

Fascinated by the Emotions of God, Part 1

INTRODUCTION

You know, the problem with the setup of a setting like this is that we're all going for God, screaming, "We're going for God!" and we can end up living in unreality. We can end up thinking that screaming and losing our voice like Lou Engle is what it's about. We think if we scream "Ah!" then, we're in, and our lives are heard. There's pain and there's brokenness; there are all kinds of things. The Lord says, "I want the whole you. I really like you; I want the whole of who you are."

WE NEVER OUTGROW THE THRILL OF THE WONDER OF BEING LOVED

It's not just about believing the unbelievable and doing what no generation has ever done. There's something even more profound than that, and that's wonderful. It's the fact that the infinite God, in glory and power, is really, really lovesick over us in our weakness and our brokenness. The greatest message that I know of for me personally is when God says, "I really like you, Mike." I can't get over that message.

"God, there are one billion galaxies in Your power. I love all of that, but the part that I really like—tell me that one part again, that You really like me."

That's my favorite part of the whole gospel: "I really like you, Mike." No, it really is. We never outgrow the thrill of the wonder of being loved. It's so wonderful to feel loved. It's an absolutely wonderful way to live. The God of love made us to long to be loved. It's wonderful to feel love. I didn't say it's wonderful to be loved, because God loves His people, but most of them are so disconnected from that, that even though He loves them, they can't feel it. I'll add a word; it's wonderful to *feel* it, to feel it. You'll never outgrow it. I'll never outgrow it. You'll never outgrow it.

In the midst of all of this, my only fear is that gatherings like this and the big one next year can be about shouting and screaming and charging: "We'll do the Night Watch! We'll give to the poor and we'll... Ah!" It's so much more than that. It's the outflow of something very powerful and quiet that's working. It's the sweet whisper of God in my soul: "Mike, I really especially like you."

"Oh, I love that whisper. That's my favorite! Tell me that again!" That whisper is for every one of you.

Elijah saw the thunder in the mountains in 1 Kings 19, the thunder and the storm and the fire and the rain, and the sweet whisper. I love the thunder and the lighting and the earthquake, but I tell you, I love the sweet whisper: "I like you especially, Mike."

The Lord's capacity is so great that He especially likes every one of us who will say yes back to Him. We become recipients of that special love. That's so wonderful. It makes the whole thing so different.

"THE LORD HAS SOUGHT FOR HIMSELF A MAN AFTER HIS OWN HEART"

Turn to 1 Samuel 13. I want to introduce to you a man whom the majority of you in this room are familiar with. It's King David, the great warrior-king of Israel. David is about fourteen or fifteen here. He might be younger; no one knows for sure. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon a prophet named Samuel, the anointed prophet Samuel. The Lord whispers in Samuel's ear and says, "I'm replacing the rebellious king, Saul." He says, "I've

found a young man who has a heart after Me. He doesn't even know that I've found Him" (1 Sam. 13:14, paraphrased).

There are many mysterious points to this verse. One of the mysteries of this verse is that David is fifteen years old on the backside of some hill in Bethlehem. I mean, Bethlehem has 300 people; it's Hooterville minus one. I mean it's really bad; you had to be over forty to appreciate that. Anyway, it's really little. It's a poor, out-of-the-way, nowhere place. He's the youngest of eight brothers. He's left out continually. Many times in his family he's rejected. It's a real deal. He's the youngest and he's often rejected. It's a very poor family, in a tiny, 300-person town. He does the most boring job: he tends sheep all day by himself.

He made a little guitar; it probably wasn't much, considering his poor family. He began to look up at the stars at night and say, "O, I love You. I don't know You, but I love You. I want to know You. What are You like? Who are You? What's going on?" Something was moving in this young guitar player's heart at age fourteen or fifteen, in this very poor, out-of-the-way, boring town with a very boring job in a poor family. That's so mysterious.

God whispers to the prophet Samuel, "That kid over there, that guitar player who doesn't know that I've heard his voice; I like him! He has a heart for Me. I've taken note of that kid. I want you to announce who he is to the rebellious king Saul. I want you to tell him one day when you meet him what I think about him."

DAVID: A PORTRAIT OF THE END-TIME CHURCH

David becomes the picture of the end-time church. The Church that the Lord is raising up before the Lord returns is a church after God's own heart, like David.

Look at what God tells Samuel: "The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14, NKJV). He has sought for Himself a man after His own heart." What does it mean to be a person after God's own heart? Because I believe that we're in that hour: I believe that there are people alive on the earth today who are going to witness the appearing of the Lord in the sky. I do believe that with all of my heart. It may be twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years; I don't know. Time-wise, I believe it's a little way down the road. I believe that there are people on the earth who will witness the appearing of Jesus in the sky and all the conflict described in the Word of God at the end of the age. God is raising up a people after His own heart like David.

Beloved, the life of David is a very, very important place of study in the Word of God for the end-time church. Because God has made this one man a picture of what the people across the earth are going to live like before Him. We can't afford not to be familiar with the life of David. We must study the life of David, the great worshipping warrior.

GOD WAS LOVESICK OVER DAVID IN THE MIDST OF HIS WEAKNESS

The message of the life of David was this: in his weakness God enjoyed him, and God was lovesick over him in the midst of his weakness. That was the secret of David's heart. David had a confidence that God enjoyed him and that God liked him even while he was still maturing. David's view of holiness was so radically different than the view of holiness of so many places throughout all of church history.

It's clear in the Word of God that God is angry at rebellion. It's very clear that God is angry at rebellion. Beloved, let me tell you this: there's a dynamic difference between rebellion and immaturity. Many, many

people who love Jesus are immature, but they relate to God as though they're rebellious and they run from a God they think is mad at them and angry at them and ready to crush them. The God who relates to them sees their immaturity and relates to them like He does David; not like they're rebellious, but they're confused about it. Their whole idea of God is so off. Their idea of prayer is off, and their idea of holiness is off because at the very beginning of the journey they mistake the most fundamental principle: they mistake rebellion with immaturity, and everything that's immature they think is rebellious. It's a serious, serious mistake in the grace of God to interpret immaturity as rebellion. Then we relate to God with no confidence at all because we feel we're rebellious and that God is about to judge us with His wrath.

GOD IS NOT MOSTLY MAD OR MOSTLY SAD WHEN HE LOOKS AT US

We say, "Well, when does God begin to enjoy us?"

I love to talk about the gladness of God's heart; it's one of my favorite messages, the glad heart of God, because today many, many people believe God is mostly mad or mostly sad when He relates to them. They think that when He looks at believers, He's either mad, and He says, "I'm going to break every bone in your body when I get my hands on you!" or else He's sad, and He says, "You know, I'm so grieved at you again. I won't break every bone in your body, but I'm so disappointed. Every time I think of you, it grieves Me."

I've got some questions that I could ask you. They're a little painful; they're a little precise. I would venture to say that the majority of the people in this room, if we pushed it, have a God who's either mostly mad or mostly sad when the issue of their immaturity comes before them. Beloved, I have good news for you: He's mostly glad when He looks at you. It changes everything because you run to Him instead of from Him. If He's mostly mad and mostly sad, you turn around and run from Him. If He's mostly glad when He sees your weakness, He says, "Come, come, I saw your weakness; I know more than you know! I'll help you, I love you, you're mine!"

You say, "No, get out of here; that's not real."

"Yes! Really!" I mean, I so loved to be loved. I'm just like you; I love to be loved, it's such a wonderful way to live. It's like, "Really?"

We inch forward. We have to get through all of this teaching we've heard for so many years. The older you are, the more bad teaching you've had, as a rule. We inch toward Him, and we say, "You still like me?" We feel sort of iffy. We don't have the confidence.

David in his weakness would walk boldly forward and say, "Father, Abba, here I am. I've sinned, I'm broken, I love You, God! It's my weakness. God, I know that in Your infinite mercy You want me. I want You!" He had this confidence as a lover that's found nowhere else in the Old Testament. David's confidence as a lover in his weakness is absolutely amazing.

YOUR WEAK AND IMMATURE LOVE IS AUTHENTIC IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

He wasn't just confident that God loved him, though that's one thing. Instead of the word *love*, let's use the word *enjoyed*. I mean, we hear the phrase, "God loves me," all the time, but in this paragraph here, instead of saying, "God loves me," I'll say, "God enjoys me." That pushes it a little. God enjoys me even in my weakness. It's not enough to know that God enjoys me and to have confidence that He actually likes me while I'm growing up. It's more than that. When my love for Jesus is weak, it's still real. We have this idea that our love

isn't real until our love is mature. One of these days when we're sixty, and our love is mature, then it's real. For the forty years between the ages of twenty and sixty our love was never real while it was maturing; it was always false until it was mature. Most people I know think that love isn't real until love is mature. When love is weak, it's false in the eyes of many, many people in the Body of Christ.

Let me tell you, your weak love is authentic, it's real, and it's genuine even when it's weak. It's more than, "I need to have confidence that God loves me." I have to have a second thing: confidence that God believes I love Him even when I'm weak. Beloved, I believe powerfully in repentance; I'm not trying to make it easy for people to live in darkness. Darkness will destroy you. I'm trying to give people a way back into the Father's embrace when they run into the weakness in their life. There's a big difference.

It's one thing to say, "God, You want me." It's another thing entirely to say, "And You know, You believe that I want You."

When I stand before God in my weakness, I stand loved, but I stand not as a hypocrite who just receives love. I am loved, but He sees me as an authentic lover even when I'm weak. He says, "Mike, your love is real. I know that you love Me. You're not a hypocrite under grace; you're a genuine lover who is still weak."

Beloved, when I feel loved and I know that I'm a lover in return, my heart is alive! I say, "I love this! I love the Holy Spirit and the grace of God! I can do anything if that's the relationship!" That's the way that David lived before God.

DAVID WAS A STUDENT OF THE EMOTIONS OF GOD

David was a man after God's own heart. There are two different definitions I like to use for a person after God's own heart. This is really important for you, because the Church worldwide is a people after God's own heart like David.

Number one: David was a man after God's own heart because he obeyed the commands of God's heart. There was a yes in his spirit to the Word of God. There was a commitment to obedience. He obeyed the commands of God's heart.

Beloved, there's a second definition to being a man or a woman after God's own heart. Here it is: he studied the emotions of God's heart.

"Studied the emotions of God's heart? What's that?"

David was a man after God's own heart because he obeyed the commands of God's heart, number one, and number two, he studied; he became a student of the emotions of God. In that way, he was a man going after what was burning in God's heart. "I want to know what You feel! I want to know what You're thinking! I want to know what You're feeling! I want to know Your heart!" He became a student of the affections of God.

God is raising up an army of radically dedicated people who are students of the affections of God. I just want to pause a second; I want you to all close your eyes for just one moment. In your own soul, I want you to say something to the Lord: not my words, but yours. I'll give you thirty to sixty seconds. Quietly you'll say, "I want to be a student of Your affections. I never thought about that, but I want to be a student of Your emotions."

I tell you, it will be a new feeling to connect with that. “I want to be a student. Lord, I want to be like David; I want to do this. I don’t know how to do it, but I want to do it. If someone will tell me how to do it, I’ll do it. I want to know Your heart.”

Talk to Him; just say, “I want to do this, God; I want to be like David. Why not me? Why all the other people? Why can’t I do this?” Beloved, when it connected with me some years ago that I can be a student of God’s heart, of God’s emotions, it literally put me on a path in God. I mean, it’s not like everyone is going to be led to night-and-day prayer through it, but it will have a bias towards night-and-day prayer. Because when you touch that realm, you have to have more. There’s a dimension where, when you touch it a little, you have to have more. Because a little of that information, when it becomes revelation, creates a hunger that creates an appetite that has to be fed. Your appetite for more increases; your capacity to receive it increases. We become students of God’s own heart.

KNOWING GOD’S EMOTIONS EQUIPS YOU TO OBEY HIS COMMANDS

David was certainly one of the most unique men in the Old Testament, if not the most. There was no man in the Old Testament who had understanding of God’s emotions like King David, no one. He stood in a class of his own. I mean, here’s Moses; Moses has all of these really powerful encounters with the Lord. David comes along about 500 or 600 years after Moses. David gets so much more understanding of God’s heart than Moses had. He brings the kingdom of God to an entirely different level. No one after David, none of the great prophets, no one received greater understanding of God’s heart in the Old Testament than King David, “the man after God’s own heart.”

Here’s what God wants us to do. God wants us to be a people after His own heart. He wants us to obey the commands, but He wants us to become students of His emotions. I know some of you think, “I don’t even know how to do that.” That’s alright; we’ll talk about how to do that. It’s a new idea to many of you, but I want this idea to connect with you. Here’s why. This is a very important principle that I’m telling you right now: to know the emotions of God’s heart is what will equip you to obey the commands of God’s heart. To know the emotions of God is what will equip you to obey the commands of God. The Church all over the world has this new, resurgent, spirit of revival. It’s only at the beginning, but all over people want to be radical, to obey, and they’re going after it. One month turns to one year, and they’re hitting the wall; the obedience that they had a year ago in the revival meeting, the desire for obedience, is gone. Why? Because our ability to obey is related to our revelation of God’s heart. The revelation of God’s emotions is what equips your heart for radical obedience. The call to obedience without a corresponding revelation of God’s emotion leaves us frustrated in many, many places. There’s always an exception of a person who isn’t frustrated, but more often than not it leaves us frustrated. We have to become students of God’s emotions.

That was the secret of David’s life. David wanted to know more than the *what* of God. He wanted to know God’s power, but he wanted to know more than the *what* of God, He wanted to know the *why* of God. He didn’t just want to know that God had the power and the wisdom to create the heavens and the earth. He loved the *what* of God’s power. God created and redeemed. He leads history and works miracles. What did God do? He intervenes with power and leads with wisdom. That’s the *what* of God. What God does is a powerful subject that I love to study.

I want to know something more than what He does; I want to know why He does it. “What are You feeling when You create the heavens and the earth? When You used Your power to make stars and galaxies and the earth for the human race, what were You feeling? I want to know that, because it matters to my life to know why You did this thing called making me. Did You make me to display Your power in making humans? Or did You make me and other humans because You burned with desire for humans?”

The Lord’s answer is this: “I burned with desire for humans. I wanted them; I wanted them. I want you, Mike; in your weakness I want you. When others don’t, I want you.” Beloved, when you know what God’s heart looks like emotionally and you know what you look like spiritually to God, then, then, then, you’ll change your lifestyle. You’ll never, ever get anyone to change their actions long term until they change the way they view themselves before God. They’ll never change the way that they view themselves before God until they get a new idea of God’s heart.

THE THREE MISSION FIELDS OF THE GLOBAL CHURCH

In the Church we have three mission fields. The Church is reaching out to the world: “Be saved in the name of Jesus.” They get saved and we call that *evangelism*. That’s awesome! The very center of the prayer movement is evangelism. We don’t “do prayer” so that we can escape the hassles of evangelism. We do prayer for evangelism. It’s not the only reason but it’s certainly central to the prayer movement.

That’s mission field number one: they’re saved. T-10, T-9, T-8... In just a small amount of time now, they’re bored, stagnant Christians. Now we have mission field number two: these bored Christians. We have to get them to shake off the dust and get dedicated. First they were lost; now they’re saved and they’ve backslidden. Now we get them dedicated. Here they’re dedicated, but you’ve only got a minute. You only get them dedicated for maybe a year or two. I’m telling you, it’s like the hourglass turns. They say yes to radical dedication, and in just a moment they’ll be cold again. In just another year or two they’ll be as cold as ice. They have to go beyond dedication; they have to live in fascination with God. God created us to be fascinated with Him.

DEDICATION IS FUELED AND SUSTAINED BY FASCINATION

I’m talking to dedicated people. I said, “Lord, let me talk to dedicated people and help get them fascinated by the Word and the Spirit about Jesus Christ.” Because if you get fascinated, then there’s a replenishing; the thing renews itself all the time. It’s living fascinated, living lovesick, living overwhelmed at God’s passion for us. That’s the fruit of studying the emotions of God.

We started a whole Bible school, Forerunner School of Prayer, around the subject of teaching people God’s emotions. I mean, that’s the key theme of the whole Bible school; we wanted a school that would train people, whether they’re the interns or the students or the IHOP-KC staff. We wanted an entire operation that just inundated people with the emotions of God so that they would have the heart of David. They would be so secure in the love of God, so fascinated by the beauty of God, that their dedication would stand the test of time. Because dedication is fueled by fascination. The Lord told us, “Raise up a whole Bible school around people fascinated with My Son.” We teach all the books of the Bible, and all the normal stuff, but the core of our Bible school is bringing people into fascination with Jesus so that they can go do the work of the kingdom from an entirely different point of view.

God wants you to be a man or a woman after His own heart. You may be fifteen years old; you may be that little guitar player in that little 300-member town, totally bored with your five-dollar-an-hour job down at

QuickTrip. David was working minimum wage all by himself, thinking, “This is really not working for me.” He was bored, he was poor, he was left out, he was all by himself. God said, “I will show you what My heart looks like, David. I will take you out of that place.”

Beloved, the great glory isn't to be removed from Bethlehem and put on a throne in this age. My goal isn't to be put on a throne in Jerusalem. David went to a throne. My goal is to be fascinated with the beautiful God. I don't care if He keeps me in Bethlehem, because Bethlehem with the beautiful God is heaven on earth. I don't care where I go. My goal isn't to fill the stadiums. I want to fill the stadiums because I want humans to hear this message. I don't want to fill the stadiums so that I can write home and say, “Dear Mom, I made it, I told you that I would.” I don't want to fill the stadiums to make a point: “See, I was in the bottom half of my senior class, but I told you that I would make it one of these days!” It's not about that.

I want to fill the stadiums because I want people like you and me saying, “Oh, this is incredible. Is it really true?” I want millions saying what I'm saying. “Is this really true? Oh, come on. Lord, really, is this true? It's really awesome!” That's what I want millions to say. That's why I want to fill stadiums. I'm not trying to get out of Bethlehem to Jerusalem, because God took David out of this little, 300-member town, and put him in the capital city. That's not the point, though. It was incidental; it was secondary.

PSALM 16: DAVID'S THEOLOGY OF ENJOYABLE PRAYER

Turn to Psalm 16. I mean, I'm about to make a crazy statement. This has to be the greatest psalm of David. I know tomorrow I'll say one of the other ones is. Oh! It hurts, it's so good. If you wanted to title Psalm 16, you could title it a dozen ways. I hope we have another session or two, because I hope to develop this a little, line by line. There's not a wasted line on one theme. It's David's paradigm of enjoyable prayer, every single line. You may look through it and say, “What's that verse for, ‘drinking blood’? What on earth is that about?” Every line of Psalm 16 is about David's theology of experiencing enjoyable prayer. You could call it, “Enjoying intimacy with God.” Every single line of this psalm is David's inner life about how he views God so differently than almost everyone in his day. It's the Psalm 16 revelation, and we could break out a half a dozen other psalms that say the same thing.

Psalm 16 is the inner workings of David's ideas about God, laid out one, two, three, four. It's so brilliant, you say, “I want to know what David knew; I want to see what David saw.”

The Lord says, “If you want it, you can have it. If you want it, you can have it.”

“IN YOUR PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY”

Look at verse 11. It's Sam Storms' favorite verse. He wrote a book on this verse called *Pleasures Forevermore*. It's absolutely fantastic. We have it in the bookstore. I told them, “Just boxes of this book, *Pleasures Forevermore*.” Sam develops verse 11, line upon line, about how God is a God of pleasure. What an interesting idea.

Look at what David says in Psalm 16:11. He says three statements; we're only going to look at one or two of them. Because my goal isn't to try and cover the whole thing; my goal is to point to a realm of reality. I mean, that's why we have Bible schools, to spend three months on Psalm 16. I can't cover it in a session or two, but I can point and say, “Beloved there's something so powerful here.”

Look at Psalm 16; look right in the middle. I mean, these three statements are worth hours and hours of teaching. He says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy” (Ps. 16:11b). What a statement. This was one of the secrets of David’s life, that he understood God’s emotions. He said, “You’re a God of gladness; You’re overflowing with gladness.” Beloved, do you know how strange of a doctrine that was in David’s day? It’s as strange today. We know the verse, so we have to say yes to it, because it’s in the Bible. I tell you, the way we preach holiness, the way we preach prayer, the way we preach dedication tells us that we don’t have a clue what verse 11 means. Throughout the world and in the Church, we don’t have a clue. I certainly don’t understand it very much. I’m at the beginning of the beginning of this.

David says, “Let me tell you about the God for whom I’m lovesick. He’s a God of overflowing gladness.”

THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE THRONE, THE HAPPIER WE ARE

Think about the throne of God in Revelation 4; the closer they get to the throne, the happier they are. If you were to be transported by the Holy Spirit to the throne of God right now, you would be shocked by the feeling of happiness that you would have. You would have overwhelming terror of God’s majesty and an overflowing happiness. You would be saying, “More, I can’t handle any more! Too much! Never enough! It’s too much, I can’t handle it! I want more! Oh, get me out of here! It feels so good! Oh, it’s so horrifying!” Because it’s so intense. Let’s forget all of that for now, but if you got up there, you would say, “This is intense!”

Someone says, “What are you feeling?”

“I love it up here! I just feel good.”

Here are the elders; they’re falling down. “Excuse me, I know you’re worshiping, but Bickle at that OneThing conference said something I want to know is true: are you happy? Oh my goodness, he’s smiling! Are you happy?”

He gets up and says, “The closer we get, the happier we are; it’s incredible!” In His presence, around His throne, is the fullness of joy! The angels in His presence are full of joy. Jesus at the right hand says, “Oh Father, I love You.”

The Father says, “Oh, Jesus, I love this! I love My kingdom, I love You, I love the angels, I love My people! This is awesome!”

IN HIS PRESENCE IS THE HAPPINESS OF OVERFLOWING JOY

We step out of heaven, we go back to the earth, we look up and all of a sudden we have this mean, mad God. Beloved, God is angry at rebellion. I want to be very clear about that. He relates to immaturity very, very differently. In His presence, around His throne, is the happy God, with the happy angels and the happy people. I’m talking about the happiness of overflowing joy. This is one of the great secrets. This wasn’t a little verse they did throughout. I’m making this part up, but this verse was the title of about ten books that David wrote. My point is, he had volumes and volumes and volumes to say about this reality: “In the presence of God is total happiness, total joy.” He was just giving the title of a section of his library here. This wasn’t an afterthought; this was one of the biggest doctrines of David’s life right here. Sam Storms devoted an entire book to it. It’s absolutely brilliant. Good job, Samuel: *Pleasures Forevermore*.

Hebrews 1:9 in essence says this: “Jesus was the happiest Man who ever walked on planet earth” (Heb. 1:9, paraphrased). That’s what it says: “Jesus had more of His Father’s gladness than any man who ever walked on planet earth.” Picture Jesus: this thirty-year-old Man comes into town. He has the brightness of His Father’s countenance. He understands human weakness; He likes us; He loves us. This is the God that David worshiped. Jesus walks into town and has more gladness. He’s anointed. It’s not just that He has gladness; He has His Father’s gladness. It’s not like His Father is saying, “There He goes again.” The Father says, “That looks like Me; that’s how I feel.” He was anointed with His Father’s gladness.

Jesus walks into town. He comes walking in, a stranger and a famous preacher. They’ve heard about Him; everyone is there. The kids run up to Him: “Oh, we like Him!” He’s rubbing the kids’ heads.

You know the moms: “Don’t, He’s a famous preacher, you can’t go do that. Why did you do that?”

“Mom, I can tell He likes me, I can tell. He looked at me, He winked, I know He likes me!” He was a stranger and the kids flocked to Him.

Lenny and Tracy Laguardia are on our staff, and they’ve given themselves to children and the happiness of God and introducing them to the happy God and the Holy Spirit, and it’s amazing, the grace of God that’s on their lives. I so appreciate them. They’ve given their whole life to showing children the face of God.

I can see these kids; here they come running through, and they look at the twelve disciples and say, “Uhh, I’m not sure.”

What’s the tip-off? You know, here are John and James: “Away with the kids! Back with the children! It’s the Man of God! Kids, go! Go!”

They say, “Uhh, no, I don’t think that we like them. We don’t think that they like us.” The kids are trying to sneak over there and Jesus is down and they grab Him and they say, “Mom, I know He likes me, I know He likes me; that’s why I like Him.” That’s the secret right there.

The kids look at the Pharisees and say, “Absolutely no way with those guys! No way!” You know why? Because when the kids looked at the Pharisee, to hug a Pharisee was as ridiculous as going to a prayer meeting with a mad God. It really is true. Why would one of these little six-year olds hug one of these angry, cranky men? Maybe if they’re related to them, maybe that one moment at Christmas if the prize is big enough; that’s it. But then this little six-year-old boy is no more going to hug that cranky Pharisee.

You know what? We preach a God that looks like a Pharisee and we tell people to go to a prayer meeting and endure the boring exercises of a boring, mad, God. There’s a reason the prayer movement around the world has been so, so utterly short-fused, because our view of God is so unlike David’s view of God. Who wants to go sit in a prayer meeting and endure the disappointment of a mad God? It’s like asking a kid, “Would you like to go to the principal’s office?”

“Hey, can I go to the principal’s office tomorrow? That would be fun!”

He’s sitting there: “Hi!”

“I’m going to beat you, you little kid!”

“Oh, I love being in this principal’s office!” That’s how we’re trying to get the Church into prayer meetings. You couldn’t get a kid to volunteer for the principle’s office. You couldn’t get a kid to go hug that Pharisee, but we’re trying to get the Church to sit in a boring prayer meeting with a mad God. They won’t do it. They absolutely won’t do it.

IT’S NOT ABOUT PAYING THE PRICE TO ENDURE A BORING GOD

Here’s what we’ve done through 2,000 years of preaching. We’ve shifted over and presented prayer like this: “Pay the price, pay the price. You’ll pay the price for prayer. If you’ll hang in there and endure the mean, boring God, if you can do this, God will reward you.”

If you thought all the way through the theology that’s going on for holiness and prayer today, I hear it and I say, “I wouldn’t go to that prayer meeting!”

I’m serious! Now I’ve taught on paying the price and counting the cost and making sacrifices, but I won’t give all of the qualifiers because I’m speaking to your heart about something. I’m not trying to dot every *i* and cross every *t*. So forgive me if I kick one of your golden calves accidentally.

Here’s the deal; here’s the deal; here’s what’s going on. Because we have a wrong view of God, we have a wrong view of ourselves, so we have a wrong view of prayer and a wrong view of holiness. We have a mad God and a hypocritical person paying the price for boring holiness. That’s it. “God is mad, and I’m just a hypocrite anyway.” We’re paying the price for boring holiness and boring prayer.

The preachers can’t get anyone to be holy, and they can’t get anyone to go to prayer meetings, and so they trot out, “If you’ll pay the price.”

I can see the Father saying, “Jesus, I like being with You. Are We that hard to be with?”

The angels say, “We love being with You; they don’t understand who You are.” I’m wondering what the angels are thinking as they’re hearing us talk about enduring and the pain of hardships and the cost and sacrificing in prayer. They’re saying, “They don’t know the God that we hang out with. When we get promoted, we get to be closer to Him. These men are talking about paying the price to endure Him.” It’s really true.

I mean, let’s make it personal. Let me be totally clear: this didn’t really happen. I’m talking on the phone: “Yeah, I’m going to pay the price and have dinner with my wife. Yes, I’ve counted the cost and it’s really boring; it’s a real drag, but, you know, you get in real trouble if you don’t, so, what the heck?”

That’s how we preach on prayer and holiness: mad God, boring kingdom, hang in there. We preach about exciting devil, boring God, exciting devil, boring God.

WHEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF GOD CHANGES, PRAYER WILL BECOME ENJOYABLE

I remember when I was nineteen years old, I went to a Bible study at the University of Missouri, just a few hours down the road here. They told me, “You have to pray.” I was nineteen years old, and I determined to

pray, because our youth group was all committed to being missionaries and martyrs. We wanted to go to the mission field and hopefully die; that was what we were into.

In the early 1970s, before they had cars and telephones, there was a move of God across the land from about 1969 to 1973. Millions of teenagers came to the Lord in what they called “the Jesus movement” and hundreds and hundreds were swept into the kingdom, at my high school and everywhere. Our youth group grew from 200 to 1,200 over night; as did youth groups all over America. Some grew to 5,000 and 10,000, like that. That was only a little, gentle breeze of what’s coming.

So we and our teachers were committed to revival and missions. We were committed to praying. They told me I had to pray. I was going for it. I got about ten prayer books. They told me to pray for an hour a day. I said, “If that’s what you’ve got to do, I’ll do it.”

I read these books on prayer, and all of these books were, “Mad God, hypocritical believer, boring kingdom, hang in there and it gets better in eternity.” I committed to an hour; I made this promise to God that I would do this. I prayed from 9:00pm to 10:00pm every night. I got there at 9:00pm. At 9:01pm, I would be praying, “Dear God, help me in the college Bible study. Help the Bible study, help me do better on the football team, help me get a good girlfriend.” I did! I really prayed that. He answered me profoundly. Then I said, “The kids in India are starving. Help the kids in India; that would be really great.”

Fifty-eight minutes to go. “Oh, man!” I was in a dark room with the doors locked. I had four roommates; they were in the other room laughing. I began to walk up and down. I said, “OK, hmmm... OK, help me on the football team, help me with the Bible study, give me a good girlfriend—that would really be good. Just help me, Lord; You know what I mean.”

Fifty-seven minutes to go. “Oh, my goodness!”

Here was my fundamental problem when I was nineteen years old. I loved God, I was a radical at nineteen years old for Jesus. I hated prayer, I hated Bible study, I hated witnessing and fasting, but I loved God. I really did: I loved God, and I loved meetings. I loved to go to meetings, I was a meeting addict; I would go to every meeting, come early and stay late. I loved meetings, and I loved God, but I hated prayer, hated personal Bible study, hated fasting, and hated witnessing. I could witness here and there, but mostly that was hard, too. I said, “Lord, I’m really a mess because everything that I need to do according to all these books, I’m really, really bad at.” I was really in a mess.

Here’s what I would do: I would go buy books on prayer and read them at around 6:00pm. I thought I should read books that said, “You old, dirty sinner, if you don’t like prayer, you’re wicked.” It made me feel good to feel bad. I thought I needed to be shaken over hell on a rotten stick. If I felt bad about being bad at prayer, at least that was a little better than not feeling anything at all, like some of my buddies. They didn’t feel anything about needing prayer. At least I felt bad about it.

It was 8:00pm, one hour before the hour of terror began. I mean, we’re talking every night—even during Christmas break. I had committed to doing this for 365 days a year. That meant Christmas break, that meant after, that meant everything. “Oh, why did I do that?”

So at 8:00pm, with an hour to go, sweat started coming up. “Oh, no! In thirty minutes I have to face the boring, angry God again.” Beloved, I began to study the life of David and the Song of Solomon; my idea of God began to change, my idea of what I looked like to God changed, and my idea of prayer changed. If you had told me when I was nineteen years old that I would be leading a twenty-four-hour-a-day prayer movement, I would have laughed: “Impossible! I hate prayer! I love God, I hate prayer!”

Then it hit me. Someone said, “Why do you think that God told you to raise up this IHOP-KC?”

I said, “I know; I know now, I’m the world’s authority on bad, un-anointed prayer. I’ve had more un-anointed prayer *per capita* than any man I’ve ever met.” I said, “I’m a world class authority on boring God, bad prayer. I know about it. I can talk about it at a moment’s notice.” Because I did it for so many years, I know it well, and I know the answer of how to get out of it.

I hear it from preachers: “Sacrifice, pay the price, endure Him, He’s worth it. Endure Him, He’s boring, but hell is a long time.”

THE AUTHOR OF PLEASURE IS THE GOD OF PLEASURE

There’s one more line I want to talk about for just a moment, and then we’ll close. Look at verse 11: “At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11c). I mean, if it’s outrageous to talk about a God of joy and gladness, that was outrageous! David wrote songs about it; he wrote psalms, he sang about it, he led worship meetings about the happy glad God who likes us when we’re weak.

People were saying, “Where’s David at?”

He took it up to a whole different level. He said, “Not only is He happy; not only is He the author of pleasure; He’s the God of pleasure. He’s the God of pleasure.”

Beloved, we’ve presented it as paying the price and sacrificing because the devil is exciting and God is boring, but we want to avoid the penalty because God has more power. That’s not the way of the kingdom. Here we are; here’s the list of all the really juicy, bad sins, whatever those are. I was staring at them, back when I was twenty years old. I was a holiness preacher. I read all of the books on holiness and prayer and tortured myself. I was doing everything bad and quitting all the time. “God doesn’t like me and I’m a hypocrite anyway; I wouldn’t like me either if I was God!” That’s really what I thought. I had no idea that God saw me as genuine and immature, and that He liked me.

So I looked at this list and said, “OK, no, no, no, no, no...” I would grit my teeth and face them off with my religious self-determination: “No!” Then I made vows: “I promise if I do one, I’ll tell everyone.” I said, “If I promise to shame myself, that would keep me away for a while.” I don’t ever remember telling anyone when I did one, but anyway, just for the record, I remember thinking about promising to tell them; I don’t know if I actually promised to tell them, but I remember never telling anyone. Anyway, I would grit my teeth: “No, no, no.” These pleasures were so powerful.

ALL OF THE PLEASURES ORIGINATE IN GOD, AND THE DEVIL COUNTERFEITS THEM

The Holy Spirit taps us on the shoulder. It didn’t really happen this way, but, He gets our attention, He turns us around, and He says, “I am the author of pleasure. All of the pleasures originate in Me, and the Devil

counterfeits them. I'm the author of pleasure. I have pleasures—physical pleasures, mental pleasures, emotional, spiritual ones.”

The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are when God reveals God to us. When God the Holy Spirit reveals His emotions and His beauty and His lovingkindness, something is so excited in our spirit. When God reveals God to our Spirit, it's the superior pleasure of life. When we touch the superior pleasures, we look back at the inferior pleasures, and this is what Sam's book is all about: when you've experienced the superior pleasures, you're equipped to say no to the inferior ones. If all that you have is the inferior pleasures and no experience of the superior pleasures of the touch of God on your spirit, you're under the dominion of those inferior pleasures. You've nothing to fight it with besides commitment and dedication.

Beloved, you can sustain that commitment for three months, or maybe three years due to strength, but you can't do it for decades. The Lord has to redirect us to fascinate us with Himself. The greatest pleasure that God gives the human spirit is when God reveals God to the human spirit.

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE INTIMIDATED BY ALL THAT THE DEVIL OFFERS US

David said, “At Your right hand are pleasures.” One of my favorite verses is Psalm 36:8, in which David said, “I drink from the river of Your pleasures, O God” (Ps. 36:8, paraphrased). He said, “I drink from the river of Your pleasure.” When God the Holy Spirit was revealing the emotions of God to David, David called it “the river of pleasure.” Beloved, I'm talking from experience now, not just from a Bible verse: when God reveals God, it fascinates, it exhilarates, it's the most powerfully satisfying thing. We don't have to be intimidated by all that the devil is offering us. We'll discover a boring devil and exciting God, if we only relate to Him in the way that He wants us to relate to Him.

I said it today: believers are going to have nothing to do with the pornography shops, and the pornography industry is entrenched deep in the church leadership, and there are hundreds of thousands of God's people all over the earth entrenched and addicted to pornography. I'm not looking at them telling them how evil they are; I'm telling them, “There is a way out.” It's not by looking at pornography and saying, “No, no, no.” It's by finding what He feels about you, and learning to see yourself differently; it's by being exhilarated, being fascinated. You look back and say, “Boring!” We'll get out of it, not because we grit our teeth; we'll get out of it because we'll lose interest in it. It's a totally different paradigm; we'll lose interest in it.

“I HAVE SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME”

Look at verse 8; here's the “onething” theme. This is the center of the psalm; it's his prayer life. “I have set the Lord always before me” (Ps. 16:8). That's night-and-day prayer; that's the one thing. We've taught Psalm 27:4: “This one thing: I gaze upon His beauty” (Ps. 27:4, paraphrased). That's the same thing as verse 8. David says, “I have a deep prayer life; a deep prayer life.” Never do you find David telling people that they need to sacrifice in order to have a prayer life; it never occurred to David that the presence of God, His joy and pleasure, was something for which he had to sacrifice in order to enjoy it. It never crossed his mind. Maybe in his youth it did, but certainly not later on.

FILLING OUR BEING WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT BURNS IN GOD'S HEART

“I have set the Lord always before me.” Right there is a radical prayer life. “Therefore my heart is glad”—because He's near me in prayer (Ps. 16:9). He says, “My prayer life isn't a bummer; my prayer life makes me glad. I love this way.”

The Lord told Paul Cain, “I will bring a new approach to holiness. There will be a young adult movement that touches the earth. There will be new music that goes to the ends of the earth.” He said, “I will give them a new approach to holiness.” I think I understand that, though I don’t understand it all. It’s an approach to holiness of understanding and encountering God’s emotions.

We’re students of God’s emotions. We’ll study the life of David, the Song of Solomon, and many books in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and we will fill our being with the knowledge of what burns in God’s heart.

I remember two and a half years ago, I had been pastoring for twenty-five years. I’ll end with this story. After pastoring for twenty-five years, I resigned my church, resigned my salary, and signed off the church board and everything else. We were having a family meeting. We hadn’t announced it yet, but my two sons, Luke and Paul, were seventeen and nineteen. It was nearly three years ago; now they’re twenty-one and twenty-three.

I said, “I’m resigning the church.”

“Really?”

“Yes, that’s what I want to do; I want to resign the church.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m giving over my salary, everything.”

“Huh, OK. What are you going to do?”

“Well, we’ll get this little trailer, and I’ve got four or five people who want to join me; we’ll get the trailer, we’ll get some guitar players, and we’ll sing for hours.”

“Oh, I mean, what are you going to do for your real job?”

“No, it will grow, it will grow; people are going to join us. There are four or five right now.”

“OK, so you’re getting a trailer and a few guitar players. You have no salary. What are you going to do for your real job?”

“No, that’s what we’ll do.”

“Umm, good?”

My boys, Luke and Paul, really love me. They’re both here, today and yesterday, and tomorrow. They said, “Good.”

One of them said, “Why? Just for fun? Why? Are you mad at the church?”

I said, “No, I love the church.” I was spending lots of time fasting for a number of years there. I said, “I want to fast more, and I want to get those guitar players. We’re just going to sing songs.”

I said, “This may surprise you, but here’s really why I’m doing it: because I love pleasure.”

They said, “Because you love pleasure?”

I said, “Yes, that’s why I’m doing it. I love pleasure.” I was being a little weird on purpose; I mean, I knew I was playing with their minds. I was being totally honest, too. I said, “You know, the men you all hang out with, the few young men? You don’t have nearly the appetite for pleasure that I have. I’ve so much heavier a demand in my being for pleasure than you do. I can’t do the other thing. I’m addicted. I’ve got to have more. I’ve got to feel it more deeply. I’m totally addicted to pleasure. I’ll go to that place, get a few guitar players, we’ll fast and pray, and we’ll study the emotions of God and we’ll say, ‘Oh, I love You, I love You, I love, I love You, I love You, I love You.’” I said, “That’s why I’m really doing it: because I love pleasure. What do you guys think?”

They said, “Dad, we’re with you; that’s good.”

Amen. Let’s stand.

MINISTRY TIME

The Lord wants to show you that He’s not boring, and we don’t have to sacrifice to hang out with Him. It’s not a sacrifice. It’s only a sacrifice because our ideas are wrong. Our ideas are so wrong. The Lord wants to show us what He looks like emotionally, and He’s going to show us what we look like to Him spiritually, and then all of the other life decisions will be taken care of. He’s burning for Me! He’s burning for You!