***Session 1 Abiding in Love: The Ultimate Reality of the Kingdom***

1. the ultimate reality
	1. The Spirit’s first agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in the Church. Jesus identified this as the highest priority to God and the first calling in our life and for our ministry.

37Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)

*This is my most favorite subject in the Bible. It is my favorite subject to search out. I love to study it and read books on it. It is my very favorite subject to experience and talk to Jesus about, and it is my favorite one to teach other believers and talk about in fellowship. My prayer is that this would be true of you as well. I know that for many of you it is already true of you, but for others, I want to give you a vision for how far you can go in this reality called* ***experiencing the burning heart of God's love****, to experience it and to express it.*

*I am going to start with the first commandment, Matthew 22:37-8. Jesus said, “Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.” Then He went on to identify this as the first commandment. He said, “This is the highest priority to God forever.” That is what He is saying. It was Jesus commenting on this passage from Deuteronomy 6. He was saying, “What God told Moses, I want to tell you more about it. This is the absolute first priority to God in this age and in the age to come.” You will never have a greater calling than to enter into this reality.*

* 1. The command to love God with all our heart does not begin with us. It is one expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom that existed long before the creation of the world, namely God’s heart that burned with perfect love within the fellowship of the three persons of the Trinity.

*The command to love God with all of our heart does not begin with us. The wholehearted love to which we are called is actually an expression of the ultimate reality of the kingdom of God. It is the way that God loves God. God dwells in fellowship within the Godhead in perfect love. God the Father loves the Son with all of His mind, all of His heart. God the Son loves the Spirit with all of His strength. The Spirit loves the Father with all of His mind.*

* 1. God is love—wholehearted love (1 John 4:16). The very being of God is wholehearted love. Wholehearted love is first in God's personality and in the relationships of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart. The Father loved the Son and Jesus loved the Spirit, etc. God is fully satisfied in the fellowship within the Godhead.

*One of the grand truths of Scripture—I do not know of any truth greater than this truth—God is love. This is saying that the very being of God is wholehearted love. This is not a passive, tame, docile type of love. This is a volcanic desire within the heart of God as He engages within the fellowship of the Trinity. This is the very love that He focuses on us.*

*Wholehearted love is first to God. That is why He calls it to be first to us. He only calls us to make it first because it is first to Him. It is first in His personality. It is the very first priority in His relationships. From eternity past God has loved God with all of His heart. Beloved, that is what we are called to participate in.*

*God is fully satisfied in this fellowship. He is filled with joy, and, because He is love, He said, “We want to create a race of beings that can participate in the satisfying joy that We have with one another.” God did not create us because He needed us. He created us because the joy of love compelled Him to create. Because love, by its very definition, demands to be multiplied and to be shared. Love that does not multiply, that is not shared, is not love by definition. God conceived of a plan to create a race of beings on whom His wholehearted love would be focused, and they would respond in the same overflow of the fire of God in their relationship back to Him, and then even to one another.*

* 1. The essence of how God thinks and feels is wholehearted love. The Lord has great power and wisdom but He only uses them to express His love.

*When I say that God is love, the very essence of how He thinks is love. The essence of how He feels is love. He thinks with burning love. He feels with burning love. We know about God’s power, and we know about God’s wisdom, but God uses His power and wisdom to express love. Nowhere in the Bible does it say God is power. He* ***has*** *power. Nowhere does it say He is wisdom. He* ***has*** *wisdom.* ***He uses wisdom and power for one reason, to express love.*** *That is the purpose. As a matter of fact, His judgments are all about removing everything that hinders love. There is no contradiction between His judgment and His love. He does not lose it for a minute in impatience. He only releases judgment to remove what hinders love.*

* 1. We best understand the first commandment by seeing it in its eternal context of the fellowship in the Godhead, rather than seeing it as one aspect of kingdom ethics. He wants us to respond in wholehearted love because it is *who He is* and *who He created us to be*. We were created in His image for love. It is the core reality of our relationship with God and the essence of salvation.

*We best understand the first commandment, the commandment to love God, in its eternal context. If we start off with the command of “Love God with all of your heart,” we might mistake it as a kingdom ethic, and we might feel duty-bound to try to love. When we understand love in its eternal context, then we do not see it as a duty issue that brings blessing to our lives, but we see it as participation in something so glorious, so awesome. It is our very liberty to walk in this. He wants us to respond in wholehearted love because that is who He is. He wants us to respond to Him in wholehearted love because that is who He created us to be. He created us specifically in His image to feel and express this love.*

* 1. One foundational premise in Scripture is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God and that we must abide in and stay focused on this reality (Jn. 15:9; 17:23).

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

*Here is one of the ultimate statements of Scripture. I do not know what can be more intense than this. I love to preach on this. I love to talk to Jesus about it. Not just to talk to people about it, but to talk to the Lord about it. The foundational premise of the kingdom.* ***God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God.*** *That almost sounds inconceivable, but it cannot be other than that. God can never love in a way different than who He is, and He is wholehearted love. He cannot love less than that. He would deny His own character (John 15:9). The Holy Spirit gives us fresh eyes and a fresh experience of this passage. Do not ever let this passage become just another Bible truth. Jesus said, “As the Father loved Me,” I am going to add the words, “In the same intensity, that is the way I feel about you.”*

* 1. The love burning in God’s heart has at least five distinct expressions that are deeply interrelated. 1. ***God’s love for God***: Each person in the Trinity intensely loves the others with all their heart.
	2. ***God’s love for His people***: He loves His people with all of His heart, mind, and strength. He
	 loves the redeemed with the same intensity that He loves within the fellowship of the Trinity.
	3. ***Our love for God***: God’s very own love is imparted to His people by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
	4. ***Our love for ourselves***: We love ourselves in God’s love and for God’s sake.
	5. ***Our love for others***: We love others in the overflow of experiencing God's love (1 John 4:19).

*I like to talk about the burning heart of God. I refer to it as* ***the fellowship of the burning heart****. We are called to enter into that fellowship. Because the burning heart is the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father. The burning heart is the Father, Son, and Spirit for us. God beckons us, “Enter into this fellowship with us.” Beloved, this is the essence of what salvation is all about. Salvation is so much more than escaping from hell. Salvation is so much more than having a ministry mandate so we have something important to do. So that life seems more important. Beloved, there is something bigger going on. We are called into the fellowship of the burning heart in this age and in the age to come.*

*I have identified five expressions of that heart. They are very simple. They are very obvious. They are deeply integrated. You do not want to separate one from another in an artificial way. They are so deeply intertwined with one another that you cannot really separate them fully.*

*The* ***number one*** *expression that I have already said—God loves God with intensity. The way the Father loves the Son, with all of His heart.* ***Number two****—God the Father, Son and Spirit love us in the intensity in which They love each other. One God in three Persons, the mystery of the Trinity.* ***Number three*** *is the first commandment. We love God in the very impartation of the way God loves God. We do not love God by our own power. It is actually poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit.*

***Number four****—We love ourselves in the love of God. Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.”*

*One lady prayed, “Lord, I want to love my neighbor as I love myself.”*

*The Lord surprised the lady, telling her that was the problem. “You do love your neighbor the way you do love yourself. That is why you hate your neighbor.” It is funny, but it is profoundly true. I believe one of the great hindrances in the body of Christ to experiencing the love of God is self-hatred. Identifying that stronghold and little by little seeing it dismantled. God may break it in one moment. Typically, it is dismantled piece by piece. So we can actually experience the love I am talking about.*

***Number five,*** *the overflow of that love is for other people. We sill actually enjoy people forever the way God enjoys them. It is not just a few good friends. Beloved, you will love the body of Christ with the same intensity that God loves them. You will enjoy millions of people for billions of years in the first beginning of the kingdom. After a couple billion years we are just starting out.*

* 1. These five expressions of love constitute what I refer to as the ***fellowship of the burning heart.***Our greatest destiny is to participate in the burning love within the fellowship of the Trinity.

*I call these five expressions of burning love* ***“the fellowship of the burning heart.”*** *It starts in God. The fellowship* ***is*** *God’s burning heart, Father for the Son etc. Our greatest destiny, our greatest destiny, is to participate in that fellowship. Here is the reason I am saying that. Many believers underline a verse on the love of God, sing a song about it, tell it to a friend, put it on a postcard, and then they move on and leave it. Our greatest destiny is to participate in that reality forever. I am jealous for this. I want to experience it. I want to express it. I want to be lost in it. I want you to be lost in it. That is what the kingdom of God is all about.*

* 1. ***Abide in love***: This is a call to live in it continually and *stay focused* on gaining insight into its various expressions. This is the main exhortation in the Bible. It includes studying it, praying over it, and sharing it—going deep in it and being students of how God feels about His people.

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

*John 15:9—there it is again. Sometimes I have that verse three or four times in one set of notes. You cannot overstate it. This time I want to look at the third phrase. It is “abide in love.” He says, “In the intensity that the Father loves Me, that is the way I love you.” Then He gives what I consider to be the number one exhortation in the Bible, “Abide in this.” He is saying, “Do not move on. Live here. Do not ever graduate from this focus. Never.”*

*Different times we will get a study focus—the Holy Spirit will highlight a theme in the Bible. You might lock into it for a few weeks or a few months, but never at the expense of leaving this truth. It is not the sort of thing we do an internship on and talk about love for a few weeks or go to a conference, and then we move on to other subjects. Jesus said, “Do not ever move on from this subject. Dwell in here. Go deep. Stay locked in. Be focused on this reality. Share it everywhere.”*

*I call the IHOPKC leadership team to this, “Focus on this subject all of our days. Never graduate from this subject. No matter what other sub-theme of this subject we study, we must never graduate from this being our primary subject.”*

*Jesus said, “Abide in it, focus on it, go deep in it, stay planted in this reality.” Do not just underline it in your Bible, write a new worship song on it, share it one time, and then move on. I have committed by the grace of God to keep this as the premier subject that I study in my personal life. Not to preach it. Yes, to preach it, but far more. I want to feel it. More than feel it, I want to express it. I want to feel it, and I want to give expression to it.*

*God calls us to be students of the emotions of God. King David was called the man after God’s own heart. King David was a student of the emotions of God all of his days. I want to be a student of how God feels. I want to study it out all of my days. I want to make it the premier occupation of my heart.*

* 1. Our primary life goal is to be focused on receiving and expressing God’s love. We are to make this the primary preoccupation of our life before, during, and after revival. We do not need to wait for a special seasons of revival to deeply engage in this reality.

*I want to call you tonight to make this your primary life goal. It is intentional. It is not accidental. Nobody can make this your life goal for you. It is an intentional commitment that sometimes we feel it, sometimes we do not, but we make it our life goal to be locked into this truth. It is our preoccupation, or it is meant to be, before revival, during revival, after revival. The reason I say it that way, different groups through history, now, and even in the past, get fascinated by the subject of revival. I am one of those guys fascinated by that subject. They begin to get a vision for a greater experience of the power of God, which is good. Here is a negative. They begin to put things on the shelf while they are waiting for what they imagine the greater breakthrough will look like.*

*I have talked to people and asked, “What does that greater breakthrough look like? Longer meetings, more powerful meetings, more people at the meetings?”*

*“I do not know, just glory to God, everybody, ‘Ahhhhh.’”*

*I said, “Well, break it down. What does it look like?”*

*“You know, just people going crazy for God, I guess.”*

*I respond, “Well, let me tell you what it looks like. It means multitudes of people going deep on this subject. That is what revival looks like.” It is not just multitudes praying the sinner’s prayer, though I love it when multitudes pray the sinner’s prayer. That is not revival yet. That is an evangelistic outreach. Awesome. I love evangelistic outreaches. When the body of Christ is preoccupied with the first commandment, but even more than that, with the way that God loves, and they want to be a part of it in a deeper way—that is my definition of revival. It has all kinds of manifestations of power and healing and salvations and renewal in the church, many things.*

*Here is my real point. Not just to define revival. That is not my point. It is* ***because*** *abiding in love is the ultimate point* ***that*** *we can do this* ***before*** *revival.* ***Do not wait*** *for what you imagine to be the breakthrough you are waiting for to abide in love now. In the revival, abide in love. In seasons of revival where there is a heightened activity of the Lord, abide in love afterwards. Do not wait for something. Do it now. Because it is what revival is about.*

*Some guy says, “Well, I do not know. I am waiting for something.” No, this is it. Right here. Right now. This is it. More people going deeper in this.*

*Then, of course, there are manifestations of healing and power in those ways, but that is to make this happen. God does not heal people just so they can say, “I have been healed.” God heals people to call them into this.*

* 1. The essence of eternal life is to know God—this speaks of experiential knowledge; it is more than information. Salvation is much more than escaping hell but is an invitation to fellowship with God (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3)—to participate in the ***fellowship of the burning heart***.

3“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ.” (Jn. 17:3)

*Jesus said in John 17, “I want you to know that the essence, the point, of eternal life is for you to experience Me. That is the point.” Salvation is more than escaping hell. We know that. It is participating in the family dynamics of the Godhead. Father, Son, and Spirit—they beckon us to participate in those family dynamics. Beloved, this is inconceivable to our natural mind that we are called by the God with the burning heart to participate in that burning heart forever.*

1. God’s love for God
	1. The first expression of perfect love is found in the relationships within the Trinity. The Son loves the Father (Jn. 14:31) and the Father loves the Son (Jn. 3:35; 5:20; 15:9; 17:23).

*We are going to go through each of the five briefly. I just went through the five. I am going to go through them again. If you visit again, you will say, “Hey, he is doing that same message again.”*

*The first expression is God’s love for God. The first expression of perfect love is within the Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit.*

* 1. There is one God who forever dwells in three distinct persons who are coequal as divine persons. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each fully possess all of God’s attributes. Each person is different from the others in function and authority in their work—which is fully unified.

*There is one God, I believe, in the doctrine of the Trinity, one God in three Persons. Fully God.*

* 1. The way that God loves within the Trinity is the *only* way He loves us. He *always* loves in fullness. His love never diminishes or grows, because it is infinite in measure and eternal in duration; He does not love us with part of His love—that would be to deny His own character.

*The way the God loves within the fellowship of the Trinity, beloved, here is the glorious thing—it is the only way He loves. He cannot love partially. He only loves wholeheartedly. God does not suspend one attribute to exercise another. He does not put love “on hold” when He shows justice. He does not put His holiness “on hold” when He expresses mercy.*

*All of God’s attributes are expressed in all He does. He cannot deny or even reduce His love one percent. If God were to love with 99 percent of His capacity, He would deny Himself. He always loves in fullness. When Jesus said, “The Father loves you the way He loves Me,” you can almost say, “Well He has to. He cannot love any other way.” He always loves in fullness.*

*His love never diminishes. Never. Not one percent. It never grows. A million years from now, Jesus will not say, “It has been an amazing season; I have grown in love. I want to give testimony.” It will never happen. If He cannot grow in love then, He cannot grow in love now. Beloved, what does that say about the way He feels about you right now? This is real. It is real.*

* 1. The union in the Godhead reveals the nature, quality, and intensity of His love. The relationships in the Godhead are the *model* and *source* whereby we relate to God and others. They give us a picture of what perfect love is, and of how He relates to us, and how we relate to Him.

*The love within the Godhead is the model and the source of how we relate to God. The way the Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Spirit, etc., it is the model. Jesus says, “Look at the way We love and you know the way We love you.” He says, “Look at the way We love. It is the source. It is the very thing We impart to you.” That is why He says, “Abide in this. Lock into it. Talk to God about it. Study it out. Pray about it. Talk about it. Never graduate from this reality.”*

* 1. Jesus has joy and enthusiasm in His love for the Father. He is moved in loving the Father and in being loved by Him. Jesus is not bored in His relationship with the Father. One implication of this is that Jesus enjoys His people in a similar way as they embrace their new identity in Christ.

*For example, Jesus has joy and enthusiasm in His love for the Father. He is moved in loving the Father. He is moved by receiving love from the Father. The Father loves Him. It moves Him. He loves the Father. It moves Him. He is filled with joy in love within the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. He is never bored in His relationship with the Father.*

*Here is the point. He loves you the same way. He is moved by loving you. He is moved by your love. He never grows bored in the relationship. We grow bored in it, but He never does. That is remarkable to me. The most fascinating Man, fully God, fully Man, is never bored with me, but I get bored with Him. Things ought not to be this way, brethren. He could say, “I have enthusiasm for the relationship because it is the only way I relate.” Beloved, when our love is weak, that does not mean our love is false. Weak love is not false love. Our weak love moves Him because it is sincere. He is not only moved when we mature. He is moved when we love Him with our all, even though our all is small.*

1. God’s love for His people
	1. Jesus declared that He loves the redeemed with the same intensity with which His Father loves Him (Jn. 15:9). He said that the Father also loves the redeemed with this same intensity (Jn. 17:23). Father, Son, and Spirit love the redeemed with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)

23…that the world may know that You…have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:23)

*It is not just how God loves God. It is also how God loves His people. Here it is, John 15:9. It made it a third time on my handout here. Same verse. Look at the next verse as well, John 17:23. Jesus said, “It is not only that I love you the way the Father loves Me. The Father loves you the way the Father loves Me. It is not just Me loving you in intensity. My Father loves you in the same intensity He loves Me.”*

*“Well, Jesus, how do You feel about it? Does that bother You since You have been with Him from eternity past?” They say love is the fruit of shared experiences. Imagine the shared experiences the Father and the Son have together. Beloved, we are newcomers beyond measure. God the Father and the Son have this long-term relationship.*

*God the Father says, “Jesus, I love them like I love You.”*

*Jesus says, “That excites My heart.” He does not say, “Well, Father, we have been together for billions of years, we did the Genesis 1 thing together, we have been on lots of ministry trips together. How can You dare love them like that?” No, Jesus’ heart is filled with joy over this reality.*

* 1. Love, by definition, demands an expression—to be shared and multiplied. God wanted others to experience the joy of the Trinity’s experience of perfect love. God created human beings to participate in this glorious fellowship because ***He is love***. God does not lack anything. He has no need. He did not create humans because He was lonely or discontent or had an emotional need.
	2. We will not love God more by “trying harder” to love but by “seeing more” of His love.

1Behold [focus on] what manner [quality] of love the Father has bestowed on us… (1 John 3:1)

*In 1 John 3:1, John the apostle said, “Behold what manner of love the Father has”—behold the* ***quality*** *of love the Father has for us. Beloved, are you beholding? To behold is the same thing to abide in it. Study it, focus on it, and go deep in it.*

*I encourage people not to try harder to love God. I say, “Do not try harder.” You cannot grit your teeth and produce emotions of love like, “I am going to love you, uuuhhh, this is the real one, just uuhh,” in a worship service, “Uuhh,”—you know you are trying to eek out love. If you ruin your vocal cords, and get a sweat, and knock down three people around you, then you really showed love. We cannot love by trying harder to create an emotion. We love by seeing more, not by trying harder. When we see more of His love, we love more.*

*I wrote a book called* ***Passion for Jesus*** *about twenty years ago, so people say, “How do you get passion for Jesus?”*

*I say, “It is not confusing. Study Jesus’ passion for you.” Beloved, when you study His passion for you, it awakens passion in you for Him. The book is not really titled rightly. The real title of the book should be* ***Passion for You by Jesus****. We did it the other way.*

*When somebody wants to grow in love, I do not say, “Try harder.” I say, “See more clearly. Take time to see. Clear out your schedule. Clear out some things from your schedule. Open your Bible, talk to God on this theme.”*

*The Spirit wants to teach you, but He will only teach you to the degree you are hungry to be taught. He will not force the conversation. A lot of people are content having their sins forgiven and having ministry activity. The Holy Spirit says, “I have much to tell you about the Father’s heart if you have time to hear it. If you have time to grow in it.” I love forgiveness from sin, and I love ministry activity, and I love social activity in the body of Christ, etc. But there is something that is bigger than all of that. It is interacting with that heart. That will change our ministry, and it will change the way we relate to other people.*

*I talked to one lady. She said, “You do not understand. I have children in the home. I cannot afford to take time for this.”*

*I said, “I love you. That is why I am going to tell you this. You cannot afford not to. You will love your children far better with a vibrant spirit than with a dull spirit. You will accidentally bruise your children. You will not mean to, but a woman with a dull spirit will bruise her children. She will not bring them into the love of God.”*

*It is the same for a man. The same in a marriage. “I do not have time. My business is growing, my ministry is going, I have my kids, I have my marriage…” You will love far deeper by experiencing His love. You cannot afford not to have time for this. With a dull spirit you will bruise the people that you are most focused on. You will not mean to, but you will. Because a dull spirit does not have the capacity to impart love. I mean the love of God, the supernatural love. It can be affirming, it can give encouragement, but what I am talking about is that I want to be in relationships where God is using me to impart the supernatural love of God that awakens people’s spirits in a supernatural way. You cannot do that without experiencing it.*

*You have heard the adage that the sermon born in the mind will only reach the mind. The message born in the heart will reach hearts. You cannot impart what you do not experience. That is true for moms in the homes, dads in the homes, in marriages, in the marketplace, in the prayer ministry, on the worship team. It does not matter what sphere we are talking about.* ***You cannot impart what you do not experience.*** *I want to give you something that shifts your heart, and I cannot do it by only studying precepts about the love of God. Somewhere I have to encounter it a little bit in order to impart it. It is not earning it. It is just called reality. It is that* ***you impart what you are****. It is one of the laws of the kingdom. It is reality.*

1. Our love for God
	1. The Spirit’s first agenda is to establish the first commandment in first place in us (Mt. 22:37-38). He loves us with all His heart and wants us to respond with all of our love. He wants us to bring our “all” into the relationship, not because He feels lonely and rejected when we love others, but because *He is wholehearted love*. He is worthy of our love. It is His inheritance to receive our all.

*He says, “Love Me with all of your heart because I love you with all of My heart. I want you to respond to Me in the same way that I love you.” He wants us to bring our all into the relationship. Again, our all is very small, but He does not mind that. He just wants our all. Our all is small, our all is broken, it is weak, but it is our all. He says, “Bring the all into the relationship.” Not because He is lonely. He is not saying, “Love Me because if you love somebody else more My feelings get hurt.” No, He does not feel rejected if you love someone more. It is because He* ***is*** *wholehearted love. It is the only way He relates. He is saying, “This is the kingdom-style of relationship.”*

* 1. God’s very own love is imparted to His people by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).
	2. Jesus defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23; Deut. 6:1-9).

15“If you love Me, keep My commandments…” (Jn. 14:15)

*Jesus defined love by a spirit of obedience. This is so important today. There are so many definitions of love. The only definition of loving God is God’s definition of love.* ***We must love God on God’s terms.***

*There are a lot of definitions of love in the culture that are now in the church as well. Because they are popular, people promote them in the church with confidence, but they are not true. Just because it has the rhetoric of love does not mean it is love. Jesus said three times in John 14, verse 15 to verse 23, three times in a row, “Be clear about it. If you do not have a heart to obey Me, it is not love. It can be religious sentiment. You can get worked up by the music in a service, but it is not love if you do not have the intention to obey.”*

*My intention to obey, I fall short on it. When we fall short on it, we call it sin, we declare war on it, and we receive the love of God, even in our weakness. We know that He delights in us, even in our weakness. I am not talking about attaining to mature obedience. I am talking about* ***contending*** *for full obedience. Even long before we attain. We are locked into it. When we come up short, we renounce it. We recommit to the walk of love. It pleases Him. It has to be rooted in obedience. The spirit of obedience or the desire to obey.*

*Let’s put it this way. We have the intention to obey. Sometimes I have an intention to obey, but I do not desire to. I say, “Lord, between You and me, I do not want to do this. I am setting my heart.”*

*The Lord could say, “I know you do not want to, but it is My wisdom operating in you that you are setting your heart to anyway.”*

*I say, “I do not like it. I would rather do it the other way. If You were not watching, I would do it the other way, but You are, and I really do love You. Aaahh! I am going to do it. I do not feel like it at all. I do not even like it.” That is an unrenewed spirit speaking in that context. I have had those kinds of conversations, but my intention is still real.*

* 1. ***The spirit of liberty:*** Liberty is found in the fellowship of the burning heart—it is being liberated on the inside to feel and express God’s love. It is being liberated from the spirit of condemnation, rejection, lust, dullness, and boredom. It is not being liberated to watch movies or to engage in parties that other believers do not feel right about. It is not about freedom to live in compromise. It is to live with an exhilarated heart by encountering God’s heart. It includes more than going on an adventurous ministry trip or having a ministry assignment that impacts many people.

*There is a lot being said about what liberty in grace is. I say this all the time because it needs to be said over and over. I believe the greatest damage and harm in the body of Christ today is not the pro-choice abortion movement, disastrous as it is. It is not the gay agenda, which is a disaster from the biblical point of view, which is my point of view. It is not what is going on in terrorism, the economic crisis.*

*The number one problem in the church today is the distorted grace message. This is dulling the spirit of God’s people so we will not be a vessel of love and power in these areas where we are contending to establish the kingdom. This distorted grace message that is sweeping across the land that is affecting young people and old alike, but it really has strongholds in young people. This false teaching is giving them confidence in the grace of God to continue in compromise. They think it is biblical because their buddies are cheerleading them in it. It is not biblical. It is a lie. It is seduction from hell. It will not bring you into the love of God. It will actually diminish and injure your life, all in the name of grace.*

*The spirit of liberty is found in this fellowship of the burning heart. When the Bible talks about the spirit of liberty, it is talking about being liberated on the inside. It is being* ***liberated to feel the love of God****. The spirit of liberty is being liberated from the spirit of condemnation, from the spirit of rejection, the spirit of lust, the spirit of boredom. Beloved, I want to be liberated from spiritual boredom entirely. The Holy Spirit wants to liberate us.*

*Liberation is not the freedom to live in compromise. I have talked to various young people. They say, “I am into grace. I have the spirit of liberty. I can go watch these things, go to these places, do these activities.” They think liberty is the freedom to compromise with nobody confronting them, but they walk around with a dull heart and a lack of experience of the love of God. Beloved, that is already the judgment on them. They do not have to be rebuked.*

*I do not want to live with a dull spirit. It is my inheritance to live exhilarated in the love of God. I refuse to make peace with living with a dull spirit in God. People have this idea of liberty, and it just walks them right into dullness and darkness, all with Biblical terms around it. What kind of freedom is that?*

1. Our love for ourselves
	1. The redeemed are to love themselves in God’s love and for God’s sake. We love ourselves through the lens of the revelation of Jesus, His cross, and our great worth to Him. We have received the very gift of God’s righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). We have indescribably value and worth to Jesus. Seeing this changes the way we feel about God, our life, and others.

39“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Mt. 22:39)

*We love ourselves in the grace of God. In Matthew 22, Jesus said, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” As the redeemed, we are to love ourselves* ***in*** *God’s love and* ***for*** *God’s sake. We love ourselves through the lens of who Jesus is and what He did on the cross. We love ourselves through the lens of our great worth to Him. Beloved, do you know the indescribable worth you are to Him? My favorite subject is the worthiness of the Lamb. He is worth it. May the Lamb receive the reward of His sufferings. Beloved, let me tell you what comes as a part of that reality. It is not just the worth of Jesus, which is my favorite subject. It is not just His worth to you. It is* ***your worth to Him****. It almost sounds like heresy. Beloved, you are worth so much to Him. You are the only ones, I am talking about the human race, that He would become human for and give His life for in order to fellowship with forever. He would not do that for angels. Can you imagine the worth you have to Him? He became Man.*

*When Jesus became a human—here is the deal—He had to become human forever. He did not say, “Father I will go down for thirty-three years, pay the price, go back up, take off the garment of humanity, throw it aside and say, ‘Uh, that was a weird garment to wear. I am glad to being back to being only God.’” Jesus is fully God. He is never, ever less than God. He is also fully Man. Once He became Man at the incarnation, He is human forever. Billions of years from now He will have this one dimension that is different from the Father and the Spirit. He will have a human body with scared hands. It is inconceivable what He did for us. Why? “Because you are worth it to Me. I want you. I want you.”*

*The devil comes and lies to us, saying, “You are worthless; you are junk. There is no sense in going on.”*

*Jesus said, “You are the one I want.” Beloved, the very fact that you have said yes to Him is already like a lightening strike from heaven about the value you have to Him.*

*Do not buy the lies of the devil. “I am not pretty enough, not popular enough, not gifted enough, not rich enough, not enough opportunity.”*

*He says, “You are human enough for Me, and I want you.”*

* 1. Seeing ourselves, and our new identity, destiny and worth in God’s love empowers us to love ourselves in God. We will never love others more than we love ourselves in the grace of God.

*By seeing ourselves in this new identity in Christ, by seeing our new destiny, by seeing our worth to Him, we are empowered to love ourselves. We cannot love ourselves just by self-help techniques. There are a lot of those seminars out there that do their best to get you to love yourselves. It is so propped up on things that do not hold you up under pressure. Positive thinking, be all that you can be. They are talking about outside the grace of God. I appreciate thinking positively. It really beats thinking negatively. But it is more than positive thinking. It is entering into the truth about who you are to Him. You will never love others more than you love yourself.*

*Like the analogy of woman I gave, “Lord, I want to love my neighbor as I love myself.”*

*He said, “That is the problem. You do not love yourself. That is why you hate your neighbor. You hate yourself.”*

* 1. The Bible calls us both *to love ourselves* (Mt. 22:39) and *to hate our lives* (Lk. 14:26).
	We love who we are in Christ—our new identity in Christ and what we do in God’s will.
	We hate our lives—who we are outside of Christ and what we do outside of God’s will.

*Here is the tension. The Bible calls us to love ourselves* ***and*** *to hate our lives. Which is it? It is both. There is no contradiction in those two exhortations. None. We are to love who we are in Christ. We love our new identity. We love what we do in the will of God. I am going to break that down in a minute. It is a very important subject. We hate who we are and what we do outside of the grace of God.*

* 1. Bernard of Clairvaux called it *loving ourselves for His sake*—that is, to be jealous to be all that He called us to be for His sake. Jesus does not want us to walk in false humility that minimizes how much *He enjoys loving us* and how He wants us to *enjoy being loved by Him.* We magnify Jesus as we love ourselves in agreement with His love for us and honor His “investment” in us.

*Bernard of Clairvaux was a very godly man in the twelfth century in France. He said, “We love ourselves for His sake.” What he meant is that we are to be jealous to be all Jesus called us to be for His sake. He does not want us to walk in the false humility that minimizes how much He enjoys loving us. He wants us to enjoy being loved by Him.*

*Let me say this again. He enjoys love you. He enjoys it. It is who He is. He says, “Do not walk in some false humility that minimizes the way I enjoy loving you. I want you to enjoy Me enjoying you.”*

*We magnify Jesus as we love ourselves because we are in agreement with His love for us. We are honoring His investment in our lives. We magnify Him best by living in agreement with Him, even when it pertains to the way He sees us.*

* 1. Jesus delights in who we are in the grace of God. He wants us to love “the person” that He loves. He wants us to enjoy how much He enjoys us—to delight in how He delights in us.

4But you shall be called Hephzibah…for the LORD delights in you…5And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4–5)

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

*God delights in us. He said in Isaiah 62:4, “You shall be called Hephzibah.” Here is what God told the prophet Isaiah, “Tell them this—the Lord delights in them. Tell them this—their name is ‘I rejoice in them.’ I like relating to them. I really do.”*

*Beloved, He does not just like you after the resurrection. He actually delights in you right now. I talked to one guy. He got really nervous about this some years ago. A lot of people think God is mostly sad and mostly mad when He relates to us. I said, “I have good news for you,”—for a sincere believer, a weak one, which is us—I said, “He is not mostly sad, and He is not mostly mad when He relates to us.”*

*The guy said, “If you tell people that, they will get confidence in a false way and live in compromise.”*

*I said, “No, it is the opposite. You get them confident in the fact that God delights in them, when they stumble, they will run to Him instead of from Him. It is exactly opposite. They will be far more obedient. They will not give up in the despair of failure and self-hatred.” The guy was troubled. I said, “Let me ask you a question. Is God ever glad?”*

*He said, “What do you mean?”*

*I asked, “Is He ever glad? Does He ever break out with a smile? Ever? Does He break out with a smile every now and then, every couple million years, every year, every day, how often?”*

*He answered, “I do not know.”*

*I said, “Think about it.”*

*He said, “I never thought about it.”*

*I said, “That is the point.”*

*He responded, “I do not know. I guess occasionally.”*

*I said, “Okay, He does a lot. Who is He breaking out with a smile over? Angels?”*

*“I never thought about it.”*

*“People? I have Bible verses.”*

*He said, “Okay, people.”*

*I asked, “What kind of people? Only people in the resurrection, or people on the earth? Does He ever like somebody when He is on the earth? Does He ever like the relationship?”*

*“Well, I guess so? But they have to be mature.”*

*I continued, “Good. How mature is mature? Like Paul? Or just one degree below Paul, and the smile breaks out on His face? Or is it a couple degrees past Paul? When does the smile break out?”*

*The guy said, “Quit tormenting me.”*

*I said, “No, I am trying to see your life changed.”*

*When the “yes” is in our spirit, even in our weakness, He delights in us, and the smile is there. He is not mostly sad and mostly mad when He relates to sincere believers, even in our weakness. Beloved, we run to Him and not from Him in that reality. I want to be near Him because He likes me more than anybody else does. He likes me the most of anybody. I like to be around people who like me. So do you. It is more than that.*

*He wants you to love the person He loves. The person He loves is wearing your shoes right now. He loves you. He wants you to love that person.*

* 1. We must receive what the Word says about our new identity in Christ, our worth to Him, and the activities we do in God’s will. We are to value the activities that we do in God’s will—though so many of them are small and unnoticed by others. Most of our love and service to Jesus consists of small acts that are usually unnoticed by others. We can easily underestimate their value to Jesus.

42Whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly…he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Mt. 10:42)

*We have to receive. This is where it begins. We receive what the Word says about our worth to Him. We do not receive what we feel.* ***We receive what the Word says****. It is more than about our worth to Him. We receive what the Word says about the value of our activities to Him. In Matthew 10:42, He said, “Anybody. If you give only a cup of water in My name, I will never, ever forget it. Ever. Never will I forget it.”*

*Here is my point. The vast majority of our acts of obedience, acts of service, and acts of love, the vast majority over seventy years, are very little and mostly go unnoticed by everybody and unappreciated. Some people imagine they will have these very dynamic acts. They might have a few in their lives. They live in this picture but as the years unfold—first they are in their twenties, then thirties, and now forties—they do not have this list of big, dynamic acts. They begin to sink, “I must be a failure. I must be a loser.” They do not realize that from the biblical perspective that the majority of their acts of love and obedience will be very small actually.*

*In Matthew 25:21, He says, “Those who were faithful with that which was very little,” Matthew 25 and Luke 19, “You were faithful over that which was very little, and now you will rule over ten cities.” We will be shocked when we see the very little that we do, that is not recognized or esteemed by anybody, and He is going to say, “That moved My heart. I will remember that forever. Well done, good and faithful servant. You are over ten cities.”*

* 1. When we know that His eyes are on us, then we do not have to strive to get the eyes of people to recognize our accomplishments and ministry, etc. We do not need to get the time and attention of the powerful and popular people because we already have the time and attention of the most glorious Man. Our ability to love Jesus is hindered by the emotional traffic that is related to being preoccupied with our own image and what we think people are thinking about us.

*When we know His eyes are on us, we do not strive to get the eyes of people on us. Beloved, this is where liberty is. If you do not know that God’s eyes are on you and that He is moved by the small things you do that nobody even recognizes, if you do not know that, then you are under this pressure to get the attention of the powerful and the popular. Here is the problem. The powerful and the popular do not have time for you. So you live in this intense tension of failure. You cannot wave enough flags to get them to pay attention to you.*

*Beloved, I have good news for you. Already the most powerful and popular, glorious Man in human history, His eyes are already on you. You already have His attention. That is where liberty is. You know what eternal rewards are? Somebody said, “I do not care about this cup of cold water or getting rewards.” Yes, you do. Jesus taught more on eternal rewards than any other man in the Bible. He knew most about them. Eternal rewards are not about doing small things that nobody sees but it moves God’s heart so that in heaven you can strut in front of people. Eternal rewards are not about strutting and showing your superiority. Eternal rewards are Jesus expressing publically the way He feels about the way you loved Him in this life.*

*He says, “I took it personally. You humbled yourself. Nobody even knew you did. You served in secret. Nobody recognized you. Nobody paid attention to you. I saw it every single time. I want you to know how I feel about the way you loved Me.” That is what eternal rewards are. It is very personal to Him.*

*Our ability to experience this love is so hindered by the emotional traffic that we naturally have. This emotional traffic where we are so preoccupied with what we think they are thinking. So preoccupied with our image and so preoccupied with what we think they think we look like. It just shuts down our ability to experience love. It is this tyranny of being preoccupied with how people might be thinking about us. The bad news is they are not even thinking about you. Just like you are not thinking about them.*

* 1. Self-hatred results in a deep sense of rejection that damages our ability to love and receive love. He desires to fully liberate our heart from self-hatred so that we do not wish we were someone else but are genuinely thankful for being who God made us to be (with our specific calling).

*This deep sense of rejection in self-hatred damages our ability to experience the love of God. He wants to liberate our heart from this.*

* 1. We love ourselves without despising our appearance, gifting, and ministry assignment regardless how small it is. We thank Jesus for who we are in Him and for the unchangeable aspects of our appearance, abilities, personality and life circumstances—family, parents, and nationality, etc.

*He wants us to love ourselves without despising the way we look, without despising our gifting or our lack of gifting. Not despising our ministry assignment, whether it is in the church, the marketplace, the university, in the home or in the neighborhood. It is a kingdom responsibility. We do not despise it because it is small. It moves Him. It matters to Him. Rather, we thank Him for who He has made us to be.*

*Beloved, it is not an accident what you look like, the giftings you have, what your personality is like. I am talking about your core personality. Not the damage of sinful decisions. I am talking about the way your characteristics were put in you in your mother’s womb. You are a designed gift, uniquely designed by God.*

*“God, You made a mistake. You did not give me the gifts the other guy has.”*

*He says, “I do not want you to have those gifts. You are something special to Me. Those gifts will make it different. Trust Me. You are born in the right family, in the right nation. You are born at the right height, your eye color, your skin color, your family background. You have the right parents.”*

*You think, “No way.” Yes, those are the ones God chose. He is the artist painting on the canvas of your life over seventy years, and He is doing something remarkable in love.*

* 1. The Lord wants us to enter into the feelings He has for us. Some must repent of longing to have another’s calling, gifting, family background and appearance, etc. We can imitate the spiritual dedication of godly people but without wanting to have their calling and life circumstances.

*The Lord wants us to enter into the feelings He has for us. He wants us to repent of longing to be somebody else. Longing to have their gifting, longing to have their personality, longing to look like them. He says, “No, I love you like I love My Son. I did well with you. I really did. You will see. You will see.”*

1. Our love for others
	1. We are to love others in the overflow of God’s very own love (Jn. 15:12). This is a dynamic expression of the fellowship of the burning heart. The Lord wants us to enter into what He feels about others—this changes the way we see people and how we respond to them.

12This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (Jn. 15:12)

* 1. We are to love fellow believers who mistreat us because God loves them as He loves us. We’ll forever delight in one another in the way in which God loves and delights in His people.
	2. Our love for others must extend beyond loving only the people who enjoy the same things that we enjoy. The spiritually strong believers are to pursue the weaker ones. We must not only love the “cool” people—who are popular and powerful and who can enhance our status, etc.

*The last point. Our love for one another, very important point, but I am out of time so just enjoy that point reading it on your own. Amen.*