

Session 3 Abiding: Intentional Cultivation of Intimacy

INTRODUCTION

Turn to Ephesians 3. Some of you were here last night when I gave part one, so I'll give just a bit of review because some of you weren't here. We started with one of the most prominent prayers in the New Testament, a prayer of Paul the apostle: Ephesians 3:14-21. We'll look at just a few lines of it. Look at the middle of verse 16. Paul prayed that the Father would grant something specifically to the believers in the city of Ephesus; that He would grant them to be strengthened with divine might on the inside. Instead of *strengthened*, you can put the word *energized*. You can put the word *renewed*, but I like the word *energized*; that God would release energy, divine energy; that He would energize with might, with His own might.

It's supernatural. It's not about us being more committed than someone else with an outgoing personality. It's not that kind of thing. It's something that's supernaturally released on the inside called might, divine might. Paul prays that they would be energized with divine might.

He goes on to say in verse 17 that the purpose of this working in the Holy Spirit, this energizing, this tenderizing, is that the presence of Jesus would be manifest in our hearts. When he prays, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts" (Eph. 3:17), it means that the presence of Jesus would literally be manifest in our emotions; that we would feel what God feels a little.

Now he's speaking to people who already have Christ living in their hearts, yet he's praying that Christ would yet live in their heart.

"Well, I thought He already did?"

He's not talking about the new birth. He's talking about a manifestation of the heart of God upon the human heart, where the human heart actually feels the emotions of God. We feel His delight, we feel His joy, we feel the pleasure that He feels in love. Our hearts are tenderized in this. It's one of the most glorious dimensions of the kingdom of God, except that so few believers press in to touch this kind of reality.

WHEN OUR HEARTS ARE ROOTED IN LOVE, WE HAVE SUPERNATURAL ENERGY

He goes on in verse 17 and gives a very important how-to, a method and a result. He says, "The way that this works is by your hearts being rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17b, paraphrased)—rooted in the revelation of divine love. We looked last night at three different dimensions of love, but we're only going to review one. Paul says that when your hearts are grounded, rooted and grounded in the revelation of God's affection for you, then this presence touches you in a greater way. This rooting and grounding is really on both sides of the equation. It's the method to being energized, and it's the result of being energized. It's like how the rich get richer. When our hearts are rooted in love, we're energized. We're energized, and then we're more rooted in love.

Being rooted in love doesn't only mean rooted in love for one another. A lot of people read it that way. It includes that, but that's not the beginning of this rooting in love. It's being rooted in the revelation of God's affection for us. The reason I'm stressing this is because so much of the Church believes in the concept that God

loves us. They believe in the concept that God desires us, but their hearts aren't rooted deeply in this revelation. It's one of those cases where the preacher says it, and they say, "Yeah, hey, we believe it."

Paul said, it's more than that. It's more than believing it. It's more than saying yes to the reality; it's being saturated in this reality. To be "rooted and grounded" means to be saturated in it. It means your spirit is saturated in this reality. We're getting some of Paul's pastoral theology. What I mean is that in this prayer, Paul is revealing his methodology of changing the church of Ephesus. He knows that if the church of Ephesus gets saturated in this reality, then their spirits will have might in them. Their spirits will have might released in them. In a very practical way, being strengthened with divine might means our spirits are being energized and tenderized. Really, it boils down to that when it's all said and done. There's nothing more energizing than touching the reality of love. A heart awakened to love has energy. There's energy that automatically touches us when we experience love.

It happens in the natural, in the realm of romance. You know, boy meets girl, and they're just giddy and all that stuff. They find they're experiencing energy. But it goes beyond romantic natural love. Think of when a baby is born; think of how the parents and grandparents react. We just had a new granddaughter. The parents look at the little one and say, "Oh!" The poor mom is thinking, "Oh! Let me sleep!" but apart from that dimension, there's an energy, there's a tenderizing and a yes and a wow in our spirits when we're really connected with love, or contact love. We call it the joy of the Lord, but it's really an energized and tenderized spirit. It happens in the spirit realm with God, not just in the natural realm. When two dear friends haven't seen each other in a good while, when they meet, in that moment they say, "Oh, my brother! Oh, my sister! Oh!" They feel energy in their heart. The God of love communicates His strength or energizing by love.

WE CALL THEM TO THE LOVE OF GOD BEFORE WE LEAD THEM TO THE WORK OF GOD

It only makes sense that the God of love would communicate and impart His energizing when we touch the reality of love. That's how the human spirit is made. If you want to get someone out of depression, if you want to get someone into an energized spirit, lead them to the realm of love. It absolutely works, because the human spirit was made by a God of love to be energized by touching love. It's really true.

The reason it's so important to say this is because those of you who are trainers and equippers of others in the Body of Christ—maybe you teach a congregation, maybe you teach a home Bible study, maybe you disciple people one on one, but you're a trainer and equipper of other people—you must know this. If they get rooted and grounded in the revelation of God's affection for them, if they get saturated in this realm, they'll have energy in their spirit and they'll have a tender spirit. It will tenderize them. What happens so often is that as leaders we call people first to the work and second to the heart of God. We call them first to the work of God, and second to the heart of God, but what happens is that they get burned out in the work because the work doesn't release energy and tenderizing. As a matter of fact, the work depletes the energy and makes them calloused if they aren't renewed by contacting and touching the Lord on a regular basis. I think it's the most common thing in all of church history: the leaders call the people first to the work of God and second to the heart of God, but in the work of God, there's not this self-replenishing energizing of their spirit that will tenderize their heart. As a matter of fact, it burns them out and bruises their heart. We must call them first to touch the heart of God before we consume them in the work of God.

It seems like the need is so great that we really need workers. I tell you, slower is faster. What I mean by that is this: if we take a slower path to get those workers working, if we get them saturated, they become workers far more effectively in a much faster time frame if they become lovers before they become workers.

YOU'LL NEVER EXHAUST THE OCEAN OF GOD'S LOVE

Now, here in verses 18 and 19, Paul seems to be contradicting himself. He tells us in verse 19 that God has made us able to comprehend the fourfold dimension of God's love: the width, length, depth, and height of the love of God. Then, in verse 19, he tells us that we're not able to fully comprehend. It seems like a contradiction but it's not. He's making two different points of emphasis. In verse 18, he's saying, "The Lord is adamant about communicating this to you. The Lord is committed to it. You don't have to talk God into it. He's already committed to you comprehending this if you're hungry to know more about Him. If you'll feed your spirit on it, God is committed, God is jealous, and God is focused on you comprehending it if you'll go after it." That gives hope.

Then in verse 19, he emphasizes a very different point. He says, "Yes, the Lord is committed to you understanding this, but don't think that because you understand the introduction you will understand it all." He says, "It's incomprehensible in its fullness. It's inexhaustible. You'll never, ever, even in a billion years, exhaust all there is to experience in the burning desire of God's heart. You'll never exhaust the ocean of God's love."

However, God in verse 18 is committed to you experiencing it, and that's a really important point to know. Beloved, your heart may be dull, you may be disconnected, you may be stuck in an area of sin and bondage, but let me tell you this. The God of the Lord Jesus is committed and jealous to see you comprehend this, if you really want to comprehend it. If you'll go about it in the way He described, I promise you that He has promised you that you'll experience it. He'll give it to anyone who genuinely wants to experience it.

That's verse 18, but verse 19 is a very different emphasis. He says, "Just because you experience it, just because you drink a cup or even drink a lifetime from that fountain, don't think you've exhausted the vast ocean of His burning desire." The God of desire, His desire is infinite. Even in eternity, it's inexhaustible.

THE WAY TO FULLNESS IS THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE AFFECTION

Then, in the next verse, he makes another key point. It's the same point as verse 17. Verse 17 says the way to get this is to get rooted and grounded in love. In verse 19, he's saying that the way to the fullness of God is to drink of His love. The way to fullness is to experience divine affection.

Why should you care about knowing that? Because for your own heart, you need to know how to focus your attention; in terms of your ministry, you need to know where to focus your attention—the way to fullness in your own life and ministry and the way to fullness in the lives of the people to whom you minister. I tell you by the authority of the words of Paul the apostle that when you know the love of Christ—or you can use the word *affection*—when you know the affection of Christ, it leads you to the fullness of God as ordained for you in that given season of your life. The fullness of God is different for different people at different seasons, but the fullness that God has ordained for any given season will only be experienced to the degree that we know, that we experience, the affections of Christ. That's what Paul is saying in verse 19.

Do you want fullness in your life? Then feed on this night and day. Do you want fullness in the lives of the people to whom you minister? Feed them on this night and day.

That's where we left off last night. Let us turn now to John 15. We only turned to John 15 last night. We'll go there, and then we'll go to one more passage. Beloved, in this vision that Paul gives of the width, the length, the depth, and the height of divine affection, he's giving a picture of a God of burning desire, a God of desire that no one can exhaust; no one can deplete Him of His infinite desire for humans. That's a wonderful picture of the heart of God: infinite desire. Jesus wants us to experience Him as the God of desire. I like to say, "burning desire," "the God of affection." When I say *desire*, I'm talking about how He longs for you with an intensity we can comprehend a little, but not fully, ever. Even a billion years from now we will still be learning to experience new dimensions of this infinite desire. Paul introduced us to the God of desire in Ephesians 3:18: the width, the length, the depth, and the height. It's fantastic.

ABIDING: INTENTIONALLY CULTIVATING INTIMACY WITH GOD

Jesus makes a fantastic statement here in John 15:7. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Then He concludes: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (Jn. 15:7-11).

That's John 15:7-11. There's so much before and so much after, but we're just picking out a few thoughts right in the middle of a very, very dynamic communication of God's heart. First, Jesus gives the condition: "If you will abide in Me." When He says *abide*, He means intentionally cultivating intimacy with God. Instead of the word *abide*, you can say, "If you live in Me." The word *abide* means to live or dwell. "The essence of your life is connecting with Me." That's another way to say it. "If you'll live in Me; if the very essence of your life purpose, if the essence of why you live is to connect with Me." That's what it means when He says, "If you'll abide in Me." It's a very, very deep and very powerful subject.

EVERY COMMANDMENT OF GOD IS A PROMISE OF ITS OWN ENABLING

The very fact that this is a condition lets you know that it's also a promise. Every commandment of God is a promise of the enabling to fulfill that commandment. Whatever God commands us to do, implicit in the commandment is the promise of the enabling, the anointing, the ability to do it. God has never commanded His children to do something that was out of reach. When He gives His commission, "Find the essence of your life in connecting with Me," then He's going to give some glorious fruits of that, but I tell you, that's good enough. I mean, the condition is the promise. If we find the essence of our life in connecting and communication with the heart of God, I don't even need the promise. That's the promise right there. Lord, that's enough right there.

The Lord says, "Well, it really is enough," but it will have a result. It will have an impact in the natural world. We're talking about intentionally cultivating intimacy; you feed your spirit on these ideas. You saturate your being, so that you're rooted and grounded in it. You add fasting to increase your capacity to receive more, to speed up the process. Fasting doesn't earn you anything; it just enlarges your capacity to receive. Fasting speeds up the process. It's a divine catalyst to receive revelation.

WE GET CLOSE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE REVELATION OF HIS HEART OF DESIRE

He says, “If you’ll live in Me.” Oh, I love this! Now let me add this. He says, “If you’ll live in Me as the God of desire, if you’ll come to Me as the God who has love, who has a width and a length, a depth and a height, if you’ll live in connection to the God of this four-fold burning desire”—it’s critical that we understand this. It’s not just “living in” the concept of God.

“Well, He is the Messiah; we read the Bible occasionally...”

No. He says, “If you’ll connect with Me as the God that I really am, the God of desire, this desire will be imparted to you.” You’ll feel where He’s going. That’s really what He’s saying in verse 11 when He says, “My joy will be full.” We’ll get to that in a moment. He’s saying, “If you’ll live in conscious connection with My heart, connecting with Me as the God of desire, if you’ll live in that realm, you will feel what I feel for you and you will feel what I feel for others. It will go through you. Your whole inner man will be changed.”

It’s the “Me” as the key idea. It’s the God of desire; the God of pleasure. That’s what David says in Psalm 36:8. David said, “I drink at the river. I drink at the river of Your pleasure” (Ps. 36:8, paraphrased). What he meant was this: “I drink at the river of the pleasure of Your heart.” He was talking about the knowledge of God’s heart. David said in Psalm 16:11, “At Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11, KJV). God is a God of infinite pleasure. His heart is so filled with delight and gladness and pleasure over His people and over His kingdom. He has pleasure in so many things. I like to describe the Holy Spirit as a river called desire. I say, “This river called *desire*.” We get close to the Holy Spirit; we get close to the Holy Spirit in the revelation of His heart of desire. I always think of the word-picture of getting close to that river where we want to put our toe in it. That river has a mind of its own. If you touch that river called desire, you’ll get swept into a whole different reality. You’ll leave Hawaii and go raise your support and live on next to nothing to go live in the plains of Kansas. This thing has a mind of its own.

You know, you can just go hang around and say, “Well, it’s interesting,” and buy a few hundred dollars worth of tapes. I don’t mean what’s happening here; that’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about something much bigger than that. I’m talking about the reality of the Holy Spirit. When you get connected with that reality, you do wild things. You give up things. You make decisions no one else can make sense of, because when you get your toe into that river, again, that river has a mind of its own. He’s called the Holy Spirit. He’s called desire. He sweeps you like this river, this torrent, into the very desires that fill Him. He puts them into you. This is real, but I’m not talking about reading a book on it. I’m not talking about going to a meeting. I’m talking about abiding in the God of desire.

I’m talking about intentionally, consciously living, where the essence of your life is to connect and to commune with the God of desire. That’s what I’m talking about. I’m not talking about going to a meeting or a teaching on it once. That’s not what I mean. “Abide in Me” doesn’t mean, “Go hear a teaching on it once.” It means that you will consciously in your weakness—we’re all weak—feed your spirit in an unrelenting way. You will feed your spirit on this whether you feel it or not. You will feed your spirit, because in time you will feel it.

Then He goes on. He says, “If you abide in Me, if you will live in Me, if the essence of your life is to connect with Me as the God of passion”—and He’s going to talk about that passion in verse 9, and He’s going to talk about that passion being communicated to us in verse eleven; we’ll get to that in a moment—He says, “there are two more conditions. If you’ll cultivate communion with Me, if the essence of your life is to connect with Me and My words live inside of you.”

THE SUPERNATURAL COMBUSTION OF THE WORD IN THE SPIRIT

Beloved, this is absolutely critical. I have a burden for this area. Even on our own IHOP-KC staff—we have 400 people on our staff—too few of our staff members live in the word of God. We go to anointed meetings; we love the meetings. We think, “Oh, I love the feel of this meeting.” I love the feeling of the meeting, too, but I tell you, an anointed meeting isn’t the same thing as feeding your spirit on the Word, and the Word living in you. Because, see, the Word is combustive. When the Word of God comes into you, and you have a spirit of devotion, a spirit of dedication, and a spirit of confidence toward the Lord as you’re meditating on the Word, when the Word comes into you, and you begin to meditate on it, and it touches the Holy Spirit—it’s the Word, number one, and the Spirit, number two, and a heart that says, “I love You”—it’s combustive. Those ideas that enter your mind awaken and impart energy and strength in you. They really, really do.

It’s a supernatural dynamic. Most people don’t believe in the supernatural combustion of the Word of God in the human spirit. It’s true, though. It’s true. I’ve been stuck many times spiritually: I open it, and I think, “Nah,” and I get that kind of “bah, humbug” feeling. “I don’t feel anything!” I get that ratty little feeling; nothing is working right. Nothing is working right. I’m not saying I get that every time, but I do many, many times. I want to be bold about that because I want to give you courage. If you don’t do it, start doing it. I say, “I don’t feel anything,” I know where to go, because I believe in the supernatural, combustive power of the Word of God. I say, “I feel rotten, but I have an ‘I love You’ in my spirit. I love You, God, but I can’t feel a thing.”

When the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God come into contact in the human spirit, POW! Something begins to happen. I don’t necessarily mean in that moment. You give it some time.

GET OUT OF THE FUNK AT THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

I don’t mean to sound proud, but I want to tell you this by the authority of the Word: I know how to get out of the spiritual funk. I know how to get out of it. Here’s what happens. A person gets into a spiritual funk; they get into this spirit of depression or this dull spirit, and they fill their mind and time with so many things, but they don’t go to the fountain of life. They say, “Holy Spirit, help me.” They even go to the prayer meeting. It’s good that they go to the prayer meeting. They even go to some fellowship, and they go do some of this and some of that. Fill your mind with the *Logos*, the Word of God, with an “I love You” in your spirit. What I mean is reading it with an “I love You,” and turning the Word into dialogue. I don’t care if you feel it at all. You will in time.

Something I did for many years—I don’t know how many years, over ten years, and then it just had a life of its own and I didn’t have to do it on my own—but for ten years at least I committed to read ten to twenty chapters of the Word of God every single day whether I felt it or not. I missed a number of days, but mostly I did it. I would start, say, in the book of Matthew. People say, “I don’t know where to start.” Just start in Matthew 1; there you have it. Take that as a word of knowledge. I would try to read twenty, but I always committed to read ten or fifteen, up to twenty every single day. It takes a small amount time, and I would read it slowly: Matthew 1, Matthew 11, Matthew 12... I would try to block out a few things. I got rid of all kinds of things in my life, and I did this for over ten years on a near-daily basis. I missed a few days here and there, and some days I would spend six, seven, or eight hours doing it.

Here’s the truth. The truth is this: I didn’t feel it very much the first few years. I just did it. Some guy told me to do it and I did it. I was literally about twenty or twenty-one years old. He gave me a vision for the power of the

Word. I was saying, “Ah, I can’t feel this. I don’t like prayer, I don’t like Bible study, I don’t like fasting, I hate witnessing. I don’t like anything, you know. I love God, but I hate all the other stuff.” I said, “But I want to be great in God. I have this dilemma. I want to be great in God and I love Him.” Those are two great things, but I didn’t like anything else. I actually liked going to Christian meetings. I liked the preaching and worship meetings. I liked that. I did like that. But I thought, “Man, how am I going to move forward?” and this man gave me the vision for it.

It was a man from a ministry called The Navigators. He said, “You read ten or twenty chapters a day.”

People would say, “Man, ten or twenty chapters a day?”

I said, “I’ll do it! What have I got to lose? Football is kind of boring anyway. I’ll just turn off the TV and start doing it.”

I started doing it every day, I started doing it for at least ten years; then I quit after ten years because it became a lifestyle. I did it much more after that in the years to come: some times a lot more, some times less. It became such a part of my being that the idea of living without that feeling, I couldn’t endure, because there’s a feeling that begins to touch you. You could use the word *energize*; you could use the word *tenderize*. They’re slightly different, but it’s the same reality. I got so accustomed to feeling the energy of the Holy Spirit in my spirit. I don’t mean in an unbelievable way; just that constant thing. I got so accustomed to having a tender spirit with the Lord. You get addicted to that, and you remember it when you don’t have it, and the very remembrance of that will drive you into it. It took me ten years of doing it as a commitment before I got so addicted to it that I said, “I can’t live without that feeling on the inside. I refuse to live without it, so I can’t do it anyway. I can’t, I won’t, and I know how to get it every time. I know how to get it.”

Well, I’m forty-seven, and that was between the ages of twenty to thirty. So I’ve been doing it for the last seventeen years since then. Again, I don’t do the ten-chapter thing, because this thing got cemented into my being. I’m just getting stirred up as the human leader at IHOP-KC over the fact that so many of our IHOP-KC staff love worship and prayer, but they’re in malnutrition on the Word of God, and it’s just occurring to me that many of them are skipping this step to which I devoted ten years of my life. They’re skipping that step. They’re saying, “Hey, I want passion for Jesus; I want to go for God and revival,” but they’re doing it without “My Word abiding in you.” That’s an incredibly important dimension of the equation. It’s absolutely a critical part, because I believe in the supernatural combustion of the Word of God by the Holy Spirit in the heart of a weak believer who has an “I love You” in his or her spirit. I like to put a few things: a spirit of dedication, an “I’ll obey you” even though we come up short, and a spirit of, “I love You and I have confidence.” I like to have a spirit of confidence, a spirit of dedication, and a spirit of devotion while I’m meditating on the Word.

I tell you, your heart will become a bonfire on the inside. Why? “Because if you abide in Me, the God of fire, the God of desire, the God of pleasure, if you consciously live to connect with that bonfire in My heart,” says the Lord, “that bonfire will get in your heart if you use the Word of God.”

THE WORD IMPLANTED WILL DELIVER YOUR SOUL FROM ANY ADDICTION

It’s not enough to come, I say that to those in our midst here who are at IHOP-KC all day long without opening the Word. I don’t mean spending the whole day in the Word, but the Word has a supernatural power of combustion to it. This is what James said in James 1:21: “The Word implanted is able to save. It is able to

deliver your soul from any addiction” (Js. 1:21, paraphrased). The Word implanted. It’s like the analogy of a farmer planting a seed. When the Word is planted like a farmer plants it, it is able to deliver you from any addiction, but even more than that, from any season of spiritual dullness and spiritual barrenness. That dull, lazy spirit that gets on us is a spirit of oppression. The implanted Word is able to save you. That’s what James says.

WE DON’T HAVE TO LIVE OUTSIDE OF THE BONFIRE OF GOD’S HEART

We use the word *save* and we think, “Be born again.” That’s not what he’s talking about. He’s talking to born-again Christians. He says, “The Word implanted is able to deliver your soul, not only from an addiction, not only from pain and anguish, but even from seasons of barrenness and spiritual dullness you can be delivered.” We don’t have to live outside of the bonfire of God’s heart. Not that we will have the same measure that God has, but with a few coals from that fire, our hearts can be energized and tenderized, and I refuse to live outside of that reality. It’s simply my inheritance. It’s simply your inheritance.

Again, in my leadership role here at IHOP-KC, too many of our staff are living on the fire of a few of our leaders. That’s not enough, because the fire of a few of our leaders will never, ever sustain them or satisfy them in their being—never. It might excite them here and there. It’s not enough to have ten, twenty, forty, or fifty leaders—whatever the number is, it doesn’t matter—and then a whole bunch of people living in the delusion that they have the fire because they’re close to people who have the fire. Most people want to know a man or a woman who knows God, and, if they do, they’re content. If they know a man or a woman who knows God, they’re almost content. Beloved, it’s not enough for me or for you to know a man who knows God. I want to know God. I don’t just want to be with a few people who know God; I want to know God, and that’s my inheritance and that’s my right in the grace of God, and it’s yours.

WHEN WE ABIDE IN THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD, OUR DESIRES BEGIN TO CHANGE

Now here’s what happens. Jesus said, “If you abide in Me, if the essence of your life is to communicate with Me, with the bonfire of My heart and My Word, your experience becomes supernatural. When you combine the combustive power of meditating on My Word with a spirit of dedication, a spirit of devotion, and a spirit of confidence, something very supernatural is going to happen.” Here it is: “You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done” (Jn. 15:7).

Here’s the catch: when you begin to cultivate intimacy with Him—I don’t mean that you haven’t begun already, but I’m saying as we continue to do that. I know many of you are pressing in right now—because of the combustive power of the Word of God, your desires change. People look at this without understanding the conditions and they say, “Lord, You say whatever I desire and ask, it will be done.”

The Lord says, “No, I said this to the abiding heart that’s filled with the Word. What they desire, what they ask, will be done.” Because what they desire will be supernaturally changed from what they desired when they started in the process.

DELIGHT YOURSELF IN THE LORD, AND HE WILL GRANT YOUR HEART’S DESIRES

This is what Psalm 37:4, the famous verse of King David, is all about, when it says “If you delight yourself in the Lord, He will grant you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4, paraphrased). One man says, “Well what does that mean?” Because there are two dimensions of God granting us the desires of our heart. Number one is that God takes desires from His own heart, and it’s like that Holy Spirit syringe. He injects them into us; He grants, He puts into us desires that fill our heart. Then the second dimension is then He answers them.

When David said, “If you delight in the Lord, God will grant you the desires of your heart,” it means two things. It means that first, God will give you new desires, and then He’ll supernaturally answer them in your life.

Some people say, “If I delight in the Lord, God will give me whatever I want.”

He will, but your “wanter” will be supernaturally impacted. The things you want will be changed. Some people start the process and say, “I’ll ask what I desire.” On the front end of the equation, it’s mostly things. It’s the things that they want. They want a new this and a new that. As they progress in the relationship, mostly what they want is experiences of God’s heart. They do want things; things are important. We need money to get into that ministry center. We need people healed. We need equipment in people’s lives, and cars, and we want them to have this and that. Things aren’t wrong or insignificant; they’re just second. What happens is that a large part of the Body of Christ reads this and goes after things, but when we do what Jesus said, we want to go after experiences with the divine heart, with God’s heart. The things we want are mostly pertaining to new and deep experiences of the heart of God, and there are things that we want and need in the kingdom, and the Lord supplies them to us, but it’s a very, very different feeling. It’s a very, very different look.

“BECAUSE HE HAS SET HIS LOVE UPON ME, THEREFORE I WILL DELIVER HIM.”

When David says, “If you delight in the Lord, He will grant you the desires of your heart,” in Psalm 37:4, it’s really the same thing as John 15:7. If you make it the passion of your heart to experience delight in God, it’s David’s version of John 15:7. I quoted this verse last night, but I just love it. In Psalm 91:14, the Lord said this about David. He said of David, “Because he set his love upon Me, therefore I will answer him” (Ps. 91:14, paraphrased). That’s another way to say this verse here; it’s another way to say John 15:7. God pulls back the curtain and says, “I’ll give you a little of My own psychology.” He says, “Because David set his love upon Me”—in the New Testament that’s called abiding in the vine, abiding in Jesus—“because David set his love upon Me, his heart is going to be changed. The things he wants are going to be different. I will answer him.”

Because when you set your love upon the Lord (Ps. 91:14), you delight in the Lord (Ps. 37:4), and you abide in the Lord (Jn. 15:7). It’s the same thing. What happens is that you posture yourself before God. You open your spirit. I like to say it this way: your human spirit becomes vulnerable to the Holy Spirit. You open your spirit and you become vulnerable to God’s desires and they replace your desires. You become a man or a woman touching the bonfire of God’s heart. You might call it “delighting in the Lord,” you might call it “setting your love upon Him,” or you might call it “abiding in the Lord.” It’s all the same reality. You open your spirit and your spirit becomes vulnerable to the desires of the Holy Spirit and a great exchange happens on the inside of you. It doesn’t happen in one day. It happens over time. The things you used to love now you hate, and the things you used to hate now you love.

“YOU WILL ASK WHAT YOU DESIRE, AND IT SHALL BE DONE FOR YOU”

Again, I’m forty-seven now. Twenty-seven years ago, I was in college. I was committing myself to an hour of prayer a day. It was at the most horrible, horrible time of night. I would pray at 9:00pm at the University of Missouri. Between 5:00pm and 9:00pm, I would sweat, because at 9:00pm the fateful hour came—just me and God. I would go to my room for one hour. Oh, it was horrible, horrible, horrible. I hated prayer. If you had told me that day, “Mike, twenty-seven years from now you will be leading a night-and-day prayer ministry,” I would have said, “You’ve totally got the wrong man. I pray because I have to. I pray because I’ll be in trouble if I

don't. I don't like prayer. I don't think I ever will like prayer. I don't even like the concept of prayer. I don't even know why He invented it, but I'm stuck with it from now until the end because I love God, but I don't like this other thing."

If you had said to me, "What do you think about prayer?" I would have said, "I don't like it."

If you had told me, "One day you'll love it," I would have said, "You've got the wrong man!"

It's a supernatural work of God in the human heart, and that's why you guys are in this room tonight, because you have that same kind of thing happening inside of you.

He says, "You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (Jn. 15:7). Now notice that you still ask. Do you know why we ask? The Lord knows anyway. The reason we ask is because when we ask, we document it in our soul in a very intentional way and the Lord wants us, by asking, to relate, and then He answers it. He wants us to ask; then He answers and we say, "Wow!" He wants the "wow" to be registered in our spirit. He says, "I'm not just going to give it to you automatically. I want you to ask for it so that you can see that your love and your interaction with Me is the reason why power is breaking in. I want you to connect it with intimacy with Me."

The very fact that God rules His kingdom by prayer is an indication of God's desire for intimacy with His people. He says, "I could do it without you connecting with Me, but I want you to connect the ideas that when your heart moves towards Me, My heart moves towards you. I'm moved by your heart being moved."

That's why God invented this idea called *prayer*. Prayer doesn't give God new information. It's not like you say, "Lord, send revival in Kansas City," and He says, "You know? I never thought about that. That's interesting. Gabriel, have you thought about Kansas City?"

Gabriel says, "Kansas City, Kansas City. No, not lately, no."

"Those guys said Kansas City."

"That's a great idea!"

"Hey, we'll do it!"

No. God had the commitment to have revival in Kansas City, as He has in your city, long before we ever thought of anything, but when we ask Him, our heart is moved in the asking, His heart is moved in the asking, and then we're moved again by Him being moved and it's this great whirlwind of intimacy. It's this cycle of intimacy that's being enacted through prayer. He doesn't have to wait for us to ask, but He says, "I want to because I want this cycle of intimacy to be established. There's a cause and effect when your heart is moved; My heart is moved, and then your heart is moved." Many dimensions are happening in this. Of course, we know that the Lord's heart being moved is at the very beginning of the equation before it happened anyway. Then He says, "It will be done for you. You will enter the realm of power."

NEVER SEEK THE POWER OF GOD WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING THE HEART OF GOD

We all want to move into the power realm, but we want to skip the first parts of verse seven. You know what? The power of God without the heart of God has surprising impact upon our hearts. We imagine if we enter into the power realm where God is answering our prayer, that's the power realm. If we touch the power of God without the heart of God, I want to tell you this. I believe this strongly. You would be very surprised if you experienced the power of God without the heart of God. You would eventually be bored with the power, and then hardened by the power. It's an absolute fact of Scripture. Because we've seen so little of the power of God, we can't ever imagine we would be bored with it, but I assure you, where the power of God is moving, many of the people are bored. In the Western world, that's such a novel idea, because the power of God is such a new idea. We like the idea, but we see so little that we think we wouldn't be bored; but I guarantee you, you would be. I absolutely guarantee you, we would be.

I know several men who have had supernatural ministries at a worldwide level, and they've told me, several of them with their own words, after meetings where healings and power and things were taking place, "My spirit is bored—not with that moment, just with God. It's not enough."

We think the power realm is enough. It's not. It's not the power of God, it's the heart of God. I remember I went to a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting when I was about eighteen years old. Of course, some of you remember Kathryn Kuhlman; she did tremendous miracles. That's the first time I witnessed an auditorium full of people bored with the power of God. It was an amazing thing. It was like one of those five- or seven-hour meetings. Some of you can remember her and those marathon meetings. In the first two or three hours, I remember the girl would get out of a wheelchair, and the people went wild. The mother was crying, etc. Then the next thing happened and everyone was crying. There were so many miracles that happened in the next five hours.

I was so shocked by this; I can remember it vividly. She called the man from the back row, and this man came out of the wheelchair, and two or three others and all the people around them watching in the whole auditorium in St. Louis were talking and chatting. During the first hour or two, they were stunned as it was happening; then they were talking, and others were coming and going. I said, "Unbelievable." Within the same day, the very people weeping at the one-hour mark were chatting at the five-hour mark, and the miracles were still happening. I said, "This is an amazing thing."

We think that if we could just get into the power realm of God, everything would be fine. No. We would end up bored without touching the heart of God, and then, worse, callused and hardened. In all the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, we have examples of generations that saw the power of God and became hardened because the power wasn't a guarantee that they would connect with the heart of God. The children of Israel are the greatest example. The Pharisees saw the power of God and they decided to murder Jesus when they saw men raised from the dead. They were hardened. Anyway, there's a whole lot on that.

"AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME, I ALSO HAVE LOVED YOU"

Verse 9. Now He's going to go right to the realm of His heart. He's talked about power in verse seven. The end of verses 7-8 is the power realm: bearing fruit, glorifying God, signs and wonders. My goodness! Those are fantastic things if you touch the power realm. Then He goes on in verse 9, "Let Me tell you something. The power realm isn't enough." He says, "Let's go back to the abiding in the God of desire." He says, "Let Me tell you who I am." In verse 9 He says, "I love you. I feel for you like the Father feels for Me" (Jn. 15:9, paraphrased).

Imagine how the Father felt for Jesus when He said that, and how He feels for Jesus now. This is one of the most staggering revelations in the Word of God. Jesus says, “I feel the same desire for you that My Father feels for Me.” He goes out of the power realm back into the heart realm, the realm of abiding. They were fascinated at the end of verses 7-8 by the possibility of power. Jesus says, “No, no, no. Let’s get back to base one here. You think the power is awesome. You think that man raised from the dead is awesome. Let Me tell you something. I’m the uncreated God and I’m lovesick over you. I burn with desire for you, and that’s far more dynamic than a man raised from the dead.” He brings them back out of the power realm to the heart realm.

This statement is staggering, because an hour or two later—it’s recorded in Matthew 26—He tells them in the upper room, at the Last Supper, “Every one of you will stumble and deny Me this night” (Mt. 26:31, paraphrased). He’s talking to immature, young, twenty-year-old apostles who are so filled with pride and weakness. He says, “I’m not talking to men of apostolic maturity in their sixties.” He’s talking to a bunch of twenty-year olds who are all going to stumble that night. He says, “I want you to know, before you even stumble; before you even deny Me, I want to equip you to recover. I’m lovesick for you. Before you even stumble, I want you to know this.” He was preparing them for their recovery by this announcement. He was giving them a paradigm for the book of Acts by this announcement. The book of Acts is all about the power of God. Not exactly; the book of Acts is about the heart of God and the power of God. He was equipping them with a paradigm to do the book of Acts in the way that it’s recorded. They were lovers of God first and workers of God second, but the two go beautifully hand in hand.

Look at that. Oh, my goodness, verse 9: “I feel for you like the Father feels for Me. If you keep My commandments you’ll live; you’ll drink at the river of My desire.”

OBEDIENCE REMOVES THE BARRIERS TO KNOWING GOD’S DESIRE

When it says, “Abide in My love” (Jn. 15:9b), it means you will be impacted by His desire. When it says, “Abide in My love,” put the word *affection*. Put the word *desire*. “You’ll live in contact with My desire.”

I’ve often found that people misread this phrase, “If you keep My commandments.” What it sounds like is this: “If you’ll obey enough, then God will like you.” He’s not saying that if you obey enough, then God will say, “Well, in that case, I’ll let you abide in My love to encounter My desire.” No. “Abide in My love” means to encounter God’s desire.

Here’s what He’s saying. Our obedience doesn’t earn us the right to encounter God’s desire. Obedience removes the hindrance; it doesn’t earn it. Disobedience causes defilement. Defilement short-circuits our ability to encounter desire. He’s not saying, “If you earn it, you get it.” He says, “If you keep the defilement out, if you keep pushing defilement out, the connection will be automatic.” He’s not telling them to earn the ability to encounter desire. He’s saying, “Get the dust out of your computer that sustains the disconnection. Get the defilement out of the way, and the connection will be automatic.” Because if you read this and you think your obedience earns you the right to abide in His love, to encounter His desire, you’ve misunderstood. He’s just saying if you want to live in this realm, if you want to drink from this river, you remove the things that quench it. You fill yourself with the Word and keep resisting the things that quench this desire until you’ve gotten rid of them. Break your agreement with them. It’s called repentance.

EXPERIENCING THE ENJOYMENT AND DESIRE THAT GOD HAS FOR US

Then, look at verse 11. We'll end with this in just one moment. He says, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (Js. 15:11). When He says, "My joy would remain in you," He means that they would experience the enjoyment and the desire that God has in loving them; they would feel God's joy. When Jesus says, "My joy," one part of that means, "The enjoyment I feel when I look at you; some of that will be imparted to your spirit. You will be able to accept and you will be able to feel My joy, My desire for you."

He says, "It's not going to end there. You're not just going to be the recipient of how much I love you. You will have your own joy. You will have the joy of loving Me back. Your joy will be awakened. Your ability to enjoy Me will also be awakened in the overflow of this."

When I look at disobedience, I don't look at it as, "If I obey, I earn it; if I disobey, I'm disqualified." Disobedience, a spirit of defilement, quenches this sensitive communication of His desire with our weak hearts. Disobedience quenches the free flow. Obedience doesn't earn it; the spirit of obedience removes the hindrances from His sensitive, free flow. It's critical. It's not enough to say, "Oh, I want to feel His joy for me. I want to feel that He loves me." I want more than that. I want my own joy, to feel the enjoyment of loving Him.

He says, "I've spoken all these things to you so that you could enter into that twofold dynamic: feeling My enjoyment of you and having your own Holy Spirit-imparted enjoyment back to Me. You'll enjoy Me and you'll feel My enjoyment of you and you'll be energized in your inner man."

Amen.