

Session 9: Practical Ways to Pursue the First Commandment (Mt. 25)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. All of God's commands include the promise of His supernatural enabling to obey them. It takes God to love God. The Father will give us supernatural impartation to love Jesus if we seek it. Love for God does not come automatically without intentionally cultivating a responsive heart. The power to love God includes the supernatural ability to feel love from God and back to Him. There is a supernatural element in being energized by stirrings of love in our emotions by Him.
⁵ The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 5:5)
- B. Common reasons that sincere believers get off course in pursuing the first commandment are because of condemnation after failing, mismanagement of their time so they are not energized in love by the Spirit, despising the process because of exaggerated ideals, or simply neglecting to regularly renew the vision to intentionally pursue loving Jesus.
- C. A common mistake is in seeing the time we invest in prayer as being our "first commandment time" that competes with being with people as our "second commandment time." Time sitting at the feet of Jesus is the place we are energized to walk out both commandments. We walk in the first commandment by obeying God with affectionate, grateful trust, even when we are outside the prayer room. We must regularly position ourselves to receive the power to walk in love.
- D. Sitting before God to get "oil" is a statement of humility that we believe God's testimony that we need to be empowered to love with clarity, consistency, and right motives. Getting oil is about getting fuel so we can walk out both commandments much better. Jesus testifies that we cannot love well without being connected to the Spirit's presence (Jn. 15:4-5). We can be active with people, but we cannot love well. We will be far more angry, offended, or proud in our service.

II. PRACTICAL WAYS TO PURSUE LOVING JESUS

- A. ***Determination***: we must make a determined decision to love God. Our response to His love starts as a choice to have a heart of affectionate obedience. We regularly realign our heart, intentionally renewing our vision to make loving Him our first priority and to go deep in God.
¹⁴ Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him. (Ps. 91:14)
1. We must choose the good part. No one can choose it for us. Ask yourself, "Why not me?"
⁴² Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (Lk. 10:42)
2. David and John leaned on Jesus' heart, or set their heart to love and be near Him.
¹ I will love You, O LORD, my strength. (Ps. 18:1)
²⁰ The disciple ... who also had leaned on His breast at the supper. (Jn. 21:20)

- B. **Revelation:** of God's love equips our heart to love Jesus. We love God with all our heart only as we see that He loves us with all His heart. He empowers us to love by revealing His love to us.

¹⁹ *We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)*

1. We gain revelation of God's love by meditating on it from God's Word. We position ourselves to receive from His heart by feeding on His Word.

¹² *The word of God is living and powerful. (Heb. 4:12)*

2. We can behold how the Father feels about us by meditation on the Word.

¹ *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us. (1 Jn. 3:1)*

- C. **Personal petition:** we must ask the Spirit to pour love and revelation into our heart.

⁹ *I pray that your love may abound still more and more. (Phil. 1:9)*

¹⁸ *That you ... may be able to comprehend ... ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ. (Eph. 3:18-19)*

- D. **Confession:** "Jesus, I am Your beloved, Your favorite one. I am a disciple You love. Your delight is in me. You feel about me as the Father feels about You. I belong to You and You are mine." We confess, "I'm loved [by God] and I am a lover [of God], therefore I am successful."

⁷ *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (Jn. 21:7)*

¹⁹ *He delivered me [David] because He delighted in me. (Ps. 18:19)*

- E. **Fellowship:** we receive much of God's love in serving and sharing, and in receiving it from others. God's love is only seen in fullness when the whole Body functions together. Part of our inheritance and healing is in the hands of others who reveal and release God's love to us.

⁷ *If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. (1 Jn. 1:7)*

¹⁶ *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (Jas 5:16)*

III. SETTING OUR HEART TO LOVE JESUS

- A. We must have a sustained vision to go deep in God. It takes focus and effort to go deep in God. Our soul prospers as we grow in the anointing to love. To walk in this requires that we must be focused on pursuing it more than gaining things and influence.

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

- B. People seeking to extravagantly love Jesus ask, "What is the most that God will empower me to give to Him?" We are not content with the minimum requirement of salvation. Satan's priority is to lead us astray from cultivating wholehearted love and devotion to Jesus.

³ *I am afraid, lest as the serpent [Satan] deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (2 Cor 11:3, NAS)*

- C. Sustaining a fresh walk with God through decades is the definition of living radically before God. We are not radical because we do something unusual for a few weeks or months. David sustained his passion for God for decades, which he referred to as “all” the days of his life.
⁴ *One thing ... I seek ... all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)*
- D. Daniel sustained his prayer life with passion for decades (from about 16 to 82 years old).
¹⁰ *Daniel ... knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days [605–539 BC, or sixty-six years]. (Dan. 6:10)*
- E. We must not despise the day of small beginnings (Zech. 4:10). We value the small stirrings of God’s Word and Spirit on our heart. The kingdom starts as a seed in our heart and grows slowly but surely. We cannot accurately measure it during the process.
²⁶ *The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed ... ²⁷ and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. (Mk. 4:26-27)*

IV. CULTIVATING THE OIL OF INTIMACY: ENCOUNTERING THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

- A. In Matthew 24-25, Jesus spoke on being prepared to walk in victory in the Tribulation (Mt. 24:29-31). His main emphasis in preparing for the end times was to watch, or develop a heart connection with God (Mt. 24:36, 42-44, 50; 25:13; Mk. 13:33-38; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 3:3; 16:15).
⁴² *Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Mt. 24:42)*
¹³ *Watch ... for you know neither the day nor hour ... the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)*
- B. Jesus taught on how the kingdom of God will function in the end times.
¹ *Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom.* ² *Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (Mt. 25:1-2)*
- C. **Virgins:** all believers are as virgins before God because of Jesus’ righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17).
² *I betrothed you to one husband ... I present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)*
- D. **Lamp:** each of these virgins had a lamp, which spoke of a ministry (Mt. 5:15-16; Rev. 1:20; 2:5).
- E. **Bridegroom:** all these ministries had revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. These are ministries who went out to meet, or who encountered, Jesus as the Bridegroom God.
- F. **Then:** We ask, “When is then?” The word “then” points back to the end-time theme emphasized in Matthew 24. This is when the kingdom functions like virgins meeting the Bridegroom.
- G. The “oil” speaks of the presence of the Spirit and our connect with Him in our secret life in God. The oil of the Holy Spirit touches our hearts in different ways. *It tenderizes our heart*, enabling us to feel more of God’s desire for us. *It enlarges our desire* for Him by encountering His desire for us. *It illuminates our understanding* of God’s heart and *imparts zeal* for righteousness.

V. FIVE WISE VIRGINS: ACQUIRED OIL

² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the Bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ And at midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” (Mt. 25:2-9)

- A. The foolish took their lamps (ministry), but took no oil. In other words, they pursued ministry as their first priority over getting oil in their relationship with Jesus.
- B. The wise ministries took oil in their vessels with their lamps. In other words, they pursued acquiring oil as their first priority before seeking to expand their ministry. The wrong perspective of servanthood is a trap of the enemy to thrust us into the *tyranny of urgency*. Some yield to this to feel good (instead of guilty), or so that others will like them, or so they appear humble to others. Some need to resist the *messiah complex* that does too much for the wrong reasons.
- C. We must cultivate oil in the midst of the natural processes of life.
⁵ *They all slept ... ⁷ all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. (Mt. 25:5-7)*
- D. They all slept and all trimmed their lamps. Sleeping in this parable is not bad. This speaks of living in context to the natural processes of life. We sustain our intimacy with Jesus in the midst of the rigors of the routine and mundane with natural dynamics. The wise and unwise both sleep or participate in the necessary (Mt. 25:5; Mk. 4:27).
- E. The foolish ministries recognized their mistake in neglecting oil (Mt. 25:8-9). The wise understood their limitation and acknowledged that their spiritual history in God and their spiritual preparedness could not be transferred to others.
- F. We “buy oil” by engaging in the God-ordained way—by investing ourselves in a costly way, to position ourselves to receive it. The most substantial way to acquire oil is by regularly feeding on God’s Word. This positions our heart before God to freely receive. These activities do not earn us God’s favor. (See “How to feed on God’s Word” notes at IHOP.org.)
³⁹ *Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard (encountered) His word. (Lk. 10:39)*
- G. Jesus’ advice is *to watch* or to open our heart to develop intimacy with Him as the Bridegroom.
¹³ *Watch ... for you know neither the day nor hour ... the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)*
- H. The Lord values our journey to grow in love. The reach of our heart to love Him moves Him. *If we do not quit, then we win.* We do not find our identity in our failure but in the fact that He loves us, in the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:12), and in the cry of our spirit to love God.