verse in my life, and I am wanting it to be in your life too. For some of you it already is. In Psalm 91:14, the Lord is speaking, and He talks about the person who set his love upon the Lord. Now that is a very, very specific thing, and I believe it is one of the most dynamic thing that happens in the life of many believers, not all believers, where they intentionally set their heart to make pursuing growing in love for Jesus the number one dream and primary goal in their life. It is not the only dream or goal that they have. I am using the words **dream** and **goal** interchangeably. You still have other goals, important kingdom goals, but there is a time in the life of a believer when they say, “I want cultivating this understanding and this way with God to actually be the most important thing I am going after.” It is kind of cool to say it, but it is really radical when it becomes a real vision in a person’s life and it changes the way they spend time, money, and everything. No one does this perfectly, but there is this setting of the heart. I gave a bit of my story last week, so I will not be going into that.*

E. David set his heart to love God right after God delivered him from Ziklag (1 Sam. 27-31; Ps. 18:1).

***‘I will love You, O LORD...He delivered me because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:1, 19)***

*From Psalm 18, I told how David set his heart and said, “I will love the Lord my God. I will love You, God. This is what I am about!” Significantly he did this after sixteen months of some compromise, not total compromise. There was compromise in his life for sixteen months in the city of Ziklag, and after this sixteen-month period, it says that the day that God delivered David from his enemies was the day that he was delivered from Ziklag. Now that is a big story, and it is a great story. David said, “I have set my heart. I will love You. This is what I am about!”*

*In verse 19, he gives a very important statement, “You delivered me from this last sixteen months,” and not just from the compromise, but David had an enemy, Saul, who was trying to kill him. He was hiding from Saul.*

*He was hiding from his enemy in a way that the Lord said, “I don’t want you to do it that way.”*

*David kind of caved in and said, “I am going to do it that way anyway because I’m too afraid to trust You in the way You said.” So he told a number of lies and did some nefarious things, yet the Lord delivered him by removing the evil king, and then David stepped out of that season of compromise. However, here is the point I want to make. He said in verse 19, “You delivered me because You like me. You delight in me. You don’t delight in some of my attitudes in the last sixteen months, but You saw the cry of my heart and You are incredibly patient with me. You delighted in me, and that is why You delivered me.”*

*Here is my point, in the pursuit of setting our heart on the love of God—setting our heart not just to receive it. It starts there for sure, and you will never love God more than you receive it freely from Him. I only love Him in response to how much I understand that He loves me when I don’t deserve it. I only love Him in response to how much I understand He loves me when I do not deserve it. And you will never ever love Him more than you see how much He loves you. So I encourage people to put your focus on seeing how much He loves you because that will awaken our hearts. Most of you know that, as that is a simple principle.*

*However, it is what happens when you are sincere as can be, like David, “I mean I am going all the way! This is what I am about,” but you run into the stumbling times in your life. You run into the times where you are not walking it out like you thought, and you say, “Wait! Wait, wait, wait! I do not want to be this way!”*

*The Lord would say, “Well, then how are you going respond to Me?” The enemy wants to convince you that God has written you off. There are more sincere believers who quit their intense pursuit of the Lord because they write themselves off and they think that God wrote them off, and that is called condemnation. They say,*

*“You know, I tried it, and it is not going to work,” and they are really sad about it. “It is not doable for me.” I tell you it is a lie! It is doable for you. Everybody that matures in this has some stumbling along the way.*

*However, one person does what David says, “I love You, and You delight in me, and that is why You are helping me! And because You delight in me, I have confidence to get back up and enter into the race again!”*

*The other guy or gal says, “I tried this, and, man, I went to the Love God conference, I signed up and stumbled, and I had a horrible summer or last few months! Augh! It is not going to work.”*

*I am telling you, beloved, that is a lie. David, the man after God’s own heart, is like a trophy of the grace of God and a picture, and God would say, “Look at that man and respond like he did. Run to Me, not from Me, because I really do delight in you; I do not delight in what you did; I do not delight in your last few months, but I delight in the relationship with you. And I see the cry of your heart. Get up and run to Me! Receive it freely that I am a God who loves beyond anything you can imagine, and then you can say, ‘I love You! I am back in this thing!’” I have never met anybody who committed to it and had this unbroken ascent of just sustainable victory after victory, never ever a dull time. I don’t know who that person would be.*

- F. One of the most important decisions in our life is when we intentionally determine that our *primary dream* is to walk out the first commandment. In other words, we set our heart to consistently seek to grow deep in cultivating a lifestyle of grateful, obedient love for Jesus that overflows to others.

*One of the most important decisions in a believer’s life—and I mean the most important decisions is to give yourself to Jesus and then after that—is when you decide that, “Yes, I want You to bless my family for sure and my friends. I want kingdom friendships, and I really value that and want You to touch my money and my ministry! I would really like that, but I am actually intentionally making my number one dream to walk in the anointing or the grace of God to love You with all of my heart. I am going after this.”*

*Again, it will change the way you spend time and money. You will spend evenings differently, not every evening, and you will spend days differently. You will invest your money in different things. You will find yourself, like a bunch of you here, getting on an airplane and flying to a city to go hear teachings on the love of God. That costs you money to go and do that. Or joining an internship—you gave a lot of money to do that. I mean, you put your money where your mouth is! There are a thousand ways to do that; I am just talking to some folks in the room here who have really done it.*

*Of course, most people who do that say, “Yes, I know, but it is not that big of a deal.” Yes, it is a big deal. It is huge what you did! Are you kidding? You could be out there doing this, that, and the other, good, bad, and ugly. You could be doing lots of other things tonight. You are investing time and money sitting in these chairs right here. Again, I could say that about a thousand other places to sit in a chair and hear or to be with other believers, but my point is that it is a decision that changes the way you spend time and money. It really does in a practical way.*

- G. Mary chose the good part (Lk. 10:42). No one can choose this for us. We must be intentional about making a “determined” choice to love God as our *primary life goal*.

<sup>42</sup>***Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Lk. 10:42)***

*One of my favorite people in the Bible is Mary of Bethany, this young lady who never gets mentioned in the book of Acts and you never hear about her in church history, but Jesus said, talking to her older sister, Martha, when Martha was complaining about her, “She chose the right thing.”*

*“My little sister is not helping me...”*

*And He said, “Your little sister has chosen something that the God of heaven—Me, the Lord Jesus—I call it the right thing, the good thing!” Beloved, that is such a powerful statement! Mary of Bethany was criticized two times in the scripture, first by her sister who loved Jesus, and next by the apostles who loved Jesus. The believers were criticizing her, and she is the only person in the Bible—well, it was only twice—but Jesus vindicated her publicly in front of believers who were accusing her. I mean good believers, the good guys, were accusing her. The good guys were saying, “You are messing up,” and Jesus said “Stop!” He did not vindicate anyone twice in a public setting that is recorded in the scripture. However, this girl never shows up again, in the book of Acts, ever.*

*Men never knew her, but the Lord knew her, and He said, “This will not be taken away. It will be sustainable.” It is doable to walk this out over the years. I don’t mean in an unbroken, perfect ascent higher and higher; I mean that you stumble and lose your way a little bit; you step into some dullness, you lose your focus, and you get back in it. In the big picture it is sustainable.*

*One of my prayers for you and for me is that God would give us courage and confidence that it is doable. Because we know our story and we know our history, “Well, I don’t stay with things very well...my attention span is not that great...I get easily distracted. I am really concerned about what everybody thinks about me. I try not to, but I don’t know if I can really do this!”*

*And the Holy Spirit wants to say, “It is sustainable. It is doable. Yes, you might lose some steps here and there, but you get right back up again.” And when the Lord looks at your life over some decades, He says “You did it!”*

*Beloved, there are no super-saints. I say that all of the time. There is nobody who is born again and just “Glory of God!” for fifty straight years. We are human. In our journey He is teaching us humility and gratitude, and that strengthens our love for Him. I am not into failing on purpose, but when we fail, and we recognize it and then receive the love of God, it makes us humble and grateful with, “I love You! and I am not strutting around because I am dedicated to You. You are more dedicated to me than I am to You, Lord!” That humility and gratitude is the protection of loving God. That is how our love is protected by humility and gratitude.*

*I do not like getting humility and gratitude. I would just like a Holy-Spirit injection from heaven, you know, like you turn around and say, “Give me an IV injection of humility and gratitude! Ouch! I am humbled and grateful!”*

*He says, “No, no, I am not going to do that way. I am going to make you humble and grateful.”*

*“Lord, let’s skip those steps!” I have told the Lord that many times “I am not like those other guys. Just skip those steps, give it straight to me, and I will stick with it!”*

*“No, you are just like those other guys!”*

*And so, day by day, when I look at some of my life, and I think, “Oh! But You love me!” I have heard so many times people say to me, “You are so dedicated!” and I think “Uh...thanks,” and I look up and say, “Lord, You just love me!” His commitment to me is far stronger than my commitment to Him, and the Lord wants to convince every one of us that that is the real narrative. That is the protection of love in our heart’s humility and gratitude.*

*Beloved, it is never too late to start, and so we can start now. Then someone says, “But I am eighty!” and I say, “Eighty is better than ninety, so start now! Do not waste another week. Start now!”*

*“Yes, but I wasted...” Forget the wasted time. That is too late. Start today! “But I am eighty!” It is better than ninety! You still have ten years, maybe. “I may only have a year.” That’s better than no years. A year is better*

than nothing. Go for it! This is real. It sounds a little corny, but it is real, and it is never too late to engage. The enemy will tell you that you are written off and it is too late, that you have gone too far, that you will never sustain it, that it is not doable, and this is one of my biggest points of contention. It **is** doable for weak and broken people. I promise you it is.

H. Our soul prospers by growing in the anointing of love.

**<sup>2</sup>I pray that you prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 Jn. 2)**

I. The grace or anointing of the Spirit to love Jesus is our greatest reward. The greatest reward of love is found in possessing a greater ability to receive and return love. Anybody can quit except a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, our love for Him keeps us from doing so.

*The grace of God or the anointing of God—I use those terms synonymously—to love Him is the greatest reward that He could give us. I mean, the reward of love is the ability to love more. A person that is a lover at the heart level wants the ability to receive and give love more than anything. They want other things, but they want that even more. I love to say this: anybody can quit, except a person in love.*

*When you love but you want to quit—I am now talking about Jesus, but it is true of other relationships—“I do not want to press on.” You know what is pressing on you. You have to go against the grain, you have to go against the current of circumstances, of temptations, and it is too wearisome to keep reaching to press on. “I do not know. I think I am just going to draw back.” Then you pause, and you conclude, “But I love You! Augh! I cannot quit! I love You!”*

*Anybody can quit except a person in love. What I am trying to say is He has you and you are His! You will never be able to quit. You will never be able to live a successful sinful life. You will never ever be able to live a life that you are content with without going deep in God. You will be miserable every step of the way if you are not pursuing it, and that is part of His gift to you. And like I like to say, “He got you!” and that is a good thing.*

*I have complained a few times and said to the Lord, “I can’t quit because I actually believe this stuff! Though my body and soul want to draw back and coast for a year or two, but ‘Augh!’ When I stop and think about You, I say, ‘No! Augh! Okay!’”*

*I can imagine the Lord with a kind of smile, saying, “Got you! I knew you couldn’t quit because I have shown you a little bit too much. You can’t quit now!” And a lot of you in this room are just like that.*

J. When God [the Spirit] reveals God [Jesus] to the human spirit, it is abundantly satisfying (Ps. 36:8).

**<sup>8</sup>They are abundantly satisfied...[as] You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. (Ps. 36:8)**

*Psalm 36: 8 is where David talks about “drinking from the river of God’s pleasure” Like, “Whoa!” What a poetic phrase, “drinking from the river of Your pleasures!” What does that mean?’ In the most simple way, it is when God reveals God to the human spirit. When God the Holy Spirit reveals God the Son, that imparts love for God the Son, but it also imparts understanding. There is nothing more pleasurable or satisfying in the human experience in any way than when God reveals God to the human spirit.*

*Even back in the Old Testament, David said, as it were, “It gets me, Lord, when You reveal Yourself.” He wrote the Psalms in the overflow of God revealing God to him, as God the Spirit revealed the Father, the Son, whichever dimension you want to focus on. And he said, “Oh, it is only moments, but it is pleasure!” I am not*

saying it is a pleasure that is unbroken, but the most exhilarating experience for the human design is when God reveals God or when God imparts love for God in our spirit.

It is like, “Ooh! I was created for this!” It is true! You **were** created for this: the river of pleasure. I call it the superior pleasures of the gospel because there is pleasure in sin, but they are the inferior pleasures of sin, as sin is pleasurable, but not satisfying. It always demands more, and it is never ever quenched. Lust always begets more lust and more emptiness about lust, and so it just gets worse and worse and worse.

I tell young people when they are playing around with pornography not to go there, that it is an empty, empty, empty pit, and you will never be satisfied. The craving will get bigger, and the emptiness will become more profound, and it will push you to the next level. It is impossible. You were not created for that. The enemy says, “Come after it!” but I tell you there is something that is far more powerful than the inferior pleasure of sin, and that is the superior pleasure of the gospel.

Meaning this pursuit of God, and though it is only momentary inspirations, a little bit of this goes a long way, to where you feel, “Ah! I want to do this!” And even when that inspiration lifts, and you get tempted to go the wrong way, the memory of it is that you know what is still available, “I am going to go get more of that! I am going to drink in that!” And you will find yourself spending more hours before the Lord and in dialogue with people, in searching it out, and in worship. “I want my spirit to get touched! The memory of that has got me, and I want more of it! I want more of it!” The memory of it is the powerful way that He influences us in the gap times, and then He inspires us a little bit more. And then inspires a little bit more!

Again, I want an unbroken inspiration that never ends, and then the Lord says, “Well, what you want is in the resurrection, and you will have that one day. You will have it for billions of years, but not right now. Right now you sign back up over and over again, and I will give you those temporary inspirations. They will hold you, and, in the gap times, you just keep reaching back for it.” That is what David called drinking from the river of pleasure.

## II. TURNING TO GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART

- A. The Lord wants us to respond to His love for us by turning to Him with all of our heart. When we turn to the Lord with all of our heart, we position ourselves to receive more from Him.

<sup>12</sup>Now...says the Lord, **“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning. <sup>13</sup>Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD ...”** (Joel 2:12-13)

Well, now we are looking at some new material. The Lord wants us to respond to Him by turning with all of our heart. Again, turning with all of our heart is a parallel idea to loving with all of our heart. Let’s go to the famous passage; I mean it is very well known in the prayer movement across the nations. Joel 2 says, “‘Now,’ says the Lord, ‘turn to Me’” which is the same as “Love Me with all of your heart.” However, Joel highlights some other dimensions and does not give the whole counsel of God or the whole picture, but he gives some parts of the picture that other passages do not give. There is not any one passage that tells the whole story. We put Bible verses with Bible verses with Bible verses, and we get the bigger picture together as we search out the scripture. Together the picture becomes more full and more clear as we stay with it.

The Lord says, as it were, “Turn to Me with all of your heart. I will not make you do it. I will help you do it if you will turn to me. It is a decision that **you** make.” And, it is going to involve fasting sometimes. Fasting does not earn you anything. Fasting positions you to receive more and to receive it faster. It tenderizes us, and we will receive more revelation from God, which means more understanding about God. That is what I mean, and

*we receive it faster. It does not mean that it all happens in one day, but you add fasting. I encourage people to fast one day a week unless they have health reasons or they have an eating disorder, then those are a little different because you do not want to stir up wrong things or hurt your body. I tell people to fast one day a week, and you may not do it all the time as a rule, but something like that, and every now and then you will have more extended times of fasting. If fasting is a part of your pursuit of the Lord, you will find yourself in a place where your spirit is more tender as fasting tenderizes your spirit.*

*I know you can fast to have breakthrough in other things. I wrote a book with Dana Candler called, **The Rewards of Fasting**. We have it in the bookstore where you can buy it, or you can get it for free on my website. In this book, we talk about the seven types of fasting in the Bible. There are seven different types of fasts. There is fasting for the breakthrough of something, fasting for protection, and fasting for direction. Those are right, and I like all of that, but the one I really love is fasting so that my heart would be tenderized. I don't like a dull heart. Humans don't do well with a dull heart. We were made to be fascinated and to be tender. So when we are dull, which happens all of the time, it is like "Ugh! This does not feel good!"*

*And the Lord would say, "There is an answer, but it is talking to Me, and fasting accelerates the tenderizing."*

*So, "Turn to Me with fasting," though don't ever think fasting earns you anything. It is like one says, "Here is what I'll do, God. I'll fast and prove my sincerity, and I will do it so intensely that You will break down and help me."*

*The Lord would say, "No, I do not have to 'break down and help you.' I am the one trying to convince you that I want to help you. You are not convincing Me!" So fasting positions us to be tenderized faster. You are not winning God who is reluctant because you fasted and you are suffering and about to die. "Okay! Okay! I will visit you! Do not die!" No, it is not like that. Obviously, that was melodramatic. He says, "No, no, you are positioning yourself to do this. I want you mourning." Mourning about what? "Mourning that things externally in your life and things internally in your life are not what they could be in this season." There is a mourning for sin, and there is mourning for compromise, and that is involved here for sure: mourning from compromise because they were turning away from compromise and they were mourning over their compromise.*

*However, I do not want to get too fixated on that because a lot of folk limit mourning to being about how badly they did. Mourning is actually biblical, and it is for your external circumstances and your internal heart condition, and, even today, there is more that God has for you. There is a gap. And the Lord understands you are mourning because you want the gap to go away. That is another dimension of mourning. Not just mourning over failing and therefore you are turning, but you are saying, "I want more. I do not just want the breakthrough in five or ten years," although I certainly do want that. And I believe in a greater breakthrough in big ways, but I want what is available today and right now in the Spirit for my heart and for my circumstances. I want the gap to be closed for today. Fasting and turning are part of that.*

- B. The Lord gave Joel insight into a 2-fold turning that He wants—we turn to God and turn from sin. We turn our focus to Him and the superior pleasures of the Gospel (Ps. 36:8). We are to turn from sin and all that is not in agreement with God. This turning involves repenting, fasting, and praying.

*The Lord gave Joel insight which I call a two-fold turning. A two-fold turning, turning from sin—which is important that we actually turn from it even though it has a hold of us—and we have to turn to God. The problem with a lot of folks is that they only try to turn from sin instead of turning to God. Some people turn to God, and they will just load up on worship sets, "I will just worship all day long," but they will not turn from their sin. They say, "I am going to stay in my immorality, but I am just going to worship more." No, no! You have to turn from the darkness, but you have to also turn to a Person, not one without the other.*

*It is like the analogy I have used many times regarding the inferior pleasures of sin. Some people just hunker down and say, “I am going to say no to darkness, no to bitterness, no to lust, no to greed, no to vengeance, and no to slandering and paying back people who treat me wrong! I am going to try and say no to those emotions.” And they fight and fight, “No! No! No!” Then they cave in.*

*The Lord, the Holy Spirit, would tap you on the shoulder and say, “Turn around. Now pursue Me, the superior pleasures of how beautiful I am and how much I love you and where we are going together. Again for those little moments of inspiration, pursue Me, and then turn around and rebuke sin a lot better.”*

*However, if all you do is have a standoff with sin, sin is going to win so many more times, and we do not have the power just to turn from sin. We have to be in pursuit of a dynamic Person, with moments of inspiration in that pursuit, which empower us to turn back around and say, “No, I am not giving in to bitterness! I am not giving in to revenge. I am not giving in to envy, to competition, and manipulation or lust or drunkenness or whatever, whatever, whatever. I am not giving in to that because I am going forward.”*

*However, if you just kind of anchor down to have a faceoff against darkness with a, “No, no, no, no,” it will be “No, no, no! Augh, I did it again!”*

*And the Holy Spirit would say, “Turn around and pursue Me! Come after Me. Then you can rebuke that darkness that is in your heart” or whatever the area is, far more effectively.*

*What I have here is that two-fold turning is a decision, and it involves the repenting of the negative and pursuing of the positive, and so there is repenting, and there is fasting, and there is praying. There are human dynamics where we interact with the Lord.*

*Again, I just like to get that Holy Spirit IV injection! Just make me grateful and humble, full of revelation and so I do not have to bother with pursuing. He says, “No! I do not want to give you a pill to make you love Me! I do not want to automate you to love Me. I want for you in your humanity to choose and grow in it because you care about loving Me.” Oh, I will take the pill for now. Just give me the “I love You pill.” “No, no, I am not going to do that. It is going to be step by step.” Oh Lord, can we **not** do that? You know, I have found that often three steps forward, two steps back—I mean that is not the real math but who knows—three steps forward, two steps back, but you keep moving forward. There are some negative emotions and negative feelings, but you just don’t give up, and you don’t give in, and you don’t quit, and you just keep going forward.*

*Look at verses 12 & 13. Let’s read it now. Verse 12, “Turn to Me with all of your heart: fasting, weeping and mourning,” and there are other things too, not just those three, but they are all a part of the picture. Verse 13, “Rend your heart,” which means tear, “not just your garments. When you return to the Lord, tear your heart.”*

*You see, when there was a crisis, Israel would tear their robes, and put sackcloth on, and act really humble. They would put sackcloth on, tear their garments, and say “We did it!”*

*But the Lord says, “Well, that is symbolic of humility, but what I actually prefer is that you tear your heart.”*

*“Ugh, tear my heart?”*

- C. **Rend your heart:** To rend means to tear something forcibly or violently. God wants us to “tear our heart” by dealing radically with the matters of the heart that are not in agreement with Him. Tearing our hearts in our pursuit of loving God is a non-optional part of seeking Him with all our heart. We tear our heart away from areas of sin to come into agreement with God’s heart.

*To rend your heart or to rend anything, like a garment, is to tear it. And to rend it is not just a little rip ever so slightly. It is a forcible and even a violent ripping. Ugh! The Lord desires that we tear our heart. In other*



words, that we would deal radically with the issues of the heart that are not in agreement with Him. And, the issues of the heart which are not in agreement with him are not just the lust or the bitterness or the anger or whatever. One of the big issues of the heart not in agreement with Him is that we do not believe in His narrative over our life. He says, “You are My beloved. We are in this together forever. Your life is glorious.”

You say, “Well, that doesn’t feel right.”

The Lord would say, “Tear yourself from the lying narrative! Not just the sinful emotion, tear yourself from the lying, the false narrative of your life.”

“Yes, but I am kind of a loser. There is nothing really happening, and I always stumble. And, I always quit anyway!”

The Lord would say, “That is not who you are! I came after you! You only love Me because I touched you and because I am pursuing you.”

“Oh.”

“I have plans for you, and they are bigger than your failure.”

And so we tear ourselves away not just from dark emotions, but we tear ourselves from the false narrative. Many believers stay with the false narrative of their life that their life is not worth much and they are not accomplishing much anyway. “Nobody knows. Nobody cares. I am going to stumble. I am a hopeless hypocrite. It does not matter anyway.” That is the false narrative that the enemy wants anchored in the life of millions of believers. We tear ourselves from that narrative, not just the dark attitudes and the dark emotions.

The tearing of the heart in the pursuit to love God with all of our heart is not optional. Some people say, “Oh, that is the radical stuff!” I say that it is actually Christianity 101, if you want to do the real Christianity. It is not just for the super-saints. It is for all the saints, meaning believers. It is for everybody who is saying yes to the kingdom and it is not optional. We tear our heart away from areas of sin, and we tear out hearts away from the false narrative of our life. Many times that is the bigger problem because when the narrative of our life gets right, then we let go of our sin a lot quicker and say, “Wow, that is worth it! I am, like, amazing! I am part of the aristocracy of the eternal city!”

Did you know that you are in the royal family of the New Jerusalem forever? “Whoa! Is that true?” Yes, and you will have a resurrected, physical body in a glorious city as the bride of Christ in the royal family. This idea that you are a loser and that nobody knows, nobody cares—I am telling you the most powerful Man that ever walked the earth cares about you and is coming after you. That makes your life extremely powerful, extremely powerful.”

I use this analogy all of the time: you know the thief on the cross, and Jesus said, “You will be with me in paradise.” And so he dies, and he is in paradise. He says, “Whoa! I am a king and a priest! If I had known that I was a king and a priest, I would have never been a thief! I did not know anything about this!”

I do not want to wait until then to figure out my life story. Beloved, it is true today; it is not only true when you die and stand before Him.

- D. God the Father’s heart was torn when He gave Jesus’ life away, and it continues to be torn in His patient longsuffering with His people as they refuse to respond to Him with faith and repentance. Jesus tore His heart when He went to the cross.

*Why does God call us to tear our heart? Well, the Father could say, "I tore My heart when I sent My Son. It tore My heart, but I sent Him because I wanted you. And after you said yes to Me, then a number of times you resisted Me. It tore My heart again." The Father could say, "I know about a torn heart, and I am not asking you to do which I have not done for love. My heart has been torn in the way that My people in whom I delight in have pushed Me away and are not interested in Me, though I am so interested in them."*

*Then Jesus went to the cross, He tore His heart, and He sweat drops of blood. He tore His heart for love, for us. In other words, tearing our heart is the way of the kingdom. It really is. "Ugh, really?" It is the way of deep love. It really is the way of love.*

*Some people hope for a Christianity that does not have this element in it. I mean, I would like that in the natural, "Lord, just wave Your hand over me and give me that pill that makes me love You. Automate me! Just give me the shot or something!"*

*"No, I am going to do it step by step because I want you to love Me."*

*Of course, there is no pill or shot; I am just being whatever.*

- E. Love for Jesus includes walking in a spirit of obedience—even costly obedience (Jn. 14:21). When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in not being able to offer the "full gift of our love" to Jesus on the last day.

***<sup>21</sup>He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (Jn. 14:21)***

*Jesus said it very practically. It is unmistakably clear here. You cannot miss it here, but it is so easily debated in the Body of Christ. But it is unmistakably clear. "If you have My commandments and you keep them, you love Me."*

*Like, "Oh really?" Jesus includes the spirit of obedience. It does not mean perfect obedience, but it is the resigning up for obedience. You stumble, but you don't rationalize it, saying, "Well, you know, a little immorality. Everybody is involved in a little bit." No, don't do it that way! Immorality is quenching your heart. It is what the Lord would tell people or those other ten things like anger is actually greed, covetousness. There are many emotions. And He would say that if you stumble in it, you do not find a Bible verse or a group of friends who pat you on the back and make it seem okay.*

*No, do not do what many are doing in the Body of Christ today. They are reconstructing the definition of grace so it does not have a spirit of obedience in it. And they are thinking, "Wow! This is amazing!" but their hearts never get free, and they never enter into the greatness of who God called them to be in His sight through that great lifestyle of loving God.*

*Jesus would say, "Do not look for Bible verses or a group of people who will agree with you and twist the scripture. No, there is a spirit of obedience."*

*Yes, you will stumble, but you just rise back up, and you admit it. You call it sin and do not rationalize it. And you declare war on it. You do not look for some way to make it okay, nor do you say, "Well, boys will be boys!" Declare war on it, and you might stumble again, but the Lord would say that this is the spirit of obedience. You are calling it what it is and not rationalizing it, and you are warring against it. In time you will get free from it at the emotional level, and that is the spirit of obedience.*

*When we neglect to confront sin in our life, it is not that God loves us less. God still loves us. God so loved the world that He loved us when we hated Him. He does not love us less, but we do suffer loss, and the loss is real.*

*There are a lot of believers who have misconstrued the whole grace message. I call it the “distorted grace” message which I call the most serious problem in the Body of Christ today. Using Bible verses and biblical terminology, but out of true biblical context and meaning, to empower people to keep sinning. The grace of God is to give us confidence to sign back up again with confidence before God, to repent and sign back up and not run away in condemnation. Grace inspires us to do that.*

*When we stand before the Lord on the last day—and every believer will stand before the Lord—He will say, “You walked with Me ten years, or fifty years, or whatever.” When I stand before the Lord, He is not going to ask me about my conferences or my book sales or how many people came to this. He is going to ask me about the response of my heart. He is going to say, “I gave you everything! Well, what do you have?” Well, I want to give to Him a gift of love. I want to give Him a response of love.*

*I don’t want to stand there on the last day and say, “Well, actually, I had a bunch of people that agreed with me, and we just lived in compromise.” That would be the most terrifyingly imaginable thing for a believer. First Corinthians 3:15 says that on that day there will be those that are saved, but who will “suffer loss” of what they could have had in their response to God and then in His rewards to them. I cannot fathom anything more serious for a believer than to suffer the loss on the last day of being able to offer and say, “You know, I did not do it perfectly, but I kept signing back up.” That is called obedience.*

*Someone might say, “Well, the love of God is free,” and I say, “Yes, but you will still suffer loss.” That is not okay! You only live on the earth one time with a natural body, and then for billions of years you will have a resurrected body and a perfect environment. You only live in this theater where you can choose darkness once, and that is your theater of showing love to God. You only do it one time in your billions of years of existence. You only get one time in the face of darkness to choose love. For the rest of your eternal existence you will not face darkness. You will still show love, but this is a very powerful time, a very, very powerful time.*

*You know, there are a lot of folks who are discouraged, and I like to tell them that for a believer this is the worst it will ever be for you. It will never, ever be worse than it is right now for us. And in a minute—whether it is in one year or fifty years, it is still a minute—you will step across that line and think, “That was the worst it ever was!” But for an unbeliever, this is the best that it will ever be for them. I mean, we do not want to go in that direction. It is real. We do not want to go that direction.*

- F. Speaking symbolically of this radical tearing of the heart, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out (Mt. 5:29). He was talking about a radical pursuit of obedience that painfully tears the heart in the process. In other words, forsake all compromise! The Spirit beckons us to “Spare not!” If there is an issue in the way that is quenching the Holy Spirit, get rid of it!

***<sup>29</sup>If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matt. 5:29)***

*I have gotten ahead of myself here. That is what Jesus is talking about when He said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear out your right eye.” He was speaking symbolically. “It is more profitable for you that you lose an advantage than your whole body to go into hell.” Now again, He was speaking symbolically here, but it is clear what He is saying. He was saying, in effect, “There are very few things more precious than your eye. If you lose something precious to you because you chose Me, and you lose it for a little while, it is far more profitable for you than for you to cast off My leadership.” Now He is talking to somebody who walks away from Him entirely, but the principle is still true. This is tearing the heart—plucking out the eye—the tearing of the heart. He is talking about the radical pursuit of obedience, the painful tears of the heart in the process. The Holy Spirit says, He beckons us, “Spare not, it is worth it! This is the hardest it will ever be for you. For billions of*

years it is going to be far better! It will never be worse than now!” And this is the only time ever you get to choose love in the presence of temptation. You will never face it again. And, beloved, that moves Him when we choose to love Him in the face of options and temptations.

- G. *The tearing of the heart is often what is most overlooked in the process of seeking freedom. The tearing of the heart is intensely personal and can be painful. Some seek a wholeheartedness that is gentle, easy, and tame. Developing mature love for Jesus is costly and aggressive. It is not passive. Do not allow any substitute for the real thing. This is the way to true freedom of the heart.*

*Okay, put a little circle by “G.” The tearing of the heart: the plucking out of the eye, meaning that which is precious, the turning away from that which is dear to us but is not right, yet it is still dear to us. Like that money situation, “That is amazing!” or that wrong relationship, “Ugh, but it is great!” That one sinful pleasure, “Everything besides that!” It is the precious thing in our fallen understanding. In our darkened understanding, it is precious.*

*And the Lord would say “I know it is precious, but I tore My heart to come after you. I know what I mean, what I am talking about. My Father tore His heart to send Me. I want you to pluck out your eye; I want you to tear yourself away from that which you deem as precious in your fallen and darkened understanding.”*

*We all have darkness in our understanding. I believe the tearing of the heart is the most overlooked process in the kingdom today, in the seeking of freedom. There is this big push or emphasis in the last ten to twenty years or a little bit longer of getting inward freedom, and I love it. Years ago it was like every seminar was inner freedom, inner freedom. Beloved, there is no inner freedom that does not have a tearing of the heart from the issue that is binding it. The tearing is not all there is to it, but there is a catching the biblical narrative of your life which means having the right identity of who you are in Christ and processing your pain in a right way. There are a number of things in the process of freedom, but I tell you that you cannot neglect the tearing of the heart, and I know a lot of counseling approaches which avoid that issue.*

*I tell you, nobody is wiser or more tender than Jesus, and He says, “Pluck the eye out; you have to tear the heart on this issue.”*

*“I do not want to.”*

*The Lord would say that there are things of processing your past through the lens of God’s understanding, seeing your identity through the lens of the gospel of grace, processing the narrative of your life through the biblical narrative of the kingdom of God. Those are critical, along with four or five other things. We cannot neglect this issue, yet many approaches to counseling avoid this issue with all of their energy because it is “negative.” Many believers—I do not think they say it—have words for it, but they hope for a wholeheartedness that is gentle and tame.*

*I want to say that developing mature love is costly, and it is aggressive. We look at that issue. We tear the heart. We pluck the eye out. It is not passive. Like, could somebody do it for me? Like, put me to sleep and do it for me? No, it does not work that way. This age is the theater of life in which we grow in love, or it is the theater in which love grows in the midst of the temptations of this life.*

*I urge you as a shepherd lovingly. There are more than just young people, but I am talking to young people: do not substitute for the real thing with some false presentation of freedom.*

*“This is freedom!”*

*That is not freedom. That is bondage masqueraded as freedom!*

*That is not freedom! Your heart could be drinking from the river of pleasure. You were not created in God's image for that!*

*"Well, it is freedom. That one church says I am free to do it."*

*I know but you will be in bondage for the rest of your life and then in big trouble afterwards. The only way to true freedom involves the tearing of the heart at a few critical moments. It is not like every day for eighty years you tear your heart. But there are those few times in the journey where the tearing of the heart is critical. It is not every day, every year, at issue. There are temptations that you will turn away from. But the "tearing of the heart" are those few issues over fifty or eighty years, whatever the number is, where it is real. And He says "No, this is real, and you have to do this!"*

- H. The Lord will help us in this. He will empower us. Yet we must cooperate with Him by tearing ourselves away from attitudes, actions, and relationships that hinder us from fully loving Him.

*The Lord will help us and empower us. We have to do it in our attitudes, and we have to do it in our actions. There is the tearing away from some relationships. There is the tearing away from the wrong narrative of our life. However, again, it is typically only a few times in our life where it is at that level of intensity, but it matters, and we cannot neglect this.*

- I. Paul pursued Jesus in a costly way that even caused him to lay down some good opportunities.

***8I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ... (Phil. 3:8)***

*We will end with this. Paul the apostle engaged, he pursued Jesus, in a costly way. What I mean is that he tore his heart, and not just that—I want to highlight this one—he invested time. He gave up opportunities. A lot of opportunities he lost because of persecution, because he would not back down, but in other situations he lost opportunities because he chose a higher path for his life. I am talking about the way he spent his time, and what I mean by that is, as I have spoken with people over the years, I have said, "You are not going to grow in love for Jesus and you are not going to love people without an overflow from loving Jesus."*

*I always hear, "What about loving people?"*

*I say, "If you love Jesus, the lion, He will be roaring at you about loving other people. Trust me, He loves people like you cannot imagine." If you touch Him, you will love people so much better, so do not buy into that false argument that you have to choose between loving people and loving Jesus. If you love Jesus, He is a lion, and He will push you into loving people in a deep and an authentic way.*

*I have had folks say, "Well, you know, I just want to love people, and I do not really want to do this"*

*I say, "You are a little mixed up. I want to be nice about it, but you are. You are not going to grow in love for Jesus on the run. You are not going to grow on the run. You might grow a little bit, but you are not going to go deep on the run. You need to stop, turn some things off, and turn away from some opportunities. You are going to invest your time intentionally in ways where you are realigning your heart and understanding with Him and in connecting with Him, and you grow in love little by little, and it will always overflow to loving people.*

*I remember this one pastor I was talking to said, "When I hear you preach, it is almost like you say that there is a connection to how much time you spend with God with how much you grow spiritually. It sounds like there is almost a connection." He thought that was legalism, so he was trying to be nice to me.*

*I said, "Well, no, I would not say that."*

*“Okay, it seemed like you said it.”*

*I said, “No, take out the word, almost. There is an absolute connection!”*

*He said, “Augh! Legalism!”*

*I said, “No it is not legalism. You are not earning anything. You are putting your cold heart in front of the bonfire. You are positioning yourself. There is absolutely a correlation, though it is not an exact one. It is not a tit-for-tat.”*

*He said, “Really?”*

*I mean, he had been pastoring for years, and I said, “What Bible are you reading or are you just reading sermons from big churches and then just repeating those sermons? Read your Bible. There is absolutely a correlation. When we put our cold hearts in front of a bonfire, which means the presence of God, little by little you know that cold frozen heart thaws out and gets tender, little by little. There is absolutely a correlation!”*

*He was shocked! He had been pastoring for years, and he said, “I have never heard anyone say that!”*

*I said, “Well, quit taking all of your sermons from the people you think have big and glorious ministries, and get back to your Bible, and you will run into it everywhere!”*

*Amen, let’s stand.*

*Lord, we will give up anything for the excellency of knowing You. The excellency of You.*

*I am calling people tonight to pursue Jesus in a costly way. There is a tearing of the heart and an investing of more of your time. There are two dimensions here. The more time with the word of God is so that you get the right narrative and so you will agree with His values and His perspective. It takes time to grow in that agreement. I am growing in it, even though I have been doing it for years, and I need to grow more in it. I need to align more and more and more, and I do that in my interaction with Him with an open Bible or with talking with other believers in conversations. It is when the Word is moving through our mouth in conversation, worship, and whatever.*

*So, Father, here we are before You, and we say we want to love You with all of our heart. We want to turn our hearts to you.*