

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

I. REVIEW FOR LAST WEEK

- A. The Shema Israel: Shema is the Hebrew word for “hear.” God called Israel to hear His heart.
⁴ ***Hear [Shema], O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deut. 6:4-5)***
- B. What they were to hear was that loving God is His first priority and the greatest way to live.
³⁷ ***Love the Lord ... with all your heart ... ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37)***
- C. The Shema reveals the “why” behind the “what” of creation and redemption. God’s purpose is to provide an eternal companion for Jesus who would be equally yoked to Him in love. Jesus’ inheritance is the mandatory obedience of all creation and the voluntary love of a people who He fully possesses (Ps. 2:8). As a King, Jesus will be obeyed, but as a Bridegroom, He will be loved.
- D. This session is focused on defining what it means to love Him in four spheres of our life (with all our heart, soul, mind and strength) and in four stages (receiving love from God, giving it back to God which overflows to ourselves and then to others).

II. GROWING IN LOVE: FOUR STAGES OF LOVE

- A. Stage 1: Receiving increased revelation of the love that God has for us (Eph. 3:18-19).
¹⁹ ***We love Him because He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)***
1. The foundational truth that equips us to love God is to know and feel His affection for us. God loves us in the way that God loves God. Jesus feels the same intensity of love for us that the Father feels for Him. This is the ultimate revelation of our worth. This truth gives us the right to stand before God with confidence as one of His favorites.
⁹ ***As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (Jn. 15:9)***
 2. Affection-based obedience is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection for us and giving it back to Him. It is the strongest, deepest, and most consistent obedience. Why? Because a lovesick person will endure anything for love.
 3. Duty-based obedience is our commitment to obedience even if we do not feel God’s presence. God’s Word requires that we obey God without feeling inspired to do so.
 4. Fear-based obedience is obedience motivated by the fear of negative consequences. It is biblical to appeal to shame and fear to motivate people. Scripture does have do’s and don’t’s, such as do not commit adultery, steal, slander, etc. We know that God will use His rod because He loves us too much to leave us in compromise (Heb. 12:5-11). We sin because our heart is unsatisfied with God without the superior pleasures of loving God.

B. Stage 2: Receiving the Father's love for Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

²⁶ *I declared Your name ... that the love with which You loved Me may be in them (Jn. 17:26)*

1. It takes God to love God. The anointing (supernatural ability) to receive God's love and then to return it back to Him is the greatest gift that the Spirit imparts to our heart.

⁵ *The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)*

2. We were created with a longing to be wholehearted and abandoned, and thus to know the joy of lovesickness. There is nothing more satisfying than having the power to give the deepest affection of our heart to God and to be loyal in love. We soar in the joy of holy lovesickness. We long to possess the power to be abandoned instead of being stuck in boredom, passivity, disloyalty, and compromise which leave us broken and discontent.

C. Stage 3: Loving ourselves in the grace of God

³⁹ *The second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt. 22:39)*

1. We will never love our neighbor more than we love ourselves in the grace of God. By loving ourselves, I refer to knowing what we "look like" to God, or knowing who we are in Christ as His inheritance (Eph. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:17), along with valuing and even rejoicing in who God made us to be physically and in our personality and gifting.

¹³ *You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts ... ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed ... ¹⁷ How precious are Your thoughts to me (Ps. 139:13-17)*

2. To love who we are in the grace of God is to be in agreement with God and holiness, which is very different from loving ourselves in a fleshly and selfish way.

3. We must not secretly wish we were someone else, as if God made a mistake with us. This is to charge God with error. As we get our eyes off of others (envy) and off our failures (despising ourselves) and put them on His grace, then we will love who God made us.

D. Stage 4: Loving others is the visible measurement of our invisible love for God. Only by being energized by loving Jesus and ourselves are we able to consistently overflow in love for other.

³⁴ *That you love one another ... ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples (Jn. 13:34-35)*

¹⁸ *Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (1 Jn. 3:18-19)*

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

III. LOVING GOD ON GOD'S TERMS

- A. Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience (Deut. 6:1-9; Jn. 14:21). There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His Word. Loving God requires more than singing to Him or merely having sentimental feelings about Him.
¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments ... ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me ... ²³ If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. (Jn. 14:15-23)
- B. Jesus' commands are all related to love. He commands us to stay near His heart, to seek His face, to choose love over lust, to receive eternal rewards, and to be vessels of love to others by serving.
- C. Denying our lustful desires is the theater God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different **assignment** from which we offer our gift of love to God. Saying "no" to sin gives us an opportunity to express our love. He takes it personally as we resist sin because of love.
- D. We must love God on His terms. Jesus wants love from us that allows Him to take total control of our lives to protect us and glorify us in His love.
- E. There are many definitions of love, liberty, and freedom in the culture of the Church in our nation. God is not a hippie. His definition of love is not about being laidback to chill out. There is no hint of this view of love from the apostles.
- F. One of the core issues at the end of the age will be in how love is defined. We will define love on God's terms or by the humanistic culture that "seeks love" without reference to obedience to God's Word. The true definition of love and good works is only found in allegiance to Jesus. We must renounce the false paradigms of love that are emerging in the Church today.
- G. Nothing more clearly brings this to the surface as our view of salvation. All men, regardless how much they seem to love, will go to hell without Jesus. My only hope of salvation is that Jesus paid the price of my guilt.
- H. True love is loyalty to God's Word that stands up for truth in today's man-fearing church culture.
- I. We will not allow our experience to be reduced to mere language about being extravagantly devoted. There is no substitute to loving God on God's terms. Some will give God more time and money if He will allow them to continue in compromise. What God wants most is our response of love that is manifest in seeking to obey His Word, which is where our safety is.

- J. What does it look like to love God with all our heart and mind? God is Love who burns as an all-consuming fire of jealousy. He wants to take over our life and to consume us from the inside out by dominating our affections, thoughts, and words. This love is not passive but passionate. The more we seek to live for love, the more broken we will be with true humility and seeking to obey Him. Jesus defines the life of love in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).
- K. The yoke of Jesus and His definition of obedient love is our true liberty. This is the easy yoke! People in love are untouchable. True freedom is found in the yoke of Christ; as we become extravagant lovers of God, we refuse to get trapped in bitterness by those who mistreat us or get caught up into seeking wealth and fame as our primary goal in the kingdom.

IV. WHOLEHEARTED LOVE FOR GOD: FOUR SPHERES OF LIFE

- A. God wants us to love Him with all of our heart and mind, because He loves us with all of His heart and mind. It is our debt and gift to love God. His requirement is to our great benefit.
³⁰ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. (Mk. 12:30)*
- B. Jesus wants to reveal Himself to us as more than our Savior (forgiver), healer, and master, but as the jealous Bridegroom God who will not relent in His pursuit of us until He has all our heart.
¹⁴ *For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14)*
- C. We earnestly ask Jesus to come to us as the God of jealous love who demands everything. We cry, “Lord, we want more of You.” Jesus responds by saying, “I want more of you.”
- D. To be lovesick for God means we seek to love Jesus in a deep and focused way, not just “on the run” as we are seeking more money and ministry. It is to desire to encounter Him more than anything else (Mt. 5:6). It is to be sick or pained when compromise is in our life (Mt. 5:3-4).
⁴ *He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love. ⁵ Sustain me ... refresh me with ... for I am lovesick. (Song 2:4-5)*
- E. No one else can give God all “your love” except for you. A unique part of Jesus’ inheritance has been entrusted by the Father to you specifically. It is the love that only you can give. We only get one opportunity to do this in a fallen world where love for Jesus is both costly and rare.

V. LOVE WITH ALL OUR HEART: AFFECTIONS

- A. *Love with all our heart*: with all our affection (emotions). We set our affections on anything we choose. We can determine some of our emotions by setting the heart. We change our mind and God changes our heart (emotions). Our emotions will follow whatever we set ourselves to pursue. We can set our heart to be filled with zeal for God.
¹⁴ *Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him. (Ps. 91:14)*

- B. We can intentionally set our affections to love Jesus. This requires that we remove everything that diminishes our affections (bitterness, lust, and being over-stimulated by entertainment). This requires that we are focused on pursuing love for Jesus more than gaining things and influence.
1. David declared that he would love God. David set the intention of our heart to love God.
¹ I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)
 2. John leaned on Jesus' heart, or set his heart to love and be as near to Him as possible. John was saying, "I am one who leans on Jesus' heart because I love Him."
²⁰ The disciple ... who also had leaned on His breast at the supper (Jn. 21:20)
- C. We set our heart to love Him by committing to walk in obedience even when it is costly.
- D. We set our heart on loving God by regularly asking for supernatural help to love Jesus. Ask God to pour His love for Jesus into your heart and to direct the reins of your heart into His love.
⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God (2 Thes. 3:5)

VI. LOVE WITH ALL OUR SOUL: PERSONALITY (SPEECH)

- A. ***Love with all our soul***: our personality is expressed most dynamically by our speech. Determine to express your personality by speaking and acting in a way that enhances, not diminishes, love.
- B. The most common way to use our soul to quench love is by grieving the Spirit by our words. When the Spirit is grieved, we do not receive from Him in the same measure (Eph. 4:29-32). We walk in love by purifying our speech (Eph. 5:1-6). Our love can be diminished by the fire released by wrong speech, which affects our inner man (Jas 3:6-10)—as speaking in dishonoring ways about the saints (1 Cor. 3:2-3, 16-18; Rom. 12:10-14; 1 Cor. 4:12). We are to renounce grumbling and evil speaking against one another (1 Cor. 10:8-13; Jas 4:10-11; 5:8-9).
- C. In our failure we confess, ***"I'm loved [by God] and I am a lover [of God], therefore I am successful."*** I am not defined by my failure or by my accomplishments. I am not despised by God, nor am I a hopeless hypocrite because of my weakness. We must live by our spiritual identity (what we look like to God) instead of our natural identity (what we look like to others) by confessing, "Jesus, I am Your beloved, Your favorite one—a disciple You love."
⁷ Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (Jn. 21:7)

VII. LOVE WITH ALL OUR MIND: MEDITATION

- A. **Love with all our mind**: we fill our minds with long and loving meditation on God’s Word and resist putting anything in our minds that diminishes love for Jesus and quenches the Holy Spirit.
- B. To love with all of our mind is our decision to take time to fill our mind with God’s Word and to agree with biblical paradigms of God. We gain revelation of God’s love by meditating on it from God’s Word. We position ourselves to receive by sitting long hours before God in His Word.
- C. The implications of God loving us with all His mind is staggering. There are 100 billion stars in the Milky Way Galaxy, which is only one of 100 million galaxies in the known universe.

VIII. LOVE WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH: RESOURCES

- A. **Love with all our strength**: with our resources (time, money, talents, reputation, and influence)
- B. We fast in the area of our strengths, especially in the five activities emphasized in Matthew 6:1-18. These five areas are expressions of voluntary weakness, because we invest our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into kingdom purposes. The normal use of our strengths is to increase our personal comfort, wealth, and honor. In other words, by the fasted lifestyle we bring our natural strengths to God as we trust Him to “return” our strength back to us in a way that enriches our personal spheres of responsibility and transforms us with meekness.
⁹ *My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness [voluntary weakness of the fasted life style]. (2 Cor. 12:9)*
- C. Jesus describes five “grace-releasing activities” that position our heart to receive more in the grace of God. We secretly **serve and give** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money [6:1-4, 19-21]), **pray** (6:5-13), **bless adversaries** (forgiving, 6:14-15; 5:44), and **fast** (6:16-18).
- D. Our devotional lives are the means of appropriating free grace, not of earning it. In these five areas, we position our cold heart before the bonfire of God’s enabling grace so as to receive the Spirit’s empowering. **Analogy**: we put our cold heart before the bonfire of God’s presence.

IX. RADICAL CHRISTIANITY: WHAT IS IT?

- A. The main objective of a believer’s life is to be able to present to Jesus at the end of our life the testimony of a life with perfect (complete) obedience, thus offering perfect love to Jesus.
¹² *If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us ... ¹⁶ God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God ... ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we. (1 Jn. 4:12-17)*
- B. We seek to offer perfected love to Jesus, who is worthy of the sacrifices we make to obey Him.
¹² *Saying, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power ... !” (Rev. 5:12)*

- C. To be poor in spirit means that we know that our spirit is deficient in obedience or love (two “great commandments”). On the last day, the fire of Jesus’ eyes will reveal, or unveil, the condition of our inner man, or the measure of love that we developed. The radiance, or condition, of our inner man will be apparent. Some will have confidence as the resplendent condition of their love is made manifest. Others will be ashamed at their lack of the development of their love from this life. They will not draw back from salvation, but will be ashamed of their half-hearted love as they stand before Jesus, One who is incarnate Love.
- ²⁸ *Little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence [boldness] and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (1 Jn. 2:26-28)*
- D. Jesus called us to live perfectly by seeking to walk in all the light the Spirit gives us. We are to have a sustained reach in our spirit to live in comprehensive obedience (thoughts, words, and deeds). Receiving more gives us the capacity to feel, receive and experience more in God.
- ⁴⁸ *You shall be perfect [walk in all our light], just as your Father is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*
- E. Walking perfect in obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the age to come. A sustained reach for 100 percent obedience is different than attaining it in life. When we sin, we repent and renew our resolve to reach for full obedience with confidence that God enjoys us.
- F. The pursuit of “complete or comprehensive” obedience includes *bridling our speech* (Eph. 4:29-5:4; Jas 3:2), *disciplining our physical appetites* (1 Cor. 9:27), *managing our time* (for service and prayer with the Word) *and money* (to increase the kingdom beyond our comfort and honor), and *making a covenant with our eyes* to refuse to look on anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1) as we engage in communing prayer with the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).
- G. Power in our life is found in pursuing hundredfold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly seek to walk in total obedience. The 98 percent pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2 percent positions us to live with a vibrant heart.
- H. Scripture presents two aspects of being complete before God. Firstly, we are instantly made complete in Christ in our legal position (justification). Secondly, we progressively become “complete in obedience” in our living condition before God (sanctification).
- ¹⁰ *You are complete in Him... (Col. 2:10)*
- I. There are different terms for the same truth: being complete in obedience (2 Cor. 13:9, 11; Phil. 1:6; Col. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 13:20-21; Jas. 1:4); perfect (Mt. 5:48; 19:21; Jn. 17:23; Gal. 3:3; Eph. 4:13. Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 3:10; Jas. 2:22; 3:2; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 3:2); mature (Phil. 3:15); blameless (Lk. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:6-8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thes. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 10; 5:5-7; 6:14; 2 Pet. 3:14; without spot (Eph 5:27); worthy (2 Thes. 1:5-12; Lk 21:34-36; 20:35-36; Col. 1:9-10 Mt. 10:37-38; 22:8; Rev 3:4-5; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thes. 2:12); stand (Lk. 21:36; 1 Cor. 10:13; 16:13; Eph. 6:10-14; Phil. 4:1; Col. 4:12; 1 Thes. 3:8. Rev. 6:17).

- J. The prize: our long-term testimony of complete obedience (love). Paul's main objective in his life was to win the prize of presenting the testimony to Jesus on the last day that his obedience was complete—thus, his love was complete. The prize is all that is involved in offering to Jesus a **long-term testimony of complete obedience** and receiving Jesus' response back in eternal rewards, which express how He feels about us loving Him in this way. Paul's paradigm of his life was one long race to obtain this prize (1 Cor. 9:24).
- ²⁴ *Those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it ...* ²⁶ *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty [lack of focus] ...* ²⁷ *I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest ... I should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)*
- K. Towards the end of Paul's life, he had not yet attained it. The prize of the upward call of God is to receive the highest dimension of one's calling in the age to come (2 Thes. 1:11).
- ¹² *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected ...* ¹³ *I do not count myself to have apprehended ...* ¹⁴ *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God (Phil. 3:12-14)*
- L. Paul had not won the prize of the crown of righteousness until his life-long race was completed.
- ⁸ *There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness ... on that Day. (2 Tim. 4:8)*
- M. The supreme value of living with a sustained testimony of complete love was understood.
- ⁹ *This also we pray, that you may be made complete. (2 Cor. 13:9)*
- ²⁸ *We preach warning every man and teaching every man ... that we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor. (Col. 1:28-29)*
- ¹² *Epaphras ... always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)*
- ³ *The testing of your faith produces patience [endurance].* ⁴ *Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing [in our obedience]. (Jas 1:3-4)*
- N. Maintaining a fresh walk with God with a sustained reach in our spirit comprehensively through decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months.
- O. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our life, we are not loved less by God, but we do suffer loss in minimizing the full gift of our love from this life to Jesus on the last day.
- P. The Lord values our journey to grow in love. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him. **If you do not quit, then you win.** We do not find our identity in our failure but in the fact that He loves us, in the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:12), and in the cry of our spirit to love God.