***Session 3 God Loves Us with All of His Heart***

1. review: the ultimate reality
	1. God is love—wholehearted love (1 John 4:16). The very being of God is wholehearted love. Wholehearted love is of first importance in God’s personality and in all of His relationships—
	to God, to us, and in what He desires from us. From eternity past, God has loved God with all of His heart and strength. This is how the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Spirit, etc.

*I am continuing in this series I am calling* ***Abiding in Love****, which is a phrase from John 15:9. We are systematically going through the key ideas related to this glorious subject. I want to take a brief moment to give a review of what we have covered in the first two sessions before we begin the new material here on session three.*

*The Bible states emphatically that one of the premise statements of the scripture is that God is love. I like to throw in the extra word He is* ***wholehearted*** *love because God expresses wholehearted love in all of His relationships in context to His family. The only way that God loves is with all of His heart. The Father loves the Son with all of His heart, all of His mind. The Son loves the Father and the Son loves the Spirit, etc.*

*Now the Scriptures make it clear there is one God in three persons. There is a dynamic fellowship and relationship between those three persons in the one God. That is the epicenter and the source of all love in the kingdom of God. From eternity past the Father has loved the Son with all of His heart. From eternity past the Son has loved the Father with all of His mind and all of His power.*

* 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 Jn. 4:19).

*In the last two sessions I have outlined these five different expressions of what I call this burning heart of God. God burns in His heart with the love and the fellowship that He shares within the Trinity between the three persons. He beckons believers into this fellowship.*

*The first expression of that love is the way God loves God, as we just mentioned. The second expression of that love is the way God loves people, His own people. He loves us in the same intensity that He loves Himself. Number three, the way that He beckons us, the way that He calls us to love Him. He says, “I love you with all of My heart.” It is only natural that He would want us to love Him back with all of our heart.*

*Then number four we will talk about in one of the future sessions, loving ourselves in the grace of God. Jesus said to love your neighbor as you love yourself. There is a wrong way to love ourselves outside of the will of God, and there is a right way in the grace of God to love ourselves. That is a future session.*

*Fifth, that love in these four expressions overflows, and we love one another in the overflow of that love.*

* 1. One foundational premise in this teaching series is that God loves us with the same intensity that God loves God and we must abide in this truth all of our days (Jn. 15:9; 17:23).

23“…that the world may know that You [the Father]…loved them as You have loved Me.”

(Jn. 17:23)

*The focus of our session today is two of the most dramatic and significant statements in the whole of the Word of God. They were spoken in the same context the night before Jesus' crucifixion. He spoke them. They are so startling, they are so massive, that their weight challenges our ability to believe and receive them.*

*The first one I will highlight is**John 17:23. Jesus is praying to the Father, and He says, “Father, that the world will know that You love them in the same intensity that You love Me.” Beloved, that is breathtaking. He says, “Father, that the nations will know that You love Your people in same scope, in the same intensity, that You love Me.” This is building on an Old Testament premise from Habakkuk 2:14, a very famous verse saying that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.*

*That filling of the earth with the glory of God—it actually begins in this age. Throughout church history that has been happening in part, but it is going to come to completion in the age to come when Jesus actually returns to the earth to rule the earth physically. In that context, in the millennial kingdom, the fullness of this passage will come to pass.*

*That the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. That is the foundational premise Jesus is relating to in this prayer, and He contextualizes the earth being filled with the glory of God to the way that the Father loves His people. He sets the glory of God into a relational paradigm, and He says this in essence, “That Your glory will fill the earth in this way: that all the earth will see the intensity of how You love Your people. It is the same way You love Me.” That is a most remarkable statement.*

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

*Now He makes a statement in**John 15:9. He makes it two times on the night before His death. He says, “As the Father loved Me, I have also loved you.” Then He calls them to abide in that love or to lock into that reality and never, ever move on from a life-focus on that truth.*

*So He tells us in John 17:23, “The Father loves you the way the Father loves Me.” It is Jesus speaking. And He says in John 15, “I love you the way the Father loves Me.” For both Father and Son, their love for us is compared to the way they love each other.*

*The measure of how God loves us is the way God loves God. What Jesus is saying in essence is, “Study how the Father loves Me, and you will gain insight into how I love you.” That is the implication of what He is saying here. We can study the way the Father loves the Son best in the four Gospels, although the entire Word of God gives us insight on it. We are called by these two statements to become students of how God loves God, how the Father loves the Son.*

*Now these statements seem so big, even unrealistic, out of our reach, but I want to remind you that nobody has more authority to comment and teach on the love of God than Jesus. Though we may not feel the truth of this love, the scope of it does not lessen the reality of it simply because we do not feel it. So the invitation, the challenge and invitation to which He is beckoning us here at the end of John 15:9 is this: He says to abide in that love.*

*Now this is the main exhortation in this series that I am giving called* ***Abiding in Love****. What He means when He says, “abide in this love,” He is saying, “I want you to stay focused on this love all of your days. I want you to live in it, and I want you to go deep in it. I want you to search it out. I want you to talk about it; I want you to pray about it. Do not ever be content unless you are growing in the knowledge and the experience of this love.” That is what He is saying in essence.*

* 1. ***Abide in love***: To abide in love means to continually live in it. This requires that we *focus* on living in God’s love. We set our heart to go deep in *beholding*,or understanding this (1 John 3:1). We must be students of God’s emotions and grow in understanding of God’s multi-faceted love.

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

*Now John the apostle later wrote in**1 John 3:1****,*** *“Behold the manner of love the Father has for us.” When he says, “behold the manner of love,” he is saying in essence, “Study and focus on the quality of love the Father has for you.”*

*So, beloved, this is our life mandate from the Word of God. We are to lock in and seek to understand the quality of the love the Father has for us. This is not a passing theme in the kingdom. This is the primary truth on which the whole kingdom of God is built. Again, we need to become students of God's emotions. Students of how the Father loves the Son and therefore gaining insight about how God loves us.*

*When we study the relationship within the Godhead, the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—again one God in three persons, the great mystery of the Trinity—when we study that which was the focus of our last session, we gain insight into how God loves God, how God loves us, and then how we overflow in response by loving Him back. So I will not cover that ground again since we looked at that in our last session.*

*Now one of the premises of understanding the being of God, in the little that we do, is that God never, ever suspends one attribute while He exercises another. He never changes one of His attributes ever, even when He exercises that very attribute. What I mean by that is that never for one moment does God love less than 100 percent. Never for one moment is God less than 100 percent just. Never for a moment less than 100 percent wise. Never for a moment is He less than 100 percent merciful. His mercy can be rejected, but the mercy is still extended.*

*God cannot be anything less than who He is, or He denies Himself. So He is* ***fully*** *God in* ***all*** *of His attributes* ***all*** *of the time. That means He always loves in fullness. Now that is within the boundary lines of His redemption, because in order to receive that fullness we have to come to Him on His terms as described in redemption.*

*He never loves part partly, He only loves fully because, again, He would deny Himself if He was deficient in even one percent of His attributes, and so that is impossible. He never diminishes in love. He never grows in love. A million years from now Jesus will not surprise us with a testimony, “I grew in love in that last million years.” Not even one percent.*

*His love is infinite in measure. His love is eternal in duration. In our spiritual life, when we are in our spiritual immaturity, He never loves us less. When we are spiritually immature He does not love us less than He will love us a million years from now in the perfection of the resurrection. When we have resurrected bodies and absolute perfection, He will not love us more then than He does the very first day we were born again, because He only loves in fullness.*

*Now the reason I say that is that, when Jesus makes the startling statements—the Father loves you the way He loves Me, and I love you the way the Father loves Me—as shocking and as vast as those statements are, when we take a step back, it only makes sense because God can only love with all of His heart. That is the only way.*

*Now, though in our spiritual immaturity He does not love us less, it is true that we experience less. He does not experience less, but we do. So whether we are spiritually mature or immature does not affect the way He relates to us. It affects our ability to experience it.*

*God is grieved at times by various activities in our lives. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as grieved. It is like parents raising a teenager—they might be grieved in an area in their teen’s life while still fully engaged in the relationship with that son or daughter. If we can do it, how much more can God do it! God can separate His grief over an area from the overall relationship that He is deeply committed to and maintain His love for us with all of His heart.*

* 1. The union in the Godhead reveals the nature, quality, and intensity of His love and relationships. These relationships are a picture of what perfect love is, and of how God relates to God, how He relates to us, and how we relate to Him and others. Each person of the Trinity enjoys and fully engages in the relationship with the others. Jesus has joy and enthusiasm in His love for the Father. He is moved in loving the Father and in being loved by the Father. His love is never mechanical. He is not disinterested or bored in His relationship with the Father.
	2. We best understand God’s love as we consider the glorious truth of the Trinity. The way that God loves within the Trinity is the way He loves us—it is the very same love. He never suspends one attribute for even one moment. He always loves in fullness—He never loves us with just a part of His love, because that would be to deny His own character. He will never diminish or grow in love, because His love is infinite in measure and eternal in duration.
	3. God’s greatness includes His burning love, infinite power, great wisdom, and majestic splendor. Insight into God’s greatness first includes seeing the quality of His love and the relationships within the Godhead. This gives us insight into Jesus’ beauty, supremacy, and worth.
1. spiritual foundation: the revelation of God’s love
	1. When God wants to empower us to love Him, He reveals Himself as One who loves us. We will only love God to the measure that we see that He loves us. It is the core truth that transforms us.

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

21Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus... (Jude 21)

*In 1 John 4:9, John declares how the love of God works in terms of our personal experience. John says we love Him because He first loved us. What he means by that is we love Him to the degree that we understand that He loves us. We will only love God to the measure that we see He loves us. In other words, the source of our love for God is rooted in our growing understanding of how much He loves us. Our love for God is actually a response to revelation of His love for us.*

*Our worship of God is a response to revelation of the love of God. We love more and we worship more when we see more. When we gain more revelation, more insight—I use the word revelation and insight interchangeably—when we gain more insight, we love more, and we worship more.*

*So whenever our love is weak, which mine is continually, I will focus my attention on gaining more understanding of how God feels about me. When I see the way God loves me, it tenderizes me, it changes the way I see myself, and it changes the way I see you.*

*The answer is always rooted in gaining more understanding, seeing more. I urge young people in their quest to love God with all of their heart, “Do not try harder, but see more. Focus on seeing more. Put your energy into gaining more understanding of the heart of God toward you instead of trying harder to love. Do not grit your teeth and determine this time you really mean it for real. Put your energy in seeing more, because when you see more, you will feel differently. You will see yourself differently; you will see people differently. On the inside you will feel differently, when you feel this glorious free love of God that He gives towards us.”*

* 1. The ultimate statement about our worth is that Jesus has the same measure of affection towards us that His Father has towards Him (Jn. 15:9; 17:23). This is both the simplest and deepest truth in the kingdom. It is both the introduction and the pinnacle of the kingdom. This truth gives every believer the right to view themselves as “God's favorite.”

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love…11These things I have spoken to you, that…your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)

*Let's go back to John 15:9-11 again. Look at it for just a little bit more. Jesus said, “As the Father loved Me, as He loved Me—that is the way I love you. Now I want you to stay abide in that love, lock into this. Do not graduate from this focus.” Even though we might have other assignments in the kingdom and even study focuses, we study everything and do every ministry assignment through the paradigm, or the grid, of the love of God. Whenever we are studying another subject, and we separate it from the way the Father loves the Son as the measure of how He loves us, we are going to get off a bit on that subject.*

*So even when we are studying something else, we continue to abide in this truth. We read every doctrine through this grid, through this paradigm. Now, beloved, the way that the Father loves us and the way the Son loves us—that is the ultimate statement of our worth. The reason we are worth so much, the reason we are so valuable, is because we are so valuable to Him. That is the root or the source of our value.*

*He goes on in John 15:11, and notice this, He says, “Now I have taught you these things about the love of God so that your joy would come to fullness inside of you.” He says, “These things I have spoken to you.” That is, “I have taught you John 15:9.” He outlined three things. He was talking more than this, but it is the absolute foundation of this. He is saying, in essence, “The way the Father loves Me—that intense love—and, the way that I love you—that same intensity—and your ability to experience it—those three together are foundational to walking in the joy of the Holy Spirit.”*

*This joy is a deep sense of well-being with confidence in God. This joy is rooted in the intense way the Father loves the Son, the intense way the Son loves us, and our beginning experience of the reality of abiding in that love. John 15:9 is where our joy is anchored. Now biblical joy is powerful; it is very powerful.*

*In context, remember John 15 is the night before His crucifixion. Now take a step back, and see the context. Jesus fully understands the context. The disciples do not. He is describing a joy that will empower them to have victory and to prevail in some soon-coming and very devastating experiences, meaning, the next day. The most devastating setback of their entire lives—the one they love, the Messiah, will suddenly be killed. Jesus had been telling them for a while, “I am going to die.” But all the men were shocked when it happened. The women got it, but none of the men got it, even though He had said it for quite a while.*

*They were shocked! I mean it. The devastation of that setback is beyond what we could imagine! They did not grasp it. Compound that setback, that profound sense of disappointment, with the fact of shame because they all denied Him that very night, so now they felt ashamed. And it is more complex than that, because the authorities, the political authorities of the city, who killed Jesus now want to throw them into prison and kill them. So they also have the threat of prison and martyrdom. On top of that put just the normal temptations of life. So they have this devastating setback, profound disappointment, shame from denying the Lord, being chased by the authorities, and temptations in their life. That is the context where Jesus said, “My joy will sustain you.”*

*The reason I say that is because the joy He is talking about is profound. It is deep. It is sacred. It is not a superficial, silly substitute for joy. The reason I say that, and I want to say this tenderly, is because in the last ten or fifteen years among many in the body of Christ, the subject of the joy of the Holy Spirit has been reduced to superficial, silly stuff.*

*People say that is joy, but I say it is not the biblical joy the Holy Spirit is talking about. It is not the joy the Bible is talking about. Jesus is talking about a joy that sustains us under devastation, through overcoming our shame, standing before persecution or the threat of it, and even before the temptations of lust or laziness or pride. His is the joy with confidence that sustains us.*

*The only reason I point that out is that I do not want people to accept the superficial substitute and say that they walk in the joy of God because they act silly at meetings. I say no, there is something so much more glorious within your reach by the Holy Spirit. It is profound. It will give you the ability to look temptation right in the eye, and to have a sense of well-being and confidence in your relationship with God, and actually say no to temptation. It will empower you when you are mistreated to stay steady in love. That is the kind of joy that He is talking about. So never ever be content with the substitute. Go for the deep and the profound joy that is the kind the Word of God talks about.*

* 1. As we progressively experience God’s love, we feel joy or a deep sense of well-being (Jn. 15:11). Understanding Jesus’ love frees us from the dominion of the inferior pleasures of sin in part; it allows us to experience the superior pleasure of encountering His burning heart of love.
	2. The Most High went so low in becoming man and bearing our sin to bring us so near to Him. The measure of His love is seen in the drastic measures He took in redeeming us to be with Him.

22Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith… (Heb. 10:22)

* 1. Jesus was zealous that His people be very close to Him forever (Jn. 14:3; 17:24).

24“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am.” (Jn. 17:24)

3“I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”
(Jn. 14:3)

*Now the same night—the same context, just after the Last Supper—Jesus prays in John 17. His prayer gives us such insight. In John 17:24, He is crying out to the Father in prayer, and we see His heart. He says, “Father, I desire…” Catch this breaking out, this burst of emotion and passion in His heart. He is about to face the most devastating thing imaginable. He is going to go to the cross and be crushed by the wrath of God for our sin, and that is coming within twenty-four hours. But He cries out, “Father I desire them, I am doing this because I want them with Me where I am. Father, Father, this is why I am doing this.”*

*Now that is not the only reason that He did it, but it was paramount on His heart the night before His death. “I want them to be with Me where I am.” Beloved, this is the great “why” behind the “what” of redemption. Yes, He created the heavens and the earth, and, yes, He redeemed us—that is the “what.”* ***Why*** *did He create, and* ***why*** *did He redeem? John 17:24 gives us insight. “I desire them that they would be with Me.” That is the deep “why” that motivates the “what” that God does in the context of His people.*

*Look at**John 14:3. He is talking again the same night, the same context. Now He is talking about the second coming. He says, “I will come again.” Again, the men do not even know He is going. They do not know He is dying the next day.*

*“You are coming again? What do you mean?”*

*He says, “I am going to tell you why I am coming back to the earth with a physical, resurrected body. I am going to tell you why—because where I am, there I want you to be with Me also.”*

*So He would come again and visit them right after His resurrection, but He would also come again at the time of the second coming in the full global sense. He gives us context for both of those situations where He appears to them after the resurrection, but also when He comes to receive all of His people in the broader sense. He does it so that His people would be with Him where He is.*

*It is this phrase “that you would be with Me” that is the dominant primary thought. “I want you with Me where I am. I want you to experience the glory. I want you to experience the nearness to My heart.”*

* 1. Jesus’ glory includes many facets of His greatness—He who is ***so high*** (transcendent) went
	***so low*** (immanent) in love and humility, to bring us ***so near*** (to rule with Him forever) because we are ***so dear*** to Him (Bride/sons). He went so low because of His desire for partnership— includes us ruling the earth with Him forever (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; Mt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Lk. 19:17-19; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17-18; Dan. 7:22).

21To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne… (Rev. 3:21)

12If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

(2 Tim. 2:12)

*Jesus’ glory includes many facets of His greatness. When I think of the greatness of who Jesus is, like I said in our last session, when I think of Jesus' greatness, I immediately go to a relational paradigm of greatness. He is great in love. Many people when they think of His greatness only think He is great in power, and that is glorious. We will be awestruck by His power forever, the One who is Most High, Jesus before whom the angels tremble, before whom we will tremble by the sheer power of His greatness and majesty. When John the apostle saw Him, he fell like a dead man before Him when Jesus unveiled His glory at a level John had never seen before.*

*Beloved, the One that is so high, the Most High, is the One who went so low for the sake of love, but* ***why*** *did the Most High go so low? The answer is that He would* ***bring us so near to Himself****. He says many times in Scripture directly and through the inspired writers of Scripture that we will reign with Him. We will rule with Him. He says, “I want you to participate fully in the mandate I have from the Father to fill the earth with the glory of God. I want you near Me, and I am going to share My authority with you.” He will always have all the authority, and we will have just an expression of it. He is infinitely superior over all of His people, but even in that He brings His people so near to His heart.*

*Now some people are captured, rightfully so. by this grand authority into which Jesus calls us. They capture the proximity to His authority, but let me tell you there is actually a bigger truth than being in proximity to His authority—that is being in proximity to His heart.*

*When He talks about us ruling and reigning, mostly we are doing it with Him. Yes, the authority is released through us, and I do not want to minimize the glory of the reality that His authority will actually be released through us. But I do not want us to lose sight of the bigger story line. It is the proximity of* ***nearness to Him*** *that is the main story line of Scripture. It is so glorious! The One who is so high, the Most High, He went so low in love and humility to draw us so near to His heart in proximity to His authority and His heart. Why? Here is the main take-away; here is the “why” behind the “what”—because we are so dear. He brings us so near because* ***we are so dear to Him****.*

*In Revelation 3:21, He makes probably the most dramatic statement about our function in the age to come. He says—I mean this is just indescribable in its vastness—He says, “I will grant to the one that overcomes”— He is talking to believers—“they will sit with Me on My throne”—this is so intense!*

*Beloved, we do not just have authority. We are actually operating in that authority right now in this age from the day we are born again, but that will come to* ***fullness in the age to come*** *in a way beyond what we could even imagine. We need to operate in that authority a lot more now, but, beloved, it is going to just keep going up and up and up and up. He says that you will operate in His very authority from His very throne. That does not mean a billion believers all sitting on the same chair, on the same throne. He is talking about “My throne” as “the authority of My throne will be expressed through all the nations through you.”*

*He says the most remarkable thing, “You will sit with Me.” The angels must have shuddered, because in heaven they stand in the presence of God, or they lie down, just straight overcome in His presence, just prostrate right before Him…but sitting in the presence of God, I mean—that is an unthinkable idea.*

*He says. “That is how near you will come to Me, to the very Holy of Holies in My heart, and I am going to share with you in this partnership. I am calling you to partnership. I want you to have ownership with Me. I do not want you to be hired hands. I do not want you to be just a work force. I want you to have deep ownership in your heart that you are going to be with Me in transforming the whole world in this age and then in fullness the age to come.”*

*We matter so much to Him. We are so dear. Again, He wants us not just to put our hands to the task.* ***He wants deep ownership in our heart****. That is why there are so many promises in the Bible about us ruling and reigning, because He is making a statement of how dear we are in the proximity to His heart and His authority as He planned from the beginning. He is making a statement—not just that it is going to be fun to rule, but the glory and the dignity of what that implies, ruling together with Him—beloved, who are we to Him? That is the message we are to walk away with!*

* 1. We matter so much to Him. He wants us to have “ownership” with Him in His unfolding plan of redemption. We are not disassociated spectators who will merely sit back to watch Jesus rule. We are to be awestruck by Him and filled with gratitude in seeing how far His love goes.

21For all things are yours: 22whether…the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. 23And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. (1 Cor. 3:21–23)

*We are not to be disassociated spectators at a distance. He says to the believers that the angels stand at a distance and serve Me, but you must come closer, come closer still, yet closer still to Me. He does not give that invitation to the angels. He calls us to the very Holy of Holies of being in the family of God. I mean in the real sense of the word. Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and then the body of Christ. I mean the mystery of the glory of all of this that the Word of God makes so clear, proclaims so clearly, that is called salvation.*

*Now look here in**1 Corinthians 3:21. Paul captures this. He says everything is* ***yours****. He says that it was in the plan of God from the beginning that it would all be yours—all things pertaining to the earth in the age to come as well as this age. He says that whether it is the world, the realm of the earth, whether it is life, the realm of the spirit, the anointing of God, even if it is death itself, it will work to your benefit ultimately. He said whether it is things in this age or things in the age to come. He says again that everything is yours because that is how Jesus wanted it from the beginning. It was always in His heart, meaning there is more than ruling involved. He wants complete, deep ownership in our heart with Him in this whole thing. We are not just hired hands or a work force at a distance.*

*Now notice the word “all” because that is the language of love. He says* ***all*** *things are yours. He says it twice in 1 Corinthians 3:21. That word* ***all*** *keeps showing up in passages related to the great plan that God has for us to be involved in the transformation of the earth.*

* 1. God gave the dominion, or leadership, of the earth to humans (Gen. 1:26-28). It was an eternal decree that He never took back, even after Adam sinned and committed high treason by abdicating his leadership and giving authority over the earth to Satan (Lk. 4:5-6).

26God said, “Let Us make man in Our image…let them have dominion…over all the earth...” (Gen. 1:26)

*Back in Genesis 1,**at the very beginning, it was God's plan that human beings would be in the primary leadership role over the earth in time and for eternity. His plan was always to fill the earth with His glory—Habakkuk 2:14, the passage we mentioned earlier. This was an eternal decree to Adam and Eve. He said the whole earth is under you, all the earth. Notice the word* ***all*** *again.*

* 1. David was overwhelmed at seeing this and the dignity of the redeemed in God’s sight (Ps. 8:4-6). This was surely a component of David’s passion for God. This understanding awakened David’s heart in love for God. We marvel at seeing what His love is capable of and how far it will go.

4What is man that You are mindful of him…6You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet… (Ps. 8:4-6)

*In Psalm 8:4-6, King David has a glimpse into this glorious reality. It is undoubtedly a life-changing moment for him when he is considering the glorious partnership that God has with the redeemed. He was overwhelmed. Look at verse 4. Undoubtedly thinking about himself as well as the rest of the redeemed, he says, “What is man that you are so mindful of him?” He says, “Who are we anyway that You think so deeply, You think so consistently, about us? You think so comprehensively that You left no detail unnoticed. Why do we fill Your mind? You are mindful of us. Your mind is filled with goodness for us.” David says, “I know my own life and my own brokenness; I know the sin of the people around me.” He says, “What is it that moves You so deeply towards us?”*

*Beloved, I believe I know the answer to that. It is not our inherent goodness, but it is the quality of who He is. It is simply who He is. The very essence of His being is this quality and this intensity and this scope of love. It is who He is that is the reason He loves like He loves.*

*I look at you and me, and I say we are not the reason. What is the reason? Because God is love. He is wholehearted love. In Psalm**8:6, David quotes**Genesis 1:26 about dominion. He says, “You put everything under us.” From the larger testimony of Scripture that translates as “We are going to be in partnership with You, with Your Son the Messiah.”*

*In everything that He does, we will be deeply related to Him. David said, “I just can not imagine the worth and the value and the dignity of the redeemed.” David was overcome by this.*

*Beloved, there is that life-changing moment in our own lives when it strikes us for the first time how real this is, and then you reinterpret who you really are before God. The truth of our worth to Him, the truth of our identity, the true identity of who you are and what your value and what your worth is—it is only found in His eyes and in His words.*

*We can try in vain to discover our worth and value and many other substitutes, but there is only One who has the key to the mystery of the true value and worth of who you are. He gave everything because we were that valuable to Him. I mean He paid with His life. He backed it up with what He did because of the way that He viewed us.*

*The revelation of Jesus’ worth to us—what a glorious theme! We will sing forever of the worthiness of the Lamb. We will never, ever exhaust the fullness of that subject. The worthiness of the Lamb—but let me tell you this—the worth of the Lamb, the quality of the Man who is fully God and fully Man, is actually magnified when we see our worth to Him. When we see the quality and the intensity of the way that He loves us, it gives us insight into the quality of person that He is.*

* 1. We are so dear to Him. The truth of our worth and identity is found only in Him. The revelation of *His worth to us* is magnified in seeing *our worth to Him* in His grace. He also magnifies His greatness through releasing His glory in and through His people. We are vessels of His grace, even “trophies of grace,” that express how loving, kind, wise, and powerful He is (Eph. 2:7). Salvation gives such dignity to the redeemed. Each one expresses the beauty of God’s love.

6He…made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(Eph. 2:6–7)

*In Ephesians 2:6-7, Paul brings all of these thoughts together very precisely. He makes reference to the truth in Revelation 3:21. We will sit on a throne with Jesus. In the verse we looked at earlier, Jesus said, “You will sit with Me on My throne.” That is unthinkable in terms of our function. Paul references that in Ephesians 2:6. He said, “He made us to sit together with Christ.” That is true. We are going to have proximity to His heart. We are going to have proximity to His authority. We are going to have proximity to His presence far beyond the angels.*

*That is the “what”—the authority. It is just indescribable that He gives us His own authority. Now in Ephesians 2:7 he tells us the “why.” Verse 6 tells the what, and verse 7 tells us the why.*

*Paul says, “Do you know why God is doing this? So that in the ages to come”—now notice the word* ***ages*** *is plural. There is the millennial kingdom for a 1,000 years coming after the second coming, then there is the eternal age that has ages in it. I do not know. I end my insight on it with just that point—he said “ages to come.”*

*There is a message He wants to proclaim; there is a truth He wants to demonstrate for ages. What is that truth? The exceeding richness of how kind He is. He wants to put the burning kindness that is in His heart on open display through our experience with Him. It has to be displayed because it is true.*

*God devised a plan that His kindness could be openly displayed forever. Beloved, He does it through you in this age, then in fullness in the age to come. Paul goes on in Ephesians 3:10 to speak of the principalities and powers, both the good and the bad, the angels and the demons. It says they are trying to figure out God's plan, and when they look at the church, they understand the plan. God wanted to display His kindness forever in the way He relates to us.*

*His kindness must be demonstrated because it is the truth of who He is. Beloved, He gave us a premiere place of authority for this reason. We have a premiere place in His heart, and that is why we have a premiere place of function.*

* 1. He is exalted in openly manifesting the great quality of His love, power, and wisdom. In seeing who we are to Him, we gain insight into His majesty. Who would love us this much? What kind of Man loves so deeply—even such undeserving ones as us? We only see the mere edges of how He feels about us and who we are to Him (Job 26:14). As beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, so great love reveals the nature of the one who loves so deeply. Our greatness in His grace is just one of many expressions of His supreme greatness that is infinitely superior to all others.

*In seeing who we are to Him we gain insight into His majesty. Who would love us so much? What kind of man loves at this depth and this quality? Beloved, it is insight about Him more than it is about us. You have heard the phrase that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. What that means is what a person esteems as beautiful gives you insight into his personality.*

*I saw this on a documentary once. A world-class scientist had this mathematical equation, some great breakthrough, and it was so beautiful to him—that white board with this equation. I looked at it and I thought, “That does not look that pretty to me.” Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. It gives you insight into what is in that man's personality.*

*Well, the quality of His love gives insight into the One who loves. Beloved, great love shows forth the greatness of the One who loves. When we see the quality of His love, His majesty becomes clearer when we see the quality and the intensity in the way that He loves us.*

*So around the throne they will declare the worth of the Lamb, but beloved—and I say this with caution and with great respect, but it is true—the whole story is not just the worth of the Lamb. The Lamb's story is also about how much we are worth to Him. That is part of the story. That is the glory of the kind of person that He is. He would not die for angels. He would not become an angel for the angels, to redeem those who were lost forever, but He did for humans.*

*It is indescribable the value we have to Him! That is part of the storyline forever. You read the hymns of Revelation, and so often they talk about God so high, Jesus so magnified, then they talk about how low He went in His death. Then a number of them talk about how high He exalted His people in the light of how low He went. Beloved, do you know your value to Him? David said it—What is man that we are so valuable?*

1. We will never exhaust the love of God
	1. We will never exhaust the vast ocean of God’s love, but will forever experience new aspects of it.

18May be able to comprehend…what is the width and length and depth and height—19to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:18-19)

*Briefly now, I am just going take another moment or two. We are going to bring this to an end, but first we must see the infinite measure of His love. In Ephesians 3:18, Paul gives four dimensions of love: width, length, depth, and height. We see the scope of the love of God in these four dimensions. Now each one of them has many facets. I put one phrase for each one just to get you started down the journey of these four, to think on and meditate on them, if this passage is new to you.*

* 1. God’s love is like a vast ocean that is big enough to reach all people and to cover our sin forever.
	The ***width*** of love speaks of embracing each type of person and personality in every nationality.
	The ***length*** of love speaks of reaching far beyond our failure in this life and continuing forever. The ***depth*** of love points to how far Jesus descended and what it costs Him to save us (Phil. 2:8). The ***height*** of love speaks of the measure of exaltation that we receive in His grace (Rev. 3:21).

*The width of His love—His love is so wide. He opens the door of His heart for all people, personalities, tribes, tongues, and every different life situation. He says, “You are invited. My love is wider than you.”*

*The length of His love—no matter what the depth of our failure, the depth of our sin, the depth of our difficult situation He says, “My love reaches further even than your sin reaches, if you will take My love.”*

*The depths of His love—again there are many dimensions and many aspects to each one of these four dimensions. This speaks to how deep the depth was to which Jesus descended for the sake of love.*

*The height of His love—how highly He exalted us because He loves us that much due to the quality of Man that He is, fully God, fully man.*

* 1. ***Passes knowledge***: It requires the aid of the Spirit to understand God’s love, and it will take all of eternity to comprehend its immensity. His love will never be fully calculated or measured.

*Paul says that this love passes your knowledge. It surpasses human knowledge. What He means by that—well, many things actually, but one—there is more in this love than you think. There is more there than you know. Forever, even a million years from now, you will still be discovering it. It is beyond human comprehension in its fullest expression, were we to completely exhaust this subject.*

* 1. ***Fullness of God:*** Walking in our full destiny is connected to us growing in the truth of His love.
1. Applying the truth of God’s love
	1. We must not refuse His love for us—that is to deny Him part of the joy He has in relating to us. We must not give our negative emotions more authority over our heart than God’s Word. We must submit our emotions to God’s Word by speaking His truth over our negative emotions.

*I want to focus mostly on our response. Our natural response to God’s love for us is with our negative emotions. We hear these truths, but we have naturally have unbelief. We naturally have shame. We naturally have rejection. We naturally have a dull spirit.*

*By the Holy Spirit we overcome these. Often we read these truths, and our temptation is to give our emotions more authority than what God says about how He loves us in His Word. Beloved, we may not* ***feel*** *the truth of these, but it does not lessen the reality of them. I do not want to just experience these in the resurrection; I want to walk in this now.*

*Growth in God’s truth is not automatic. Growth in this requires our involvement. We search it out. We study it. Even more than that, when negative emotions hit us—shame, rejection, failure, all of these normal emotions—we quote the Word of God.*

*Like Jesus said to the devil, we say to darkness, “It is written.” Some of the passages you can say, “It is written…He loves me. Jesus loves me like the Father loves Him. It is written.”*

*It is written: I am an object to display His kindness forever. It is written: devil, you are a liar. It is written: He desires me that I would be with Him where He is. It is written… One by one, when negative emotions hit us, we do not just endure them. We stand up and say we are giving the Word of God more authority than our negative emotions.*

* 1. It is not difficult to believe that God loves believers in heaven. The difficulty is in believing that He has affection for weak people. God loves unbelievers, but He loves and enjoys believers.
	2. God does not confuse the spiritual immaturity of sincere believers with rebellion (remember that both sheep and swine get stuck in the mud). The Lord rejoices over us each time we sincerely repent of our failure, long before we even attain to spiritual maturity (Lk. 15:4-7, 17-22). The Lord feels *compassion* over the prodigals on the day they repent (Lk. 15:17, 20). God revealed His enjoyment of the prodigal son in the father giving him the best robes (Lk. 15:22). The newly repentant, yet immature prodigal son had many areas of his life that still needed transformation.

*I just described how God relates to the weak and broken, how He enjoys us even in our immaturity. So read those passages in Luke 15 on your own.*

* 1. God delights in showing us mercy. He wants us confident that He enjoys us (even in our weakness) as we walk in sincere repentance. Then we run *to* Him instead of *from* Him.

18He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)

* 1. In John 21:20, John wrote his “signature” for his life work. This verse tells us how he carried his heart and lived his life. John never mentions his own name in his gospel, but refers to himself five times as “the disciple the Lord loved” (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He wanted to be known by how he related to Jesus, not by what he accomplished before men.

20Peter…saw the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] following…?” (Jn. 21:20)

*I will just comment on this. You know that John the apostle was at the Last Supper, and he wrote these passages in John 14-17. Basically, he said, “I am going to run with this. I am going to apply this to my life.”*

*When I meet Peter one day in the resurrection, I am going to say, “Peter, you were at the table when Jesus said He loves you like God loves Him. Why didn’t you write that in 1 Peter and 2 Peter?” I am sure he will have a good answer.*

* 1. John had one of the greatest “resumés” in history by being in relationship with Mary (Jn. 19:26-27) and the apostles, including Peter and Paul. He was instrumental in great revivals and wrote five books of the New Testament. Jesus promised him he would rule on a throne in Israel (Mt. 19:28) and he saw his name on a foundation of the wall in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14).

*John could say, “I put it put it in my writings a couple of times.” But it is more than that. When John writes about himself in the Gospel of John, he only refers to himself one way, as the man that God loves, the one that God loves. Beloved, that is for every one of us to take hold of. John said, “I will run with that.* ***I*** *am the guy that God loves.” He says, “That is who I am. That is how I see myself. I am going with it. I put it in the Bible.” I like John; I am following him.*

* 1. The measure of His worth and love is seen in the drastic measures He took in redeeming us.

9“You are worthy…for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood…
10And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

(Rev. 5:9–10)

*The hymns of Revelation bring all of these together. There are a number of hymns. I will just pick one.**Revelation 5:9. Worthy is the Lamb the Most High God. He was slain by blood. He went so low. He made us kings and priests. He brought us so near to Him because we are so dear to Him.*

*Another one, Revelation 1:5-6, says the same thing. It says that, because He loved us, He made us kings and priests and shed His blood. Beloved, this is our story! This is how God sees us. I do not want to be content with anything less than walking in more of this revelation.*

*Amen and amen. Let's stand. Oh, let’s abide in love as a spiritual family. Let’s go after this. Let’s call everyone to it. Abide in love, study it, focus on it, go deep in it, confess it, pray over it, talk about it, and abide in love.*

*Father, we come before You in the name of Jesus. O, we love the way You love us, though we hardly understand it. We love the way You love us, but we hardly understand it. Holy Spirit, lead us, show us how to abide in love.*