

## ***Session 1 Contemplative Prayer: Journey into Fullness***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ephesians 3 is one of the great prayers of the New Testament. The ultimate prayer of the New Testament may be the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, or the "High Priestly" prayer in John 17. We don't really have to pick between the two; we have them both. I really like the prayer in John 17. It's Jesus' final recorded prayer before He went to Gethsemane.

Here in Ephesians 3 is one of the real pinnacle prayers of Paul the apostle. Ephesians 3 is one of the high points in the whole Word of God in terms of apostolic revelation under the unction of the Spirit revealing the highest things of God's heart. There are few chapters in the whole Word of God that are equal to Ephesians 3 in terms of the grandeur of what is in God's heart for the human heart.

### **"FOR THIS REASON I BOW MY KNEES TO THE FATHER"**

We're going to look a little at this prayer. My goal isn't to break it down line by line; I don't want to do that. There are plenty of good commentaries on Ephesians 3, but I want to draw attention to a couple of important points.

Paul said, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father" (Eph. 3:14). When Paul says, "For this reason," he's referring to verses 1:13, and also verses 15-21. It's the entire flow of what's going on in Ephesians 3. There's a tremendous wealth of revelation before verse 14. That's what's on Paul's mind, but he's going to take all the revelation of verses 1-13 and pray that it would actually come to pass, and that's what's on his mind when he prays verses 14-19 and then makes that great statement in verse 20-21.

### **WHEN WE LOSE THE PROPHETIC VISION, WE LOSE THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER**

I'll paraphrase a little. "For this reason I labor in prayer; I bow my knees to the Father." Let's add the phrase, "I labor in prayer and fasting with something in view." Paul has a very clear vision in view when he labors in prayer. The very thing that Paul had in view for the saints, for the believers in Ephesus, is what we have in view when we pray in intercession for the Church and when we pray in intercession even for our own lives and the lives of our friends and loved ones. There's something in view; there's a reason, there's a vision, there's something that's awakening our heart, that's wooing us into the fullness of God's heart.

I find that when people don't have a reason, when they lose the reason—I'll lay out the reason in a moment—when they lose the reason, they lose the fire for prayer. I have never seen a people sustain themselves in prayer that don't have a greater and more sustained vision of what God wants for them. If you take away the prophetic preaching of what God has for the human heart, you'll lose the spirit of prayer.

I go places all the time and they say, "Teach us about prayer. We want to do some of the things that you men are trying to do."

The reason I say, "trying to do," is because what we're doing and what we're trying to do are really two different things. We're trying to do something high; what we're actually doing is—well, the phrase I use in Kansas City is "little, rough, and ugly." We're endeavouring; we have a vision. For all of you who are leading prayer ministries, the call to prayer always begins with a clear, regular presentation of the vision of what God

has in His heart for people. When you lose the prophetic proclamation of the vision of what God has for the church or the vision that God has for the individual heart, you'll lose the spirit of prayer.

In the 1980s I travelled around, not very much, but a little, and they wanted to hear about it because I had given myself to intercession, and I said, "If you don't have a vision of a victorious church and a soul in the fullness of God, you won't have a prayer ministry in your church." The vision of a victorious church is absolutely paramount for night-and-day prayer.

### **RENEW YOUR VISION TO HAVE THE FULLNESS OF GOD**

I love it when Paul says, "For this reason." Again, he's going backwards referring to the first thirteen verses, but if there were a pinnacle statement it would be verse 19. We'll get to that in a moment, but I'll give you a little hint: Paul said that we would be filled up to the fullness of God. That's the vision right there. That's the ultimate reason. When we lose that vision, we lose the spirit of prayer, individually and corporately.

You want to renew the spirit of prayer? Renew the vision to have the fullness of God. What I want to do in this first session is to go as far as I can and tell you some of my journey through Ephesians 3:19, to having a growing conviction that God wants my soul to enter into fullness. Ephesians 3:19 unquestionably has been one of the most important verses in my prayer journey in the last twenty years. "For this reason I labor in prayer" (Eph. 3:14, paraphrased). "For this reason I do what it takes to position myself before the throne to press in. For this reason I live a fasted life. I position my heart." We will be a people of one thing because of a reason, because of a vision.

He goes on in verse 15 and talks about the Father, "the God from whom every family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:15, paraphrased). There's a lot there, but I'll move past that. He goes on to describe some of his prayer theology. Why do we care about prayer theology? The name of this conference is "Passionate Pursuit." It's really kind of a cool name for living a life of contemplative prayer; living a life immersed in the Holy Spirit. What we're really talking about is living a lifestyle of prayer, not just going to prayer meetings, but cultivating a spirit of prayer in our secret history in God. The Holy Spirit is renewing this thing called "contemplative prayer."

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS RESTORING CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER TO THE BODY OF CHRIST**

There's no biblical definition for contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer has been defined differently by different theologians in different generations of church history. I have my own definition; I'll give you a handout tomorrow and lay it all out. My definition is a little different than others. Of course, I've never met two people who have the same definition of contemplative prayer. One thing is common: everyone talks about being abandoned to God in the pursuit of it. There's a clear Holy Spirit emphasis on the subject of contemplative prayer. Maybe that's a new term to you. Maybe you don't know what I mean, or what others mean. I'll be doing most of the morning sessions. I'll be talking line by line about what contemplative prayer is from the perspective from history, and how the Word of God describes some of the dynamics of contemplative prayer.

One thing is for sure: the Holy Spirit is restoring this precious jewel in the grace of God to the Body of Christ. We're going to talk about what it is, why it's important, and how to do it, because this is the God-ordained means to enter into Ephesians 3:19 in fullness. Fullness is what we're after. We're after fullness. We want everything God gives the human heart in this generation. We want everything that God will give the human heart in this hour of human history. He will give more now than He did a hundred years ago; He really will. He

will give the most in the generation of the Lord's return. I believe we're in that generation. Whether five years or fifty years, I don't know, but I believe there are people on the earth today who will see the actual appearing of the Lord in the sky. I believe it's closer to fifty years than to five years, but I don't really know. I'm not a date-setter. As a matter of fact, I believe date-setting isn't just dangerous; it's worse than dangerous. It's distracting. I believe we're in that hour, and if it be true, if we're in that final generation, whether we have several decades to go or not, there are things that God has uniquely reserved for the final hour of natural history called "the fullness of God."

### **A BILLION-YEAR JOURNEY INTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD**

The fullness of God in this age is nothing like the fullness of God in the age to come. As a matter of fact, the phrase in verse 19 is kind of a difficult phrase for human beings to peer into: "the fullness of God." I can just imagine the angels saying, "Well, I would like to talk on that one for a few minutes."

Isaiah 6 describes the seraphim. Billions of years from now, the seraphim are still there, right next to the throne, still covering their eyes, still gazing, overwhelmed by new discoveries, new discoveries of the beauty of God. Maybe they've been there for billions of years. I have no way of knowing and I don't care, but they've been there a long time. With one set of wings they cover their eyes, overwhelmed at the new discoveries, the new flashes of power of the transcendent beauty of God that overwhelms their being. For a billionth time they've gazed, and for a billionth time they're overwhelmed by new discoveries.

When I say *fullness*, I look around at the great cloud of witnesses and I admit I don't have a clue what I'm talking about. Let's settle that, OK? "I'm a little man; you men know a whole lot more than I know, but what a stunning phrase that God the Holy Spirit put in the Bible."

There's the relative definition, and of course there's the absolute one, the absolute definition of the fullness of God; a billion years into eternity we will still be discovering the inexhaustible ocean of God's being. It's inexhaustible. I don't know what to say about the absolute definition of fullness. I don't think it's my mandate or my invitation in God even to peer into that in any significant kind of way, but on this side of the resurrection, there's a relative definition for fullness, for what God will give the human heart in this season of history.

The church in the Western world has so quickly abandoned our inheritance of the fullness of God, even in the relative sense of the term. I don't want to give up our inheritance for this hour of history. I want to be a man in the midst of a people related to a whole company of people all over the earth, an international family of affection that has Ephesians 3:19 written on its heart by the Holy Spirit. We're going after this thing with all the abandonment that the grace of God will give us. Business as usual is not OK. I'm not taking my cues from other leaders in the Body of Christ who pat me on the head and say, "Settle down, you'll be OK." I don't want to be OK. I want an unrelenting pursuit after fullness, which is another way of saying hungering—hungering for God.

### **YOUR DESIRE FOR GOD IS GOD'S GIFT TO YOU**

It's the greatest gift that God can give you. Well, I don't know if I want to say, "*the greatest*." There are a lot of things you can put in that category. One of the great things that God can give the human soul, the human heart, is desire for Him. Your desire for Him is His gift to you. It really is. It takes God to love God. It takes God the Holy Spirit. It takes supernatural activity to be abandoned to go after God in fullness.

## **THE PARADOX OF HUNGER IN THE LOVE OF GOD**

The problem with hunger is that hunger has tremendous pain and tremendous delight on the other end of it. There are several very powerful paradoxes in the heart of the hungry for God. The very anguish we feel of darkness and barrenness is really an expression of hunger and love. It's the dark side of love. I don't mean *dark* in an evil sense. John of the Cross talked about the dark side of love. He spoke of dryness; he spoke of experiencing the pain of barrenness that can't bear accepting the status quo, but can't have that for which we yearn so greatly. In itself it's the very work of love in the human spirit.

God has many reasons for what John of the Cross called "the wounds of love." He draws us closer. We get closer to the fire of His being. The closer we get, the more awakened we are in love, and yet the paradox is this: the closer we get, the more aware we become that we're outside of the fullness of the experience of love. We feel the pain of being overwhelmed, and in the same twenty-four-hour period we feel the pain of feeling like we're groping, touching nothing. I've known them both in the same twenty-four-hour period. It's like eating a thirty-ounce steak after a twenty-day fast. In my tiny capacity, I know the pain of touching a little of God and being so full and stuffed. "Oh, I can't take any more. Stay Your hand lest You kill me."

I haven't had many of those, but I have had a few experiences where God's revelation touched me. It was such a small thing, but my capacity was so much smaller that it was like a big steak after a long fast. It was painful; I said, "Don't give me anything more for a little while." Then, in the same period of time, even in the same twenty-four-hour period, I felt like I was groping with nothing. It's a strange thing, this thing called the grace of God in the human soul.

## **THE GLORY AND THE GORE OF THE FULLNESS OF GOD**

We'll talk a little about the wounds of love. We'll talk about John of the Cross, one of the contemplatives from the sixteenth century in Spain, one of the great men of God, a man who touched some of the secret places in God's heart in union with God. God has raised him up as a statement—not infallible, not perfect, but his abandonment to God is a rebuke to the modern church, because even that long ago God was giving these things to the human heart.

I don't want to get ahead of myself, but the fullness of God is gory and glorious. I call it "the glory and the gory"—the overwhelming delight and the horrible anguish of love happening in the same human heart. We're pursuing this together, not just in one place; I'm talking about the fellowship of the burning heart all over the nations, from all different traditions in the Body of Christ. Millions of people are going after this thing. There's a certain fellowship around the burning heart of God that's so precious and so dear. We don't have to apologize for the intensity of our desire for God. Probably everyone in this room lives in a context where we have to apologize to other people for our intensity. That's the way it works; it's not a rebuke to anyone, that's just the way it works. We have to hide it. It's almost like we have to pretend it isn't really there, because even believers in Jesus are intimidated, overwhelmed, and made uncomfortable by spiritual intensity.

I know God is raising up places all over the world where we can gather, little oases where we come together for a few days; they're going to be everywhere. They're everywhere now. We come together and we drink from this well a little. For just a few moments, we don't have to have any facades. We're weak, we're broken, we have intensity, we have a vision, we're not entering into it, we're failing, but we're going, and we don't have to apologize for our failures, nor do we have to apologize for our vision and our intensity. We're going for it. It's very important. When you preach on it and proclaim it, there will be those who make sure they watch and catch

you when you fail. There's a certain sense of, "Well, I won't really speak my real heart." Then there's the other group of people who feel so rejected and intimidated, you don't want to say it to them either. Then there's the group that's walking with you, hand-in-hand together, and there's a little competition, so you can't really go there. We feel exhausted hiding it. It's in the Bible, it's the will of God, it's the Holy Spirit's activity and ministry. We're going for this thing. We're going to be people of one thing.

### **JESUS DIGNIFIED THE WISDOM OF BEING A PERSON OF ONE THING**

There are three primary verses I use when I talk about the people of one thing. I'll probably quote them a half a dozen times. These are three verses that are good to know.

Jesus said it. Most of you know the passage; in Luke 10:42, He's talking to Martha about her little sister, Mary. He says, "Martha, your little sister does this one thing" (Lk. 10:42, paraphrased). He uses the phrase, "This one thing." Jesus dignified before the human soul the wisdom of being a person of one thing. We don't have to apologize for being a man or woman of one thing.

King David spoke in the same spirit in Psalm 27:4. We all know the verse. King David said, "This one thing: I gaze on His beauty" (Ps. 27:4, paraphrased). Jesus said it to Mary, and it doesn't get any higher than that; He was describing Mary's heart. Then we have David saying, "This one thing."

### **WE DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN THE AFTERGLOW OF YESTERDAY'S VICTORIES**

Then we have Paul the apostle: "This one thing I do" (Phil. 3:12). He said, "I forget and I press. I press for the goal, the prize of the upward calling. I press. This one thing I do: I forget my victories, I don't boast in them. I forget my failures, so there's no condemnation. I push delete on yesterday and press, press, press. This one thing: I press for the upward call. I press in."

I care about yesterday's victories in the sense that they're important to the Lord, but I don't want to live in the afterglow of yesterday's victories. Do you know what? I don't want to live in the backfiring, so to speak, of yesterday's defeat. I want to press in and forget. "This one thing": I press. We're going to be a people of one thing. We have to be a people of one thing to enter into fullness.

### **"STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT THROUGH HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN"**

In Ephesians 3:16, Paul explains why he's pressing; he explains why he's laboring in prayer. Why are you laboring in prayer? What's the reason? Why do you posture your heart to receive everything God has? Why are you endeavoring to be a people of one thing? These phrases are so filled; you could go on and on. I'll skip some of the really important stuff and just get right to the very mountaintop: so that you would be strengthened with might on the inside.

Paul said, "I fast and pray for you for one primary thing to happen: that the might of God would be released into your inner man." He qualifies it in very glorious ways and he gets insight through the Holy Spirit.

### **POSITIONING OURSELVES TO EXPERIENCE THE MIGHT OF GOD**

There are many, many things to say about this. Basically, it takes God to love God. It takes the power of God to be abandoned to God. We need the might of God touching our human spirits. I want to be a man of prayer, not because I want to prove that I'm dedicated. Many of the people in the false religions have tremendous devotion, and they're trying to create a reputation in the land that they're devoted. I don't care about devotion for the sake

of devotion; I'm desperate in my weakness for the might to touch my spirit. I need might on my spirit, because I want to go somewhere and I can't go there without might, divine might. I can't go there by reading books about it; I can't go there by hearing your story. Your story can encourage me, but there's only one way I can go forward: through the escort of the Holy Spirit, releasing might to my inner man. That's very important.

A lot of people put the primary emphasis of their life upon the increase of their ministry. We need to put the primary emphasis on receiving might that touches the inner man. We read books about might, we write books about might, we go to conferences about it, we argue about it, we do everything except for positioning ourselves to experience the might of God in the inner man. No one can fake this. No one with wisdom would want to. I don't want the reputation of it; I want the reality of it in my secret life. In all of thy getting, get the might of God upon your spirit.

### **LIVING IN THE FIERY REALITY OF THE HEART OF GOD**

It's the very thing that Paul would go on and say later in Ephesians 6:10. He said, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). Oh, what a sentence. He goes on to talk about spiritual warfare, and he references this verse in verse 16. He says, "This might will bring you to new heights of God in your heart, but also it will equip you to free others in warfare" (Eph. 6:16, paraphrased).

### **FEELING AND MOVING IN UNITY WITH THE HEART OF GOD**

This might isn't something you can fake. It isn't a certificate you hang on the wall; it's something you receive in your secret life in God. Again, I don't want to have the reputation that I'm devout and have a prayer life. I want living reality when all you guys are gone. I don't want to be an echo; I want to be a voice. I don't want to memorize phenomenal clichés of mighty men and women of past days; I want to live in the fiery reality of the heart of God. That's my destiny. That's your destiny on planet earth. It isn't enough to get the best clichés and say them and write books on them and get materials and be eclectic and put it all together and have people say, "Wow," and buy the book. It means nothing. No devil or angel will be moved by your book. I want the kind of thing that moves things in the spirit.

The demon said, "Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you men" (Acts 19:15, paraphrased)? I want to make an impact in the Spirit, but I want more than that. I want something more than just moving angels and devils. Daniel in Daniel 9 bows his knees and prays and angels start coming. Angels were set to flight by the movements of a man's heart on the earth. That's massive to me. That's massive. Demons were set to flight by the movement of a man's heart on the earth. It's impact in the realm of the Spirit, but there's something more than that. It's our destiny, it's our dignity, it's who I am, to feel and move in unity with the heart of my God forever—not just in eternity, but now. It takes might; it's the might of God. That might of God is more than just gently pushing people down in prayer lines, maybe saying, "I didn't really push you," and having a little debate afterwards. This is might on the inside of me that no devil can touch and no religious argument can steal. They can put you in prison, but the might that's on the inside neither rust nor moth can destroy. It's on the inside of you. The martyrs took it to their deaths, and they took it into the resurrection with them. The might of God is our number one inheritance, the internal might of God.

It takes God to love God. I don't mean just the power over demons; I'm talking about the ability to have a weak human heart soaring in the realm of power and light, in the realm of God himself. I like what Paul said in Ephesians 3: "I labor." Look at verse 14, "I'm fighting for you in prayer. I know the value of might. In all of thy

getting, get this might. Don't be content in faking someone out. Don't be content with a reputation that you have it. Get it. I'm fighting for you in prayer to have it" (Eph. 3:14, paraphrased).

This is the very thing that Paul fought for in prayer. He wrestled through the night that he would be in his own vein. It's a radical lifestyle change. When we have the vision of divine might, beloved, there's nothing you won't do with the clear visions God wants to give you of divine might.

### **THE LIGHT AND THE DARK SIDE OF FLOWING IN LOVE**

Know this: the divine might of verse 16 is just one of the important ingredients to the fullness of verse 19. It's about fullness. We're after fullness. We're not just after might in itself; might is indispensable to experience the fullness, the fullness of our heart moving in union and intimacy with God's heart. It's the quest, the hunger for fullness. Remember, that hunger is God's gift to you. That hunger has overwhelming delight and the anguish of feeling abandoned and barren. There are two sides of love when we move in the spirit with our weakness. God uses the one overwhelming love to absolutely empower us and draw us. He uses the hiding of His face for the sake of love, in order to produce meekness and tenderness and dependency, so that in our victory we don't get raised up in pride. He uses both sides of love. John of the Cross calls it the light and the dark side of flowing in love of God. Again, *dark* in this context doesn't mean *evil*; it means that God hides the release of it from our feeling it. It's there. It's true for every single person in this room: if you lose your anguish to have more of God, you're already going backwards.

Our anguish to experience God more isn't from the devil. Think about it: the devil didn't give you anguish for God. Your anguish to experience more of God isn't a deed of the flesh. It isn't just a religious spirit. The flesh doesn't produce anguish to know more of God in the human heart. It isn't the devil, it isn't the flesh; it's the work of God in you and in me.

I talk to people all the time. They say, "It's so horrible; God is so far away." I'm smiling and they just want to reach over and hit me. "What are you smiling about?"

I say, "You didn't have that anguish years ago. Years ago, you never thought about it. Look at how different you are. Look at what has happened to you. You used to hurt because someone didn't like you. You weren't popular or famous or rich; you weren't this, that, and the other. Now you're in anguish because you can't discern the invisible presence of God. You're in anguish over it. Where did that come from? It didn't come from the devil; it didn't come from the flesh. That's the token of God's hand upon your heart. Stay with it. Get into a marathon pace. Don't evaluate yourself; don't evaluate others. Don't compare; just keep going after it and you'll have both sides of it in different seasons. Even in the same twenty-four hour period we have both sides of it."

### **"THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH"**

In verse 17 Paul says, "When this might touches you, there's something that happens: Jesus dwells in you" (Eph. 3:17a, paraphrased). Let's say it a little differently: it's the manifest presence of the Godhead upon your emotions. He isn't talking about Jesus dwelling within you at the new birth. These Ephesians are already believers. They're already pretty fervent believers. Is what sense is Paul praying that Jesus would dwell in them? They're already born again, and they already have the Holy Spirit's ministry operating in them. He isn't talking about initial experience; he's talking about what Jesus said in Revelation 3:20 when He stood at the door

of the Laodiceans. He said, “I’m knocking because I want to come into you and dine with you” (Rev. 3:20, paraphrased). He’s talking about a manifest presence in the midst of believers.

### **JESUS CHANGES OUR EMOTIONAL CHEMISTRY THROUGH DIVINE MIGHT**

Instead of the word *dwell*, put the words, “Jesus manifesting His presence on your emotions.” Again, there’s the release and the withholding as expressions of His presence on you. John of the Cross called it “the dark night of the soul,” or, “the dark night of the senses.” He had two different terminologies.

Beloved, my weak heart is cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Its own frame and its own design are weak. The very emotions of the Godhead are resting on us, just a little. Jesus is moving, expressing His personality through your personalities, in little tokens, but a little goes a long way. Paul tells us that when divine might touches you, the manifest presence of God changes your chemistry. You’re not perfected in one release of divine might; that’s not what he’s talking about. There are things I love now that I hate, and there are things I used to hate that I now love. That’s Jesus changing my emotional chemistry through divine might.

Verse 17a brings you to verse 17b. Notice the word *that*. There’s a purpose, a divine logic, and it not only motivates Paul in his prayer, it enables him as he trains the people in how to move forward in God. He says, “Number one, let’s fast and pray to release might on your spirit. Might will bring you into an emotional chemistry change, Jesus dwelling on the heart. He will cause you to be rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17b, paraphrased).

This is an agricultural and architectural metaphor: “rooted and grounded.”

He’s talking about the foundation of building. These are two of Paul’s favorite metaphors when he talks about the cooperation of the Holy Spirit in the human will. I don’t want to go into that right now, but they’re brilliant. They’re magnificent. I’ve done some study of people who have had great understanding of these metaphors in different commentaries. It’s a brilliant piece of wisdom.

Let’s just say this: “awakened inside.” Not only are we feeling God’s love, not only are we feeling God’s heart for ourselves and having some of those moods begin to change a little, but we’re actually beginning to be rooted and awakened in love. The very love of God is imparted, and it’s profoundly a part of who we are now. It’s a permanent change in our being. It’s something that we will have forever and ever. It’s tokens of His presence that take root in our being. They don’t go away. We can quench His presence, but there’s a place where we’re rooted and grounded. There’s a place where it becomes a permanent part of our being, a part of who we are. We’re lovers of God.

### **TO THE MAN OR WOMAN WHO HAS LOVE, EVEN MORE WILL BE GIVEN**

Then he goes on and he says, “Now, when you’re awakened to love, when it becomes a permanent part of who you are, even in immaturity, you’re a lover of God” (Eph. 3:17b, paraphrased). He says, “When you become a lover, there’s no one who understands love like a lover.” This is the principal of the rich getting richer. This is the principal of Mark 4:24, where Jesus said, “Be very careful what you listen to, because to him who has, even more will be given besides” (Mk. 4:24, paraphrased). To the man or woman who has love, more is given. It’s a strange dynamic; the very impartation of love is what equips you to grow in the ocean of love. To the man or woman who has initial experiences, God says, “If you stay with it, it enlarges your capacity, and you go on into that vast, inexhaustible ocean.”

The lover comprehends love like no one else. I love to teach on the Father heart of God and the passionate heart of the Bridegroom. It's the first person of the Trinity, the tender Father. It's the second person of the Trinity, the passionate Bridegroom. There's something about the Father's tender love and the Bridegroom's fiery love; there's something about it that just throws us into another realm in God.

You tell that message to a sincere believer who's not rooted or grounded in love, and they look at you and say, "Huh. That's cool. Anyway, let's go on to build the church and do this."

You say, "Stop. It's more than cool. The Godhead is in love with you."

They say, "Yeah, that's neat. I really like that."

Anyway, we're thinking about the outreach next week, and they don't grasp it at all. It takes the heart of a lover to be introduced into the new realms of God. I began to devote a bit of energy to the revelation of the Father and the Bridegroom, and I thought I was really going somewhere. Now I know I'm not. As I began to give myself to it, I began to rework in my heart a little of the rooting and grounding in the revelation of love. It begins to be a small part of who I am, not just an insight that touches me here and there, but part of the fabric of my being. That's what equips you to see the ocean, the realms of love far out beyond. The introductory experiences of love, the experiences of falling into love on the front end, are what prepare you for the inexhaustible ocean, the deeper realms of God.

It's like the aerospace mathematician, or whatever his name was. He was in fifth grade, and he was number one in the class in multiplication. He really thought he knew math. He said, "I was number one in the class. I knew math. Then I went to college and got into calculus, and boy, I really knew math."

Now he's seventy years old. This is a made-up story. You go to the man and say, "You really know math."

And he says, "No, no, no, I really don't. I thought I knew math when I was ten, twelve, fifteen, and twenty years old. I don't know any math. I understand that there's a world of math out there. I don't have a clue how those galaxies relate to one another. I don't know anything."

The further I go in this, the clearer it is that I'm one inch out of the water, at most. I thought I was in Ezekiel 47, overflowing in love. As years go by I have the opposite experience of Ezekiel. He started at the ankles, and he went to the knees, and the loins, and finally to overflowing. I thought I was overflowing a few years ago. The line was up to here. A few years later, I said, "I guess I'm only up to here."

A few years later I said, "Man. I'm in wet sand and the water is just a few feet away. I'll be in that water in just a short while." The sand is wet. I look for it carefully; my heel is in dry and my toes are in moist sand. That's it. I had the reverse experience of Ezekiel. That's what's going on here. In other words, it's the introductory experiences of verse 17a that prepare us for the greater dimensions of love in verse 18: the width, the length, the depth, and the height, comprehending the inexhaustible thrill of the ocean of love. I can say this, and I admit it: I don't really know what I'm saying, but I know there's a universe of math out there. I can understand that scientist in the space department who knows that he doesn't understand math. I understand what he means, just a little. I know just enough to know that there's a world I have no comprehension of at all.

Paul tells us this: when you begin to comprehend some of the depth, some of the deep stuff, then the comprehension of verse 18 turns into the experience of verse 19. Instead of the word *know*, put the word *experience*. Instead of the word *know*, put the words, “intimate experience.”

### **“FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US”**

Paul says, “This love compels me. It drives me from one prison to the next. They beat me, they threaten me, but this thing is alive in me. I can’t stop, and they tell me they’ll beat me again” (2 Cor. 5:14, paraphrased). He says, “I’m driven by the experience of incomprehensible love. I know the logic. If I go to the next city, I’ll get hit really hard again.”

“I say, ‘I’m not going. I’ll send Timothy!’ Then I get quiet and that volcanic thing happens in me, that divine compelling, and I say, ‘I’m going, because the power on the inside has more force than the pain of the beating on the outside.’ This is the secret of the martyrs at the end of the age: the intimate knowledge.

Then verse 19 is the ultimate. He says, “Why? So that in the relative sense we could have all that God will give the human heart.” That’s what contemplative prayer is about. Well, I have to measure it a little, but this is one of the really classic chapters on contemplative prayer.

Again, tomorrow morning I’ll have some notes for you, and I’ll talk about some definitions and some pathways to contemplative prayer. A few more ideas and then I’ll pray for you.

The pathway to contemplative prayer, to the inward life, is enjoying intimacy with God. It’s more than intercession, more than praying for the sick. Oh, I love those. This isn’t for the faint of heart, this journey. You can be weak; I’m really weak. If the weak are invited, I qualify.

There’s a strange thing going on in the land today. The Body of Christ has a billion in the earth. It’s a very small number. The Protestant wing of the Western church is nearly 98 percent unaware that the Holy Spirit is restoring contemplative prayer, bringing it center stage to the Church.

I come and go. I don’t ever want to be a know-it-all hot shot, and go somewhere; I don’t even know what’s going on. I don’t even want to do that stuff. I want to get might and be lost in love. I don’t want to be one of those, “I know more than you know” people. I’ve tried that, and it wore me out. It’s so exhausting. Then you get the tar beat out of you, because their spirit is as feisty as yours. It’s a huge waste of time. Anyway, the Western, Protestant end of the Body of Christ is almost entirely unaware of this.

### **DO WE CALL THEM “CONTEMPLATIVES” OR “MYSTICS”?**

Do you know who picked up on it? Of all people, it was Barnes & Noble. I don’t know if they have a prophet in there, or if they have really smart entrepreneurs. I don’t know when this happened; it may have been five years ago. I’m one of those guys who go get the Starbucks, sit in the chair, read the books, and don’t buy them. Sometimes I accidentally mark in them, and then I have to buy them. Anyway, I like the whole Barnes & Noble deal. I’ve been going there for ten or fifteen years. First there was a book on prayer here and there; then they got this big religious section, and then there were one or two books on contemplation. They call them *mystics*. I don’t use the word *mystics*, even though it’s a legitimate term. I don’t want to fight that war. There were so many people who use the word *mystics* who were so off. I don’t want to argue for them. I don’t want to say who was and who wasn’t, so I’m just saying, “contemplative prayer,” but I mean the mystics.

Even in our work here at IHOP-KC I say, “Let’s just stay with *contemplative*.” Again, there were plenty of people who were really in profound error who somehow ended up on some list of the great mystics. We’re just lovesick for Jesus. We just do Jesus. I don’t know what groups do what, but we’re really going after the Man Christ Jesus under the grace of God the Father by the Holy Spirit. I don’t want to go into the semantics, the debates, who was and who wasn’t, because they’re all lumped together in one giant category. It’s sad to me, because it obscures the glory of what’s in front of the Body of Christ. I call them *contemplatives*. It isn’t wrong to use the other, but I have limited time for arguments. I don’t have time to go there.

### **EVERYONE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST IS CALLED TO THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFESTYLE**

Anyway, I went to Barnes & Noble, and initially there were five books on the mystics, the contemplatives. Then a year went by, and there were thirty. I said, “Oh,” and my stack was getting bigger. A year went by, and there were 200! I said, “Someone is figuring something out.” Then there were 500. I’m making up the number, of course. There were shelves of them. I said, “Who is figuring this thing out? How come the leadership of the Body of Christ isn’t figuring this out? Why is Barnes & Noble prophesying to us?” I don’t know if they’re the true prophets. I don’t know if they’re Balaam’s buddy prophets. I don’t know who’s picking up on it, but it’s the word of God. It’s God’s heart.

Where are the leaders? Where are the evangelical leaders who are calling the Church? We have Richard Foster; he’s been doing it for years. You have a few here and there. You have Dallas Willard. There are a few.

I said, “Lord, let’s go for this.” My prayer is that you would get clear in your soul that this is a *now* word. This is a *kairos* hour. We’re in a time frame where God is speaking the call to contemplative prayer, and to lives of contemplative prayer. I don’t mean that you leave your jobs to do it. Some of you will do that. God is calling everyone. Everyone in the Body of Christ is called to live in the contemplative lifestyle—everyone.

That’s one of the great strongholds we have to overcome. People think, “Well, if you join IHOP-KC or if you join a monastery or if you can go out into the desert, you can do it.” No, it’s for people who work fifty and sixty hours a week; they have three and four and five children and more. It’s for people in prison. It’s for people in discouragement. It’s for people in all walks of life who say yes to Jesus. We have to get rid of this lie that it’s only for people who quit everything and go to a mountain. We have to get over that hurdle. Barnes & Noble is prophesying it. Hurdle number one is this: we have to understand that contemplative prayer is everyone. Everyone is called to the fullness. Ephesians 3 wasn’t written for one half of 1 percent of the Body of Christ in history. It was written for the whole Body of Christ in all of history. It’s written for people with jobs and families and neighborhoods and pressures. Ephesians 3 is for everyone, and I’m not going to let the devil steal it from me or those who will listen to what I’m saying. We’re all going to go into this thing.

### **CHURCH HISTORY DIDN’T BEGIN WITH MARTIN LUTHER**

There’s another hindrance that’s bigger than that. It’s a very, very important hindrance we have to dismantle. I say *we*, but the vast majority of this room is Protestants. A lot of us think that church history began in 1517. We think that when Martin Luther went and nailed those Ninety-five Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, church history began. It didn’t begin with Martin Luther. Church history has been going for 2,000 years, not 500 years. Some of the brightest lights in all of history were blazing a thousand years before Martin Luther.

I understand the reasons, but I'll take liberties and not be totally honest here: historians call that period of time "the dark ages." There are good reasons for that, but forget those good reasons for a moment and let me say this. The brightest lights in history were man and women of abandonment in the dark ages. Somewhere we have to say, "The dark ages with luminaries in the grace of God." We don't count them: they were Catholic priests; they can't be bright! It has to be the dark ages. We're Protestants.

I tell you, I haven't studied it intensely, but certainly with more than a casual interest. I've studied the lives of the mystics and the contemplatives through history. Clearly, the most inspiring, compelling examples in my world have come out of the Catholic dark ages. I can't find anything like it in modern times in America in the Protestant world.

"We can't do that, because don't they do those other funny things?" Well, some of them might do some funny things, but I guarantee you that when you stand before the Lord, you'll understand that you did some funny things too. It's this idea that we have to find the group that doesn't do anything funny—where are we going to go? Not to Kansas City, that's for sure. I really mean that.

I love what Paul Cain says: "Don't be so open-minded that your brains fall out." We have to be able to go and receive where God has rested His presence in history, and some of our examples will have Catholic roots in history. You don't have to accept all the dogma of the Catholic church to receive the inspiration of lives of abandonment today—lives that we know of, lives that burn today. We need a little Holy Spirit, catalytic jump start. We need to see where a few have gone before us and say, "If they did it, we can do it, and more," and if you want to go deep in that way, I'm sad to say, the vast majority of your roots in history will be Catholic. You don't have to accept all the dogma of the Catholic church to receive the inspiration of lives of abandonment. I'm not intimidated by that.

I have books by Protestants and Catholics; we're getting them out there. I don't tell people, "Wait until it's perfect before you read it." I have very few books that are perfect. I say, "Use discernment. Read the Bible with discernment, and read and know what part is in the Word of God, and be inspired and move forward."

### **THE EARLY EXCITEMENT AND PROMISE OF THE JESUS MOVEMENT**

I'll give just a little of my history. I'm out of time. I met the Lord in 1971, thirty years ago this summer. After I met the Lord I was involved in a fiery youth group. The youth group grew from about 200 to about 1,200 in a single year in the midst of the Jesus movement. Some of you remember those times. How many of you can remember the early 1970s, when the hippies were all coming in? Everyone was getting saved, and the numbers were amazing.

My leaders were leaders in Campus Crusade, and they told us all about prayer and revival and evangelism and the Great Commission, and we loved it. We fed our lives on the missionary biographies. We had a vision to go hard. Then, after we did the evangelism thing for a few years, we figured out that it wasn't working very well. We wanted to go win the world, but almost no one was responding after the wave of the Jesus movement lifted. Then, in the natural process of the Holy Spirit, the leaders said, "We have to find ways to interact with God through fasting and prayer to release more so that we can do what these great missionaries did in history." We kind of endured the idea of fasting and prayer in order to fulfil the Great Commission. We endured God in order to serve God. We wanted to be great missionaries and evangelists, but we didn't want to have to mess with God—really getting close and overcoming all the obstacles and living lives of abandonment and learning the

ways of the Spirit in prayer. We didn't want to do that; we just wanted to serve Him. Maybe someone would write a biography about us, and then we made it.

This was in the mid-1970s—1973, 1974, and 1975. I really began to say yes to this thing called *prayer*. I read a whole bunch of books on prayer and I didn't like it at all. Prayer was one of the things I hated. There were four things I hated; I say it all the time. I hated prayer, I hated fasting, I hated witnessing, and I hated Bible study. I really did. I loved God and loved meetings. Bible study was the easiest of the four great, horrible things, especially if it was a group Bible study, because I could talk all the time. Bible study was the least worst of the bad things; then evangelism was probably the second. But prayer and fasting? Ugh, forget it!

The men who were over me said, "You have to do this."

I said, "What a drag. If that's the only way I can go forward, I'll do it. I don't like it, but I'll do it."

I read a bunch of books on prayer. It was uncomely. You couldn't have convinced me that twenty-five years later I would be involved in a prayer movement. I would have said, "No, you really have the wrong man. Preaching on fasting? No way." I figured out every way to get the job done without prayer and fasting.

I experienced one of the great privileges of my life, in a natural sense, a month or two ago. I got to spend part of an afternoon with Bill Bright, who's eighty years old. Through his ministry he has led more people to the Lord than any living person in history.

He was sitting there at eighty years old, and we were talking. He said, "After fifty years of doing it, I've learned one thing: it doesn't work apart from prayer." He's eighty years old; he looked at me and said, "Young man..."

I said, "I'll take it!"

He said, "If you'll buy into this in your youth and never back out, you'll be wiser for it. It doesn't work; and if anyone can say that, I can. It doesn't work without prayer and fasting." Wow! What a powerful privilege to hear the wisdom and conclusions of a man like that.

Anyway, I was reading this book in 1976—not that the date matters. I couldn't remember where I was when I was reading it. This man said, "I have prayed Ephesians 1:17 and Ephesians 3:16 thousands of times, for years and years."

I said, "What? Ephesians 1:17 and Ephesians 3:16? OK."

So I wrote it down, read Ephesians 1:17 and Ephesians 3:16, and said, "These are the strangest, most confusing prayers I have ever imagined," but out of sheer desperation, I put them on this list and prayed them everyday. I prayed them, and I had this prayer list that I went through over, and over, and over again. The only way I could pray for any length of time at all was by reading the same prayer list over and over. I didn't know what to say if I got off of the list. My goal was to pray for an hour a day.

This is horrible, but I said, "I have to do this forever. I hope in the resurrection it changes. I can do this for fifty years, but I can't do it for billions. There's no way I can do this for billions of years."

I had these ten or twenty prayers, and Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 3 were at the top of the list because this book said it. He said he liked it, so I said, “I’ll try it for a year or two.” I stayed with it for some years. I had no idea that I had stumbled right into the middle of the heart of God.

I started praying Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 3. Some years went by, and it was the summer of 1981, twenty years ago. It was one of the great, life-changing summers of my life. I went on my first extended fast. I was scared to death. I prayed this for literally two or three years, and it might help you. I said, “If You’ll really help me to do a long fast—and not just one of those, ‘Lord, help me,’ I mean You really have to help me—I’ll do one.”

The Lord smiled and said, “You know, little man, I love you so much. It isn’t like that, but I’ll help you.”

### **THE LIFE-CHANGING IMPACT OF JOHN G. LAKE AND MADAME GUYON**

I went on an extended fast in the summer of 1981, and nothing was happening. I ran into two things that changed my life. I ran into the teachings of a man whom I read for some weeks during the fast; his name is John G. Lake. I had nothing to do; I was too tired, too moody, too everything, so I tucked away for hours and took naps, drank coffee with triple Sweet n’ Low just to get a little zap from it. It was a water-and-coffee fast, but I figured Sweet n’ Low was legal, so I put a ton of it in there. Let me tell you, it has a bad kick in a few days. I won’t go there now, but don’t do that. Later I’ll talk more in-depth about John G. Lake. I read his writings for weeks, and they totally transformed my life.

Someone gave me a little book by Madame Guyon called *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*. I could never pronounce her name; I didn’t have a clue what it was about. I read this book ten, twenty, thirty times. It was an extended fast. I read it over and over and over, and I want to say this: there are a number of sentences in this book that I think are really off. This book is so wonderful, but there are a number of things I think are really off. I can’t think of anything that’s perfectly “on” that has the glory of what’s in this book.

She let smallpox touch her face and she said, “For the glory of God I will let this disease destroy my beauty.”

I wrote, “Dumb!” I did, I wrote, “Dumb!”

Because even when I gave someone the book, they saw that and said, “Wow, I guess you didn’t agree with that.”

I said, “No, there are a number of things.” It was like a safety net.

John G. Lake was saying, “Don’t ever go to a doctor or you sin.” I said, “Wrong!”

He was saying, “Get rid of everything that’s sickness.”

She was saying, “Everything that’s sickness, go for it.” I was kind of in a collision with my Sweet n’ Low, and I was twenty-five years old; I couldn’t figure it all out, but I know that healing is awesome, and I know that going deep in contemplative prayer is awesome. Somewhere I’ll figure out how they work together. In my

understanding, they profoundly come together, but I never met anyone who says it exactly right. This book is phenomenal, but you're going to run into some things that are off, in my opinion.

I began to go into those two different lines of flowing in the anointing of John G. Lake, the greatest of all Protestant healing ministries. Then, a few years later, there was another book. I've talked about this at the other conferences. The man who wrote it was Bernard of Clairvaux. Some of you have never heard of Bernard of Clairvaux. John G. Lake was my hero; Andrew Murray said he had the greatest healing ministry in history. I read the incredible miracles of John G. Lake. I became a John G. Lake fanatic, and, not a scholar, but an eager student, at least.

I read all of his stuff over and over and preached it for years. The only life I have ever read that has eclipsed John G. Lake in power healing was Bernard of Clairvaux. There were incredible healings: the lame walking, the blind seeing, hundreds of thousands of converts, demons coming out; he combined the anointing of John G. Lake with the contemplative prayer of Madame Guyon, and his favorite book was the Song of Solomon. He was lovesick with the Bridegroom revelation.

There are a number of biographies on him. For me he became the most inspiring life outside the Bible. Some years ago I began to read everything I could. I had many, many books on Bernard of Clairvaux. He put Madame Guyon and John G. Lake together in one package and added the Bride of Christ on top of it. I think you could present a case that he was the most powerful man in the secular, political, and spiritual dimensions in the world. He was born in 1090 and died in 1153; he only lived sixty-three years. He was this little abbot, this young man who had a little monastery. He started it out in the woods, and named the little valley *Clairvaux*. I mean, it was horrible. He almost starved to death during the first few winters. He named it, "Valley of Life," *Clairvaux*.

This little monastery began to grow. The powers that be came to him and said they wanted him to be the pope. He said, "No, being the pope is great, but I don't want to be the pope; I want to be a man of prayer." He spent his whole life fasting and praying, teaching on the Song of Solomon. He picked his main disciple and said, "Make him pope," and they made him pope.

His main man was pope, and they said, "Bernard is truly the pope because his man listens to him so much." Then the King of Italy, the King of France, and the King of Germany had such profound respect for Bernard of Clairvaux, his spiritual power, his prophetic ministry, and his ability to cast out devils, that they would listen to anything he said. They were going to war with each other a few times in his ministry. He walked over to the King of Germany and said, "Stop it."

The man said, "OK."

They said, "Bernard is in town. He walked from France to Germany. He wants to meet you."

He said, "No, tell him I'll stop the war." Obviously, there are a lot more details than that, but these three men were powerfully impacted.

That's the way those nations were in the twelfth century. He installed the pope, and he had a whole army of people all over the world, casting out devils, healing the sick, and leading hundreds of thousands of people to

Jesus. But Bernard said, “All I want to do is go back home and live in my little room, praying, fasting, and studying Song of Solomon.”

I fell in love with this man. You want to get rocked? Read the life of Bernard of Clairvoux. He made a few real blunders, and he said some things that, in my opinion, were wrong, wrong, wrong. But I hear the Holy Spirit whispering, “Yes, but he has so much more right than you have.” It’s really true.

I would say the most influential life in my thirty years of walking with the Lord is Bernard of Clairvaux. John G. Lake would be number two. My old faithful, David Brainerd, the missionary to the Indians, would be number three.

Then finally, just three or four years ago, this phenomenal book came out by Father Thomas Dubay. It was a bestseller all over the world—Protestants have never heard of it—called *Fire Within*. He takes probably the two greatest examples of contemplative prayer. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila were friends. They lived in the sixteenth century at the same time. They worked in the same place for a season in Spain, and somewhere in their soul with God they both said, “We’re going for it with God in the deeper life.”

They’re two of the shining examples, and they’ve articulated with such clarity the way of deeper life in God. You go to the Protestants and they say, “Wasn’t he one of the dark night men or something?” He was one of the greatest flaming hearts of love in all history, along with Bernard of Clairvaux, John G. Lake, and Teresa of Avila. There are plenty of things that I would say differently, but they have so much right that I can’t throw them away because of what’s wrong, because there’s too much right to dismiss them. We’re in great need in the Protestant world right now for some examples that will beckon us into the fullness of God. I don’t know of any passage more relevant than Ephesians 3 for the fullness of God.

Amen. So that’s a little introduction. Let’s stand.