



THE
FIRST
&
GREAT
COMMANDMENT

KAY-CHONG YEO



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FORERUNNER RESOURCE

The First and Great Commandment

Kay-Chong Yeo
2009

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

The First and Great Commandment
by Kay-Chong Yeo

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PREFACE

What is God looking for?

God has everything! Yet, He is searching for something. What could God, who has everything, possibly want? One of the most important questions you and I can ask is, "What is God looking for?" When we discover what He wants, we then realize what we are looking for and understand life (John 4:23).

Jesus tells us what God is looking for – LOVE. He is looking for reciprocal love. He is looking for love responses from our heart. He is after our heart (not our talent or money, etc.). He desires voluntary wholehearted love from us. This love is fueled by the spirit of abandonment to God. He wants us to give our lives to Him. God created us for a specific purpose and designed us with longings to fulfill that purpose. (2 Chron. 16:9)

What does God desire? He desires that we love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength because He loves us that way. We can know the "why" behind the "what". His glory is always the first reason for His actions in creation and redemption. However, YOU are also a significant reason. You are part of the "why" behind the "what". He pours His love on us and receives it back from us. He does it all for love.

Our highest calling is to move God's heart with our love. Our highest purpose is to love God. This comes ahead of seeking to make an impact or to be successful from man's point of view. Many want to build a big ministry for God. But first, He wants our love. It is the currency of heaven. My spiritual identity is that, "I'm loved by God and I am a lover of God and therefore I am successful". This is who we are to God, for we are not defined by our accomplishments.

The Church of Ephesus was a great revival center in their time (Acts 19-20). Yet, they did not sustain the freshness in their love for Jesus. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. Lovers will always outwork the workers. When we work without intimacy, we work as a slave. A heart of a bride is refreshed as she labors. Service without the foundation of devotion leads to burn out, disappointment, and wounding. Thus the service is not sustained over decades (Rev. 2:1-5).

The First and the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37 – 38)

The Holy Spirit is restoring the First Commandment to its first place in the Church worldwide. It is the First Commandment because loving God is the first priority to God. Jesus did not call it the first option for it is a commandment. Jesus makes it clear that cultivating wholehearted love for God is the highest and greatest lifestyle. Loving God is a glorious end in itself. However, it never ends with loving God but always overflows with loving ourselves and others (believers and unbelievers).

It is the Great Commandment because loving God would cause the greatest impact on our heart. It is the only way to enter into our greatest destiny because it has the greatest reward. Loving God always has a great impact on God's heart, our heart and the heart of others. It is a dynamic means to an end.

THE FIRST & GREAT COMMANDMENT

We need revelation of the supremacy of the First Commandment. It is the standard of evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. In our desire to keep up with popular ministry trends, some regularly change directions in their ministry. We must not get our ministry focus from the latest trend, but from God's Word.

Our primary goal is to grow in love for God. God measures life differently from man because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence and time. Our greatest reward is to know and feel His love, to love Him and then to overflow with love for others.

God loves us in the same way that God loves God

The foundational truth that equips us to love God is to know and feel His affection for us. God loves us in the way that God loves God (John 15:9; 17:23). The Father feels the same intensity of love for us as He feels for Jesus. The Father delights in Jesus throughout all eternity. Do you know the way you move God's heart? We are His greatest prize and the apple of His eye! (Ps. 17:7 – 8) When we know the King loves us, we are unmoved even when others overlook or mistreat us.

The measure of the Father's love and affection for His Son Jesus is the measure of His love for all His sons and daughters. This is the ultimate revelation of our worth. This truth gives us the right to stand before God with confidence as one of "His favorites". Our confession is, "Jesus, You love me like the Father loves You". This makes our life great and meaningful.

Defining Wholehearted love for Jesus (Mark 12:30)

"Loving God with all our heart" means to love God with all our affection and emotions. We "set" our affections on anything we choose. We set our heart and God changes our emotions. Our emotions will follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. We can set our heart to be filled with zeal for God. Lord, take the reins of my heart to direct it into the ocean of Your love. Ask yourself, "Why not me?"

"Loving God with all our soul" means to love God with all our personality and being. Our personality and being are expressed most dynamically by our speech. Therefore, we must determine to express our personality by speaking and acting in a way that enhances and not diminishes love.

"Loving God with all our mind" means to fill our minds with long and loving meditation on God's Word and resist putting anything in our minds that would diminish love for Jesus and quench the Holy Spirit.

"Loving God with all our strength" refers to the giving of our resources (time, money, talents, reputation, and influence) unto the LORD.

"Hear...: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Deut. 6:4-5

Kay-Chong Yeo
Director
IHOP – One Thing Ministries (Singapore)

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Session 1

The Call to the First and Great Commandment

(Matt. 22:1-14)

A. Introduction

1. The parable of the wedding occurred on the final week of Jesus' public ministry. This was Jesus' final public teaching before He went to the cross on Friday.
2. Jesus was experiencing tension and mixed emotions over His last visit to Jerusalem.
 - a. The agonizing anticipation of the Crucifixion.
 - b. The joy of finally having His Bride. The joy set before Him was the wedding supper of the Lamb. (Heb. 12:2; Isa. 62:5; Rev. 19:7 – 9)
 - c. The painful despair of Israel's rebellion and rejection. (Matt. 23:37 – 38)
3. Jesus' public ministry ends with the proclamation that the Kingdom of God is a wedding. This is probably the message that was (and is) dearest to His heart. (Matt. 22:2)
4. Jesus is giving the Bridal Invitation through three parables in Matt. 21:28 – 22:14
 - a. The parable of the two sons in Matt. 21:28 – 32 focuses on the message that even the worst sinners are invited. No one is too sinful to be excluded. Only rebellion will disqualify us from being part of the wedding.
 - b. The parable of the wicked vine-dresser in Matt. 21:33 – 44 focuses on the message that God has an inheritance for His Son. Only rebellion will disqualify us from being part of that inheritance.
 - c. The parable of the wedding feast in Matt. 22:1 – 14 focuses on Jesus' great invitation. It speaks of three things:
 - i. This parable speaks of His heart for a Bride – wholehearted lovers of God and equally-yoked partners.
 - ii. This parable speaks of the nature of the message that we should preach and the focus of discipleship.
 - iii. This parable speaks of the goal in our walk with God.
5. Jesus is not distracted from His theme of the wedding throughout Matt. 22. The final cry of His teaching was Matt. 22:37 – 38 – wholehearted lovers of God for there is a wedding at hand.

B. The Bridal paradigm of the Kingdom (Matt. 22:1 – 2)

1. To fully appreciate Jesus' call to the First and Great Commandment in Matt. 22:37 – 38, we need to understand the parable of the Wedding in Matt. 22:1 – 14. For the call to the First and Great Commandment is in context to the parable of the Wedding.
 - a. Jesus' much-anticipated ride into Jerusalem on a donkey is the fulfillment of the famous Messianic prophecy in Zech. 9:9 about the promised Messiah.
 - b. This parable sets the tone for His teaching throughout all of Matt. 21 – 25 in which He emphasized the heart of the Gospel and the End-Times. His next visit to Jerusalem will be on a white horse as the King – the Second Coming of the LORD. (Rev. 19:16)
 - c. Jesus called Israel to the First Commandment in context to the parable of the wedding feast. In this He reveals the Bridal Paradigm of the Kingdom.
2. The Father's eternal plan is to arrange a marriage for His Son. Our relationship with Jesus is a marriage. This describes our unique privilege of experiencing intimacy with His heart. (Rev. 19:7 – 9)
 - a. God's eternal purpose for His creation is to provide a family for Himself and an equally-yoked Bride for His Son as His eternal companion who will reign with Him in love. God is raising up a prepared Bride for His worthy Son. Our garments will proclaim the measure of our love.
 - b. Jesus referred to Himself as a Bridegroom and the apostles as Friends of the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15), His Kingdom as a marriage (Matt. 22:2) and the New Jerusalem as the Bride (Rev. 21:9).

C. The message of the Kingdom (Matt. 22:3 – 4)

1. *"and sent out his servants... Again, he sent out other servants..."* (v.3 – 4)
 - a. The Father sent *"servants"* or messengers to invite people to a wedding. In this parable, Jesus reveals His burning desire for us and His longing for a deep relationship with us that will last forever.
 - b. This reveals the purpose of humanity and the highest focus for ministry.
2. The bridal perspective should change the way we preach the Gospel as evangelists, how we counsel people in difficulty as pastors, how we teach the Bible as teachers of the Word, how we prophesy as forerunners and how we build churches as apostles.
3. It should alter the way we view people and preach on salvation, holiness or judgment. We are saved "from something" terrible and "to something" glorious. We need salvation to escape hell as well as to qualify and empower us to engage in a deep eternal relationship with God. (1 Cor. 1:9)

D. Two responses to the message (Matt. 22:3, 5, 6)

There are 2 general responses to the Bridal message of the Kingdom:

1. *"But they make light of it."* (v.5)
 - a. Passive resistance to Jesus: passivity about God's deep desire and great provision for us is a serious sin of ingratitude. People say that they must be practical, but there was nothing practical about creation and the incarnation.
 - b. God went out of His way for love. Farms and businesses are given to us as God's gift to experience His love and express it back to Him. No blessing or ministry assignment in God is ever to take the place of our relationship with Him.
2. *"Treated them spitefully and killed them."* (v.6)
 - a. Active resistance to Jesus: hostility to God's messengers through mistreatment and persecution.
 - b. This will be especially real during End-Times when the Antichrist and the world will persecute and kill the true voice of God in calling the Church to wholeheartedness.

E. The response of the Father (Matt. 22:7)

1. God's active response: the King sent out His armies in fury to destroy those who murdered His messengers. He will also burn their cities. God will burn the cities of the Antichrist because He arranged a wedding and they killed His beloved. (Rev. 16:17 – 21; 19:2, 11 – 21)
2. The Romans' attack on Jerusalem in 70 AD was only a partial fulfillment of this.
3. The intensity of the Father's love is the same intensity of His wrath against all that hinders love. There is no contradiction between the passion of the Father and His anger. The context of God's fury is His intensity in arranging a marriage and protecting His people.
4. We can only make sense of Jesus as the Judge if we understand Him as the Bridegroom. He works with the Father in judgment to remove everything that hinders love and all that harms His Bride. The fury of the Father is an expression of His passion for Jesus and His Bride. (Ps. 2:5 – 9)
5. Jesus developed Matt. 22:7 in more detail for Apostle John in the judgments described in the Book of Revelation. Revelation is about a Bride being prepared for her wedding and the First Commandment filling the earth and evil being driven off the planet.
6. We must not be ashamed of God's fury and thus, seek to hide it or downplay it as if it is a fault in God's character. We must not be afraid of being accused as "gloom and doom" or "fire and brimstone" preachers.
7. Jesus preached a message of doom to those who opposed His fiery love. We can only preach judgment in a right way with a right spirit by understanding the Bridegroom. God's judgment is best understood in light of the refusal to receive His intense love. We downplay the fury of God's judgment because we do not understand the reality of His passionate love.

8. Paul prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in understanding and experiencing God's love. All who speak in judgment are to be rooted in revelation of the intensity of Jesus' love. (Eph. 3:17 – 19)

F. The invitation of God for all to participate in the Wedding (Matt. 22:8 – 10)

1. Those invited were not worthy because they did not respond with love. Being worthy of salvation does not mean that we earn it, but that we respond in grateful love to Jesus' love.
2. The primary "currency" in eternity is voluntary love formed in our hearts in this life. Christianity, through the lens of the Bridal paradigm, makes radical abandonment to God's love reasonable and has no interest in "fire insurance Christianity" (i.e. being a Christian just to be saved from hell's fire).
3. God's heart is seen in His desire for both the bad and good. Jesus wants the "bad" ones. There is no one who has gone too far. If they simply respond then God accepts them. (Matt. 21:31)
4. God's zeal to send His messengers to the highways and byways is an expression of His fiery passion. He wants His servants to participate in this great drama. It was unthinkable to the Jews of that day to go out of their way to bring salvation to the Gentiles in the highways and byways.
5. The Lord has no pleasure in the death of wicked and desires all to be saved. (Ezek. 18:23; 2 Pet. 3:9)
6. The wedding hall will be filled. This speaks of the Great Harvest at the End-of-the-Age. (Rev. 7:9)

G. The necessity to prepare (Matt. 22:11 – 13)

1. A wedding garment will be required to participate in the great Wedding Feast. It speaks of the righteousness of God imputed and imparted to us. Wedding garments will be given to each believer according to their acts of obedience and wholehearted love
 - a. This is different from the robe of righteousness we received as a gift when we first became believers. (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 61:10; Rev. 19:7 – 9) Gift of Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us instantly at the new birth.
 - b. Righteous character is imparted to us progressively by the Holy Spirit
2. The man without the wedding garment speaks of those who seek to enter the celebration of salvation on their own terms.
 - a. The garment of religion: includes those who practise "nominal Christianity", Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc, or those who think they will receive salvation without accepting Christ as Savior. The man with religious pride trusts in his own merit in thinking he is qualified for salvation.

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- b. The *garment of compromise*: those with continual compromise are presumptuous about God's mercy. They think they are saved without being serious about loving Jesus with obedience.
 3. God has great mercy toward us in our many failures. What He does not accept is our long term unwillingness to war against our failures with sincere repentance. It is not enough to be familiar with biblical language and attend worship gatherings.
 4. Our immaturity does not disqualify us but our insincerity does. We must distinguish between rebellion and immaturity. If we mistake immaturity as rebellion then we run from Him instead of to Him when we see our weakness.

H. Final exhortation (Matt. 22:14)

1. "*For many are called, but few are chosen*" – Multitudes are invited but only few respond with loving faith. This principle connects this parable with the parable in Matt. 21:28 – 32.
 - a. The Lord calls "*many*" reflecting His invitation to all, "*as many as you find*" (Matt. 22:9).
 - b. The "*chosen*" refers to the responsive who seek to love Jesus with all their heart (Matt. 22:37).
 - c. The "*called*" lose their privilege by their own unresponsiveness to God's gracious call and invitation.
2. Divine election works with human responsibility so that voluntary love is made manifest (v. 37).

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Session 2

Defining the First and Great Commandment

A. What is God looking for?

1. Matt. 22:35 – 38

A lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment?" Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment."

2. God has everything. Yet, He is searching for something. What could God, who has everything, possibly want? One of the most important questions you can ask is, "What is God looking for?" When we discover what He wants, we then realise what we are looking for and understand life. (John 4:23; 2 Chron. 16:9)
3. In Matt. 22:37 – 38, Jesus tells us what God is looking for – LOVE.
 - a. He is looking for love responses from our heart. He is after our heart and not our talent or money, etc.
 - b. He desires voluntary, wholehearted love from us. It is fueled by the spirit of abandonment to God. He wants to take over our lives, but He wants us to give it to Him willingly. God created us for a specific purpose and designed us with longings to fulfill that purpose.
 - b. He requires that we love Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength because He loves us that way.
4. Our highest calling is to move God's heart with our love.
 - a. Our highest purpose is to love God. This comes ahead of seeking to make an impact or to be successful from man's point of view. Many want to build big ministries for God. But He wants our love above everything else.
 - b. Our spiritual identity is that, "I'm loved by God and I am a lover of God therefore I am successful". We are not defined by our accomplishments.
5. The church of Ephesus was a great revival center in the early Church. Yet, they did not sustain freshness in their love for Jesus. (Acts 19 – 20; Rev. 2:1 – 5)
 - a. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. Lovers will always outwork the workers. When we work without intimacy with God, we work like slaves.
 - b. A heart of a bride is refreshed as she labors. Service without the foundation of devotion leads to burnout, disappointment, and wounding. Thus, the service is not sustained over time.
6. The Holy Spirit is restoring the First Commandment to its first place in the Church worldwide.

B. Defining the First and Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37 – 38)

1. What is the First and Great Commandment?
 - a. The First and Great Commandment comes from the Hebrew Shema in Deut. 6:4 – 5.
 - b. The Shema Israel: Shema is the Hebrew word for “hear”. God is calling Israel to hear His heartbeat in Deut. 6:4 – 5.

Hear (Shema), O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:4 – 5)
 - c. What they heard was that loving God is His first priority and the greatest way to live.
2. The Shema reveals the “why” behind the “what” of creation and redemption.
 - a. God’s ultimate eternal purpose for creation is to provide a family for Himself that includes faithful children that will love and obey Him.
 - b. God’s desire is also to provide an equally-yoked Bride for Jesus as His eternal companion. He promised to give Jesus an inheritance consisting of a people whom He fully possesses in love. (Ps. 2:8)
 - i. Mandatory obedience: God will cause all creation to obey Jesus. (Phil. 2:9 – 11)
 - ii. Voluntary love: God will raise up people who voluntarily choose to love Him
 - iii. Equally-yoked in love: God wants us to love Him with all of our heart and mind because He loves us with all of His heart and mind.
3. Jesus wants us to love Him in the way He loves us. He will supernaturally empower us to love Him this way. For “it takes God to love God”.
 - a. The anointing to receive God’s love and to return it to Him is the greatest gift that the Spirit imparts to us. (Rom. 5:5)
 - b. Jesus prayed for His people to be supernaturally empowered to love Him with God’s love. (John 17:26)
4. God’s purpose is to select and train a Bride who would be prepared by voluntary love to reign with Jesus. The First Commandment will be in the first place in the Church when Jesus returns. (Rev. 19:7)

C. First Commandment – the first priority of God

1. Loving God is the first priority to God. Jesus did not call it the first option but a commandment.
 - a. Jesus makes it clear that cultivating love for Him is the first emphasis of the Holy Spirit.

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- b. Loving God is a glorious end in itself though it never ends with loving God but always overflows with loving ourselves and others – believers and unbelievers.
 2. What does He want most and first? The mystery of our life is found in this truth.
 - a. It is love that He is after. He is after our heart. He wants us. He wants our voluntary love.
 - b. One of the most important questions to ask God is “*What are You looking for before anything else?*” When we find what God is looking for then we will find the answer to what we are looking for.
 3. Loving God is the first priority to God. It is number one on God’s priority list. We must plan ministries with this as the first goal and measurement of success. Numerical growth is good but that is not the litmus test of God’s grace or pleasure.
 4. Many are searching to know the will of God. What is the first issue in the will of God?
 - a. God’s will is to strengthen the response of our heart to Him in love. This is more important to Him than our ministry assignment.
 - b. Jesus is after our heart. He wants to wake us up to reveal and impart His love to us. Everything that God does, He does first for love.
 5. Christianity is an on-going encounter of love with a Person. Possessing fierce dedication and making radical choices for righteousness will not keep us steady unless we encounter this love.
 6. It is not enough to be a part of a mission or have vision to change a city or nation. The labor of the vision will make us emotionally weary without the small but consistent stirring of love in our emotions by the Spirit.

D. Great Commandment – greatest calling and lifestyle

1. Loving God has the greatest impact on God’s heart, our heart and the heart of others that we touch.
 - a. It is the greatest calling for our heart and it is the greatest calling in our ministry to others because the fruit lasts forever.
 - b. It is what Jesus esteems as the greatest way to live and it is how He measures the quality of ministry. The greatest call in ministry is to call people to this.
2. Our greatest calling in the grace of God is to move or impact God’s heart.
 - a. We move His heart by every movement of our heart to show love to Him by obedience. It is a radical lifestyle.
 - b. What God wants most and esteems as greatest is the response of love from the human heart. He delights to see us giving Him our time, money and talents only because in giving them we express our love for Him.
 - c. Each time we repent of compromise it moves Him.

- d. We move His heart by sitting before Him and by doing small acts of service for others because of love for Him. (Matt. 10:42; Luke 10:38 – 42; Heb. 6:10)
3. Some are captivated most by getting more people to receive their ministry and to listen to them preach or sing. With better networking, marketing and lighting we can often get a bigger crowd.
4. It is not wrong to use creative wisdom to more effectively communicate through our ministry. However, our greatest satisfaction is to know and feel His love, to love Him and to overflow in love for others. This will have the greatest impact on our heart as our spirit is exhilarated by God's love. The greatest grace we can receive is the anointing to feel God's love and to express it.
5. Loving Jesus has the greatest reward in the Age-to-come and thus, it is the only way to enter into our greatest destiny. We can be one of the greatest people in history simply by living in deep love for God. We might not become the most famous but we can be one of the greatest. (Matt. 5:19)
6. Our greatest strengthening is found in affection-based obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus' affection and responding back in love. It is the most consistent obedience because a lovesick person will endure anything for love. People in love are "untouchable".
7. The anointing to love God is our greatest possession. The reward of love is found in possessing the power to love. No sacrifice is comparable to what He has given us in His love. Anyone can quit but not a person in love. When we are tempted to quit, the obstacle in our path is that we love God.

E. Revelation of the heart of the First and Great Commandment (Eph. 1:17)

1. We need the Spirit of revelation in order to understand the supremacy of the First Commandment. It is the standard of evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - a. God measures life differently than man because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence and time. What will matter to God is whether we grow in love for Him.
 - b. The Scriptures show us clearly what God considers greatest. We must not get our ministry focus on the latest trends, but on God's Word.
2. God is raising up forerunner messengers to call others to define loving God as God's highest purpose. They will make the First Commandment the primary focus of their life and ministry.
3. The church of Ephesus was a great revival center in the early Church. However, they did not sustain freshness in their love for Jesus. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. (Acts 19 – 20; Rev. 2:4)
 - a. Lovers will always outwork the workers. When we work without intimacy, we work as slaves. A heart of a bride is refreshed as she labors.

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- b. Service without the foundation of devotion leads to burnout, disappointment, and wounding. Thus, the service is not sustained over decades.
 4. Satan's priority is to lead us away from cultivating wholehearted love and devotion to Jesus. (2 Cor 11:3, NAS)
 5. We must make a determined decision to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We must set our heart to make love our first priority and have a vision to go deep in God.
 6. It takes focus and effort to go deep in God. To walk in this requires that we must be focused on pursuing it more than gaining things and influence. (Ps. 91:14)

Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:42)

7. Sustaining a fresh walk with God through time is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months. David sustained his passion for God for decades that he referred to as "all" the days of his life.

One thing I have desire of the LORD, that I seek; that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life... (Ps. 27:4)

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Session 3

Loving God Wholeheartedly

A. Biblical definition of loving God

1. God created us to love Him in four spheres of our life – our heart, our soul, our mind and our strength because He loves us this way. It is both our debt and gift to love God in these four ways. (Mark 12:30)
2. What does loving God look like?
 - a. It is much more than sentiment or extravagant expressions in worship services. True love requires heart responses with follow-through action. We should be not content with loving Jesus merely with our mouth speaking about being radically devoted. Our experience of loving God should not be reduced to mere language without real expression in our life according to God's ways.
 - b. There are many definitions of love in our society and culture. We must define loving God in accordance to His heart and Scripture. We must not define loving God by the humanistic culture that "seeks love" without reference to allegiance to Jesus and obedience to His Word. We must renounce all the false paradigms of love that are emerging in the Church today.
 - c. God's definition of love does not involve accepting everyone with tolerance by abandoning His standards. Love is more than romantic notions about being happy in God.
3. Our primary assignment in God's will is to grow in love.
 - a. God measures life differently from man because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence and time. All of God's commands bring with them the promise of His supernatural enabling to obey them.
 - b. We must actively cultivate extravagant devotion to Jesus. This takes time and effort. Love does not automatically grow. It diminishes unless we intentionally cultivate a responsive heart.
 - c. We are not content with the minimum requirement of salvation. We must choose the good part as Mary did. (Luke 10:42)

B. Four measures of loving God

1. Radical Obedience: loving God requires the pursuit of obedience. (John 14:15 – 23)
 - a. Jesus defines loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience. There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His Word. Love requires the wholehearted pursuit of obedience in both our attitudes and actions.
 - b. Jesus defines walking out our love as the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle in Matt. 5 – 7. Denying our lustful desires is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different "assignment" from which we offer

our gift of love to God. Saying “no” to sin gives us an opportunity to express our love to God.

- c. Some give God more time and money in the hope that He will dismiss an area of compromise in their life. What God wants most is our response of love that is manifested in seeking to obey His Word. Jesus wants love from us that allows Him to take total control of our lives. Thus He protects us and glorifies us in His love. This is our place of greatness.
 - d. All of Jesus’ commands are related to love. He commands us to stay near His heart, to seek His face, to choose love over lust, to receive eternal rewards and to be vessels of love to others – by blessing and serving them.
2. Rapt Adoration: loving God includes our adoring trust towards Him. (Rev. 5:9)
- a. Adoration and gratitude to Jesus for His greatness and kindness is essential to love. It is foundational to Paul’s theology of holiness and love.
 - b. With awestruck grateful love we adore Jesus and trust His wisdom, humility and power. He is the most deserving and capable person to rule our life and the whole earth. We often take the wealth of God’s kindness so lightly. This is due to our long association with sin, which deserves God’s wrath. (Rom. 2:4)
 - c. Love grows in us as we are moved by the truth of Jesus’ greatness and by gratitude in seeing the whole story of how He is treating us. The psalmist had an overflowing heart of adoration for the indescribably loveliness of Jesus. (Ps. 45:1-2)
3. Relentless Trust: loving God requires confidence in Jesus’ perfect wisdom in His leadership. (Job 1:21; 13:15; Prov. 3:5 – 6)
- a. True love expresses loyalty and trust to God and His promises instead of yielding to circumstances and the fear of man.
 - b. In the End-Times, there will be a great test for all believers not to be offended with God. (Matt. 24:10). The major conflict will be about defining who Jesus is and how we love Him. We must love and understand God on His terms.
 - c. Love for God is also loyalty to His truth as seen in Jesus. Our love must be expressed in alliance with the Jesus of the Bible. The Holy Spirit will glorify and exalt Jesus by guiding us into all truth about Him. (John 16:13 – 14)
 - d. Three truths about Jesus that offend people:
 - i. His deity and His right to establish absolute standards by which the nations are accountable to Him.
 - ii. The only way of salvation is through Jesus.
 - iii. He possesses the wisdom and love to judge sin in time and eternity.
4. Reckless Abandonment: loving God includes consuming desire and abandonment to Him. (Song 4:16 – 5:8)
- a. Love is not passive. Rather it involves burning desire. To be lovesick for God means we seek to love Jesus more than anything else. Being “wounded with love;”

is to be sick or pained with desire for more of Jesus and to remove all compromise that hinders love for Him.

- b. God is Love. He burns as an all consuming fire of jealousy. He wants to take over our life and to consume us from the inside out by dominating our affections, thoughts and words as He determines our destiny and establishes our eternal greatness and joy. (Exodus 34:14)
- c. The God who has everything wants us because He is love. Love is not tolerance but desire. The God who has everything still wants something. Why? Not because He is needy but because He is the fountain of desire. Desire implies want but not lack. Even though He lacks nothing, God wants the ones He loves.
- d. Jesus will reveal Himself to us as more than our Savior, Healer and Provider but as the jealous Bridegroom God who will not relent in His pursuit of us until He has all our heart.
- e. Jesus beckons us into abandonment, "Take up your cross and follow Me." This is the voice of a Bridegroom who gave all for the sake of love (Eph 5:29 – 32). Jesus defined love as love that lays down one's life for his friends (John 15:13). Jesus loves us with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength and what He wants is a people yoked to Him in this kind of love. The Bridal Paradigm is about abandonment. (Eph 5:29; Ps. 45:10)

C. Four spheres of loving God

1. Love God with all our heart: AFFECTION

- a. The heart speaks of our emotions, affections, longings and the very impulse of desire that effects every decision we make. The heart is the "hidden current" that moves our inner man. Our heart has powerful emotions that paint the way we see everything. Our heart defines our core reality that drives all that we do. (Prov. 4:23)
- b. We can "set" our love or affections on anything that we choose. Our emotions eventually follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. In doing this, we determine the course in which our emotions develop over time. As we change our goals, the Spirit changes our heart. (Ps. 91:14)
- c. Setting our love on God includes removing all that diminishes our affections, such as bitterness, lust and being over stimulated by entertainment or the pursuit of gaining things and influence.
- d. David made a choice to set his heart to love God. We decide the things that eventually form our emotions most. Our decisions by themselves are not enough to change our emotions. Yet, they are an indispensable part of the process of emotional transformation. (Ps. 18:1)
- e. We must not underestimate the power of setting our heart on God. In doing this we put ourselves in the path of the Holy Spirit. We set our heart to love Him by

committing to walk in obedience even when it is costly. The Spirit honors the power of our decisions before imparting love in us. (Ps. 37:4; Rom. 5:5)

- f. The power to choose where we set our hearts is part of the great dignity of the human spirit created in God's image. Angels do not have affections like humans created in God's image.
 - g. We set our heart on loving God by regularly asking for supernatural help to love Jesus. Ask God to pour His love for Jesus into your heart and to direct the reins of your heart into His love. (2 Thes. 3:5)
 - h. No one else can give God all "your love" except you. A unique part of Jesus' inheritance has been entrusted by the Father to you specifically. It is the love that only you can give. We only get one opportunity to do this in a fallen world where love for Jesus is both costly and rare.
 - i. Affection-based obedience is the strongest type of obedience because it flows from experiencing Jesus' affection. It is the most consistent obedience because a lovesick person will endure anything for love. People in love are untouchable. Freedom is found in the yoke of Christ.
2. Love God with all our soul: PERSONALITY
- a. The soul is our personality that expresses the uniqueness of our abilities and desires including the way we talk and walk and what our preferences are.
 - b. Our personality is expressed most dynamically by our speech. What we say enhances or quenches our ability to grow in love. Therefore, we set our heart to express ourselves and to communicate in a way that enhances and not diminishes love. When the Spirit is grieved, we do not receive from Him in the same measure. (Eph. 4:29 – 32; 5:1 – 6)
 - c. Our love can be diminished by the negative fire released in us by wrong speech that affects our inner man. We renounce grumbling and speaking against one another, knowing that doing such things hinders our ability to love God and feel God's love. (Jas 3:6 – 10; 4:10 – 11; 5:8 – 9; 1 Cor. 3:2 – 3, 16 – 18)
3. Love God with all our mind: THOUGHTS
- a. We fill our minds with long and loving meditation on God's Word and resist putting anything in our minds that diminishes love for Jesus and quenches the Spirit.
 - b. To love God with all our mind involves taking time to fill our mind with God's Word and to agree with His Biblical paradigms. This involves rejecting lies about Jesus as our Bridegroom King and Judge. We gain revelation of God's love by meditating on it from God's Word.
 - c. The language of the human spirit is all about images. Our mind is our intellect, understanding, the place of our imagination. As we renew our mind with God's Word, we repaint our internal canvas. We erase and replace wrong thoughts with Godly thoughts.
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- d. Most of our life is centered in our minds because we can never turn it off. Our mind defines so much of who we are and how we love. God's Word equips us to think first and most naturally about God. To love God with all our mind is a powerful possibility.
 - e. Through meditation we can take the reins our mind and write the script of the movie we continually watch within. We cannot shut down the images in our mind but we can direct them. Jesus can become our first thought.
 - f. As our mind is renewed, Jesus becomes our sweet escape from lust, pride and fear as we retreat into His beauty and love. Jesus desires to be our resting place.
4. Love God with all our strength: RESOURCES
- a. We love God by using our resources in partnership with the Spirit in a way to grow in love. We fast in the area of our strengths especially in the 5 activities in Matt. 6:1 – 18.
 - b. These five areas express “*voluntary weakness*” because we invest our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into the hands of the Spirit. Jesus describes five “*grace-releasing activities*” that position us to receive more.
 - i. We serve and give (charitable deeds: giving service and money (Matt. 6:1 – 4, 19 – 21))
 - ii. Pray (Matt. 6:5 – 13)
 - iii. Bless and forgive our adversaries (Matt. 6:14 – 15; 5:44)
 - iv. Fast (Matt.6:16 – 18)
 - c. The normal use of our strengths is to increase our personal comfort, wealth and honor. In other words, by the fasted lifestyle we bring our natural strengths to God as we trust Him to return our strength back to us in a way that enriches us and transforms us with meekness.
 - d. Our devotional lives are the means of appropriating free grace, not of earning it. In these five areas we position our “*cold heart*” before the “*bonfire of God's enabling grace*” so as to receive the Spirit's empowering.

D. Loving God with our ALL

1. We are equally yoked to Jesus not by the size of our love but by the “all” of our love even though our “*all*” is small. He wants to be loved in the way He loves us.
2. A sustained pursuit for 100% obedience is different from attaining it in our life.
 - a. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to attain full obedience in God, the Lord values our journey to grow in love. The pursuit of our heart to love Him moves Him.
 - b. If we do not quit then we win. We do not find our identity in our failure but in the fact that He loves us, in the gift of righteousness and in the cry of our spirit to love God. (2 Cor. 5:12)

3. Power in our life is found in pursuing 100-fold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. When we seek to obey God with all our heart, we are positioning ourselves to live with a vibrant heart. *Pursuing full obedience is the definition of living radically before God.*
4. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God but we do suffer loss in minimizing the “*full gift of our love*” from this life to Jesus.
5. People in love are untouchable. True freedom is found in the yoke of Christ as extravagant lovers of God. We refuse to get trapped in bitterness by those who mistreat us or get caught up in seeking wealth and fame as our primary goal in the Kingdom.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Session 4

Loving God with All Our Soul

A. Loving God with all our heart requires loving Him with our soul

1. God created us to love Him in four spheres of our life which includes our heart, soul (personality), mind and strength because He loves us this way. (Mark 12:30)
2. What it means to love God with our soul or personality? The primary idea is to love God as expressed by living in humility in our attitudes and speech.
 - a. What we say enhances or quenches our ability to love God by the power of God. (Eph. 4:29 – 32; 5:4)
 - b. Our costly choices to walk in humility express love for Him. Embracing humility is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances.
3. Jesus loved us with all His soul as expressed in His humility. Understanding Jesus' humility inspires and instructs us to ask for the Spirit's help to love God in the way He loves us. (Phil. 2:6 – 8)
 - a. Meekness is power and privilege under control. It speaks of restraint in the use of power except to promote love. Meekness is not to be confused with weakness which is the absence of strength.
 - b. The life of the Godhead flows forever from meekness. Jesus put on display the riches of God's humility. (Matt. 11:29; Mark 10:45)
 - c. The Holy Spirit functions as the support ministry within the Godhead. He is fully God yet chooses to work behind the scenes without the desire to be recognized. He is happy in humility. (John 16:13 – 14)
 - d. Jesus' humility is seen in His ultimate goal being fulfilled at the end of the Millennium. (1 Cor. 15:24 – 28)
4. God's humility is expressed in all He does. Love and humility are the same. (Ps. 113:4 – 8)

B. God's definition of love: The humility of Jesus

1. The humility of Jesus made manifest in His incarnation openly displayed His abandonment in loving us. Thus, our abandonment in loving Him is also deeply rooted in humility. (Phil. 2:3 – 9)
 - a. From eternity, Jesus has been in the form of God which means He shared glory with the Father. The pre-existent Christ in the form of God was equal with, but

distinguished from, the Father. Being in the form of God, Jesus eternally possessed all glory and privileges of being God. (John 17:5; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15)

- b. In the incarnation, Jesus now has two natures – being fully God and fully man. Jesus was never ever less than God but lived as if He was never more than a man. He always retained His deity. (1 Tim. 3:16)
2. Jesus refused to enjoy His unique privileges in being God because He was seeking our interests. He did not view the humility required in His incarnation as something that took anything essential from His core identity as a servant filled with love. In it, He denied Himself privileges. He did not deny His core identity but rather expressed the true heart of a servant. (Phil. 2:6)
3. He did not see the incarnation as an injustice, in that He had to lay aside His glory to eternally become a man to make a way to exalt us forever. In the incarnation, He found the opportunity to give us His wealth. (Rev. 3:21)
4. Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity. However, He could not use His divine power for His own ends while on earth and qualify as our High Priest. Jesus was God hidden in the obscurity of humanity. He could not draw on His own omnipresent, omnipotent or omniscient as God. As a Man, He lived dependent on the anointing of the Holy Spirit when doing a miracle. (Heb. 2:17)
5. Jesus is God and man with two distinct natures existing in one person.
 - a. Jesus remained as the head of the universe during His earthly life. He forever is the Creative Word who sustains and holds all things together. (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17)
 - b. Christ emptied himself and made Himself poor. He possessed all the majesty of deity, performed all its functions and enjoyed all its prerogatives. Yet, He was vulnerable to pain, frustration and embarrassment. (Phil. 2:7; 2 Cor. 8:9)
6. God's core identity is love expressed in humility. Jesus' main identity is not in His power and uniqueness.
 - a. Satan sought to tempt Jesus with this because it is what moved Satan. If Jesus' core identity was in His power then the incarnation would have been robbery or a denial of what was in His heart.
 - b. Jesus did not insist on His rights to live free from rejection, pain and humiliation.
7. It was precisely because Jesus was in the form of God that He sought to give and serve. What expresses His glory best is Jesus' love and humility. (Luke 6:35)
 - a. He did not see it unbecoming of His Godly nature to wash the feet of people. It expressed His true God-like self.
 - b. He saw lowly tasks as an opportunity to show who He was as a humble God. To serve is the very core of who God is.
 - c. The love of Jesus is not self-absorbed but absorbed in the good of others. He is not preoccupied with His own preeminence but consumed with the good of others.

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8. Jesus made himself of no reputation.
 - a. He embraced shame and disgrace in coming as a servant. This was a new dimension for Jesus who came as a servant without any rights to honor.
 - b. Jesus concealed His divine glory. This is the most profound and unimaginable while maintaining the full power of God. Jesus hid His glory under the veil of humanity.
 9. Jesus embraced a life of weakness, rejection, homelessness, poverty, weariness, shame and pain.
 10. Jesus did not come as the God of "jasper glory" but as man who expressed this glory. (Rev. 4:3)
 - a. He wanted to identify with man and not just to dazzle us. He could not do this without becoming man.
 - b. We are by nature preoccupied with our own image and consumed with being recognized for our good traits. Jesus embraces a position where everyone totally underestimated Him and His abilities.
 - c. When they saw Him they saw nothing to distinguish Him. He was totally ordinary in every sense.
 11. Jesus embraced death on the cross. (Phil 2:8)
 - a. In His eternal form, He was immune to death. Now He would be its victim.
 - b. He embraced a type of death that involved indescribable physical pain and emotional shame. Dying on the cross was viewed as being under God's curse. (Gal. 3:10, 13)
 12. God is love. The core definition of love is to give. Love by definition is what is given not what is gained. We are the reward of His suffering. His passion for God and people are first to Him. (1 John 4:16 – 21)
 13. Jesus existed eternally as a servant. He did not become something that He was not. (John 13:3 – 17)
 - a. Jesus comes as servant - whether coming to Earth for the first time to die, or coming back for the second time to be King.
 - b. The eternal government of God is servanthood. When He takes the scroll He pledges the leadership of the earth forever to servant-rulers who will perpetually wash the feet of others.
 - c. When Jesus returns at the Second Coming it will be all about love. He will gird Himself to serve His creation forever. As the reigning King, He loves to use His power to enrich the ones He loves. (Luke 12:37)
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C. Love for Jesus: humility is expressed through our speech

1. When Paul applies his exhortation in Philippians 2 for the people at the Church in Philippi to walk in humility, he focuses on their need to speak with humility. This is one of the most practical applications of loving Jesus. We must not hide our complaining under the guise of just being honest. (Phil. 2:12 – 16)
2. Love grows in us as we are moved by Jesus' humility as we see the story of how He treats us. (Jas 1:19-21)
3. To love God with all our soul speaks of *loving Him with our personality in deep humility*.
 - a. This is expressed most dynamically by our speech. We set our heart to express ourselves and to communicate in a way that enhances - not diminishes - love. When the Spirit is grieved, we do not receive from Him in the same measure. (Eph. 4:29 – 32; 5:1 – 6)
 - b. What we say enhances or quenches our ability to love Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:29 – 32; 5:1 – 6)
4. Love is diminished by the fire released in wrong speech that affects our inner man. We renounce grumbling and speaking against one another, knowing that it will hinder our ability to love Jesus. (Jas 3:6 – 8; Matt. 12:34)

D. Showing love for Jesus in humility when we are mistreated

1. In the case of our being mistreated or enduring disappointments, we must interpret them according to truth as seen through Christ's eyes. (1 Peter 2:21 – 23)
 - a. Offense from disappointment can paralyze our spiritual life when we blame and accuse others. This hinders our walk with God.
 - b. The past attacks our confidence and as a result, our love for God as well as our destiny in God. We must face disappointment in God's way in order to be free to grow in love for God.
2. We must entrust our enemies into the hands of Jesus' power, wisdom and loving leadership. To neglect this is to be diminished in our ability to respond to Jesus in love. (Ps. 31:5; Rom. 12:19)
4. We forget our noble sacrifices that may tempt us to pride or feel we deserve better treatment from God in our ministry and circumstances. These impulses undermine our gratitude for His goodness. We were once lost in the state of darkness. Jesus pointed out the danger of relating to Him on the basis of how much we feel we deserve instead of with gratitude. (Eph. 2:1 – 12; Luke 17:7 – 10)

Session 5

Loving God with All Our Mind

A. Introduction

1. Loving God with all our heart requires loving Him with our mind. (Mark 12:30)
 - a. God created us to love Him in four spheres of our life which includes our heart (i.e. affections), soul (i.e. personality), mind (i.e. thoughts) and strength (i.e. resources) because He loves us this way.
 - b. We can only love God with all our heart by seeking to love Him with our mind, soul and strength in practical ways.
2. Loving God with our mind includes meditation on the Word as we cry for the Spirit of revelation of God's heart and ways that we may come into more and more agreement with who He is and how He views us and leads us.
3. Loving God includes choosing to forget or remember. It takes a process that we must be committed to by continually and deliberately feeding our mind on truth. (Phil. 3:13; Jude 17; John 8:32)
 - a. Paul's heart came alive with loving fascination with God by meditating on Jesus and His plans. (Rom. 11:33)
 - b. Moses cried out to see God's glory to understand God and His ways. (Ex. 33:13 – 18; Ps. 103:5 – 7)
4. Setting our mind on loving God includes removing the wrong mindset that diminishes our love such as shame, bitterness, lust and ingratitude and filling our minds with truth. (Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:2)

B. Understand the power and vastness of the human mind

1. God created us after His own image and likeness. One aspect of this is seen in the vastness of the human mind that will be seen as eternity unfolds. It is like a mysterious internal universe with a memory that is more powerful than a computer with trillions of gigabytes. (Gen. 1:26)
2. The language of the mind is images. Our memory is a vast reservoir of near endless visuals. Imagination was given to us by God to visualize His truth and to interact with Him in a deep and continual way throughout eternity.
3. Our minds are constantly conducting conversations.. The Lord created us this way for ceaseless dialogue with Him. So much of our life is lived in our minds because we can never turn our minds off. It is the continual reality and stream of our life. When our body sleeps our mind stays active through night.

4. Our mind defines so much of who we are and how we love. We can express ourselves in many ways but still only a very small percentage of what we think can be expressed and known. (Rom. 12:2; Titus 3:5; Eph. 4:17 – 23)
5. To love God with all our mind is a supernatural possibility. Through meditation we can take the reins our mind and write the script of the movie that we can continually watch within. We cannot shut down the images in our mind but we can redirect them.
6. As our mind is renewed, the Spirit releases supernatural activity in our mind called life and peace. In this, Jesus becomes our “first thought”, our “holy daydream” or our “sweet escape” from lust, pride and fear as we retreat into His beauty and love. Jesus desires to be our “resting place” or “getaway”. The one we think about when we take a deep breath or while driving alone. (Rom. 8:6)
7. To seek to love God with all our mind is glorious. If the mind is not engaging in loving God but seeking to be filled with “truth,” then this vast power and reality within is very dangerous to us.

C. The close relationship of knowing truth and loving God

1. To love God with all our mind involves taking time to fill our mind with God’s Word and to agree with the biblical paradigms of God. This involves refusing lies about Jesus and the truth and by refusing to put anything in our minds that diminishes love for Jesus and quenches the Spirit. (2 Cor. 10:5)
2. Agreement with God is the way in which the Spirit awakens love in us. He who knows much about God loves God more and more. Knowing truth and loving God are deeply connected.
3. Love itself is a deep type of knowledge. Loving God is continually refueled by encountering truth over and over.
 - a. Jesus is the Truth so meditating on truth is essential to all growth in love.
 - b. Our thinking is the fuel for which love or anguish arises in us. Truth stirs powerful emotions of love for God in us by being set aflame by the Holy Spirit as joy instead of pain.
 - c. Thinking compels us and opens our emotions to supernatural influences whether by God or of demons.
4. What we put in our mind and what we do in our actions forms our memory.
 - a. Both the Holy Spirit and demons use our memory to form our desires and emotional make up. Both good and evil begin with thoughts. Evil thinking separates us from the Spirit and good thinking unifies us.
 - b. When we think on what the Spirit thinks, then love is awakened in us and our emotions become alive with holy desire. The Spirit uses memory to release the sweetness of God in us.

D. Loving God with all our mind: viewing our past according to truth

1. Our ability to love God is related to how we view our past – negatively or positively. Negative experiences leave many in bitterness and with wrong paradigms of God and themselves.
2. Discerning the truth about God's goodness in our past produces gratitude which is the foundation of loving God. How we feel is dramatically related to how we view our past. It either locks or unlocks our heart in reference to receiving love from God and returning it.
3. Our capacity to love is shaped by what we think about our past. Many are trapped and controlled by their past. The Spirit wants to reveal the places we are chained to our past by bitterness, shame and wrong paradigms of God that subtly accuse Him. The Spirit wants to reveal where we have misinterpreted crisis events and disappointments with lies instead of the truth.
4. Our thinking about the past can affect us positively by remembering the truth about God's goodness toward us in forgiving, delivering and providing for us. This awakens gratitude.
5. What God did in the past gives us insight and faith for what He will do in our future. Where is the past? It exists in our mind. Nothing negative is just forgotten. It must be confessed, forgiven and healed if it is to lose its negative power over us. (Deut. 2:7)
6. The Judgment Seat of Christ is all about evaluating the past. (1 Cor. 3:11 – 15)
 - a. Over 99.9% of our life is in the past in the form of decisions we have made to love God and His rewards for them.
 - b. This is not only true now but our decisions in eternity will continually form who we are in God in the eternal present.
 - c. Thus, a part of loving God will always be in how we process our past.
7. Satan's plan is to cause the negative events of our past to remain alive in our memory as a destructive force and the positive realities of God's goodness to be forgotten. The past is not simply a harmless past if it remains alive in our minds in a way contrary to the mind of Christ.
8. In the case of our sin, the process of being unchained from the past requires acknowledging it and declaring war on it by repentance.
 - a. What would have been different if Adam had acknowledged his sin instead of blaming Eve, and what if Eve would have accepted her role in sinning instead of blaming the devil? (Gen. 3:1 – 7)
 - b. We must insist on holding the truth of receiving free forgiveness and His affection. (Rev. 12:10 – 11)
 - d. We cannot just forget the past because the past has a voice. We must triumph over it by the truth.

9. Satan uses scenes from our past to accuse us with partial truths.
 - a. His only ground for accusation is un-confessed sin. Our prison is made up of things from our past. The construction material of the prison Satan wants us in lies in our failures and bitterness.
 - b. The accusation of the past must be silenced by submitting it to Jesus' work on the cross. Many close their eyes and live in a museum and prison of their past failures and defeats.
10. In the case of our being mistreated or enduring disappointments, we must interpret them according to truth as seen through Christ's eyes.
 - a. Offense from disappointment can paralyze our spiritual life. It results in us blaming and accusing, such that it hinders our walk with God.
 - b. The past attacks our confidence and therefore, our love for God as well as our destiny in God. We must face disappointment God's way in order to be free to grow in love for God.
 - c. We must entrust our enemies into the hands of Jesus' power as well as His wise and loving leadership. (Ps. 31:5; Rom. 12:19)

E. Loving God with all our mind: viewing the future according to truth

1. We love Jesus today related to thinking right things about our future.
 - a. What we believe about our future and the commitments we make to it dynamically influences our capacity to love God. (Lam. 1:9)
 - b. We live carelessly with our time without a clear picture of what we want to be in the future. Without a vision or clear life plan, the people perish or live without restraint in their time. (Prov. 29:18)
2. Our commitments define who we are. We have an identity crisis without clearly defined commitments to the future. People embrace discipline much easier with a clear vision of what their future can be in God. What we believe about where we are going forms how we live today.
3. Our capacity to love is related to where we have been but also where we are going. Hope is to be anchored in the future. What we commit ourselves to in the future affects who we are now, as well as what we do.
4. Our vision for the future includes setting our mind on goals for our spiritual development, not just on our future careers and ministries.
 - a. People with a vision to grow spiritually use their time and money differently. The lack of vision for our spiritual attainment hurts us in the present tense.
 - b. To be ambivalent about the future has negative effects, leading people to passivity and lethargy.
 - c. What are your future goals for your spiritual development? Some have no concrete goals. They lack a clear picture in their mind as to what they are determined to be.

- d. What are you determined to be in God? What do you believe about what you can be spiritually? Who are the examples from history that you feed your mind on for inspiration?
- e. Paul prayed that the saints be filled with the knowledge of God's will for them because he knew the power of a vision and commitment to their future. (Col. 1:9 – 10; 4:12; Eph. 1:17 – 18)
- f. Our specific action plan to attain these spiritual goals includes time in the Word and prayer with regular fasting.

F. The call to forget and remember: understanding the balance

1. Paul taught us to both forget our past failures that lead to guilt and past dedication or our accomplishments that can lead to us to pride or lack of gratitude. (Phil. 3:4 – 13)
2. God forgets our sin because of the cross. We must forget our failures after we repent and refuse to let shame damage our ability to love God. (Heb. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:17 – 21)
 - a. Guilt is the sense of responsibility we feel when we sin. Do not let guilt become shame.
 - b. Guilt says our actions are bad. Shame says that we are bad.
3. We must forget our noble sacrifices that may tempt us to pride or to feel we deserve better treatment from God in our ministry and circumstances, thus undermining our gratitude for His goodness. We were once lost in the state of darkness. Jesus pointed out the danger of relating to Him on the basis of how much we feel we deserve instead looking at Him with gratitude. (Eph. 2:1 – 12; Luke 17:7 – 10)
4. We are to remember God's promises to us and wonderful works on our behalf (1 Chron. 16:12; Deut. 32:7; Ps. 107:8)

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

Session 6

Loving God with All Our Strength

A. Loving God with all our heart requires loving Him with our Strength

1. God created us to love Him in four spheres of our life which includes our heart, soul, mind and strength because He loves us this way. (Mark 12:30)
2. What it means to love God with our strength?
 - a. We love Him with all our strength as we pursue Him in fasting. Fasting involves investing our natural strength in our pursuit of loving Jesus more.
 - b. In Matt. 6:1 – 23, Jesus described five aspects of the fasted lifestyle related to our natural strengths. We secretly serve and give (6:1 – 4, 19 – 21), pray (6:5 – 13), bless adversaries (6:14 – 15; 5:44) and fast (6:16 – 8).
3. Fasting both expresses our love and positions us to receive the Spirit's power to love Him more. Our capacity to love Jesus is enhanced by engaging with the Spirit through the fasted lifestyle. An aspect of fasting is not to gain influence with men but to receive power to fully love God.
3. The anointing to love God is our greatest possession. The greatest reward of love is found in possessing the power to love. It is the supernatural ability to feel love for Jesus. The “joy of lovesickness” with loyal obedience frees us from burn-out.
4. The grace of fasting is God's gift to us and is one practical way to posture our heart to experience God's power to love Jesus.
 - a. Fasting is not an optional part of NT Christianity.
 - b. God gives more to us according to our hunger for Him. Fasting helps our hunger grow faster. (Matt. 5:6)

B. Positioning our heart to receive Grace: Voluntary Weakness

1. Fasting is a call to embrace voluntarily weakness in order to experience more of God's presence. Matt. 6:1 – 23 points us to six expressions of “voluntary weakness” in which we invest our natural strengths (i.e. food, time, money, words, energy and influence) in our relationship with Jesus.
2. We embrace weakness in our natural resources to position ourselves to receive strength from the Spirit. God made fasting and praying so simple, yet so powerful. (2 Cor. 12:7 – 9)
 - a. Paul was not referring to moral weakness due to failure but voluntarily weakness due to Godly choices.

- b. The normal use of our strength is to increase our own comfort, wealth and honor. By the fasted lifestyle we bring our natural strengths to God as we express our love to Him and trust Him to “return” our strength back to us in a way that transforms our heart and blesses our circumstances.
 - c. Paul received a divine revelation that embracing voluntarily weakness was the doorway into God’s power. Many desire to walk in “*perfected power*” yet refuse the pathway of weakness. (1 Cor. 1:27 – 29)
3. A lifestyle of voluntarily weakness includes prayer, fasting, living simply, joyfully embracing persecution and reproach for Jesus’ sake. *The Kingdom paradox is that He releases spiritual power in the context of natural weakness.*

C. Five Expressions of the Fasted Lifestyle (Matt. 6:1 – 23)

1. Jesus taught on five specific ways to embrace voluntary weakness. He embraced these in His life as did the greatest men of God in history such as Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and Paul.
2. The *five expressions of the fasted lifestyle include giving, serving, praying, blessing our enemies and fasting from food.* Each is a form of fasting in that we are to embrace weakness, declaring to God that we derive our strength from Him and freely give it back to Him.
3. The fasted lifestyle is *a long-term commitment to these five expressions.*
 - a. *GIVING MONEY: our financial strength* (Matt. 6:3 – 4, 19 – 24)
 - i. Charitable deeds refer to acts of servanthood and giving money as two expressions of fasting.
 - ii. Our money is a significant part of our financial and social strength. When we give money away to build God’s Kingdom, our resource base becomes weaker by fasting in our financial strength. This expresses love for Jesus and others as we trust God to multiply the money we give away.
 - iii. Jesus urges us all to use money now to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. In the process, our hearts grow in love for Jesus. It is impossible to love God and money. (Matt 6:19 – 24)
 - iv. The widow who gave her last two mites showed much more love for God than those who gave much more money but at less sacrifice. Giving money requires emotional dynamics that force us to wrestle with covetousness and fear of lack in demonstrating our love for Jesus. (Luke 21:1 – 4)
 - v. David set his heart to live radically by loving God with his money. (2 Sam. 24:24)
 - vi. We give money or our financial strength to express love to Jesus. Love is not minimized because we believe that God promises to give us more money. (Mal. 3:7 – 10)

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- vii. When Israel held back their money they expressed their lack of love for the Father. (Mal. 1:6 – 10)
- b. SERVING PEOPLE: our strength in time and energy (Matt. 6:1 – 2)
- i. Serving others is another aspect involved in charitable deeds. In serving, we invest our time and energy in God's purpose in others that could have been used to further our own interests.
 - ii. We show love to Jesus by serving the saints and in serving others we come face to face with the Servant of all. He wants us to encounter Him and this is where that encounter takes place. (Heb. 6:10)
- c. PRAYING: our strength in time and emotions (Matt. 6:5 – 13)
- i. Prayer and reading the Word is a form of weakness that fasts time and emotions. When we invest time in prayer, we pass up opportunities to network, socialize or be entertained.
 - ii. In prayer, we fast our emotional energy, as we pour ourselves out interceding for God's blessing on others. In fasting time, we must entrust ourselves to the Lord for our promotion.
 - iii. Instead of using all of our time to seek our comfort and success, we pray to an invisible God who delays His response to us as we seek Him and release blessing on others. We position our cold heart before the fire of God's grace to receive the Spirit's empowering.
 - iv. The exhortation Jesus gave most to help the Church prepare for the End-Times is to "watch" or develop a heart connection with the Spirit in prayer. If we have grace for prayer, we will have courage and direction. (Matt. 24:36, 42 – 44, 50; 25:13; Mark 13:33 – 38; Luke 21:36; Rev. 3:3; 16:15)
- d. FORGIVENESS and BLESSING OUR ENEMIES: our words and reputation (Mat. 6:14)
- i. Forgiving and then blessing our enemies expresses fasting related to words and relationships. In this, we fast our words and reputation by refusing to come to our own defense. A good reputation is a significant part of our life strength and resource used to influence others.
 - ii. Instead of making full use of our words to defend and promote ourselves, the Lord calls us to restrain our speech. To actively bless our enemies means refraining from words to always expose our enemy as we defend our position and gain the sympathy and support of others.
 - iii. An "enemy" in the most general sense is one who blocks our goals. Enemies are those who hinder our plans and cause us to lose honor, time, money and relationships. This loss is painful.
 - iv. In this we show love to Jesus by obeying Him and gaining our identity and comfort from God. When we bless our enemies, we "fast" some of the social strength we gain from fighting back.
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- v. We fast from defending our reputation, and trust the Lord to fight for us when we are silent. In silence, we commit ourselves to God to answer for us. This is the most difficult form of fasting. (1 Pet. 2:23)
- e. FASTING FOOD: our strength physically and mentally (Matt. 6:17 – 18)
 - i. Abstaining from food is more about physical and mental weakness than hunger. When we give our physical strength to God we miss opportunities to build our personal success. (Ps. 109:24).
 - ii. Overindulging in legitimate physical appetites quenches the Spirit's life in us. Lawful, God-given pleasures will dull our spirits if they are allowed to reach a point of excess. It is wrong to let any pleasure become more important to us than God.
 - iii. Some are hindered by the fear of fasting. The fear of fasting is worse than the fasting itself. This requires that we deny ourselves of various legitimate pleasures that are not sinful in themselves, but neither do they enhance our life in the Spirit. Most over-indulge in natural, permissible pleasures of recreation, abundant food, comfort and money.

D. The internal rewards of fasting: the anointing to love Jesus more

1. The Father rewards fasting in different ways:
 - a. Internal as our hearts encounter Him.
 - b. External as our circumstances are blessed.
 - c. Eternal as fasting impacts our eternal rewards.
2. Fasting tenderizes and sensitizes our hearts over time to receive grace to love Jesus more. We love Him with new focus, consistency and intensity with a new zeal for righteousness.
3. John the Baptist was the greatest man ever born. His greatness was not because of miracles in his ministry but his obedience and intimacy cultivated in a fasted lifestyle. (Matt. 11:11; John 10:41)
4. As we engage in a fasted lifestyle, our problems do not all just disappear. Rather, they come into divine perspective as we begin to be preoccupied with loving Jesus more than our problems.
5. As the Spirit shows us the big picture of God and eternity, we become increasingly freed from being preoccupied with our circumstances.
6. Fasting with prayer positions us to receive deliverance from various sinful addictions. God has given this grace to us for the pulling down of demonic strongholds in our mind. (2 Cor. 10:4 – 5)
 - a. Common sins that beset people include bondage to pornography, immorality, anger, alcohol, drugs, and different eating disorders.

- b. Isaiah exhorts us to fast to “loose the bands of wickedness”, that we might be freed from the sinful behavior we are addicted to. (Isa. 58:6)
- c. Strongholds are demonically energized; they are established on territory Satan has been given rights to hold, either through our sin or that of the generations before us.

E. Conclusion

1. Fasting is a basic Christian lifestyle! It is Christianity 101. Some see fasting as radical and therefore as optional. There is no such thing as NT Christianity without regular fasting.
2. It is vital for all believers to live a fasted lifestyle.

IHOP – One Thing Ministries

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Session 7

Growing in Wholehearted Love

A. Introduction

1. The *Shema Israel*: Shema is the Hebrew word for “hear”. God called Israel to hear His heart. (Deut. 6:4 – 5)
2. What they were to hear was that loving God is His first priority and the greatest way to live. (Matt. 22:37)
3. The Shema reveals the “why” behind the “what” of creation and redemption.
 - a. God’s purpose is to provide an eternal companion for Jesus who would be equally yoked to Him in love.
 - b. Jesus’ inheritance is the mandatory obedience of all creation and the voluntary love of a people who He fully possesses. As a King, Jesus will be obeyed but as a Bridegroom, He will be loved. (Ps. 2:8)

B. Perfecting our love for God

1. The main objective of a believer’s life is to be able to present to Jesus, at the end of our life the testimony of a life with complete obedience and offering perfect love to Jesus. We seek to offer perfected love to Jesus who is worthy of the sacrifices we make to obey Him. (1 John 4:12 – 17; Rev. 5:12)
2. To be poor in spirit in Matt. 5:3 means that we know that our spirit is deficient in obedience or love.
 - a. On the Last Day, the fire of Jesus’ eyes (Rev. 19:12) will reveal or unveil the condition of our inner man or the measure of love that we developed. The radiance or condition of our inner man will be apparent.
 - b. Some will have confidence as the resplendent condition of their love that is made manifest. Others will be ashamed at their lack of the development of their love from this life. Though this is not an issue pertaining to salvation, but they will be ashamed of their half-hearted love as they stand before Jesus, one who is Incarnate Love Himself. (1 John 2:26 – 28)
4. Jesus called us to live perfect by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us. We are to have a sustained reach in our spirit to live in comprehensive obedience (i.e. thoughts, words and deeds). Receiving more give us the capacity to feel, receive and experience more in God. (Matt. 5:48)

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5. Walking in perfect obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the Age-to-come. A sustained “reach” for 100% obedience is different than “attaining” to it in life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to “reach” for full obedience with confidence that God enjoys us. The pursuit of “*complete or comprehensive*” obedience includes:
 - a. Bridling our speech. (Jas 3:2; Eph. 4:29 – 5:4)
 - b. Disciplining our physical appetites. (1 Cor. 9:27)
 - c. Managing our time (i.e. for service and prayer with the Word) and money (i.e. to increase the Kingdom rather than our own comfort and honor).
 - d. Making a covenant with our eyes to refuse to look on anything that stirs up lust. (Job 31:1)
 - e. Engage in communing prayer with the indwelling Spirit. (2 Cor. 13:14)
 6. Power in our life is found in pursuing 100-fold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. The 98% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2% positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
 7. Scripture presents two aspects of being complete before God. (Col.2:10)
 - a. We are instantly made complete in Christ in our legal position – Justification.
 - b. We progressively become “complete in obedience” in our living condition before God – Sanctification.
 - c. There are different terms for the same truth:
 - i. Being complete in obedience (2 Cor. 13:9, 11; Phil. 1:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 13:20 – 21; Jas. 1:4)
 - ii. Perfect (Matt. 5:48; 19:21; John 17:23; Gal. 3:3; Eph. 4:13. Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 3:10; Jas. 2:22; 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 3:2)
 - iii. Mature (Phil. 3:15)
 - iv. Blameless (Luke 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:6 – 8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thes. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 10; 5:5 – 7; 6:14; 2 Peter 3:14)
 - v. Without spot (Eph 5:27)
 - vi. Worthy (2 Thes. 1:5 – 12; Luke 21:34 – 36; 20:35 – 36; Col. 1:9 – 10; Matt. 10:37 – 38; 22:8; Rev 3:4 – 5; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 2:12)
 - vii. Stand (Luke 21:36; 1 Cor. 10:13; 16:13; Eph. 6:10 – 14; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 3:8. Rev. 6:17)
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8. Paul's main objective in his life was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day that his obedience was complete and that his love was complete. The prize is all that is involved in offering to Jesus a long term testimony of complete obedience and receiving Jesus' response back in eternal rewards. Paul's paradigm of his life was one long race to obtain this prize. (1 Cor. 9:24 – 27)
9. Towards the end of Paul's life, he had not yet attained it. The prize of the upward call of God is to receive the highest dimension of one's calling in the Age-to-come. (2 Thes. 1:11; Phil. 3:12 – 14)
 - a. Paul had not won the prize of the crown of righteousness until his lifelong race was completed. (2 Tim. 4:8)
 - b. The supreme value of living with a sustained testimony of "complete love" was understood. (2 Cor. 13:9; Col. 1:28 – 9; 4:12; Jas 1:3 – 4)
10. The Lord values our journey to grow in love. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him. If you do not quit then you win. We do not find our identity in our failure but in the fact that He loves us, in the gift of righteousness and in the cry of our spirit to love God. (2 Cor. 5:12)

C. Four stages of growing in love

1. Love by God – Receiving increased revelation of the love that God has for us. (Eph. 3:18 – 19)
 - a. The foundational truth that equips us to love God is to know and feel His affection for us. (1 John 4:19)
 - b. God loves us in the way that "God loves God". Jesus feels the same intensity of love for us that the Father feels for Him. Likewise, the Father feels the same intensity of love for us as He feels for Jesus. This is the ultimate revelation of our worth. This truth gives us the right to stand before God with confidence as one of "His favorites". (John 15:9; 17:23)
 - c. There three kinds of obedience:
 - i. Affection-based obedience is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus' affection for us and giving it back to Him. It is the strongest, deepest and most consistent obedience. Why? A lovesick person will endure anything for love. (Gen. 29:20)
 - ii. Duty-based obedience is our commitment to obedience even if we do not feel God's presence. God's Word requires that we obey God without feeling inspired to do so.
 - iii. Fear-based obedience is obedience motivated by the fear of negative consequences. It is biblical to appeal to shame and fear to motivate people. Scripture does have many do's and don'ts such as do not commit adultery, steal, slander, etc. We know that God will use His rod because He loves us too much to leave us in compromise. (Heb. 12:5 – 11)

2. Loving God – Receiving the Father’s love for Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 17:26)
 - a. It takes “*God to love God*”. The anointing and supernatural ability to receive God’s love and then to return it back to Him is the greatest gift that the Spirit imparts to our heart. (Rom. 5:5)
 - b. We were created with a longing to be wholehearted and abandoned and thus, to know the joy of lovesickness. There is nothing more satisfying than having the power to give the deepest affection of our heart to God and to be loyal in love.
 - c. We soar in the joy of holy lovesickness. We long to possess the power to be abandoned instead of being stuck in boredom, passivity, disloyalty and compromise which leave us broken and discontent.
3. Loving ourselves in the grace of God. (Matt. 22:39)
 - a. We will never love our neighbor more than we love ourselves in the grace of God. By loving ourselves, it is referred to knowing what we look like to God or knowing who we are in Christ as His inheritance. (Eph. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:17)
 - b. This also comes along with valuing and even rejoicing in who God made us to be physically and in our personality and gifting. To love who we are in the grace of God is to be in agreement with God and holiness, which is very different from loving ourselves in a fleshly and selfish way. (Ps. 139:13 – 17)
 - c. We must not secretly wish we were someone else as if God made a mistake with us. This is to charge God with error. As we get our eyes off of others (i.e. envy) and off our failures (i.e. despising ourselves) and put them on His grace then we will love who God made us.
4. Loving others in the grace of God. (Matt. 22:39)
 - a. Loving others is the visible measurement of our invisible love for God. (1 John 4:7 – 13, 20 – 21)
 - b. Only by being energized by loving Jesus and ourselves are we able to consistently overflow in love for other. (1 John 13:34 – 35)

D. Conclusion

People who love Jesus will love others much more. It is impossible to love Jesus and not love people more. The greatest anointing of the Spirit is to walk in the two great commandments by loving Jesus with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

Session 8

Cultivating Confidence in Receiving the Love of God

A. Introduction

1. The foundational truth that equips us to love God is to know and feel His affection for us. For it takes “*God to love God*”. Therefore, we need to receive the love of God. (1 John 4:19)
2. We are incapable of loving God by our own strength. We need the supernatural impartation and the anointing of God to receive God’s love and then to return it back to Him. This is the greatest gift that the Spirit imparts to our heart. (John 17:26)
3. Apostle John exhorted us to behold the manner of love the Father has for us. This is practical because we love God more as we first understood His affections for us. (1 John 3:1)
4. The key to loving God is to receive and to encounter the love of God. There are two keys in receiving the love of God:
 - a. Enlarging our heart and tenderizing our spirit. (Prov. 4:23)
 - b. Cultivating confidence in receiving the love of God. (Eph. 3:17 – 19)

B. Foundational Premise 1: Enlarging our heart and tenderizing our spirit

1. It is never an issue for God to bless us with His love. However, our ability to receive the love of God depends on the condition of our heart and our capacity to receive from God.
2. Therefore, our goal is to tenderize our spirit so that we can receive from God and to enlarge our heart so that we have the capacity to receive a greater measure of love from God.
3. In Matt 5:21 – 48, Jesus warns us of six hindrances that will quench our spirit and harden our hearts. We are to resist these toxins of sin in our lives. Jesus gave six practical areas in which we must wage war against:
 - a. Anger – spirit of murder (Matt. 5:21 – 26)
 - b. Adultery – spirit of immorality (Matt. 5:27 – 30)
 - c. Swearing – spirit of dishonesty (Matt. 5:33 – 37)
 - d. Disregarding the sanctity of marriage – spirit of treachery (Mal. 2:13 – 17) and disloyalty that disregards the sanctity of marriage (Matt. 5:31 – 32)

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- d. False commitments – spirit of manipulation (Matt. 5:33 – 37) To use “spin” to present ourselves in a false way about our commitments in the past and the present (by the lack of follow through)
 - e. Demanding justice – spirit of pride or bitterness that insists on our personal rights (Matt. 5:38 – 41)
 - f. Impulse to retaliate – spirit of revenge or animosity in relationships (Matt. 5:42 – 47)
4. In Matt. 6:1 – 18, Jesus describes five “grace-releasing activities” in our devotional life that position our hearts to receive more from God.
- a. Our heart receives more grace as we:
 - i. Consistently and secretly serve and give, as well as do charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (Matt. 6:1 – 4, 19 – 21)
 - ii. Pray (Matt. 6:5 – 13)
 - iii. Bless adversaries and forgive (Matt. 6:14 – 15)
 - iv. Fast (Matt. 6:16 – 18)
 - b. These five areas are expressions of “voluntary weakness”. In other words, by the fasted lifestyle we bring our natural strengths to God as we trust Him to “return” our strength back to us in a way that enriches our personal spheres of responsibility and transforms us with meekness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
 - c. Our devotional lives are the means of appropriating free grace, not of earning it. In these five areas we position our “cold heart” before the “bonfire of God’s enabling grace” so as to receive the Spirit’s empowering. In this way, we enlarge our capacities to receive the love of God.
 - d. Spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, fasting, meditation on the Word, etc) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace. These activities do not earn us God’s favor.
 - e. Spiritual disciplines do not earn us God’s favor but gives us the opportunity to show the value of our relationship with Him. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for a more intimate relationship with Him.

C. Foundational Premise 2: Confidence in approaching in God

- 1. Having confidence in approaching God is the key in receiving the love of God and to enjoy intimacy with Him in the long run. (Eph. 3:12; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19 – 22)
- 2. This requires living in the knowledge of Who God is, the reality of our “belovedness” before God along with the confidence that God sees us as genuine lovers of God. For all of the redeemed are Beloved of God.

3. Our confidence in approaching God is based on our understanding of two truths:
 - a. Understand Who God is – how we view God.
 - b. Understand God's heart for people – knowing how God view us.
4. We must fill and renew our minds with these truths and allow it to transform our heart so that we may have confidence to run to God in moments of spiritual victory and defeat, strength and weakness.
5. One of the foundational realities of David's life was his dynamic understanding that he was totally forgiven, delighted in and dear to God, even in his weakness. David understood that his spiritual immaturity was not perceived by God as rebellion. God sees the heart of His people. (1 Sam. 16:7)
6. David had an unusual ability to fully receive the free mercy and goodness of God because he had confidence in God's mercy even in times of his weakness and failure. For David knows Who God is and understood how God viewed him even in his weakness.

D. Understand Who God is – how we view God

1. The present crisis in the Body of Christ stems from an incorrect view and paradigm of God!
 - a. Instead of viewing Him as a God who is full of tenderness, gladness and desire, we imagine a God who is mostly mad and mostly sad.
 - b. Most Christians have vague and contradictory ideas about Who God is and His personality. This will affect our confidence in approaching God and therefore, many people never experience the fullness of the love of God and enjoy the pleasure of intimacy with Him.
 - c. A.W. Tozer said, *"The decline knowledge of the Holy has brought on our troubles. A rediscovery of the majesty of God will go a long way toward curing them. It is impossible to keep moral practices sound & our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we should bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more clearly as He is."*
2. Traditionally, the Church of Jesus Christ understands the redemption, the power and the work of God. But we have very little understanding of who He is and how He feels (i.e. His heart & emotion). Understanding the heart and emotion of God will help us to understand the person of God.
3. David understands the heart and emotion of God towards people. This gives him confidence in approaching God. Likewise, we must yearn to know how God feels and how the passions of His heart move. As we discover the same truth as the "man after God's heart," we will find ourselves living the way David lived.

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4. The five-fold revelation of God that empowers our heart with confidence before God.
- a. The God of **TENDERNESS** (Jeremiah 9:24; Luke 15:11 – 24)
 - i. Jeremiah tells us that He is a God that delights in showing us lovingkindness.
 - ii. We can never bring anything to the bargaining table to motivate Him to deal kindly with us, for He is fully motivated within Himself to be merciful and kind!
 - iii. God's tenderness towards us far surpasses our understanding. The truth is that He forgives us instantly when we ask for forgiveness. He knows that we are weak and is not surprised by our failings.
 - iv. God knows our weakness and frailty. He sees the "yes" in the hearts of His people. He enjoys us even in our weakness.
 - v. Many of us have more confidence in our own dedication and commitment to the LORD. However, the strength of our commitment and obedience is in the drawing power of Jesus' tender leadership. (Jeremiah 30:21)

"Do not put confidence in our ability to follow Jesus; but put confidence in His ability to lead us!" Jack Deere

- b. The God of **GLADNESS** (Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 15:4 – 7)
 - i. Zephaniah 3:17 tells us that God smiles with delight and enjoyment when He gazes on each of us. Many are accustomed to relating to God as mostly sad or mostly mad. But He is a happy God!
 - ii. In Luke 15:4 – 7, Jesus describes what God's emotions are toward those who lost their way in weakness. He portrays the Father going after the lost sheep until He finds them. When He does, He lays him on the shoulders and carries him home, rejoicing with great gladness. We need to recognize that God is not a distant and frustrated Father.
 - iii. He is the God of gladness and a happy God of infinite joy. Psalm 30:5 says that "His anger will only last a brief moment but His favor last a life time..." Our relationship with Him is based on the gladness of God's heart towards us.
 - c. The God of **BURNING DESIRE** (Song 4:1 – 11, 6:4 – 9)
 - i. Our Bridegroom God is one who burns with fiery affection for us. This is different from His tenderness and gladness towards us.
 - ii. The fact is deeply rooted in Scripture that God is full of intense desire and burning love for each of us. He longs to be near to each of us personally, in the way friends and lovers want to be together.
 - iii. The God of affection – this is the foundational truth that gives us true meaning in this vast and complex world in which we find ourselves in. This is what makes us great – that the eternal One, the uncreated God pursues us with passionate desire.
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- d. The God of **JEALOUS ANGER** (Revelation 19:2, 6 – 7)
- i. As a Bridegroom God preparing His people for the great Wedding Day, the focus of God's jealous anger is directed in judgment of 2 things:
 - Those who gave themselves over to IMMORALITY.
 - Those who PERSECUTED His people.
 - ii. The principle underlying His jealous anger is this: whatever harms His Bride's preparation as His eternal companion will be judged! The essence of God's judgment is His commitment to remove all that hinders wholehearted love in our lives for Him.
 - iii. God manifests His jealousy in our lives as divine discipline. This is not divine rejection for God discipline us because He delights in us (Proverbs 3:12). This flows out of His passion for us, for He will not allow anything to continue in our lives that hinder loves for Him.
- e. The God of **FASCINATING BEAUTY** (Psalm 16:11, 27:4; Isaiah 4:2; Revelation 4)
- i. Our Bridegroom God possesses a beauty that transcends any other in the created realm. He is far above all other magnificent things and pleasures.
 - ii. Through the Scriptures and by His revelation to our spirits, we can encounter the beauty of the LORD.
 - iii. His beauty fascinates and captivates our hearts for He woos and wows us with His magnificence.
 - iv. This fascination with the God of beauty is easily the greatest source of pleasure of heaven and earth. David understood this truth and testified of it in Psalm 16:11.
 - v. For gazing at the beauty of the LORD has become the single greatest attribute of his life. (Ps. 27:4)

E. Understand God's heart about people

1. God has *different emotions related to how people respond to Him*. Some live confused without knowing whether God is mad, sad or glad at them. We do not want to think God is mad when He is delighting over us, thus living in condemnation. Nor do we want to think He delights in us if He is grieved because of our compromise, thus living in presumption.
2. We receive God's righteousness and favor because of what Jesus did not because of what we do. Even though salvation is a gift, it is still necessary to sincerely repent to receive it. Repentance is a change of the attitude that turns from sin and to God according to the "*light of understanding*" that we have at each season in our spiritual journey. (2 Cor. 5:17 – 21)

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3. Foundational principle in understanding God's heart about people is that God is able to differentiate between sincerity and hypocrisy, as well as between spiritual immaturity and rebellion.
 - a. Spiritual immaturity is not the same as rebellion. At times they look the same outwardly yet they come from very different heart responses. A sincere yet immature believer shows their sincerity by quickly repenting and renewing their war against the sin they had just stumbled in.
 - b. A genuine lover of God has a willing spirit because they sincerely seek to obey Him. Our obedience and love for God are sincere even while they are weak and flawed. Weak love is not false love. The sincere intention to pursue full obedience is different from the attainment of it. (Matt. 26:41)
 4. David seemed to commit more serious sins than Saul, but God's favor continued with David. Why?
 - a. When David sinned his heart was wounded because he grieved God's heart. He cared more about his relationship with God than the consequences of getting caught by man.
 - b. Saul gave an outward show of repentance, even while he planned to continue in rebellion. (1 Sam. 15:22 – 23)
 5. A hypocrite is not someone who fails, but one who says one thing and does not seek to obey it.
 6. Seven principles of how God feels toward people
 - a. God loves and blesses unbelievers
 - i. God loves unbelievers even when they rebel against Him and have no regard for Him. (John 3:16)
 - ii. God blesses evil people. We are not to mistake His blessings on them as His approval of them. (Matt. 5:45)
 - b. God enjoys sincere yet immature believers
 - i. The Father's affection for Jesus is the measure of His affection for us. Jesus gave this revelation of His love to help the apostles recover from betraying Him that night. This is the ultimate statement of our worth. It gives all believers confidence to be "God's favorite". (Matt. 26:41; John 15:9)
 - ii. We are lovely to God even in our weakness. He is pleased with us from the moment we repent and reset the intention of our heart to obey. This work of God in us is the beginning of victory. (Song 1:5)
 - iii. One reason Jesus enjoys us is because He has more gladness than any man in history. Joy fills His personality. Many think of God as being mostly mad or sad when they relate to Him. (Heb. 1:9)
 - iv. God rejoices over His people as they repent. This is long before we attain mature obedience. (Luke 15:4 – 5)
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- v. God enjoys His prodigal children even in their weakness. His enjoyment is seen in immediately giving them the favor of the best robes. This is before they mature in their areas of failure. (Luke 15:18 – 22)
 - vi. God delights in showing us mercy (Jer. 9:24). He wants us to run to Him instead of from Him. (Jer. 9:24; Mic. 7:18)
 - vii. We can stand with confidence in His favor and have a new beginning by “pushing delete” after we sincerely repent. This is different from “pushing delete” on the process of emotional healing. (Lam. 3:22 – 23)
- c. God's love is not the same as His full approval
- i. God enjoying us does not mean that He approves all that we do or overlooks areas needing transformation. He loves us even when we need rebuking because of a failure to repent in a certain area. (Rev. 3:19)
 - ii. God smiles over our life in a general sense, while He deals with particular sins in us. Several areas of immaturity do not define our entire relationship with God. We are defined by God's passion for us, receiving the gift of righteousness, and by our heart cry to obey Jesus.
 - iii. God is longsuffering to those He loves. He woos us to repent in areas of failure in our life. (1 Cor. 13:4 – 7; Rom. 2:4)
 - iv. We must not confuse His patience with His approval. He has patience for a season even when we refuse to fully respond to Him. Jesus gave Jezebel and her disciples in Thyatira time to repent. (Rev. 2:21)
- d. God's discipline is not the same as His rejection of us
- i. God's correction is not rejection. It is proof of His love. He delights in those He disciplines. (Prov. 3:12)
 - ii. He corrects the areas that He disapproves of so that He might remove all that hinders love in us. (Heb. 12:10)
 - iii. God does not discipline us to the degree we deserve nor changes the way He feels about us. (Ps. 103:10 – 11)
 - iv. To be disciplined means God cares and has not given up on us. It is a terrible thing to “get away with” sin long-term because that means God is giving that person over to their sin. (Rom. 1:24; 1 Cor. 11:32)
- e. God is grieved over the persistent sin of His people
- i. Jesus spoke of vomiting lukewarm believers out of His mouth. He does not despise them, nor has He lost interest in them or cast them away. He is grieved or heart sick with concern over them and what they were losing. He feels like vomiting over their condition. (Rev. 3:16 – 17; Eph. 4:30)
 - ii. God feels the pain of those He disciplines and continues to consider them as His dearly beloved. (Jer. 12:7)
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- iii. God will manifest His jealousy over us as He requires our wholehearted love and obedience. He zealously insists on that which deepens our relationship with Him and results in our greatness. (Jas. 4:5)
 - iv. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our heart, we are not loved less by God but we do suffer loss in several ways. We minimize our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, the spirit of revelation, God's power, fellowship with God and others, and receiving eternal rewards.
- f. Spiritual disciplines do not earn us God's favor
- i. Spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, fasting, meditation, etc.) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace. These activities do not earn us God's favor. The power is in the fire of God's presence and not in our cold hearts that are positioned before it.
 - ii. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for relationship with Him not on how much He loves us. (Matt. 5:6)
 - iii. God honors the value we put on the relationship by giving us more according to our spiritual hunger, but He does not love us more. He will not enjoy an obedient believer more in a billion years than He does now. (Mal. 3:6).
- g. Spiritual maturity allows us to receive more but not be loved more
- i. God loves us all yet He entrusts a greater measure of power to the mature. He determines the measure of power that He has planned for each to walk in. This measure is different for each believer. Our obedience positions us to walk in whatever that full measure is. (Matt. 25:15)
 - ii. People with greater power in ministry or influence in business are not loved more by God. He will entrust more to us as we mature because it will not damage us nor others. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us by faith. (Acts 3:11 – 12; Gal. 3:5)
 - iii. They are not earned by our discipline. However, our spiritual maturity provides added protection from the counterattack of Satan on those operating in the anointing. Four things increase as we experience more of the Holy Spirit's power:
 - God's zeal
 - Satan's rage
 - Man's demands
 - Our emotional capacities
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Session 9

The Second Commandment — Loving Others

A. Introduction

1. People who love Jesus will love others much more. It is impossible to love Jesus and not love people more.
2. *The greatest anointing of the Spirit is to walk in the two great commandments* by loving Jesus with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. To put the Second Commandment first is to make our ministry an idol in our heart. (Matt. 22:37 – 40)
3. Jesus answered the question about which was the great commandment by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind.*” Jesus added 3 new ideas.
 - a. Loving God is the first and greatest thing.
 - b. Loving people is like loving God.
 - c. The purpose of God as seen in Scripture hangs or originates from these commandments.
4. There are four stages of love
 - a. *Receiving revelation of God’s love for us*: Knowing how God feels about us as our Father and Bridegroom is the foundational truth that equips us to love God. (1 John 4:19; Eph. 3:18 – 19))
 - b. *Receiving God’s love for Jesus*: It takes God’s power to love God. (John 17:26; Rom. 5:5)
 - c. *Loving ourselves* in the grace of God: We love our neighbor as we love ourselves in the grace of God by knowing who we are in Christ along with rejoicing in who God made us – personality, gifting, calling, physical features, etc. Agreeing with God about our value is different from loving ourselves in selfish way. As we get our eyes off of others and off our failures, we value and even love who God made us. (Ps. 139:13 – 17; 2 Cor. 5:17)
 - d. *Loving others*: This is the greatest work of the Spirit and is the ultimate proof of His work in the human heart. As we love God and ourselves, we overflow in love for others. It is the visible measurement of our invisible love for God. (John 13:34 – 35; 1 John 3:18 – 19)

B. To love our neighbor (Matt. 22:39)

1. Love for others like loving God flows from regularly encountering God's love for us. (1 John 4:19)
2. To walk in genuine love as defined by God is much more than sentimentalism. It takes seeking to love Jesus with "all" our heart, mind, soul and strength.
3. To walk in love requires the Spirit's power to energize us by regularly having our emotions stirred and strengthened by the subtle impressions of the Spirit. Christianity is an on-going encounter of love with a Person. (Rom. 5:5)
4. Only by loving Jesus and ourselves are we able to consistently overflow in love for others. We are energized to sustain compassion by the gratitude and joy of being loved by God.
 - a. We must love God first and ourselves to properly love our neighbor.
 - b. We must love ourselves first to have power and energy to love others.
 - c. We can only love our neighbor in the overflow of loving God. For only in being loved by God and in loving God can we properly love others.
5. This demanding commandment requires a comprehensive re-ordering of how we think and process life. We by nature are self-consumed so it takes the power of the Spirit to walk this out.
6. Loving God and loving others are bound up as one.
 - a. We value others in the overflow of seeing how valuable God is and how valuable we are to God.
 - b. The Second Commandment seems to stand by itself in some passages because its connection to the First Commandment is assumed.
7. We are not called to love others instead of ourselves but "as" ourselves by using the same standard in measuring love for others as we use for ourselves.
 - a. We are to seek our neighbors' benefit "as" or "with the same focus and energy" as that we seek for ourselves.
 - b. For example, we are to seek for more money and blessing so we can give more. In this God's generosity is manifest to us and through us.
8. To love others as ourselves is to value their longing for significance, acceptance and success as being as important as our own. Because all people are created in God's image they deserve to receive love from us that we receive from God.
9. We are not to dismiss loving ourselves but we enhance it by loving others with new depth.
 - a. We will experience God's tender compassion as we show it to others. This radical command touches the core of our being.
 - b. This command exposes a deep root system of sin in us. To seek to love people as ourselves shows us our sin and spiritual lack.

C. Love is the source and goal of the Law and prophets

1. Jesus emphasizes the importance and the connection of these two Commandments by saying, “*On these two commandments hang the Law and prophets*”. They are connected to each other and God’s eternal purposes. (Matt. 22:40)
2. God’s purposes as declared in the Law and Prophets depend or hang on love. Love is the source behind all of God’s eternal purposes.
3. Our love for God and the goal of the Scripture are “fulfilled” when we love others. Love gives practical expression of what the teachings in the Law and the Prophets really mean. (Rom. 13:8 – 10)
4. Paul gives us more insight into love by exhorting us to offer it as from a pure heart – our motive to enrich others without seeking for personal benefit, from a good conscience that is free from condemnation and sincere faith that stands steady in difficult circumstances. (1 Tim. 1:5)
5. Love is both the goal and source of the Law and Prophets. In other words, all of God’s purposes in the Scripture hang on these two great commandments. (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:8 – 10)
 - a. We must understand the “Golden Rule” in its context in the Sermon on the Mount which calls to an all consuming relationship with God.
 - b. In this passage, Jesus taught us the Father gives good things to those who ask in prayer. Next, He said “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*”. In other words, this commandment is given in context to the call to prayer.
 - c. The call to walk in love is given in context of God releasing His supernatural provision to us by prayer.
6. The foundation of this commandment is a revelation of the Father’s love and a prayer life based on trusting His leadership. An important aspect in loving people is seen in embracing a lifestyle of fasting and prayer so that we are prepared to release more of the power of the Spirit to them. The life of John the Baptist, Elijah, Paul and the apostles testifies to this.
7. Love is rightly focused on meeting people’s physical needs with food and clothing. However, since people are eternal spiritual beings they need more than having their physical needs meet.
8. Love requires more than sentimentalism, but a relationship to Jesus that is based on God’s terms.
 - a. Allegiance to Jesus provides us the standard and source to be properly motivated and energized in love.
 - b. One core issue at the end-of-the-age will be in how love is defined. We must define love on God’s terms, not by the humanistic culture that “seeks love” without reference to obedience to God’s Word.
 - c. The true definition of love and good works is only found in allegiance to Jesus.

9. God uses love to awaken the human heart to truth about Jesus which meets their ultimate eternal need.
 - a. Love draws people to truth, providing opportunities for their greater eternal need to be met in Jesus.
 - b. Secular humanism is content to help people without meeting their deeper spiritual need.
 - c. We love God as we seek to enrich others on Jesus' terms.

D. The supreme value of love

1. The supreme value of love can only be understood when it is set in context to the eternal realm of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul earlier emphasized that all believers will give an account of their life and ministry to God (Rom. 14:10 – 12; 2 Co. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:10 – 15)
2. Without love, everything we say, every gift we have and every sacrifice we made count for nothing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (1 Cor. 13:1 – 3)
3. Paul gives three-fold descriptions of love in 1 Cor. 13:4 – 8, 13:
 - a. The characteristics of love which is the eternal nature of God. (1 Cor. 13:4 – 7)
 - i. Paul gives us the essence of love as being longsuffering which does not judge harshly and is kind. (1 Cor. 13:4a)
 - ii. Paul defines how love does not act by using 8 negatives and how love does act in using 5 positives. (1 Cor. 13:4b – 7)
 - b. The superiority of love is seen in its permanence in eternity. (1 Cor. 13:8)
 - i. Love never fails because every movement of our heart in love is remembered and rewarded by God forever at the Judgment Seat of Christ, whether it is received by people or not.
 - ii. No investment of love is forgotten, wasted or lost in God's sight. (Heb. 6:10)
 - c. Love is the greatest. (1 Cor. 13:13)
 - i. Faith – agreement with God's Word – is the way to release the gifts of the Spirit. Love is the purpose for them.
 - ii. Faith is *HOW* the gifts function. Love is *WHY* they function. Hope stabilizes us.
 - iii. We must be strong in faith, anchored in hope and to walk in love.

Session 10

Restoration of the First and Great Commandment

A. The Mysteries of the Gospel (Romans 16:25 – 26)

1. There are mysteries in the Gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ. By His grace, the LORD will release and reveal such mysteries to His people, the Church of Jesus Christ.
2. These mysteries of the Gospel are not “new truths” but they are truths that have been hidden. At the right time and season, the Holy Spirit will reveal it to the people of God.
3. Therefore, we need to take heed to what the Spirit is saying to the Church at all times. (Revelation 2 – 3)
4. Currently, the Holy Spirit is (at the least) revealing and emphasizing 2 mysteries of the Gospel:
 - a. The destiny and the call of the nation of Israel. (Romans 11:25)
 - b. The restoration of the First and Great Commandment. (Ephesians 5:32)
5. The Holy Spirit is calling the Body of Christ around the world to return to its First Love! The voice of the Holy Spirit will get louder in 5 – 10 years!

B. The First and the Greatest Commandment

1. Matthew 22:37 – 39:

Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul & with all your mind.” This is the FIRST & the GREAT Commandment. And the second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (NKJV)

2. At the moment, it is probably one of the important priorities in the Church of Jesus Christ around the world. But it is certainly nowhere close to being the first priority in the Body of Christ at large. In most Churches, we have re-arranged the priorities.
3. What are the First and the Second Commandment all about?
 - a. The First Commandment is about our IDENTITY in Christ.
 - b. The Second Commandment is about our ROLE in Christ.

One is about our POSITION and the other is about our CALLING.
4. The restoration of the First Commandment is not just about the observance of certain laws, duties or regulations. It is about the restoration of our IDENTITY.
 - a. Our identity as a Bride of Christ.

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- b. Our identity as a LOVER of God.
 - c. Our INTIMATE walk with God.
5. Current condition of most Christians: BORED, BURNOUT, DISCONTENTED, STRUGGLING with SIN – because the Church has not discovered the power of intimacy with God. (2 Timothy 3:1 – 5)

C. The Heartbeat of Jesus

1. John 17:26 describes the very heartbeat of Jesus. In this verse, Jesus prays for the Fulfillment of the First Commandment.
2. John 17 is the high priestly prayer where Jesus prays for the every believer and the Church before the end of His ministry on earth. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God is praying the will of God for the Church.
3. The high priestly prayer is probably the greatest and most important intercessory prayer recorded in the Bible. It is also the longest intercessory prayers recorded in the Bible.
4. We need to realize that Jesus Christ is perfectly sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, everything that Jesus prayed for is not from the flesh and cannot fail. Everything that the LORD asked for, especially in this prayer, will come to pass.
5. In John 17:26, Jesus prays
“I have made you known to them, & will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for Me may be in them & that I myself may be in them.” (NIV)
6. Essentially, Jesus is saying this to God the Father,
“You say that there would be people who would love Me as You love Me, Father.”
7. In essence, Jesus is asking the Father to supernaturally impart the Father’s love for the Son of God into us; therefore, creating voluntary lovers who are so ravished with love that it can only be compared to the way the Father loves Christ.
8. Before the Second Coming of Christ, the First Commandment will dominate and prevail in the hearts of God’s people around the world. The Father’s holy zeal for His Son will fill the hearts of God’s people.

D. Restoration of Our Identity – a LOVER of God

1. Restoring the First Commandment is not just about observing certain duties. It is about the restoration of our true IDENTITY in Christ!
2. Hosea 2:16,

“In that day”, declares the LORD, “you will call Me ‘my Husband’; you will no longer call Me ‘my Master.’” (NIV)
3. Hosea speaks of a time at the end of the age when the Holy Spirit will restore the relationship between God and His people, and they will speak of their relationship with the LORD in an entirely different way.
4. They will call Him their HUSBAND instead of their MASTER
 - a. The servant attitude of workers will be replaced with the love and energy of lovers whose passion and joy are to please the One who is the Object of their love.
 - b. We will not be pre-occupied by duty but we will experience more than a servant-Master relationship; we will work and serve even more diligently and we will actually obey God in a more intense way.
 - c. Most importantly, we will call Him our Husband because we will see ourselves as His Bride.
5. Restoration of the First Commandment is going to be the next move of the work of the Holy Spirit – *the emergence of the Bride of Christ!*
6. Between 1950s to the early 1990s, the Holy Spirit restored the 5-fold ministries back to the Church of Jesus Christ. From the early 1990s to early 2000s, it is the era of the Saints’ Movement – Ephesians 4:11 – 13.

E. Working Lovers, not Loving Workers

1. Being lovers is our IDENTITY in Christ – It is WHO we are!
 - a. *WHO we are is the LOVER!*
 - b. *WHAT we do is the WORK!*
2. God wants us to be a LOVERS and as a result of that, a working-lover!
 - a. We are the lovers of God who happen to work, not workers of God who struggle to love Him.
 - b. God wants us to be something – BEING, before He wants us to do something.
 - c. In a fallen world, we want to do something in order to be someone. With God, it is exactly the opposite.
 - d. God wants us to be firstly, RELATIONALLY oriented, and secondly, achievement oriented. The Great Commission is very important to God and we are to fulfill it. However, it is important that what we do must flow out of who we are!

3. However, the world totally evaluates us differently. “Who we are” is determined by what we have accomplished, our status, our wealth, our talent, our ministry, our anointing, etc.
 - a. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us live from the self-centered motivation of trying to be something and seeking to achieve more.
 - b. With minds that are not renewed, we work to feel important and to appear significant in the eyes of others.
 - c. All these will never satisfy our inner desires. Instead, it will lead us to striving.
4. Ask yourself a dreadfully honest question: What really gives you significance and fulfillment?
5. We are NOT firstly, the warriors of God! We are firstly, the BRIDE of Christ! We are first, LOVERS, and then we do the acts of war for God!
6. When we are relationally oriented first, we do not work in ministry because of a need to feel successful. We already feel successful because of our relationship with Jesus. Then we launch out and do the work of the Great Commission from a foundation of success.
7. But if we work because we are trying to achieve success, a sense of significance or importance, we will burn out quickly through added temptation, pressure and strife.
8. Principle of “Martha and Mary”
 - a. In Luke 10:38 – 42, Martha was not wrong because she wanted to be a servant. However, her priorities were upside down and her work “distracted” her from being a lover (v.40).
 - b. Martha was probably doing much more that was right than wrong. Unlike Martha, many people are neither lovers nor servants of God. Many Christians are lukewarm and are consumed with self. It is good to be a worker of God!
 - c. The issue with Martha was not so much that she is a worker of God. It is more with the fact that she has gotten her priority upside down.

F. The anointing of the First Commandment

1. When the First Commandment is seen as a task or as a sacrifice, the secondary rewards often become primary to us.
2. In other words, our main concern becomes how much anointing is on our ministry, how much money we have, the condition of our health, how successful we are in our career, the number of deep and loyal friendships we have. These are not unimportant. In many cases, these are genuine needs.

3. However, all the above-mentioned rewards become secondary when Jesus is our magnificent obsession, because our highest level of purpose and satisfaction is fulfilled.
4. Then we become powerful and fearless in the grace of God when the primary focus of love for which we were created begins to be fulfilled. This is the anointing of the First Commandment.
5. From there, we will carry our love as our reward with us wherever we go, even when we are going through wilderness.
6. The anointing and benefits of the First Commandment:
 - a. *Reduces Striving*
 - When the greatest reward in our lives is not found in God (Genesis 15:1), we will find our significance in other areas like ministry.
 - When the performance of ministry becomes a sense of significant to us, we will begin to strive.
 - However, if we realize that our greatest significance is being the lover of God and God loves us, we will cease striving!
 - b. *Reduces Burnout*
 - Many Christians burn out quickly in their work of service for God because their service to God is not an outflow of the First Commandment.
 - Unfortunately, their performance in ministry has become of form of measurement of who they are in Christ.
 - As a result of that, discouragement, despair, stress, boredom and frustration in ministry will inevitably set into our lives.
 - Living by love and finding strength - God's embrace will revolutionize our Christian walk and ministry. People who are in love quit a lot lesser than people who are not in love. (Genesis 29:20)
 - c. *Reduces Temptation*
 - Happy and satisfied people sin less.
 - Much of the sin in the Body of Christ is a response to boredom, pain and need for comfort.
 - Many people get into sin because certain areas of their needs are not fulfilled. So they reach out for immediate comfort in status, financial gain or wrong expressions of sexuality.
 - When we find our fulfillment in the love of God, we will sin less.

G. Conclusion

1. Not only is the First Commandment being neglected by the Body of Christ, it is also being attacked by Satan.
2. 2 Corinthians 11:3 says,
“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” (NIV)
3. Satan does not want us to have an intimate relationship with the LORD. His strategy is to sidetrack and distract us from the simplicity of undistracted love and devotion to our LORD!
4. Satan does not want us to have an intimate walk with the LORD, because we become powerful and fearless in the grace of God when we walk in intimate relationship with our LORD.
5. However, the Bible says in Ephesians 5:27 that our LORD Jesus Christ will restore the Church to her rightful position as the Bride of Christ – *“...a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (NKJV)*

Session 11

The Call to be Radical

A. Being a radical Christian

1. We should seek to live in a radical way before God. But what does it mean to live radically?
 - a. Jesus defined this in the Sermon on the Mount by calling us to live perfect lives by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us. (Matt. 5:48)
 - b. We are to have a sustained reach in our spirit to live in comprehensive obedience. Walking perfect in obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the age-to-come.
2. The pursuit of complete obedience includes:
 - a. Bridling our speech. (Jas 3:2; Eph. 4:29 – 5:4)
 - b. Disciplining our physical appetites (1 Cor. 9:27)
 - c. Managing our time for service and prayer with the Word. (Matt. 6:19 – 21)
 - d. Using money to increase the Kingdom beyond our comfort and honor. (Matt. 6:19 – 21)
 - e. Making a covenant with our eyes to refuse to look on anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1) as we engage in communing prayer with the indwelling Spirit. (Job 31:1; 2 Cor. 13:14).
3. To live in perfect or complete obedience is defined by the 8 beatitudes. We are poor in spirit as we see our serious dilemma in seeking perfect obedience. We then mourn so as to be desperate enough to pursue it regardless of the cost. (Matt. 5:3 – 12, 48)
4. Power in our life is found in pursuing 100% obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. The 99% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 1% positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
5. A sustained reach for 100% obedience is different than attaining “sinless perfection” in this life.
 - a. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to obey with confidence that God enjoys us.
 - b. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life we are not loved less by God but we do suffer loss in minimizing the “full gift of our love” from this life to Jesus on the last day.

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- c. Different terms for the same truth of being complete in obedience:
 - i. Perfect (Matt. 5:48; 19:21; John 17:23; Gal. 3:3; Eph. 4:13. Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 3:10; Jas. 2:22; 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 3:2)
 - ii. Mature (Phil. 3:15)
 - iii. Blameless (Luke 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:6 – 8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thes. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 10; 5:5 – 7; 6:14; 2 Pet. 3:14)
 - vi. Without spot (Eph 5:27)
 - v. Worthy (2 Thes. 1:5 – 12; Luke 21:34 – 36; 20:35 – 36; Col. 1:9 -10; Matt. 10:37 – 38; 22:8; Rev 3:4 – 5; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 2:12)
 - vi. Stand (Luke 21:36; 1 Cor. 10:13; 16:13; Eph. 6:10 – 14; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 3:8; Rev. 6:17).
 6. Scripture presents two aspects of being complete before God:
 - a. Justification – legally, we are instantly made complete in Christ.
 - b. Sanctification – we progressively become “complete in obedience” in our living condition before God.
 7. From God’s point of view, *the main objective in our life* is to be able to present the testimony to Jesus at the end of our life that *our obedience was complete* and *our love for Jesus was made perfect*. (Matt. 5:48; 1 John 4:17 – 18)
 - a. Enoch received the testimony that his life responses were pleasing to God. Abraham, Daniel and David received this testimony. (Dan. 12:13; 1 Chr. 28:4; Heb. 11:5)
 - b. Our primary calling is to live in a way that expresses love to God by comprehensive obedience. (2 Thes. 1:10 – 11)
 - c. In other words, to establish a history in living in deep agreement with the Spirit so as to give Jesus a gift of our love on the last day. This is the inheritance that Jesus died for. (Eph. 1:18)
 8. *Paul’s main objective in his life was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day* that his obedience was complete - or his love - was complete. Paul’s paradigm of his life was one long race to obtain this prize. Our race is against darkness and not against others. (1 Cor. 9:24 – 27)
 - a. Paul had not won the prize of the crown of righteousness until his life-long race was completed. (2 Tim. 4:8)
 - b. Towards the end of Paul’s life, he had not yet attained it. The prize of the upward call of God is to receive the highest dimension of one’s calling in the Age-to-come. (Pl. 3:12 – 14; 2 Thes. 1:11).
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9. We are to ask the Lord for insight into areas where we lack complete dedication to Him. We ask the Lord to shock us now with insight into our lack of dedication instead of at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We sit before the Lord like Mary of Bethany to worship, to receive revelation of His beauty, to intercede for others and to gain insight into what we lack in our dedication. (Jas 1:3 – 5; Matt. 19:20 – 21)
10. David set his heart to live radically by pursuing full obedience in all the days of his life. (Ps. 101:1 – 6)

B. Eight keys in pursuing radical Christianity

1. *Energized by intimacy*: Lifestyle of encountering God. Christianity is an on-going encounter of love with a Person. The labor will make us emotionally weary without the consistent stirring of love in our emotions by the Spirit. Stirred emotions in love are very powerful.
2. *Sustained in difficulty*: It is not laziness that retreats from difficulty and hard work.
3. *Maintained in secret*: It is not about gaining fame in ministry but living before an audience of One. It is not about the size of our ministry impact on others.
4. *Expressed in the mundane*: It is more than the pursuit of novelty to escape boredom. It is more than good music at prayer meetings or expressing ourselves with energy in a worship service.
5. *Anchored in eternity*: With confidence of eternal reward. (Heb. 11:6)
6. *Enriched in community*: We are strongest, safest and happiest when we pursue God together.
7. *Stands for truth*: It courageously embraces truth and the stigma of standing for what men reject.
8. *Sustaining long term*: It is what we do for decades, not something unusual we do a few months. Daniel sustained his prayer life with passion for decades – from about age 15 to 82 years old, 605-539 BC almost 70 years. (Dan. 6:10)

C. Five practical ways in pursuing our wholehearted love for Jesus

1. *Determination*
 - a. We must make a determined decision to love God. Our response to His love starts as a choice to have a heart of affectionate obedience. We regularly re-align our heart by intentionally renewing our vision to make loving Him our first priority and to go deep in God. (Ps. 91:14)
 - b. We must choose the good part. No one can choose it for us. Ask yourself, “*Why not me?*” Mary, David and John leaned on Jesus’ heart, or set their hearts to love and be near Him. (Luke 10:42; Ps. 18:1; John 21:20)

2. Revelation

- a. The revelation of God's love equips our heart to love Jesus. We love God with all our heart only as we see that He loves us with all His heart. He empowers us to love by revealing His love to us. (1 John 4:19)
- b. We gain revelation of God's love by meditating on it from God's Word. We position ourselves to receive from His heart by feeding on His Word. (Heb. 4:12)
- c. We can behold how the Father feels about us by meditating on the Word. (1 John 3:1)

3. Personal Prayer Time

We must ask the Spirit to pour love and revelation into our hearts. (Phil. 1:9; Eph. 3:18 – 19)

4. Confession

We confess, "I'm loved by God and I am a lover of God therefore I am successful". (John 21:7; Ps. 18:19)

5. Fellowship

- a. We receive much of God's love in serving and sharing and in receiving it from others. God's love is only seen in fullness when the whole Body functions together. (1 John 1:7)
- b. Part of our inheritance and healing is in the hands of others who reveal and release God's love to us. (Jas 5:16)

D. Conclusion

1. We must have a sustained vision to go deep in God. It takes focus and effort to go deep in God. Our soul prospers as we grow in the anointing to love. To walk in this, we must be focused on pursuing it more than gaining things and influence. (3 John 2)
2. People seeking to extravagantly love Jesus ask, "What is the most that God will empower me to give to Him?" We are not content with the minimum requirement of salvation.
3. Satan's priority is to lead us astray from cultivating wholehearted love and devotion to Jesus. (2 Cor 11:3, NAS)
4. Sustaining a fresh walk with God through decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months.
 - a. David sustained his passion for God for decades that he referred to as "all" the days of his life. (Ps. 27:4)
 - b. Daniel sustained his prayer life with passion for decades – from about age 16 to 82 years old). (Dan. 6:10)

About IHOP – One Thing Ministries

The Heart of our Vision

*“John the Baptist said...the friend of the Bridegroom...rejoices because of the Bridegroom’s voice.”
(John 3:29)*

“Anna...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day...and she spoke of Jesus to all...” (Luke 2:37 – 38)

“Pray that the Lord of the Harvest would send out laborers into His Harvest... therefore go to all nations and make disciples.” (Matthew 9:38; 28:19)

“...for My House shall be called a House of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7)

Our Mission and Mandate

At the International House of Prayer – One Thing Ministries, we are committed to Prayer with Worship, the Prophetic and the Great Commission.

We embrace and seek to live out the following four heart standards (embodied in the acronym “IHOP”), in order to be a people who will partner with God in these Last Days:

- **Intercession:** a people of prayer, expressed corporately through night and day prayer and worship;
- **Holiness:** a people who have set ourselves apart for intimacy with God, and who live out the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle;
- **Offering:** a people who give extravagantly to God for the advancement of His Kingdom, and who live a fasted lifestyle (ie. living simply for ourselves);
- **Prophetic:** a people who stand boldly in faith, move in the power of God and have confidence in His provision, protection and direction.

As a **missions base**, we seek to equip and send missionaries as dedicated intercessors and evangelists with a forerunner spirit who will labour to see revival and a great harvest all over Asia.

The **heart of our missions base** is 24/7 worship and prayer; thus, we seek to establish a 24/7 House of Prayer in Singapore – a perpetual sacred assembly gathering corporately to fast and pray in the spirit of the Tabernacle of David.

Two historical figures from the Bible who inspire us are Anna, the first evangelist and forerunner in the New Testament, and King David from the Old Testament. Anna prayed and fasted for over sixty years before Jesus’ first coming (Luke 2:37), and King David organized and paid 4,000 musicians and 288 singers to worship God night and day (1 Chron. 23:1 – 25:31).

Our **mandate** is to train believers, from this place of night and day prayer, to love Jesus and people wholeheartedly as they go forth to preach the Word, heal the sick, serve the poor, plant Houses of Prayer and proclaim the return of Jesus across the earth.

THE CALL AND INVITATION TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

My heart burns as I invite you to partner in the vision that the LORD gave us to equip people from all over the world to live lives overflowing with passion for Jesus and compassion for people. John the Baptist described himself as a “friend of the Bridegroom” as he prepared the people for the first coming of the LORD. Today, the Holy Spirit is raising up “friends of the Bridegroom” type ministries like John, with the “forerunner spirit” to prepare His Bride for Jesus’ Second Coming.

After being a pastor for more than 15 years, my ministry has changed significantly. I now devote all my energy to establish a ministry that embraces fervent intercessory prayer and worship with daily fasting as a foundation for effective outreach and world evangelization. I deeply believe that unceasing intercession, worship and fasting are the vital keys to the completion of the Great Commission.

One Thing Ministries is committed to Prayer (i.e. intercession, worship, healing, prophecy, etc.), Fasting (i.e. covering 365 days a year), the Forerunner Spirit (i.e. preparing the Church as a Bride for the unique dynamics in the End-Times), and the Great Commission (i.e. proclaiming Jesus to all nations). We are consumed with the mandate to train believers to love Jesus and others wholeheartedly as they go forth to preach the Word, heal the sick, serve the poor and plant Houses of Prayer across Asia.

However, at the heart of our ministries is the 24-hour a day prayer with worship. Our original inspiration came from Anna in Luke 2:37 – 38, the first evangelist and forerunner in the New Testament who prayed and fasted for 60 years before Jesus’ first coming. We were also inspired by King David, who organized 4,000 musicians and 288 singers to worship God 24 hours a day (1 Chron. 23 – 25).

On September 6, 2003, I gathered together a few people with the burden to establish a House of Prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David. We know that it is the heart of God to establish a House of Prayer where “the fire on the altar shall never go out” in the land of Singapore. We trusted that people would come from all over the island – musicians, worship leaders and singers would come; finances would be provided; etc.

In 1722, an “Intercessory Missions Base” was established Germany by Count Nicholas Ludwig Von Zinzendorf. They named their settlement Herrnhut, which means “The Watch of the LORD” and they began prayer meetings that continued 24 hours a day for over 100 years resulting in the first Protestant missions movement in history known as the Moravians. To this we say, “Yes LORD, do this in Singapore even in our day!”

Leviticus 6:13 says that “the fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.” It is our goal also to keep the fire burning that it may never go out! **We are calling out to all the worship leaders, musicians, singers, intercessors, etc.** who have the heart to establish this House for the LORD to join us to keep this fire burning continuously!

“So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.” (Haggai 1:14)

Kay-Chong Yeo
Director, IHOP – One Thing Ministries