

## ***Session 4 Jesus, a Bridegroom with a Burning Heart of Love***

*Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.*

Session four on our class, “Jesus, Our Magnificent Obsession.” Our goal is to be obsessed with the magnificence of Jesus and who He is and what He does and the way that He feels about us.

Tonight I want to look at Jesus as the Bridegroom God, the God with a burning heart. Now at first, when we think of a burning heart of love, we think, “OK, He is going to give us mercy.” That’s not really where I am going tonight, I am going a little different direction. The love of God is a bigger subject, as you know, than Him smiling on us now and giving us mercy. The real point I want to make is that this is His nature, that forever and ever and forever He is going to have you deeply involved in all that He does, because He is a Bridegroom.

It is the facet of His Bridegroom nature that will cause Him to involve you in a deeper way than we would ever imagine, in the days to come. I don’t mean just in this age; this age, yes, but I am talking about the age to come. This affects the way that we picture Jesus, the way we picture our future, the way we picture ourselves. When we get a clear vision of the heart of love and the implications of that, and the way that He plans and administrates His kingdom and the way it involves us in a practical way related to His glory—we are very focused as a community, in a good way, on the fact that we want to see the Lord have full glory, but I believe that some of us will be greatly surprised at how deeply we will be involved with Him when His glory is fully manifest.

That is the point that I want to make tonight: that He is a God with a burning heart; He is a God of relationship; everything He does and everything He plans is from the place of thinking of relationship. This affects every sphere of the kingdom: everything that He does He does from the foundation of thinking of dynamic relationship. Let’s just start with a few basics.

### **THE NATURE OF GOD: LOVE**

Paragraph A. 1 Jn. 4:16 - the nature of God is love. God does not just do acts of love, He actually is love. That is a huge statement. That is a mind-bending reality. He is love. The definition of love is relational. In the fellowship of the Trinity, between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God is deeply relational. The relational implications do not stop there. The way that He has planned His future, with you involved, is dynamically relational. That is the focus I am looking at more than anything tonight.

I will make it practical for today as well, but the way we think about our future really does affect the way we relate to the Lord, even today. Reading this sentence again, we can only properly understand God’s eternal purposes and we can only understand how He views us now, and then, in the context of a relational paradigm of God; a God who is not just committed to relationship, everything about Him flows in relationship. That is what He cares about.

Paragraph B. The nature of God’s kingdom—the very nature of it, the nature of God, and the nature of the kingdom, of His eternal plan—is relationship, and it is partnership and our involvement with Him. One of the key points I want to make in a few moments—I will just kind of hint at now—we have not really put it into words, but when we think of the future and we think of Jesus, we have this unconscious, unspoken disconnect from Him when He is manifesting His full glory, that we are kind of out of view and that it is just Jesus and He has forgotten us and that our whole identity is about singing songs to Him forever; that is all that we do and that

is all that He wants. Beloved, we will really enjoy singing songs to Him, but He has more on His heart for you than that. He loves it when we sing songs to Him, it moves His heart and it moves your heart, but there is more in His heart than that kind of paradigm of the future.

### **LOVE IS MORE THAN SOMETHING GOD DOES, IT IS WHO HE IS**

Paragraph C. God's—I keep wanting to say—commitment to relationship (but that is an inadequate statement)—His whole being flows in relationship. It is more than something He does, it is something that He is. It is not something He puts on, it is something that flows out of Him effortlessly in an unceasing way. The proof of God's commitment and flow of relationship is the very fact of the Trinity, that in eternity past, the Trinity has dwelt together in a deeply satisfying fellowship together, and the most amazing thing is this satisfied pleasing fellowship, this deep mutually open-hearted fellowship. This is what we are invited to participate in. I don't mean that just you and Jesus will have a friendship; you are being beckoned by the Lord forever to participate in the fellowship that has existed within the Godhead. He calls us into that dynamic of fellowship.

The question I ask over and over is, “Who are You and why do You care so much about me? Why do You want me in this level of participation? Because You do. What does that really mean about the value of my life even now?” Though others may not value your life, there is One who does. He designed you, not just to fellowship with you in a casual way, but actually so that you would participate in the deep fellowship, the satisfying fellowship, of the Trinity itself forever. That is what you were created for.

Paragraph D. Love is God's eternal nature. It is His personality. He is an eternal, overflowing fountain of desire. God does not work up desire for you, He is an eternal fountain of desire that never ends; that is His nature. It is not just His nature, it is the nature of His kingdom. He is the architect of a plan for which this is the centerpiece: that His desire would be manifest, and it would awaken desire in us, and we would engage with Him forever at the deepest level imaginable. Again, the take-away point of that is, “Who are You?” Such grandeur, such glory, such greatness—and why does He want you so much? If He cares that much about you, then how should you think about yourself now?

### **GOD IS LOVE**

He is love. Love always desires to share love. Love must have an expression in order to be love. Because He is self-satisfied love at the deepest pleasure, He desires that we would enjoy the enjoyment He has in the love between the fellowship of the Trinity. He wants us to enter into that.

Paragraph F. We were created in His likeness. Genesis 1. “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Here is the Trinity making us in Their likeness. The reason we are made in God's likeness is because God intended from the beginning to have deep eternal fellowship and participation with us, or that we would participate with God in that which God has already been functioning in from eternity past, and that is a fellowship of love. He didn't make us like the angels; He made us like Him. The angels are servants, the Scripture makes that clear, they are not made in the image of God; they are not designed in their spirit to interact with God in this way. From the very beginning, when God thought of the human race, He designed us for deep interaction with Him. The reason is because we are going to have it.

He designed us this way, so that a million years from now you are not lost far at a distance, just kind of in oblivion, thinking that Jesus is so supreme that you are nearly nonexistent. No, in His supremacy, we will be surprised at the value we will have when He is magnified at the highest level; what we will be to Him in that

hour. That is the point I want to make, because, again, if that be true, if that is the nature of the kingdom and that is how He is, what does that mean about my future? What does that mean about who I am today? How should I live in the light of that?

### **GOD ENJOYS LOVING US**

Paragraph 2. We were created in God's image to be loved and to love, because that is what God's image is. The reason we enjoy being loved—how many of you enjoy being loved?—is because God enjoys it and you are made in His image. The reason you enjoy loving back is because God actually enjoys loving you. It is not an effort, it is not a commitment that He made—and now that Jesus paid the price, because He is true—He has to walk it out; He actually enjoys loving and enjoys being loved, that is why we love Him. He has planned a future. He is the architect of an eternal plan, where that is the centerpiece of the design, that all that are His will enjoy being loved by Him, He will enjoy loving them, and they will enjoy loving Him and He will enjoy being loved by them. That is where our future is; that is where it is going.

Top of page two. All these are nice thoughts; you think, "Wow, that's pretty cool." I am talking about something more than pretty cool, meaning this: when the Lord first called me to the subject of the Bride of Christ—it was 1988, a long time ago—He spoke by the audible voice of the Lord. The subject was the Bride of Christ, Jesus, the Bridegroom God. I tell the story, but I have never really emphasized it to this degree. I did not like this—I like it now, but back in 1988, I thought, "Bridegroom?" It was not even my way. It was awkward. My vision of God was functional: He was the King, He had a workforce called an army, we did His work, the power of God went forth, and great things happened. He said, "Yes, there is truth to that, but that is not the core reality of the kingdom." It was a difficult shift and that is the reason I am highlighting this.

Though you would agree with the fact that God is love, I found it took me some years after I agreed mentally and verbally that this is where I wanted to go. It took some years for my heart to be converted in the way I carried my heart with God. It took effort. Meaning, the truths of His love hit my mind and repelled, they bounced off. Not really, but the truths did not impact me; they were foreign; they did not take; I could not feel them, and I could not think freely about them.

I had a few Bible verses on the love of God, but it was an effort to even go there, but the point I am saying is, after some years, my soul was more converted to carry itself in that way. It took some effort. That is the point I am making, it took me a while. I tell you, it is worth it.

Don't think—because you have come to IHOP–KC, and the subject of the Bride of Christ is mentioned here on a regular basis—that by agreeing with it mentally, the way you carry your heart is converted to where you can carry it and think freely about it, not just one or two principles. My point in this session tonight is that He really is this way; we really need to be converted to this Jesus. It really will change us, but it takes some time and it takes some effort.

### **GOD LOVES US IN THE WAY THAT GOD LOVES GOD**

Paragraph G. God loves us in the way that God loves God. That is almost an inconceivable thought. This has pushed me for twenty plus years—I have looked at this and said, "Holy Spirit, let this touch me." Not just, "Let me say this as a preacher," but, "Let me carry this in my private walk with you; let this stir up my holy imagination and let me carry my heart according to this truth. This is who You are. This is the nature of Your kingdom; this is how You see me; this is the nature of how we will relate forever." I want to get into that room, so to speak, I want to go there. That is what I am appealing to right now.

Paragraph 1. Love finds pleasure in others; in relating to others. For example, when you love somebody, you enjoy relating to them and you want them to feel loved. You want them to actually have the assurance that you love them when you really do. I have good news for you: That is how Jesus is; He actually wants you to feel it. He finds pleasure in you, yes, even you. You think, “Oh boy, if you knew the whole truth...” Well, He knows the whole truth about you—more than you know about you. The whole truth about you is not just negative—He knows more negative about you than you know—the whole truth about you is profoundly positive as well. He knows who you are and where you are going in the relationship.

Beloved, the whole truth about you is not what you are doing wrong, the whole truth is what He has called you, and who you are to Him in relationship to Him in His plans; that is the truth about you, and how you have said yes to the Spirit. He gets that more than you get that about you, and He knows more bad stuff about you than you do, too.

Paragraph 2. Jesus wants us to feel loved; He celebrates our dignity, our value. He wants to participate; He has pleasure in participating with us. In the age to come, when His full glory is manifest, we will be deeply involved, participating with Him. We will have a deep sense of ownership in His exaltation. Meaning—when He is exalted, it is not like you are going to fade away: “Well, it was good when we knew each other. Now that He is famous, at the top, in front of all the nations, I guess that is the end.” Beloved, He will actually be thinking about you in His exaltation. You will actually feel ownership of all the glorious things that happen to Him. You will not be at a distance. You will not be in a place of oblivion, kind of disconnected from it all; it will be part of your story—what happens to Him—in a way that will surprise us.

## **LOVE IS THE CORE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM**

Paragraph I. Love is the greatest virtue. Love is the greatest response to God. Love is the core message of the kingdom, and my point is not, “Because of that we ought to love more,” that is another message for another day. The point is that everything He plans for you is through that grid. Yes, on another day we will talk about, “We need to love more,” but that is not what I am talking about now. My focus now is the supremacy and the victory of love throughout God’s eternal purpose, with you right in the middle of the love-flow; this is what has been planned for you.

That is the type of Man that He is: fully God, fully Man, love in relationship. There is no such thing as love that is only sentiment. Some people have an idea of love: they feel the sentiment in a worship service; if they feel a little emotion, then they think they have love. I love to feel emotion in a worship service, but love is far more than that sentiment. Love is relational and it is mutual; it goes two ways. This two-way dynamic of love is foundational to every single aspect of the kingdom that He has planned and that He has ordered.

## **GOD DESIGNED US FOR RELATIONSHIP**

Let’s look at a few subjects. Love is the primary grid from which we define all theology. The reason I say that is because much theology today is separated from this grid; therefore, the theology gets off. It becomes theory instead of reality. A lot of you are in Bible school. I like that. That is important. I am still in Bible school—I am; I actually study more in my fifties than I did in my twenties. I studied a whole lot in my twenties. I will never be out of Bible school. In the resurrection I will still be in Bible school; I will still be eagerly searching out the Word day by day by day. I will never be out of Bible school in that sense. Here is my point: I have read a lot of theology books through the years. I know this: that if it is not through the grid of this relational

paradigm of God who is burning with desire, the theology will be off. I'll say it again: it takes some effort and it takes some staying with it to get this grid in your mind; it is not automatic.

Again, in 1988 the Lord spoke in this dramatic way about the Song of Solomon and the Bride of Christ and it just bounced off of me for a couple years. I labored in it, because the way of my mind did not flow with it. Don't imagine that if you've been here for a while that it's automatic. I believe many people have been in this community, four, five, ten years, and this has not touched their heart in a deep way. Though they have the language and they can repeat it, it still hasn't affected them; it hasn't stirred up their holy imagination in their private life. It isn't something they think deeply and often on in their private life.

That is what I mean by it has not touched them. It bounced off. It is very natural, normal, because they did not know it would take labor to get into that room. The way we understand salvation; the way we understand the justice ministry, the Great Commission, the supremacy of Jesus, the eternal rewards, the millennial kingdom, the judgments of God in time and eternity; the way we understand the Body of Christ—holiness, family life, money—everything must go through this grid in order to have a proper bearing of it from God's point of view.

### **MORE THAN A SAVIOR**

Naturally, most of what is being spoken to the Body of Christ does not go through that grid. It takes time and effort to bring our heart through that grid. This is the Man we are worshiping. We hardly know Him. We know Him as Savior—He forgave us—we know Him a little as Healer, a little as Provider. Every now and then He provides something here and we have a testimony. I love all those—I want more of that, but He is more than that. He is an eternal fountain of love. That is who He is in His core: He is love. The Holy Spirit's agenda is to restore and establish loving God with all of our heart as first place.

Not just in this age, but a million years from now in the age to come, it will be first in everybody's life, which is exciting. It doesn't mean we will just love Him, it means there will be a dynamic interaction between us and Him. The reason He called us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength is because He loves us with all of His heart, all of His mind, and all of His strength. He is the architect of God's eternal purpose. God loves us this way. He is telling me to love Him with all my heart. He says, "Only because I have loved you with all of My heart first." I think, "Where is this going? Lord, where is this going? Us interacting together forever—it is not just me and You interacting. I am interacting in the fellowship of the Trinity; something beyond anything I can imagine." All of us together, and then us having an overflow together from that reality. That is where our future is and that is how valuable we are to God. That is who Jesus is.

### **WE ARE PART OF HIS STORY**

Paragraph K. We are a great part of His story. We are not just kind of nondescript servants and workers in a vast crowd; we have a dynamic part in the story of His glory: the very existence of a bride equally yoked to Him in love in eternity. This existence is a significant part of His glory. I have talked to different students over the years. I get all kinds of strange answers to questions, which I like. On the subject of His glory, I don't get strange answers. What I mostly get is no answers.

"What does it mean to live for His glory?"

"You know, just glorify God."

“Yeah, I know, but what does that mean?”

“You know, you know; magnify His supremacy.”

“OK. What does that mean?”

“You are supreme.”

“OK, do that for a billion years. Is that it?”

“You know, stuff like that.”

“Like what? Fill in the blanks.”

“I don’t know, stuff like that.”

I don’t get strange answers, I get no answers, because what I am doing is presenting Jesus in a way where I want us to be forced, as a community, to break it down in specifics in as much as the Bible gives it to us. These are the implications of who this Man is; yes, we will magnify Him by declaring who He is, but the magnifying of His supremacy involves much more than the declaration to Him of who He is. It is actually to participate with Him at the level He defines, which is intense. We will magnify His supremacy by believing what He says about who He is and what He wants in the relationship, and by being as jealous of our life as He is about our life in relationship with Him.

### **JESUS IS JEALOUS FOR US**

That is part of the supremacy of Jesus: that we would enter into the jealousy that He has for our life before Him and connected to Him. I don’t mean just: Are we living right and obeying the rules? He has a jealousy for the deep connectedness we will have forever. He wants to be a part of your heart; He is jealous for it. That is part of His supremacy. It involves many areas of our lives. It is very exciting. Beloved, you are the work of His hands. The Body of Christ in history is the work of His hands, we are one of the main ways that He makes His story known.

It isn’t just His glory that emanates out of Him that is glorious; it is the very fact of that glory in you that is His work, His design, and His idea. Beloved, that is part of His story—who you are to Him is part of His storyline in history. He is really excited about you, and He is proud of you, and you are central to His future because He chose it that way. You are not going to be on a cloud, floating around, playing a harp, singing worship songs, and saying, “I wish there was a little more to do Lord, I like this.” I tell you, we will really, really like that—singing to Him—but He wants more from us than singing.

He wants more from us than declaring to Him who He is; He wants us to declare who He is for several reasons. Not because He has a need to know or He needs affirmation—that is not a problem with Him—because His magnificence demands a response, but it also has an impact. It does something to us and to the kingdom when we live in that posture. That is for another time.

Paragraph L. Jesus does not want us disconnected from His story. Again, we have this unspoken disconnect in our concept of His glory or the magnifying of His supremacy. It is like we are irrelevant; we kind of fade and disappear. We still exist—but kind of nobody knows we do because we are so lost in Him that we do not really exist, but we do exist. No, that is not how it is; you will be precious and central on His mind. You aren't a pawn in a game; you aren't just a prop on the stage.

### **HUMILITY IS COMING INTO AGREEMENT WITH GOD**

He is love. That is who He is. That is what He does. You are the object of His desire. He is coming after us. I am talking about from the historical point of view. He wants relationship and He wants to bring us into the relationship; He is very experienced with a long history with the Father and the Spirit, that kind of relationship He has had from eternity past. He is not trying to dismiss you. He is not trying to minimize you. Humility is not to somehow come into oblivion; humility is to come into agreement with God. That is what humility is. A lot of folks—their idea of humility is false humility; they disappear in a way that is impossible. They don't really disappear; they wish they could. They don't know how to, because they can't, because it's not reality. They don't know how to be humble. They keep existing when they try to disappear. It is kind of circular, religious confusion. They do not understand His nature and the nature of who we are to Him. Why we were created in His image was so that we would flow in connect with Him forever.

### **WE ARE A PART OF HIS WORK**

Beloved, we are a very significant part of His work. We are one of the ways He wants to make Himself known throughout all of history. “Look at My great trophy; look at her—the way she loves Me. It was My idea, it was My power, it was the work of My hands. She is the statement of who I am.” Not entirely—there is more than that—but beloved, we are a significant part of His story because He wants it that way.

If you are that important, who are you? If you are that important to Him, how important should we be to ourselves? Why do we live the way we live—either positive or negative? Why do we do what we do in light of the value we have to Him? His original plan was Adam in the garden. He was walking with Adam in the garden; He wanted to be in paradise. He wanted to be in paradise with them, He didn't want to be in paradise without them. It was His idea. Adam didn't know anything about paradise. God thought of paradise and He is restoring paradise. He is the last Adam. He doesn't want to be in Eden without us. He wants to be there with us. We aren't just saved with a stamped passport; we are literally His Bride, His eternal companion forever.

Some think; “Lord, this hurts my brain. I must be really important, and I don't get it.” That's the point. When the Lord is in His fullness of exaltation—which is forever—you will be in His mind. You won't be forgotten because now He is in the big time. You will be in His heart. It won't be just this way. It is almost though—all of us will feel this—in His full exaltation it is as though He would be looking at us nodding that He knows, that we know, that He knows that we are together. We will have a feeling of ownership. We will be fully engaged in it. We will be a part of the joy of it. We will have a confidence before Him, and a boldness in our relationship, even in that hour.

He is exalted in His own way, as the only one who is fully God and fully Man. In His exaltation, we will be near and dear to Him, not in oblivion. Not irrelevant, not faded away, not disappeared into a cloud somewhere. I can't imagine a good thing happening to me without my wife and sons, and now my daughters-in-law and grandchildren, being in my mind related to this good thing. I mean, if somebody called up and said, “Here, I am giving you 100 million dollars,” the good news is I would use it for IHOP–KC and help you guys with work

scholarships; you would be on my mind. I have thought it a thousand times, that is why that has slipped out. I think it is really going to happen, that is another story for another time.

I am trying to just tell an imaginary story here, and I slipped into reality. The first thing I would do if some great honor came, or some great increase of wealth—the first thing I would do is call my wife and my sons and I would be thinking always of how they could share it and be a part of it. First thing I would think of. If I, being evil, can think that way, how much more does He think that way about His exaltations? You are on His mind. He is thinking of a way to share it, to include you in it.

### **WE ARE A PART OF HIS STORY**

Top of page 3. Paragraph O. There is nothing more theologically accurate than: Jesus is love. That is the grid. Man will define love and get people off track. I am talking about love on His terms, not love on man's terms. Man's definition is different from His. I take for granted that most of you know that is where I am coming from; we had a discussion a month or so ago with our worship leaders, all sitting around. A couple said, "We want to sing songs to describe Jesus, but never involve us." I said, "What?" They said, "Just Jesus. No I, no me; just Jesus."

I said, "That is weird." It is like my wife coming to me and saying, "I promise, I am so devoted to you, I will never talk about us, and I will never talk about me in our conversation."

"Why? Are we not together? I would like you to talk about you and us. I am committed. I am in. Why not?"

"Because it's you. I don't want to talk about us."

"Yes, but you are part of my story. Go ahead, how are you feeling?"

"Should I talk about me?"

I told them, "Where did you get that idea?"

"Well it's just about Him."

### **HE CAME AFTER US, WE DIDN'T GO AFTER HIM**

Beloved, you are a part of His story. You are a deep part of what He thinks about and where He is going. There is no kingdom of God in the future without His people. He has already established it; it is a fact of history. You can't tell His story or proclaim all about Him without you being involved somewhere. He is not a disconnected being. He is a deeply relational being who is love, and desire; and you are the object of it. It sounds noble when we only talk about Jesus and not about us, but Jesus doesn't like that. He really likes you. Again, if my wife says, "I am never going to bring up my heart or our relationship, I am just going to tell you, Mike, about you," I would say, "Please, do not."

If she was being the most positive, it would be relationally strange. We are married to Him forever because He wants it that way. He came after us. We did not go after Him. It is His idea, not ours. You don't need to be in every song, but His joy about the Father, the glory of what He did, the way He feels about us, our struggle to



love Him, our cry for help, our glory with Him; all of that is a part of a vast story. It is that diamond with many facets.

### **JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM: GOD OF DESIRE AND RELATIONSHIP**

Roman numeral II. Jesus the Bridegroom. Here is what I am saying in A and B: He calls Himself in the Bible, “Bridegroom and Husband.” He calls us bride. In the Bible! The relationship is called betrothed and married. That is the Bible; that is Holy-Spirit inspired. The reason for this language is because He wants to relate to us deeply forever, and He means it. We don’t have to fully get all the implications of it. My point right now is: that is His nature; that is the nature of the kingdom and that is what He wants with you.

He named Himself this. We didn’t say, “Would you consider a date? You do not have to. We could just have coffee, just be friends. No heavy thing.” It didn’t happen that way. Here we were in sin and in darkness, completely fixated on our own ego and sin and He says, “I want you to be Mine forever, I am coming after you.”

“Why are you intruding in my life?”

“Because I have glorious plans for you. You and I will be together forever.”

### **A LOVE PARADIGM OF HOLINESS**

Top of page four. The only way we can understand salvation is through a love paradigm—paradigm just means a perspective—through a perspective, a lens, a pair of glasses. Only through looking through that lens can we understand salvation. Salvation is so much more than escaping hell.

Paragraph B. Look how God describes salvation. Because of His great love with which He loved us, He raised us up. We sit with Him on a throne, no less; we sit with Him on a throne. Why? Why do You want all this? Verse 7. Why did You love us and do this for us? So that in the ages to come, I could show all the created order how kind I am. I wanted My kindness—it needed manifestation—My tender kindness was bursting out. The only theater that I wanted it to be expressed in, in its fullness, was you. My kindness will be on display forever. Every time that you love Me, every time we share the secrets of our heart in eternity, My kindness will be trumpeted. The message will be trumpeted through our interaction. We are the trophy; the people who benefit from His kindness, we are the trophy of His riches. It is amazing that He is this way.

Paragraph 4. A paradigm of holiness: radical Christianity. People have ten views of that. It has to go through the grid of love. I call it affection-based obedience. Yes, there is duty-based and fear-based, both of them are biblical, they are just weak. Affection-based obedience is through the grid of His desire that we obey. That is the strongest obedience.

### **A LOVE PARADIGM OF SUCCESS AND SECURITY**

Roman numeral 5. Bottom of page four. A love paradigm of success: success, to some people, is a dirty word if you really love Jesus. The people who like success, they are those guys who just want money, fame and honor, they just kind of use Jesus’ name. They’re not even into Jesus. That is what you hear them kind of say, because people abuse success in Jesus’ name: to the people who really love God, success is a dirty word.

Success is not a dirty word; success is profoundly a part of His agenda for you. You can't repent of wanting success—you can repent of wanting it the wrong way and in the wrong timing and in the wrong method, but you can't repent of your human spirit wanting to succeed, because God created you in His image and He put in you a cry to be all that He created you to be. You can't get rid of it. I have seen a lot of Christians in their early years of sincerity—they know that it's wrong to go after self-promotion in the eyes of men, carnal things, but they limit success only to the negative. They can't have success, because that's what the carnal Christians do. "I am going to go really for God, so I'm in this mode of no success. I don't know exactly what that means." You can't repent away your spirit; your spirit will not go away; it is eternal. We can put band-aids on it, we can put Novocain on it, painkillers on it, but your spirit longs for success. The key is to answer it the right way, in Him, and who He is.

Top of page five. Paragraph C. Still talking about affirmation and security. Jesus called us to love our neighbor like we love ourselves. Did you know that you will only love others to the degree you love yourself? The analogy—I have shared it over the years—the lady said, "Lord, I want to love my neighbor as I love myself." The Lord shocked her and said, "That is the problem. You do love your neighbor the way you love yourself. You hate yourself, that's why you hate your neighbor." We are called to love ourselves and to hate our lives. There is a distinction; very different lines of thought. There is no contradiction in those. Both of them are true. We love ourselves through the lens of His eyes. We are jealous for what He sees and what He wants in relationship with us. We have great worth to Him. We talk about His worth to us. Have you ever considered your worth to Him? You are of great worth to Him. You are the only thing that He would leave heaven, take up the form of Man, and go to the cross for; that is the worth you have to Him.

### **LOVING OURSELVES BY MAGNIFYING HIS SUPREMACY**

Paragraph D. We best love ourselves by receiving and magnifying His supremacy in love. He is magnified in us as we more fully receive His love and we more fully receive what He wants, the agenda He wants for our lives. Some people think humility is having a low agenda. No, humility is agreeing with God's agenda. God has a major agenda for your life; you need to agree with it. That is called humility. We want to magnify God in His enjoyment of releasing His glory through you. Did you know that He enjoys it—did you know that He enjoys watching you be exalted in His purpose? He likes it when things are going the way He plans and your spirit is happy. I am talking about throughout all of eternity. We see the fullness of what God has planned.

He is not saying, "Oh no, you smiled, you liked it. Now I lost glory somehow. If only you hadn't smiled, it would have worked. If you smiled, that means I lost something, if you are happy." Beloved, He does not lose anything when He gives us things. Some people have this idea that if we get anything out of it, He loses something. No, He is exceedingly rich. He doesn't lose love when He gives love, it doesn't work that way. He doesn't lose anything if we enjoy the process. As a matter of fact, He enjoys us enjoying it.

Paragraph F. Bernard of Clairvaux, in the 1100s. He is one of my favorite guys in church history. He called it loving ourselves for His sake; we love ourselves for His sake.

Paragraph G. Jesus does not want us to walk in humility that shuns or minimizes how He loves loving us. He does not just love you, He loves loving you. He says, "I really like loving you. I don't want you to get into humility that shuns or minimizes this reality." He loves us enjoying being loved by Him. He is love. That is why this is a huge subject. It isn't just, "God is love, let's move on." No, there are so many implications to this about us. He is magnified when we boldly believe in His love, when we are as jealous as He is for the fullness

of His purpose in the relationship that He has ordained between us and Him. When we are as jealous for the relationship as He is, beloved, that is what He wants. He is magnified in that holy boldness.

### **A LOVE PARADIGM OF ETERNAL REWARDS**

A subject that is talked about a bit around here is the subject of eternal rewards. I have taught on eternal rewards for twenty-five years really consistently. It is one of my favorite themes, so I always get the same question. It is well-meaning, but it is grossly misinformed. It is something like this: “I love Him so much, I don’t care about rewards.” That is a misinformed view; their idea of rewards is a carnal view. Rewards, in their carnal mindset, mean a way to be over people in a way to show their superiority. That is not what rewards are, a way we can get over people and be superior.

I say, “Yes, I don’t want those either. That isn’t what the Bible is talking about.” They say, “Oh.” I say, “First of all, you don’t want to assume you love so much that you don’t care about it,” because—paragraph A—“Jesus taught more on eternal rewards than any man in the Bible. Already we have to be careful. He must know things about them that are not obvious to us.” When people say, “I don’t really care about them, I just want to love Him.” I say, “Trust me, if you get them, you will really care about them because Jesus really cares about them. It has nothing to do with you being in front of people, or strutting in front of people.”

“Oh, what does it mean then?” Eternal rewards express how Jesus feels about the way you loved Him. Because Jesus is so rich and because He is so loving, the simplest acts of love you show towards Him in this life—He gives you crowns and garments, and all manner of rewards that express how He feels about the way you loved Him—the things He gives you actually magnify His love for you and the way you loved Him. It is between you and Him.

Some guy may say, “Wow, you are so captured by the fact that He will give you garments that signify how He feels about the way you loved Him.” Those garments—you will wear the statement of His love everywhere you go. You want that, He wants you to have it. That is why He taught more on it than anybody. I don’t mind the question when somebody says it. I understand it. When I first heard about eternal words, I thought it too, “I love God so much, I don’t care; I just love Him.” When you understand them through a paradigm of love, they are all about love. They are about proximity to Him, being near Him—about involvement with Him. That is what it is about; it isn’t about strutting in front of people, it isn’t about bragging; it is about connecting with Him, and Him expressing how He feels.

Here is a good statement. Paragraph A. Matthew 25; He will say this to people, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful in a little bit, now you are ruler. Here you are in a place of leadership”—the “ruler” doesn’t mean you are over people. You will be, but that isn’t the point. “You are working together closely with Me in that sphere of the earth. When I think ruler, I do think how many people might be under me. I think of how many staff meetings I get to have with Jesus to talk about what it is I am involved in. I want to be in some meetings: “What do you think about my little area?” If He gives me a pick—I don’t think it works that way—but I am going to pick IHOP Kansas City. I just want to do IHOP. I know all you guys want Jerusalem. Everyone says, “I want to go to Jerusalem.” “Lord, I will go to Grandview. I will do the house of prayer in Grandview.” I don’t really get to pick, that was dumb. Here is the point: I wanted to shift your idea of ruler. Here is the next thing I want you to see. I want you to see the word *joy*.

Rewards, He has joy. It is His joy. He is the one excited to give you the garments, to proclaim how He feels about the way you loved Him. When He gives them in His joy, we enter into it and then we have joy. We will really like rewards; they will magnify His supremacy, because His love will be sounding forth throughout our lives. We are a testimony of how worthy He was in this life. We are a testimony about the quality of His love, because He gives so much for us doing so little; He pays so well. When I think of rewards, I think, “You gave so much.” We just repented of a few secret things that nobody knew we did. Because we repented of them, You remove them and reward us forever. Those are all statements of His supremacy. If you think of rewards outside of the love paradigm, then it gets all confusing.

### **A PARADIGM OF MINISTRY**

Top of page 6. Paradigm of ministry. We are in ministry, not to get a following; we are in ministry so we can help people connect with the love of God and so we get out of the way. It is a love paradigm of ministry. We are in the ministry whether you minister to one person or a thousand. The idea is that you are a friend of the Bridegroom. You help the people of God and Jesus connect, you get out of the way, and you don’t draw attention to yourself—something I have a lot of energy about; that we do not draw attention to ourselves. Whether it is our platform ministry style, the worship team, the preachers, or the people leading the ministry.

What we are doing in the auditorium, whether we are worshiping, whether the Lord is touching us, we do not want to draw attention to ourselves. We want to draw attention to Jesus. By nature we draw attention to ourselves. If we get a little anointing, a little feeling, a little of this, a little of that, we want everybody to know, so we draw lots of attention to ourselves. When we look through a love paradigm, we want everyone to be thinking about Jesus, not about us. Whether we are on the platform, or out there, in the workplace.

It is a ministry style that is about us driving people to the awareness of Him and not being aware of us. It is at every level of the kingdom; whether you are in a worship service, on the platform, in the marketplace, wherever: finally, a love paradigm of the glory of God. What the Lord is after—I will just be so brief on this—Hebrews 10: what He wants, is for us to have boldness, and to be near Him, and to have assurance or confidence. He wants us to have boldness; He wants us really close to Him, fully participating with Him, awestruck by His majesty. He doesn’t want us awestruck by His majesty and then retreating. No, He wants us near, close, with boldness, with an open spirit. Not a proud spirit, but a confident spirit, awestruck by His majesty, but emboldened by His love; that is the partnership. That is the participation together.

Paragraph 2. Paul compared the manifestation of God’s glory in the Old Covenant with God’s manifestation of glory in the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant, here is what He said. 2 Corinthians 3: the whole comparison is there. In the Old Covenant, the glory of God manifest, I mean the trembling majesty of God. Here is what happened. They all worshiped at a distance, they observed His glory at a distance and they were servants like the angels—the angels are only servants—they didn’t see themselves as sons and daughters, or a Bride. In the New Testament, we are not at a distance, just observing His glory as a servant, but we are near and we are observing His glory and we are declaring it, but we are participating in it; very different from the Old Testament. We are a Bride, we are not servants. In the Old Testament, they stood at a distance; they trembled and hid their face. In the New Testament we open our heart and receive love, we enter into the fellowship of the Trinity of His burning heart. I call it the fellowship of the burning heart.

Paragraph D. In the New Testament, we are awestruck with His power, but we are bold to enter in and participate. It is a view of God where we participate; we are not content to be far away in oblivion—which does

not exist anyway—Jesus is the one who was so high, but He went so low to bring us so near, because we are so dear to Him. That is the combination of the truths that come together in the New Testament glory. Finally, in paragraph F, end of page 6, we magnify Jesus’ supremacy by fully receiving and returning His love in a deep relationship that forever involves declaring and magnifying His greatness, worshiping Him. That is a significant part. There are great pleasures in His heart and even in those who do it. We will magnify His supremacy; not only in declaring who He is, but also in the way we live together with Him, because we trust and magnify who He is in His kindness to us.

Our very lives are a statement of His grandness and greatness. We will obey His commandments forever, we will partner with Him forever, we will be jealous for everything that is in His heart for us, we will be jealous for it. That is part of magnifying Him. Amen.

### **MINISTRY TIME**

Tonight was just Jesus, the Bridegroom God, the God with the burning heart. I want to invite people to come forward. We all need this. I need it. You need it. I need it a whole lot.

Nobody outgrows this need for a lot more of the things I just shared. I want to invite people to come forward. You say, “I have such a pain in my heart. I feel distant from God. I know He loves me, technically, I know it is true. I cannot feel it. My life feels worthless. I know it is not. It feels that way. The enemy whispers in my ear. I am being attacked and assaulted. Everything you said Mike, I believe it, but it bounces off of me. It does not seem true, though I believe it is true. I want a breakthrough.”