

Encountering the Father Heart of God: A Vision To Go Deep in God

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS RESTORING THE FIRST COMMANDMENT TO FIRST PLACE

- A. The great commandment is to love God with all our heart. This is God's first priority in our life. The Spirit will restore the first commandment to first place in the generation Jesus returns.
³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. (Mt. 22:37-38)
- B. The End-Time saints will come up victorious over the Antichrist singing about Jesus as they marvel at His greatness. The End-Time martyrs will be victorious in love.
*³ I saw...those who have the victory over the beast (Antichrist)...standing on the sea of glass...
³ They sing...saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works..." (Rev. 15:3-4)*
- C. The reward of a lover is the power to love. A lover will always outwork a worker. When a worker becomes a lover, their paradigm about the work changes greatly.
- D. We cannot love God with all our heart until we know He loves us with all His heart. When God wants to empower us to love Him, He reveals Himself as One who loves us.
¹⁹ We love Him because (we understand that) He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)
- E. God loves us in the same way that God loves God. The measure of the Father's love (affection) for Jesus is the measure of His love for us. This is the ultimate statement of our worth. It gives every believer the right to view themselves as "God's favorite." It is not difficult to believe that God loves perfected believers in heaven. The difficulty comes with believing that He has affection for weak people in this age. God loves us like God loves God.
⁹ As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide (live) 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)
- F. Jesus spoke this to the apostles at the Last Supper (Jn. 14-17) to prepare them to recover from condemnation, confusion and disappointment at the time that Jesus died and they betrayed Him. We are to behold or be attentive to how the Father feels about us.
¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)
- G. Our heart must grow in love for God as His blessing increase in our lives.
² I pray that you prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 Jn. 2)
- H. The primary goal or assignment in God's will is for us to grow in love, meekness and revelation. If our ministry assignment is our first priority then we easily get burned out and bitter.
³ You have labored for My name...⁴ I have this against you, you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember from where you have fallen; repent or I will...remove your lampstand. (Rev. 2:3-5)

II. AFFECTION BASED OBEDIENCE: MOTIVATED BY SATISFACTION IN JESUS

- A. The ocean of God’s love includes the pleasure of being tenderized, desiring and enjoying God.
¹⁷ You being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend...the width, length, depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge... (Eph. 3:17-19)
- B. “Affection-based obedience” is obedience that flows from experiencing Jesus’ affection for us and then giving it back to Him. It is the strongest kind of obedience. It results in the deepest and most consistent obedience. A lovesick person endures anything for love.
- C. “Duty-based obedience” is obedience that does not feel God’s presence. God’s Word requires that we obey God even when we do not feel inspired to do so.
- D. “Fear-based obedience” or “shame-based obedience” is obedience that flows from the fear of being put to shame or the fear of suffering negative consequences. This is biblical. It is not enough to motivate us to consistently resist the pleasures of sin for many years.
- E. The approach of many is to only use shame and fear to motivate people into keeping a list of dos and don’ts. Holiness has often been presented in a negative way with endless lists of threats and warnings of the consequences of sin. The Word of God has many prohibitions, but these laws and rules were never designed by God to transform the heart. Something more is needed.
- F. We sin when our heart is unsatisfied with God. The temptation to experience the pleasure of sin is usually more powerful than the fear of punishment. This fear of sin’s consequences does not usually overpower the tendency to sin. Instead, it causes us to sin in secret.
- G. C. S. Lewis said: “We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with alcohol and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us. We are like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because we cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea.” That’s the choice we make when we sin. It looks as if it will satisfy us, when in fact it is spoiled meat. The pleasures of God are a banquet that delivers us from the emptiness of sinful pleasure.
- H. Jesus glorifies Father because He feels loved by the Father and love for the Father. Jesus likes who the Father is. Affection based obedience is foundational to Jesus’ life (1 Cor. 15:28). As we know that the Father loves us we glorify or honor Him more consistently.
- I. We receive revelation of His love and then return it to Him and allow it to overflow to others.
⁹ As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:9-11)

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

III. GOD DOES NOT CONFUSE SPIRITUAL IMMATURETY WITH REBELLION

- A. God does not confuse spiritual immaturity with rebellion (the OT law spoke of clean and unclean animals: sheep and swine both become stuck in the mud).
- B. God loves unbelievers, yet He loves and enjoys believers. Jesus immediately rejoices over us at the time of our repentance. He smiles over us when we begin the growth process with sincere repentance, long before we attain spiritual maturity.
⁴ What man...having a hundred sheep...does not leave the ninety-nine...and go after the one...? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing...6 he calls together his friends...saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents... (Lk. 15:4-7)
- C. Jesus feels compassion over the prodigals on the day they repent. God revealed His enjoyment of the prodigal son by the father giving him the best robes (Lk. 15:22). This newly repentant yet immature prodigal son had many areas of his life that still needed transformation.
¹⁸ I will...say to him, "Father, I have sinned..." 20 He arose and came to his father. When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 22 The father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet..." (Lk. 15:18-22)
- D. God enjoys us even in our immaturity. He delighted in David on the day of his repentance after 16 months of compromise in Ziklag (1 Sam. 27-30).
¹⁹ He delivered me (David) because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)
- E. 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.
¹⁸ He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)
- F. We can have a new beginning with God as a first class citizen after we sincerely repent. We "push delete" after we have sincerely repented.
²² Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)
- G. Jesus paid the price that we might stand before God with confidence of having His favor.
- H. We must have confidence of our access to the presence of the indwelling Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the glory that Jesus gave us to empower us to walk in unity with God's heart. Unity with God's heart is the essence of intimacy with God.
²² The glory You gave Me I have given them (indwelling Spirit), that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (Jn. 17:22-23)

IV. SETTING OUR HEART TO KNOW THE FATHER

- A. We must have a sustained vision to go deep in God by walking in intimacy with Him. We must set our heart like Mary of Bethany and David did.
- B. This is God’s End-Time agenda for the Church. It is doable and attainable for the weak as we quickly re-align our heart when we discover our natural tendency to drift from our first love.
- C. The cry of our heart is to see the Father. This is a primary issue with the ministry of the Spirit.
⁹ *Jesus said, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (Jn. 14:9)*
- D. The primary goal or primary assignment in God’s will is to grow in love, meekness and revelation. God measures life different than man because He has all the money, wisdom, fame, influence and time.
- E. Our ministry assignment or our place of function in ministry must be our second priority. It will change through the seasons and it will ebb and flow in terms of momentum and increase. If this is our first priority we will stumble in burn out and bitterness.
- F. Spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation, etc.) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace and they give us opportunity to show how much we value our relationship with Jesus.
- G. *Analogy: We put our cold heart before the bonfire of God’s presence* by seeking Him in the Word and prayer. *We change our mind, then God changes our hearts.* We change our mind (understanding about God), then God changes our emotions (unlocks our hearts). These activities do not earn us God’s favor. The power is in the “bonfire of God’s presence” not in our cold hearts that are positioned before it.
- H. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for relationship with Him not on how much He loves us (Mt. 5:6). God honors the value we put on the relationship by giving us more according to our spiritual hunger but He does not love us more. Jesus discloses Himself to us based on our responses of love and desire for Him (Jn. 14:21-23).
- I. It takes focus and effort to go deep in God. There is a captivity of activity in working for God without acquiring the ‘oil of intimacy.’ The battle in the natural and in the Spirit is for oil. In the natural, we must drill for oil and mine for gold and diamonds because they do not usually lay on the ground. It is the same in the Spirit, we must drill for the ‘oil of intimacy’ and dig for gold.
- J. False religions present a harsh God. The life without the Father is the essence of hell.
³ *This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God... (Jn. 17:3)*