

## ***Session 1 Loving Jesus: The First Commandment Restored to First Place***

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

### **THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT**

Paragraph A. This message is called “Loving God.” It is about restoring the first commandment to first place like it was in the early church, as we read in the very well known verse, Matthew 22:37: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Here is the point that is amazing: Jesus identified this as the first commandment in terms of His priorities. Loving God with all of our heart and all of our strength, etc., is what God considers the highest priority in His kingdom. Right now, the first commandment is somewhere in the top ten of the Church, but it is not number one. It takes the grace of God to walk in this. We are setting our heart to say, “Holy Spirit, help us to make this number one in our life.”

Jesus goes on and says a second thing. He says in effect, “It is not only the first priority; it is the greatest way you can live before God. It is called the great commandment” (Mt. 22:38, paraphrased). Many people are in quest of the most successful life. How can they live to their greatest potential? I can tell you right now: by embracing the first commandment. That is the secret to greatness from God’s point of view.

### **LOVING JESUS THE WAY HE LOVES US**

Paragraph B. The Father promised an inheritance to His Son Jesus. In ages past, even before the foundation of the world, the Father promised to give His beloved Son an inheritance: an eternal companion, one who would love Him in the way He loves her. Can you imagine that when Jesus called us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, it is because He loves us with all of His heart? Can you imagine that the Genesis 1 God loves you with all of His strength and all of His mind? This is indescribable in its glory and its implications. That point alone causes us to view our Christian walk very differently. Who can know that Jesus loves us with all of His might without wanting to respond in the same way?

The inheritance God the Father promised the Son is an eternal companion, one who would be equally yoked to Him in love forever by the power of God. It is a remarkable concept that in the resurrection we would be equally yoked to Him forever and forever by the power of the Holy Spirit. That journey and that relationship begin now in this life. It is real and it is within reach to love Him with all of our strength. Even though our love will be frail and our love will be weak, our love can be all we have, even though our strength is nothing compared to His.

### **JESUS WANTS THE VOLUNTARY LOVE OF HIS PEOPLE**

One part of the inheritance God the Father promised His Son is the mandatory obedience of all creation. What I mean by this is that the Father promised the Son that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. Every believer in heaven will bow and confess, “You are Lord,” and every unbeliever will confess, “You are Lord,” but from the lake of fire. Every demon in hell will be in hell in obedience to Jesus’ command. Whether believer or unbeliever, whether angel or demon, every created being will obey Him 100 percent, some unto damnation, being sentenced to that place by His own words.

However, Jesus wants more than the mandatory obedience of the nations. There is something on His heart for which He longs much more than that all people would obey Him and bow their knee before Him. He wants the

voluntary love of His people. He wants a people who say, “I choose to love You with all my heart. I want to,” because it has to be our choice by the very definition of love.

### **LOVING JESUS THE WAY THE FATHER LOVES HIM**

Notice the intensity of Jesus’ prayer in John 17:26. It is quite remarkable. This is Jesus praying right before the cross. He says, “Father, I want the love with which You love Me to be imparted to them” (Jn. 17:26, paraphrased). Beloved, stop for a moment and think about this. How much does the Father love the Son? He loves Him with indescribable intensity in the fullness of love. Jesus says in effect, “Father, I ask that the very quality of love You possess for Me, will be supernaturally imparted to those who are Mine” (Jn. 17:26, paraphrased). It is indescribable what this verse means. It expresses the intensity of Jesus’ heart. He wants a people, He wants a Body, He wants a Bride, who is equally yoked to Him in love by the very power of God.

Paragraph C. If you think this is impossible, it is. In the natural it is impossible. It takes God to love God. It takes the power of God to inspire us and to empower us to love God back. As we reach for Him and as we are hungry for more of Him, it is in that very reach, in the grace of God, where we are increasingly empowered to love God by the power of God. It will take more than just fierce determination. It will take the grace of God, but God’s grace is moving on those who are hungry for it and it increases our capacity to love Him.

### **WE MUST LOVE GOD ON GOD’S TERMS**

Paragraph D. In this whole idea of loving God, it is important that we love God on God’s terms. The reason I say this is that in this hour of history many people talk about love. They are not talking about the same thing though they are using the same words. Some have reduced love to a positive, sentimental feeling, an emotion. Love has emotion, but it is more than emotion. I believe, a core issue in the generation of the Lord’s return is how love is defined. We learn this from the Bible. Many people who claim loyalty to Jesus talk about love and loving God, but it is not in a way the Bible describes as loving God. We must define love on God’s terms. In the Church there is a great battle right now for what it means to love God on God’s terms. It is not enough to say the word worship, to say the word love, and to say the word justice. We need to walk it out in the way the Bible describes and not in the way the humanistic culture describes, which has made its way into the Church.

### **LOVE MUST BE ROOTED IN OBECEIANCE**

Paragraph E. One of the ways Jesus defines love—not the only way, but a very significant way—is that it must be rooted in a spirit of obedience. What do I mean by a spirit of obedience? I mean a sincere setting of our heart to obey the Word of God in secret when no one is looking. If we are to walk out the first commandment, the glory and the dignity of that lifestyle and the greatness of it, we need to set our hearts to obey the Word of God. Jesus makes it very clear here in John 14:15 and the other verses I have on the notes here. He says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (Jn. 14:15). He means that love is more than fervor in a worship service. It is more than sentimental feelings, though sentimental feelings have their place. It must be rooted in a sincere desire to obey Him in the secret place of our life when nobody is looking. It is fairly easy to obey Jesus when everybody is looking. It is when they are not looking that love is expressed back to God. The reason I say this is because there is a lot of talk today about the grace of God and the people who are talking about it are using the message of the grace of God to empower them and give them confidence to live in compromise. We are going to talk more about that in tomorrow’s sessions.

## **OBEDIENCE LIBERATES OUR HEARTS**

The grace of God supernaturally empowers us to love God on God's terms, which is in a spirit of obedience. Love and obedience are synonymous to God. Obedience is not a call to grit our teeth and endure a boring lifestyle to prove to God we are sincere. That is not the obedience He is talking about. All of God's commandments are rooted in His heart of love for us. Holiness, love, humility, and obedience are all different facets of the same diamond. When Jesus calls us to obey Him, it is not to see if we are willing to endure a boring life of drudgery. Obedience liberates our heart. It frees us to walk in the destiny for which God has called us as the children of God. Disobedience defiles our spirit and dulls our heart. It minimizes our capacity to experience God. When Jesus says, "Obey Me," He says in effect, "I want you to walk in the liberty and the glory of divine love. I want you to feel My love and feel the power of loving Me back and walk with a vibrant and radiant spirit. I want you to enter into the fullness of your destiny before Me and obedience is the only way forward." Jesus was not being hard core here. He was not pointing His finger at them and saying, "You better love Me or else!" That is not what He was talking about. It is as if He is saying, "I can show you the way into the experience and liberty of love." That for which you were created is love—to encounter it, to receive it, and to return it back to the Lord.

Paragraph F, the Sermon on the Mount. I will not go into this tonight, but a little bit tomorrow. I believe, the Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 5-7—is Jesus' most significant public sermon in the Bible. Everybody who is sincere about Jesus needs to be familiar with the Sermon on the Mount—everyone. These three chapters define love and obedience on God's terms. It is essential that we are familiar with these three chapters in an intimate way. They are what God defines as the way of liberty and the way of love.

## **THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT**

Page three on the notes. Let's look at this again. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God" (Mt. 22:37). He defined this as the first commandment and as the great commandment. I want to talk about these two words—the first and the great—a little bit more. Number one, it is the first commandment. It is the highest priority to God. It is the number one emphasis of the Holy Spirit in the Church right now.

Occasionally people ask me, "What is the Spirit saying to the Church?"

I say, "I know for sure." This throws them off, because that seems a little arrogant and presumptuous.

They say, "What?"

I say, "I know the number one thing the Spirit is speaking to the Church. The Word of God says it by the lips of Jesus. It is the first commandment. That is the first thing on God's agenda."

Jesus did not call it the first option. He called it the first commandment. Again, the word commandment in our culture is not popular. People say, "Oh no, that sounds as if you are being a little rough on us." When you see the larger testimony of Scripture, the first commandment is the way of liberty. It is the way God is glorified in the human experience as well.

## **GOD HAS EVERYTHING, BUT HE IS SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING**

I think it is remarkable and amazing, that the first thing on God's agenda is that you and I love Him. Think about it. Why does He care if I love Him? He is so powerful. He is so interesting. He is so completely satisfied

and fulfilled within the fellowship of the Trinity, the Godhead. Why would He be so interested in me talking to Him and loving Him? He wants me to pray. He wants me to interact with Him. I say, “Lord, I am not that interesting. Why do You want me to talk to You so much? My love is very weak. Why do You care so much?” It is amazing that the number one thing on God’s agenda for the human race is that we would love Him. That is an insight into how He feels about us. God has everything, but He is searching for something He still wants. How could the God who has everything be searching for anything? There is one thing He wants that He will not take by His power, and that is the voluntary love of your heart. “The eyes of the Lord go to and fro across the earth. He is searching for the heart that is loyal in love” 2 Chronicles 16:9 (paraphrased). In John 4 Jesus said, “The Father is searching for people who will worship Him in a wholehearted way” (Jn. 4:23, paraphrased). How could the God who has everything possibly want something He doesn’t already have? Beloved, the fact that He wants our love, that He desires it, does not imply any lack in who He is in His glory. He lacks nothing. He does not need us. He simply desires us, because He is the fountain of love. His heart is the eternal fountain of godly desire itself. Beloved, this is the Person to whom we are relating.

### **WHAT IS GOD LOOKING FOR?**

When we put the work of the kingdom, our prayer life, and the life of obedience in context of who it is that is beckoning us to love Him, it only makes sense to give our all to this relationship. The Genesis 1 God loves you and me with all of His strength and all of His mind. What does that say about our value to Him? Why do we want to live with a defiled and a dull spirit, so that we cannot experience the glory of this ongoing encounter with the Man who is incarnate love itself?

What is He looking for? He is looking for love from your heart, not because He is needy, not because He lacks. He is totally satisfied within the fellowship of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are in perfect love and in perfect union, one God in three persons. Because they are love, the eternal fountain of love itself is the very being and heart of God. The Father is saying in essence, “The love that We enjoy so deeply with one another, compels us to multiply it and to share it with others.” Therefore He created humans and then redeemed them, so that we could share and participate in the love that is so perfect and delightful within the Godhead.

We begin that journey now in this life. It is called the first commandment. Beloved, it doesn’t end in this life. For billion of years, our experience of love will increase, and so will our ability to receive more love and to return more by the power of God. A billion years from now, we will still be growing in this. This is a love that has no boredom in it at all, never. It is a love that is rooted in delight and joy and pleasure, because it is totally pure.

Beloved, this is the lifestyle God has called us to. This is what we want to do with our strength. Regardless of what assignment God has given us, whether it is in the Church, in the marketplace, in the home, raising children, being a homeschooling mom, or driving the bus. It doesn’t matter where your assignment is. Your highest calling is to enter into this ongoing encounter with a Person, an encounter that goes on forever and forever. It is never old. It is always new. It is always fresh.

### **GOD IS AFTER YOUR HEART**

It is love that He is after. He is after your heart. Beloved, He is after your heart. Why He wants my heart I don’t know. I just laid that down and don’t worry about that anymore. If I were God, I wouldn’t want not to be that close to me, but He does. That is a statement about who He is and therefore, through the redemptive grace of God in Jesus, it is a statement about the worth we have before Him as well. It is glorious. I want to throw my

whole being into this relationship, to cultivate it and to call others to it with all of my might. In a few moments I am going to urge you to set your heart to make the first commandment first in your life and to put it as the number one reason why you have life on the earth, and to commit your life to this relationship, regardless of where your assignment is in society. I don't want you to do it out of duty. I want you to do this because it only makes sense to do it. You don't have to be a preacher in a church to do this, but you would also spend your life calling people into this relationship and into putting the first commandment first.

Paragraph C. Cultivating love for God is the great commandment, because it has a great impact on God's heart and it has a great impact on our heart. It is the commandment that makes our life great in God's eyes if we walk it out. You may not have the gifting of this person or that person. You may not have the social standing. You may not ever have the fame. Beloved, you can live in the greatest way possible for a human by embracing this journey called the first commandment.

I talk to young people all the time. I ask them a question. "What is God's will for your life?" They ask me that too, "Hey, will you pray with me? I want to know God's will for my life." What they are asking mostly is a question about what they are supposed to do, but God's will for your life is firstly about what you are supposed to be. Most folks are focused on what they are supposed to do. I appreciate that. You want to know what you are supposed to do, but if you are only locked into what you are supposed to do, with very little understanding of what you are supposed to be, you will live in perpetual confusion even as believers. It is an unnecessary confusion that you could settle by putting first things first.

### **WE HAVE THE GREATEST CALLING**

Beloved, you have the greatest calling. I ask people, "What is the greatest calling?" Some of them will talk about filling a stadium as the great calling, meaning the bigger the impact, the bigger the calling. I appreciate those whom God has called to have a big impact, but let me tell you this, when you stand before Jesus, He is not going to ask you about the size of your ministry. He is going to ask you about the size of your heart. When Billy Graham stands before the Lord, Jesus is not going to say, "Father, Father, I think that is Billy Graham over there. Look!" It is not going to happen that way. When Billy, for whom I have the highest esteem, stands before the Father and the Son, when he stands before Jesus, Jesus is not going to say, "How many stadiums did you fill Billy? Wow!"

God is going to ask Billy what is the size of his heart is. That is what He wants to know. That is what He will talk about first, not the size of his impact. If that is true of Billy Graham, then that is true of us. I am saying this not as a rebuke, but as a point of liberty. Many folks have the idea that unless they fill a stadium, they are a second class believer. Beloved, even if nobody pays attention to you, you can be great in God's eyes if you love Him with all of your heart with a spirit of obedience and humility. I am saying this to liberate you. Your life is powerful no matter how small your impact is or how small your gifting or your education or your bank balance. You can be great in God's sight.

### **JESUS WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEART**

Roman numeral III. Let's look at the four spheres of our life and how we love God in those areas, and just take a moment for each one of them. First, we love Him with all of our heart. We are to be engaged fully in the relationship to love Him with all of our heart. It engages our emotions. I am not talking about emotionalism. I am not talking about getting as stirred as possible in a worship service so that you are banging your head and falling down in convulsions because you are so intense. That is not what I am talking about. Most of that is

foolishness anyway. Honestly. I am not talking about carrying on in a fanatical way so that everybody is watching you in a worship service. That is not what I mean about engaging your heart. I am talking about being fully engaged so that you are eager and zealous to grow in love. You are not passive, you are not negligent. You are not looking for short cuts. You are looking to give your all to the relationship. That is what I am talking about. Jesus wants more than dutiful, mechanical service. He wants more than fanatical, trumped up, hyped up emotions. He doesn't want either one of those. Both of those are not what He is talking about. He is talking about being fully engaged and eager, pouring yourself into the relationship; not looking for shortcuts and not looking to do the least possible and still be born again. That is not what He is talking about.

### **SETTING OUR HEARTS ON LOVING GOD**

Paragraph B. We can set our love on anything that we want. We can set your love on money. We can set your love on many things. I could go down the list, meaning we can determine to lock into anything and our emotions will actually increase and follow anything we set ourselves to go after. Psalm 91 talks about the man who set his love on God. There was a time in my younger days where I determined to set my heart on loving God. I heard different men teaching the Word. I said, "I want to do it!" I read biographies of men and women of God who gave their all. There was a time when I said, "Why not me? Why can't I love You like this?" I didn't feel anything. It was not an emotional experience, but there was a time I made a conscious decision. I am not saying I have followed through well. That is not my point. I am not making myself an example of this. I am just saying in my story—because it will be true of you as well—there is a moment where you determine to set your heart on loving God. Your emotions will follow over time. You reset yourself time and time and time again. It is not a one-time decision. Here is the good news. As we change our mind by setting ourselves in that direction, the Holy Spirit will change our emotions.

My goal tonight, in the ministry time in a few moments, is to have you determine to set your heart—whether you feel it or not—and say, "I am going to go after the first commandment lifestyle. I am going to see it as the primary reason for my life, regardless of what my assignment is in the kingdom, whether it is in the marketplace, the home, or both, or in the church, whatever."

### **LOVING GOD WITH ALL OF OUR MIND**

Page five. The second sphere of loving God is with all of our mind. The first sphere was with all of our heart—not necessarily in this order. I don't know that there is an order. The idea is that we pursue loving God in all four of these areas of our lives: heart, mind, strength, and soul. We pursue them all simultaneously. I don't know that there is a particular order. Maybe there is.

To love God with all of our mind is a very significant thing that Jesus is saying. It is often neglected by people who sincerely love God. They think of emotions and fervor in a service, and maybe having tears when they hear a worship song. They tend to not think much deeper than this when they think about loving God. Jesus said in effect, "I want you to love Me with all of your mind." That is a powerful statement. What does that mean? There are many dimensions to all of this. My point tonight is not to try to be comprehensive, but it is to point an arrow to aim your life, and fully throw your life in one direction. That is all I am doing tonight. To love God with all your mind speaks of filling your mind with things that inspire you to love God instead of things that diminish love for God.

## **WE NEED TO FILL OUR MINDS WITH THE RIGHT THINGS**

Paragraph A. What we do with our mind greatly affects our capacity to love in a positive or a negative way. There are many born again believers, who love Jesus in the general sense. What do they do with their mind? They don't fill their mind with things that inspire them to love Him more. The idea of loving God with all of their mind never crosses their mind.

Filling our mind with the right things refers primarily to the Word of God. Not only that, but that is the foundation. It increases our capacity to love Jesus and then to love others out of the overflow. If we fill our mind with wrong things even inadvertently, meaning we don't even mean to, but we just don't fill them with the right things, it diminishes our ability to experience the love of God. There are many people who come up after teaching times when we pray for them. They say, "I want to feel the love of God." I talk to them a little bit. What they fill their minds with makes it impossible for them to feel the love of God in an ongoing way. It would be a violation of the Scripture if they did. We are called to love God with all of our mind.

## **MOST OF OUR LIFE OCCURS IN OUR MIND**

Paragraph B. Let's talk for two or three minutes about how important our mind is and how our mind works. Our mind is the doorway to our inner man. This may sound strange, but most of your life actually occurs in your mind. You only experience a little bit. You think about it much more than you actually experience it in physical ways. The language of the human spirit is pictures. The way your mind thinks is by a series of pictures. I could say anything, like a pink elephant. You think now of a pink elephant. It comes to your mind. A picture, not a concept comes to your mind.

Paragraph C. Let me draw an analogy about how our mind works. Our mind is like an internal movie screen. Did you know that the pictures in your mind never, ever stop even when you are asleep? The pictures are going all the time. Every now and then you remember a few of them. We call that a dream. You are dreaming all night and all day pictures enter your mind. It will be this way for billions and billions and billions of years. That is how the mind works. It will never be different than that. Our mind stores those pictures. Like a state of the art type camera that stores all the videos. Here is what it is like in our movie. The movie screen is inside our brain. We are the producer of that movie, we are the lead actor, and we are the main consumer of that movie. We produce it, we act in it, and we watch it. We are the hero. We are the villain. We are everything right in the middle of our own movie network inside our mind.

Here is why I wanted to tell you all that. I am not getting into some weird philosophy here. Your mind is like a vast universe on the inside. Your mind will continue to remember billions of years from now, meaning, the "hard drive" in your mind is vast. Billions of years from now you will still have full recall of things that happen throughout eternity. Can you imagine how vast your mind is? We are only using the smallest fraction of our mind from the scientific point of view.

## **TRANSFORMING THE MIND**

Here is the point. We can change the movie and the script if we want to. We can continue to feed on the wrong pictures. I don't just mean the tragedy of pornography. I am talking about reliving bitterness, envy, and condemnation. I am talking about comparison and inferiority. All those movies are playing as well. I don't just mean the sexual perversion. Here is the good news. We can rewrite the script by meditating on the Word, by reading the Bible and whispering a conversation to Jesus, as we are reading and talking to Him. We can rewrite the script and the scenes that enter into our mind, not 100 percent in this age, but we can make a great impact.

Paragraph E. Here is my real point. Our mind has such a glorious potential. Our mind has such vast power. Yet so many born again believers are so casual about what they do with their mind. Your mind is so powerful in the way it affects your heart and emotions. Your mind is so dynamic in the way God created it. Why will we spend our days in vanity, entertainment, and daydreaming, when we can rewrite the script and love God with all of our mind?

Paragraph F. We love God with our mind when we take time to fill our mind with the Word of God. The guy says, “Well, I don’t read well.” You don’t have to read well. You can read slowly. You can read clumsily. You can misunderstand half of what you read. As you read it, you dialogue with the Person who is behind the Word. He is the Living Word. The Spirit teaches you regardless of how bad of a reader you are. People say all the time, “I’m a bad reader.” They think you are supposed to read two thousand words a minute. No, when you meditate on the Word, you read it really slowly. I pause every few moments and talk to Jesus. I mean every five to ten seconds I talk to Him. I say little phrases to Him. I am not talking about speed reading. The guy says, “I don’t read well, because I am ADD.” In my opinion—I am not a doctor, so this is just an opinion—most of the ADD in our society is acquired ADD through lifestyle patterns. It is time to turn some things off, to shut some things down, and to recapture the dialogue in your mind with the one who loves you with all of His mind. You can’t do it on the run. You have to make time for it. Beloved, your mind is so powerful.

### **LOVING GOD WITH OUR STRENGTH SPEAKS OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES**

Page seven. The third area, the third sphere is that we are to love Him with all of our strength. I will say this briefly and then move onto the next one. To love Him with all of our strength speaks of our natural resources, which is our time, our money, our energy, our talents, our words, our position of influence, whether it is over one person or a thousand people. It is our sphere of influence. We take those areas of strength and we invest them in a way that causes our love for Jesus and for other people to grow. I don’t mean that everything you do is about this, but the first consideration on your heart is to reinvest your resources and your strength, to inspire love in you or in others. It is as if Jesus says, “I want you to love Me with your strength. I want your strength. I want your time, I want your money, I want your words. I want you to invest them in your relationship with Me. It matters to Me.” No, He doesn’t need our money. He doesn’t need our time. He wants it, because it communicates love. You invest in the relationship of love.

Roman numeral VI. We are to love Him with all of our soul. I believe this is probably the most challenging of the four, to love Him with all of our soul. To love Him with all our soul means to make our relationship with Him the definition of our true success. Let me say that again and I will break it down quickly. We are going to have people respond to the Lord. Our natural identity is based on our accomplishments and achievements before people, meaning, if people look at our accomplishments and our success and our achievement and they like them, we are called successful, because in their eyes we attained something and we are applauded as successful. The most natural way to define our life or to define our success—I am using that in the same way—is by what we accomplish in the eyes of people. It is as if the Lord says, “I want you to carry your heart in an entirely different way. I want you to realign the way in which you derive your identity. I want your identity to be realigned so that you see your success in terms of how you love and obey Me, not in how much you accomplish in the eyes of men.” Beloved, that takes effort. That takes perseverance.

### **REALIGNING THE WAY WE DERIVE OUR IDENTITY**

Paragraph B. Our identity is how people see us, but our identity is how we see ourselves as well. Sometimes you get your identity from what you accomplish—if you are good in athletics, if you make a lot of money, if

you are really pretty, if you are a really gifted musician, or you are really smart. If your value and identity are based on that—on which we naturally all base our identity—you will continually live in an emotional storm. You will always be afraid and preoccupied with losing it or with fear that somebody takes it or somebody interferes with it, because then your value goes down the tube.

Paragraph C. If the primary success of my life—note the word primary—is because Jesus loves me and I love Him back, if that is where I derive my sense of success and value, beloved, you cannot touch me. Imagine this: the God of Genesis 1, who created the heavens and the earth with words, He loves you. That is indescribably glorious. He loves you. He is pursuing you. He desires relationship with you. Beloved, that is really, really awesome, even though that is actually not enough. You have to respond to the grace of God by loving Him in return. It is the grace of God, but you do activate or engage your free will in the process or it is not love. You have to choose each step of the way. A billion people—or something like that—have chosen to receive the love of God through Jesus, but there are six billion people who have refused the love of God or they don't understand it. Even if there are a billion born again believers—well, I don't know the number—it is still the vast minority of the planet. Even though there might be a billion of us, we are a significant minority in terms of the planet.

Can you imagine how glorious it is that the Genesis 1 God loves you? Can you imagine the miracle of grace that you said yes and received God's love and returned it? Beloved, that one fact right there makes you one of the most successful people on the planet right now. You are already significantly more successful than six billion people on the planet. You are at the very top of success in the human family right now, simply by that fact right there. It is easy to get lost in the struggles of life and to lose sight of how glorious this really is.

### **“IF YOU LOVE ME AND I LOVE YOU, I AM ALREADY SUCCESSFUL”**

Some years ago, I heard this confession. I don't even know where I got it. I must have heard it from somebody. Almost everything I learned I got from somebody. I just wrote it down and said it later. I heard this confession and I have used it for thirty plus years. When my heart gets in pain, when my heart gets into trials and under pressure like everybody else, it doesn't matter what kind of pressures, I get tempted to get lost in the pressure and to draw back and say, “Lord, I will pursue You more diligently when I get through the pressure. I have to figure out all this.” Then I stop and say, “I have to think about this. Why am I even doing this thing called life? Why am I even doing this? Because You love me. Yes, that is amazing. You have set Your desire on me. You want me. Wow, OK. Wait! By the miracle of grace, I have responded. I want You! I love You! You love me! I am already successful!”

That simple confession has pulled me out of a potential tailspin 10,000 times in the last thirty years. I have said that phrase so many times. “Wait, Lord, the pressures are mounting, but You love me and I love You.” Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with Me in paradise.” The thief dies. He steps over that line. He is in paradise. He looks around and says, “Wow, I am a king. If I had known I was a king, I would never have been a thief. Why didn't anybody tell me I am a king? I am a priest and a king forever. If I had known this back there I would have lived differently.” Beloved, I don't want to wait until the resurrection to believe the Bible. I want to believe it now. God loves you, you love God. You are already successful.

### **WORKING WITH A WRONG SPIRIT BURNS YOU OUT**

Paragraph E. Burn-out doesn't mostly come from working hard. Every now and then it does, but I think ninety percent of the time burn-out doesn't come from working hard. Burn out comes from working with a wrong

spirit, from trying to gain the approval of man, from trying to get a promotion, from trying to get affirmation, or from working in the fear of competition and jealousy, bitterness, and anger. It is working with a wrong spirit that burns us out, way more than working long hours. Although for some people it is through working long hours, mostly it isn't.

Catch this next sentence in paragraph E if you are still tracking with the notes. If we work to be successful, we get burned out. If we work from a place of success, meaning we already know God loves us and we love God, then we are already successful. In the primary arena of life, not the secondary arena of my assignment, if I already feel successful, I can handle stress very differently, because my success does not depend on circumstances, but it depends on my relationship with the Lord. When we work to become successful so that men applaud us, whether in ministry or in the marketplace or whatever, it will really wear us out. If we go into the midst of conflict and we know that regardless of how it turns out, in the most profound sense we are already successful because we love God and God loves us, beloved, that is a very, very different reality.

**“ONE DAY YOU WILL DO TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR PRAYER”**

I will end with a story—the IHOPKC story. I have told this a number of times. I will tell you the very short version. It was thirty years ago when the Lord spoke in a supernatural way in May 1983. I won't go into the details. I was twenty-seven years old. I am fifty-seven now. He said, “You will do 24/7 prayer with singers and musicians, etc.” I had no interest in that. To be honest, that sounded horrible to me. Honestly, thirty years ago I said, “Why would I ever want to do that?” I didn't say, “Wow!” I said, “Oh, no!” Honestly. I couldn't make any sense of it. I am not a singer. I am not a musician—well, the secret is that I really am, but Misty and those people will not let me do it on the platform. They don't know what they are missing, but that is their problem! Anyway, I am not a singer or musician. The Lord said unmistakably in a profound way, “You will do this one day.” I said, “OK.” I had more of a negative than a positive feeling about that. We put a sign on the wall, “Twenty-four-hour prayer in the spirit of the tabernacle of David.” We put that sign on the wall in the church facilities. The tabernacle of David means twenty-four-hour prayer with singers and musicians. That's the point.

**“I DON'T KNOW”**

Sixteen years go by from when the Lord spoke that in May 1983. We have the sign on the wall for most of those sixteen years. People would join the church I pastored and say, “What is that sign? What is twenty-four-hour prayer with singers and musicians?”

I said, “I don't know. Honestly, I don't even know.”

“Why do you have it up there?”

“God spoke it so dramatically. It will come to pass.”

“When?”

“I don't know.”

“How?”

“I don't know.”

“What is it?”

“I don’t know.”

I meant it. I didn’t know at all. Sixteen years goes by. The new young adult church I started grows to several thousand people. Many of them asked me, “What is that? What does that sign mean?” I gave the same answer for years and years and years. In January 1999, thirteen years ago—fourteen years ago in a minute, because we are at the end of December—the Lord said, “Start the singer and musician thing”—I am summarizing it. So I take a deep breath plus some. With a little anxiety, some fretting, and some other things, I resign the church and I start this bizarre thing with singers, musicians, and missionaries, whatever. We don’t even know what to do.

Thirteen years have gone. We have a thousand staff. We have a thousand students in our Bible School. A lot of things are happening—a lot of outreach, a lot of ministry, a lot of open doors. Here is my point. We waited those sixteen years for it to happen when I didn’t even get what it was. I still don’t think I even get what it is. People from those sixteen years have visited me the last thirteen. They come into IHOPKC and say, “It happened. That thing on the wall really happened.” I say, “Yes, it is really happening.” The point I am making is what I am coming to next. Inevitably they will say this. Not everybody, but many of them will say, “Your dream came true. That thing on the wall, look, there are a thousand staff and students, and all these doors are opening. My goodness! The dream that was on the wall for those nearly sixteen years came true.”

### **MAKE THE FIRST COMMANDMENT THE DREAM OF YOUR HEART**

Here is what I tell them. It shocks them, but I mean it. I say, “No, IHOPKC is not my dream. My dream is the anointing to walk in the first commandment. That is the dream of my heart. IHOPKC can’t touch my dream. If IHOPKC gets really big, my dream is not helped at all. If IHOPKC goes away, it doesn’t touch my dream at all. Nobody can touch my dream. It has nothing to do with money, it has nothing to do with crowds, it has nothing to do with resources, or Bible Schools. The dream, for which I set my heart some thirty years ago, is the anointing or grace—I use those synonymously—to walk in the first commandment, so that when I stand before the Lord, He will say, ‘That was great.’ That is the dream of my heart.” I will do IHOPKC because He told me to and I like IHOPKC, most of the time, not always, but most of the time.

Beloved, I am calling you from the Bible to make the first commandment the dream of your heart, the thing to which you will give all of your heart, without looking for shortcuts. The thing to which you will give all your mind. You will not squander that glorious thing called the mind. You will give your strength to loving God: your resources, time, energy, words, etc. You will give your soul to it. You will identify your success related to the first commandment, not to how much money or fame you get. If you do that, I assure you that on the last day, if you stay with it, the Lord will call that great. He will say that your life was great before Him. You will never regret making that the dream of your heart. Amen.

### **RESPONSE**

Those that want to respond, but say, “I have a dream for other things,” that is OK. It is good to have that other dream, but make it secondary. Don’t throw it away, make it secondary. Make it subservient to the primary dream to walk in the first commandment in the grace of God. Tonight you are saying, “I want to do that. I want to set my heart.” Again, this is something I heard some preachers talk about years ago. I don’t even remember how it happened, but I said, “I am going to set my heart on this.” I didn’t feel a lot, but I said, “I am going to stay with it.” Beloved, you can set your heart tonight and not feel anything, but the setting of your heart is

critical and it will change your life over the next decades to come. It will radically change the way you live, think, talk and process things.

If you are saying tonight for the very first time, “I want to make the first commandment the primary dream. I want to set it as the number one thing I live for,” and you would like prayer for that—I don’t mean a recommitment, I mean it is your very first time—I would like you to come up to these black lines. You are making a statement before God, saying, “Lord, I want this. Yes, I want the other dreams, but I am going to make them secondary. I don’t even know how to do that, but You are going to teach me how to do that.” There are many of you who want to do this in the congregation and among those who are joining us on GOD-TV live and on the Russian TV as well. We want to greet our Russian brothers and sisters who are tracking with us, as well as many through the internet in different countries.

Now I am talking to people who have already made this commitment. It is time to realign yourself again. I have to recommit myself to this several times a year in a major way. I know it well, but I lose my way. I have to sign up again to make this number one. The pressures of life crowd this out and I have to say, “Wait, wait, wait, that is not what I am about first. I am first about the anointing—or the grace—to walk in the first commandment.”

I am asking believers to take these next fifteen minutes and talk to the Lord. Say, “Lord, I want to do this. I want to do that which is great in Your sight.”