

Session 3 Contemplative Prayer: Drawing Near to God

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 3. As I said in the first session, I believe this is the clearest, most definitive statement on contemplative prayer: Ephesians 3:14-21. I won't go through that because Kingsley touched it a little last night, and he took it in a slightly different direction. I really appreciate it, but there's so much theology and even practical wisdom in the journey to contemplative prayer. I want to really highlight that again. In my study of the Scriptures, I have never seen anything equal to it.

The Lord wants to re-establish, or to establish for the first time in the Church worldwide, this glorious dimension of contemplative prayer. We don't need to be afraid of the name. The name isn't a biblical name; it's a practical name. Again, throughout church history, those who have embraced the grace of God in the deeper life in prayer have titled different dimensions of the grace of God with different titles. That's fine; there's no one standard definition. My real burden is the fact that it has been neglected. It has been overlooked. This is where the tremendous experience of God in the inner man takes place. It isn't enough just to have intercessory prayer, or personal prayer in supplication. Those are brilliant; those are wonderful. It's the kingdom of God to understand those, but that's not enough.

I was talking to a Catholic priest who was with us yesterday. He said, "You keep saying the Catholic church does this. We don't do it. We've gotten so far away from it. There are a few people who do this, but we need to hear it. We don't do it." I've come to the conclusion that, besides a few tucked-away people, it's almost a lost art in the Church. That's not really the best way to say it; it's a grace of God that's been neglected.

"STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT . . . IN THE INNER MAN"

Look at Ephesians 3:16. Paul is describing the divine might that invigorates and empowers the inside of a human being. Wow. We love divine might on our hands. We love to pray for people and see things happen. That's wonderful; that's part of the kingdom of God, but when that divine might starts operating inside of our being in power, it's what we call "the superior pleasures." God is the author of pleasure. Sam Storms has written a book on the pleasures of God; I really hope he touches that in the afternoon session. The idea is that God is a God of pleasure, and that walking with God is the superior pleasure.

IN SEEING GOD DIFFERENTLY, WE SEE OURSELVES DIFFERENTLY

When God reveals God to the inner man, it changes our emotional chemistry. We walk with a whole new inward way of living, a whole new way of seeing. We see God differently, and in seeing God differently, we see ourselves differently. When we see God differently, we see ourselves differently.

THE ANOINTING OF LOVE IS OUR PRIMARY REWARD

Paul is laboring in prayer for this; he did it for his own life, but he's doing it for the saints in Ephesus. He knows where the secret power is, if you will. He knows that it's experiencing the superior pleasures on the inside of the human design. It's walking around, carrying our reward, our primary reward on the inside. We have many, many secondary rewards: the anointing in our ministry, the favor of God, finance, divine health, blessing and favor on relationships, and so on. There are many, many powerful parts of the blessing of God, but those are our secondary rewards. Our primary reward is that we would feel loved and respond in love. We're loved and we're

lovers. It's the anointing to enjoy love. It's the anointing to enjoy it from God, the anointing to return it to God, and deliver it to others.

The anointing of love is the primary reward, because that's the very essence of God's being. He is love. To feel the love of God, to be broken and weak and to feel loved even a little is absolutely awesome. A little goes a long way. You feel a little of that and you think, "Oh, yes, I know why I'm alive, on the earth and in heaven." To feel love is exhilarating—to feel the power of being loved and desired and enjoyed by the triune God. What an awesome way to live, in this age and in the age to come. We're going to live that way forever—feeling loved, feeling delighted in, feeling pursued, feeling beautiful, feeling enjoyed. I love to be loved. I love it, and so do you. So does your neighbor who doesn't know Jesus. So does your neighbor who does know Jesus but doesn't know how to enter in. This is where the might is.

IT TAKES GOD TO LOVE GOD, AND TO FEEL LOVED BY GOD

Look again at verse 16. It takes God to love God. It isn't just about ideas; it isn't just about sermons and conferences and ideas. When those ideas enter into the hidden recesses of the inner man, when those ideas enter in by the power of God and touch the spirit, they explode. There's impartation. It changes our emotional chemistry. It's powerful. It's the might of God exploding on the inside of the weak human frame. We call it the joy of the Lord; we call it enjoying God, but it's the power. It does take God's power to feel love. It takes God to love God and it takes God to feel loved by God. The Holy Spirit is the escort; there's only one way forward, and it's by the escort of the Holy Spirit, but the Church must position herself to go on that journey with the divine escort, the Holy Spirit.

Some people think that the issue of feeling loved by God is just an automatic thing. They say, "Well, I don't feel loved."

I say, "Do you have any comprehension of the magnitude of what you just said? You don't feel loved?"

"Well, you know. I don't really get this love thing."

What they mean is, they're assuming everyone else does and they don't, and I'm looking at them from a totally different perspective. I say, "It's a supernatural operation of God invigorating you if you feel loved. That's stunning. That's not just something you take for granted."

For that divine missile to hit the target in your being and explode in power is awesome. That's really where it's at. I said, "Don't take that for granted. That's the ultimate pinnacle of the glory of God touching you. You feel the fiery being of His heart towards you."

EMOTIONS THAT ARE TOUCHED AND ENFLAMED BY SUPERNATURAL POWER

It doesn't end there. It awakens feelings that are reciprocated back to God. It takes might. It takes God to love God. Because I understand it a little, I want to position myself for might to be released in me. I'm not satisfied just doing the external work of the ministry; I'm committed to the work of the ministry because of what's going on, on the inside. So many people sign up for a task when God invited them to experience might inside their being, the experience of feeling God. I know we don't go by feelings. Our relationship isn't based on feelings, it's based on the facts of what He has done, but we were made to work rightly in fullness only when feelings are present. I don't mean present every moment of every day, but we go by the facts of redemption, the facts of who

He is. If you live only by facts, you're going to be broken, because you were made by an emotional God with very powerful capacities for emotion. If those emotions aren't touched and enflamed by supernatural power, you will be so susceptible to the counterfeit.

That's what Satan knows. He knows our capacity for emotion is so intense because we're made in the image of God who is intensely emotional. He is burning desire. He's not emotionalism, but He's full of emotion. He's not emotionalism, but He is fiery desire.

SPIRITUAL BOREDOM IS THE ENEMY'S BEST WEAPON AGAINST US

"God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). He's an ocean; He's an inexhaustible ocean of divine love and fire. That's at the core of His being. You were made to only work like that. Contemplative prayer is the way into that reality. We have this massive capacity for emotion. We're trying to run the whole race on facts, trying to fill our minds with facts, and we do need to fill our minds, but there's a place where we realize that facts by themselves, disconnected from the escort called the Holy Spirit, releasing these facts with might on the inside, will never, ever get the job done. We walk around like robots, mechanically repeating doctrine, trying to fulfil the missions of the Church, the mandates of the Church, while being dead on the inside, broken and passionless.

The enemy knows that spiritual boredom is his best weapon against us. When we're spiritually bored, we're vulnerable to the counterfeit. I was talking with some friends this morning about "Transcendental Meditation" and the eastern religions. Transcendental Meditation exploded in the 1960s and 1970s. Millions flocked to this thing, and so many celebrities took Transcendental Meditation, which is the counterfeit of contemplative prayer. It's falsehood—having nothing to do with the Bible or the Spirit—but it's the cry for inward encounter.

So much of the Church seems content. They're not really content, but they think they're content if they have a little power on their hands. You'll never be content with power on your hands. Power in ministry may give you a bit of a platform, and you may get some people thinking you're cool. Even that's empty in a moment.

"Well, if I have power on my hands, then people will think I'm cool. I'll have friends. I can tell Mom, 'Mom, I told you I would make something of myself, and somehow it will all work.'" It doesn't work that way. We were made by a very fiery God as fiery human spirits. Until that fire is ignited and stewarded in us and released by the grace of God, we walk around like dead men, claiming facts and burning out doing the mandates. Meanwhile, the false religions, the eastern religions, are trying so hard with so many counterfeit attempts to touch the inner man. All these methods and teachers are aiming at power in the inner man. They want to be there and feel something alive that's not just pain on the inside. Some of them are aiming for nothingness as their way into life.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE FULLY HEALED TO BE AN AGENT OF HEALING FOR OTHERS

Beloved, Paul said it. Let's read verse 16, in the Bickle version: "That you would feel power and might and emotion and glory and have pleasure and love being alive and love being loved" (Eph. 3:16, paraphrased). That's what verse 16 means. I don't just love to be loved, and I do: I have a ferocious appetite to be loved. I love to be loved. It just feels so good, but there's something that feels just as good as being loved: it's loving back. We were made in the image of God. We were made to be lovers. We're wounded lovers, we're wounded worshipers; we're in process, we're on a journey, but we're still doing it.

Henry Nouwen wrote a book called *Wounded Healers*, which is brilliant. The point of the book is that you don't have to be fully healed to be an agent of healing for others. John Wimber picked up on that and talked about healing others in our own brokenness and weakness. Brilliant! We can love God and love one another and we can be worshipers even in flight, even in process, even in the midst of the journey. We're wounded lovers, we're wounded healers, but we're still authentic lovers. Though immature, we're authentic. We're wounded worshipers, but it's real.

I don't just love to be loved; I love to love everyone, even the old, mean men who are grumpy and grouchy. They love to love, but they can't connect because their hearts are so burned over and bruised, they think they don't love at all, but they're only alive by being loved and loving. We're only alive in the realm of love.

WE OVERCOME INFERIOR PLEASURES WITH SUPERIOR PLEASURES

Ephesians 3:16 is all about contemplative prayer, the Holy Spirit escort into the realm of being alive, with divine might coursing through our being, moving inside of us. "Happy holiness" is what we call it. We talk a lot here about happy holiness, superior pleasures. If all you have are the inferior pleasures of sin, and you grit your teeth and try to renounce them, and try to make promises not to give into them, and you don't have a corresponding revelation of the superior pleasures, but you just keep trying to renounce the inferior ones, the Lord will tap you on the shoulder and say, "Turn around and experience the superior pleasures of might on the inside of your being." With superior pleasures we can overcome the inferior ones. If all we have are inferior pleasures, we're going to lose the battle over time. There's a giant void, a giant vacuum.

We will never experience the superior pleasures until we receive a new paradigm that God is our tender Father and Jesus is our passionate Bridegroom. But that's not enough. The doctrine of the Father as a tender father and the Son as a passionate bridegroom isn't in itself enough, because the information by itself must connect in the inner man, and that's a supernatural act. It's revelation; it's a supernatural activity when that information goes through your mind and ignites the human spirit, the hidden parts of our being that we don't understand. It's the mystery of the human spirit.

Paul the apostle mentioned the mystery in Colossians 3:3. He said, "Your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). That means many things, but there are so many dimensions of how your being works that are hidden from you. You can't see the mystery of the vast world inside of you called the human spirit. It's that vast world inside of us, the eternal human spirit. All the false religions exploit that reality, trying to search it out and probe it and enter into experiences that satisfy. Our life is hidden. We don't know how glorious we are in Christ Jesus. We don't know how beautiful we are. We don't know how great we are. We don't know what it means that we're the Bride of Christ, sitting with Him forever. The glory and the beauty and the success of our life are truly hidden from us. Our lives are hidden in Christ. They're only made known in Jesus a little in this age, and fully only in the age to come.

Our lives are hidden away. We can't see who we are. We can't see our own beauty. We can't know our spiritual identity except in Jesus. Your life is hidden in that Man and only in knowing that Man are the secrets to knowing who you are given to you, little by little. But even then, it's more than just knowledge. Knowledge is powerful, and I believe in filling my mind with knowledge, but that knowledge can't enter into the deep recesses of my being without the action of the third person of the Trinity. He has to be present or it doesn't ignite, and if it doesn't ignite, I have information that I'm claiming, which is good and important, and I have a task that I'm committed to do, but my heart is dead and I'm being overwhelmed by inferior pleasures.

God says, “Touch the superior ones. Take the information and connect with it.”

How do you connect with it? It’s called contemplative prayer—the lost grace, the neglected grace in the Body of Christ. We become students of theology instead of those who encounter and experience God in the inner man. When I say *we*, I’m talking about the “Go for God gang” across the earth, whoever they are. I’m talking about those millions that go to those crazy conferences all over the earth, and they go hard. Being students of theology is never enough; we have to be people who encounter God deep in our spirits. You don’t encounter God in a sufficient way if your life is on the run. You don’t encounter God enough on the run. There are lifestyle decisions, there are radical changes in the way you spend money, the way you spend time. The way you spend time won’t change until the way you spend money changes. The way you spend time is a radical expression about how you spend money. It really is. We have many, many changes to make if we’re going to encounter God.

There’s a reason contemplative prayer is a neglected grace. It’s the grace that connects our spirit in encounter with God’s Spirit in a discernable way, in an ongoing way. I’m so desperate that the Lord restores this in the Body of Christ. I keep saying, “Restore it; it has never taken root yet. Establish it; that’s it.”

Maybe 1 percent of the Body of Christ in history has had this. It needs to be established. Ephesians 3:16 is about your inheritance to feel loved and to feel love back, and to live with power on the inside of your being, not just the giftings of your hands and mind. You may be a great musician or a brilliant scientist, but it’s more than just anointing when you lay hands on people. It’s carrying the reality, moving and active, inside the secret place, the hidden part, the inner man. Wow! I want this. Do you want this? I want this, you want this, and we’re going for it.

I look at the eastern religions, and millions are joining them. I say, “No!”

The Lord says, “My people need to have the joy of the superior pleasures in their countenance and in their lifestyles, to woo them out of the counterfeit.”

The multitudes of the nations, the people who are moving into these false religions, trying to go into deeper lives and more mystical experiences, look at us and say, “Ugh! You men grit your teeth, sin a lot in secret, live in total condemnation, judge one another horrifically for it, judge yourselves, and then turn the sword on one another. You live on the surface. You live in the values of the world, lust and greed and pride, and you tell us you have the secret? I don’t think so. We already checked you guys out; it isn’t happening in the Western church.”

It won’t be an argument that wins them. It won’t be a dialogue or debate; it will be people who are “living flames of love,” as John of the Cross said. I don’t even mean we look at them and say, “Hey, we’re living flames of love.” I’m not talking about buying the tee-shirt or the bumper sticker and wearing it; I’m talking about living differently. It’s called happy holiness. Beloved, this isn’t going to happen in any other way except through the path of Ephesians 3, which is the path into supernatural activity on the inside of the hidden part of our being.

Look at that: strength with divine might in the secret place of the human design. Whoa! Feeling loved, feeling love back, happy holiness. Whoa! I don't even need verse 17; I'm hooked. Verse 16 is good enough.

WE BECOME THE THINGS THAT WE BEHOLD IN GOD

Verse 17 is Jesus manifesting His emotions, manifesting His personality, manifesting His presence inside of your being. Oh, I love it. When Jesus manifests Himself, when His personality and His emotional reality is imparted to yours a little, it's called being rooted and grounded in love, feeling love and loving back. It's called being loved and a lover, being rooted and grounded. Jesus dwells within my being, in the overflow of His fiery ocean of love, helping me to be rooted and grounded. Those are two great words we won't go into. I feel a little loved, and I love a little more. Oh, I like this whole way.

The Lord says, "This is the way I have ordained for the human race through the Holy Spirit." Oh, this is really the way to do it.

You have to get quiet, though. You have to get a new image of who God is. Only there can you see who you are, because your life is hidden in God. You can't know who you are until you know a little of what God looks like emotionally, and until that happens, you can't know what you look like emotionally to God. I call it the "beholding and becoming" principal. Only as we behold what His heart looks like can we become an expression of that heart reality in our own being. Only by seeing a God of passion can we become passionate. Only by seeing a God who pursues us can we become a pursuer of God. Whatever we behold in God's heart is what we become in our heart before God: a lover, a pursuer, a delighter, an enjoyer. John said it himself: "You love God because He first loved you" (1 Jn. 4:19, paraphrased). You're a lover because He showed you Himself as a lover. Do you know why you love Him? Because He first loved you. Do you know why you're something of a lover of God? I mean, we're lovers of God in reality; that's our identity, but do you know why some of it is manifesting? You have a bit of love growing inside of you because He revealed Himself as a lover to you.

"WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US"

Whenever God wants me to become something at the heart level, He lets me behold that in His heart for me. It's the beholding-and-becoming principal. Whatever you behold in God's heart for you is what you become in your heart before God. "We love Him because He first loved us." You can write the word *enjoy* there: we enjoy Him because we knew He first enjoyed us. You want to enjoy God? You need to study and fill your mind with the reality that God enjoys you. We pursue God because of the revelation that He's a pursuer. Do you want people to pursue God? Reveal to them the revelation of the hot pursuit of God's heart for them. It's the beholding and becoming, being rooted and grounded. What a way to live!

IF YOU POSITION YOUR HEART, HE WILL RELEASE HIS PRESENCE

My point isn't just that the information is critical. That's one of my favorite points in life, but I'll get off of that. My point today is that information ignites in your being through contemplative prayer. It isn't enough to have it in a book; it isn't enough to hear a tape series, or even to echo it for others. It isn't enough to have it in your mind with clarity. It's only ignited through encounter in the inner man, and this is what God is jealous to give us. It isn't like we're talking Him into it; He's talking us into it. He isn't saying, "Well, for you, I guess we're getting close to the second coming. I could pick things up a little since it's you and you won't leave Me alone. OK, I'll let you feel more of Me."

That's not how it works. He's saying, "I'm the One who's pursuing. I'm trying to talk you into it. The problem is that you're so busy and so superficial and you have so many lies in your being that you don't buy into this."

James 4:5 says the Holy Spirit jealously desires us. James 4 is all about drawing near to God. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (Js. 4:8). If you draw near to God, He will manifest His presence in your being. If you position your heart, He will release His presence. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Do the external acts of positioning yourself, called "contemplative prayer," and He will release His presence on the inside of you.

"THE SPIRIT WITHIN US YEARNs WITH JEALOUSY"

As much as I like James 4:8, the part that excites me is verse 5, in which the Holy Spirit shows Himself as the jealous God. He jealously yearns for you to do this.

"Holy Spirit, I know You're busy, You have this giant job description. You're all over the earth."

Some angel speaks up: "All over the earth? He has way more to do in heaven. Do you want to see what He does up there?"

"Holy Spirit, You have a big job description; I know You're busy, but could You help me? Could You escort me personally?"

He says, "I jealously yearn to do that; I want it so much. I will if you will." That's what the Holy Spirit says: "I will if you will. I jealously yearn. Do you jealously yearn to enter into this internal reality?"

The contemplatives in history call it the interior life. It's called "developing the interior life." The Holy Spirit says, "I will if you will."

"How do I do it?"

Like Mary of Bethany, you sit at His feet. Fill your mind with new ideas of God, and you'll get new ideas of you. But that's not enough: learn to commune with the Holy Spirit in your spirit and it ignites inside of you; it's supernatural. I look at these eastern religions and say, "No, no, no! They're sweeping the earth."

The Lord says, "I have an answer, believe Me."

The Ephesians 3 church, the Church in the Ephesians 3 reality, will so outshine the false religions. They're looking into a vacuum, or they're gazing into the demonic powers of darkness. We're looking into eternal love and the throne and communing with light on the inside of our being.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE, MORE IS GIVEN

"So that you may be able to comprehend. . ." (Eph. 3:18). It isn't enough that the presence touches us in verse 17. We can only comprehend by the presence. We have to put ourselves in a position. Like I said the other day, the rich get richer (Mk. 4:24). To those who have, more is given. To those who have a certain introduction into love, who are rooted, it's only beginning; there's a whole harvest of love waiting to happen—that's the rooting.

Verse 17 is the introduction; verse 18 is the vast ocean. Verse 17 is the beginning; verse 18 is the fullness. Only lovers grow deeply in love.

In verse 17, we get introduced to the realm of love; in verse 18, we get lost in the ocean of eternal love. Only the lovers who engage with the introductory places of the realm of love, of being loved and being lovers back, are candidates for the vast ocean of love. Verse 18 is a neat doctrine that frustrates us, because verse 18 is unreality without an introduction of being rooted in verse 17. It's an unreality without divine might and it's an unreality without laboring in prayer.

In verse 14, Paul says, "I bow my knees" (Eph. 3:14). He's talking about the prayer process that birthed this dynamic on the inside. We can pray for our friends that this will happen, but it's the posturing of our own heart that makes it happen as well. It's the Mary of Bethany heart.

In verse 18, he prays that we would know and comprehend the vast ocean of love. It takes God to know God. It takes God to love God, it takes God to know God. You can't enter into that divine treasury.

"Open the treasury! I want to look at gold!"

Those security guards guarding the gold reserve at Fort Knox would look at you and say, "Hmmm, call 9-1-1 quick; this man has really lost it."

You can't just go up to the divine treasury and say, "Open up your gates, here I am." We need an escort. It takes power to gaze into these unseen things; it takes God to know God. The Holy Spirit is jealous. He'll do it, but we can't bypass encountering the Spirit. We can't bypass a life of fellowshiping with the Spirit. We can't bypass the reality of the Spirit and just strut up there and open the gates and walk away with the gold.

The Holy Spirit says, "You're not getting into that treasury without Me walking you up there and opening it up and empowering you." It takes power to know God. It takes God's power to know what God looks like.

I don't just mean because it's mysterious information. It's more than just mysterious information about what God looks like in His being; it's that the information is of another caliber than we have in the natural.

THE NATURAL CAPACITIES CAN'T RECEIVE SUPERNATURAL THINGS

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:13 that the natural capacities don't have the ability to receive supernatural things. It's an issue of capacity. You get a billion-watt, whatever—I'm bad at all these analogies. Anyway, if you plug a billion volts into a 110-watt unit, it's going to fry the unit. It's an issue of capacity. The natural capacities can't receive the supernatural dimensions. It takes a Holy Spirit escort. It isn't just that the information is private, and it's impossible to have it unless God wants to give it; it's that our capacities don't work. The plug-in doesn't work.

YOUR HISTORY OF ENCOUNTERING GOD DOESN'T GUARANTEE ENCOUNTERS TODAY

"Well, I'm really smart. I have a PhD and I can say it better than anyone and I have read all the books and all this stuff."

The Holy Spirit says, “Good, but your capacity isn’t getting built for this without My presence’s aid upon Your heart.”

“Yeah, but I’m really smart. I read all those books.”

He says, “Yeah, you don’t get it. You have to be escorted. It takes God to know God. You can’t bypass life with Me and enter into this capacity.”

“But I did a little of You a couple years ago. Remember that one time when I just went really hard?”

“It has to be God in the present tense. Your history of God isn’t what sets you up for encounters today.” It’s a present life with God. Our history in God matters, but it’s our present life with God; it’s called communing prayer—really.

Now at a conference like this, I can’t really give a lot of details, though I’m trying to do that today. I have a few more minutes today, and I’ll definitely continue tomorrow. I don’t know that much about it. I don’t want to stand up here like some big, small man. I’m a beginner. I’m a beginner’s beginner. My goal isn’t to try and give you all the steps. One reason is because I don’t have time, and the biggest reason is because I don’t know all the steps. Another reason is that you can only take so much. My desire is to give you a vision to go there. If you leave here saying, “I don’t know how to do it, but I’m just sick about this thing, I have to do it,” we win. You’ll figure it out. The Holy Spirit is jealous. He yearns for it; He really wants it.

YESTERDAY’S MANNA IS ROTTEN TODAY

You have to say, “I don’t fully get it all. He didn’t give too many details, but I’m sick in my being about this. Oh, I have to do this. This bothers me.” I tell you, then we win. Then we can give you a few resources. Even the resources, even the information in the books and tapes, as helpful as they are, aren’t enough. At the end of the day it takes the Spirit’s presence, those present-tense encounters that draw us to Him. Let’s not make light of those who have gone before us; they know the path, but the knowledge of the path itself doesn’t get you into the treasury. It helps, but it’s the Spirit in the present tense.

It’s why, during Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness, the manna was rotten after a day, except on the Sabbath. A day later, the manna was rotten. Yesterday’s manna is rotten today. It doesn’t mean our truths of yesterday aren’t good; they’re not fake, but they don’t have power in our being today. We need encounters regularly. We live lives of prayer. Look at verse 18: Kingsley Fletcher last night said the words, “An open mind.” I say it a little differently, but it’s the same idea. His terms are a little different.

THE LORD IS GOING TO RELEASE THE CHURCH’S TREASURIES OF GOLD

Here it is in verse 18, “That you would be able to comprehend with all the saints” (Eph. 3:18). There it is: all the saints. Here’s the point: you won’t reinvent the wheel in your one life and know all the mysteries that God has entrusted to the Church in history. Imagine this: the Holy Spirit has been leading the church. Since the day of Pentecost, He has been the Teacher. We have this very limited, 110-volt unit inside; God has billions of volts to give. You have your little 110-volt unit, like I do; we start out right out of Bible school. Maybe I have fifty years, maybe I have eighty years; who knows?

The Lord says, “You think you’re going to grasp all I have taught the Church in history in eighty little years with that little voltage, with your small capacity? No, it isn’t going to happen. I want you to be students. I want you to receive. I want your heart open.”

Part of the treasury of experience and understanding is going to crescendo in the generation of the Lord’s return. There’s a global dimension of understanding and revelation that’s coming to the Church. Not just because we all discovered brand-new things in the last ten to twenty years of natural history; it’s because we learn to receive the gold deposited to the whole Church across the earth over history.

I wish—not really, but I wish it could be easier in the flesh. I wish the Lord said, “That you would be able to comprehend the vastness of God’s love with all the charismatic, non-denominational people in your church this month.” It would be nice if we could comprehend it with all non-denominational charismatics. Well, let’s throw in some of the mainline charismatics; they’re good too. And there’s this one man, he’s not even charismatic, but he’s pretty neat. OK, throw him in. The Protestant church with all its twenty hundred streams won’t make this work. We have to drink from the wealth. The Catholic church, with all its history, doesn’t have it. There’s a vast world we rarely think about in America called the Orthodox church and the brightness of God’s glory in their history. It’s different from the Western Roman Catholic church. There are many differences.

Then there’s the Messianic, and there are all kinds of things coming to the surface. We’re in the Protestant wing, most of us, and, like I said earlier, you don’t have to agree with all the hundred streams. You don’t have to join them. By the way, 100 is a hypothetical number. All of the streams in the Protestant church bug me—all of them. Even the one I’m in bugs me. I don’t even know which one I’m in; I got all confused. They say, “What stream are you in?”

I say, “Well, just, oh my goodness. I’m a mutt of church history. I don’t know.” I can’t label it very clearly. I’m just hungry like you are. Anyway, every one of the hundred streams in the Protestant church bug me. They all have errors and they all have irritating people in their history.

The Lord says, “I’m not telling you to join them in the legal sense of an institution. I’m asking you to serve them and receive from them. I’m asking you to love them. I’m asking you to be a cheerleader for them. I’m asking you to learn from them.”

“OK, I can do that with the Protestants.”

He says, “I don’t want you to join the Catholic church.” I’m not Catholic; I have no intention of being Catholic. More than that, I’m committed to not becoming a Catholic; I’m adamant about it. I have no interest, no desire—zero. I don’t believe in all the dogma of the Roman Catholic church, but I know that I can’t go into the depths without the whole Church. There’s just no precedence in history. I don’t want to be Eastern Orthodox. I don’t want to be one of the Orthodox institutional churches that buy into all the dogma of the church, but I tell you I want to drink from the whole Church. I don’t want to be in the Messianic church. I believe in what God is doing, but I don’t want to become a Messianic believer.

Someone says, “Well, by definition, you can’t.” I don’t even know what I want to be, to be honest. I just want to go hard with God with people who are lovers of Jesus.

Here's our safety: our safety isn't in being able to so own all the dogma of every religious institution that we can join it. Our safety is not in that. Our safety is in our focus on the Man Christ Jesus and a radical commitment to the Scriptures and a radical commitment to love. That's our safety. I go to these different places in the Protestant world, and in the Catholic world, and I've had the chance to fellowship with some of the top leaders in the Orthodox church.

“THE ONLY THING I DO IS JESUS BY THE WORD OF GOD”

I say, “Jesus, here's all I care about. From where I'm at, I don't plan to join any of these. Or, really, I won't. It's more than not planning to do it. I'm sure of that in the grace of God. Here's the deal, Father: I just love Your Son, sitting at Your right hand, as You described in Revelation 4 and 5.”

I love Him, and I tell these different ones, “The only thing I do is Jesus. You have to know. Don't introduce me to your people and want me to do something besides Jesus, because I'll really disappoint you and embarrass you. All I do is Jesus by the Word of God. If that's what you want, I'll come, and I'll come with a heart of joy. I do Jesus and the Word of God with all my heart. If it's in the Bible and it's about Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, you've got me.”

Here's why: Jesus will win the eschatological beauty contest at the end of the age. He really will, if He's proclaimed. I use the word *eschatological* to mean the end times. Jesus wins the great end-time beauty contest.

“Well, they talk to angels.” Oh, don't worry. Wait until He's set forth on the stage; He will outshine those angels. Isaiah 24 says, “The sun will draw back in embarrassment when He appears” (Isa. 24:23, paraphrased). The sun will say, “Oh, I can't deal with this,” when the glory of the God-Man steps onto the scene of natural history.

I say, “You're only worried about those things because you don't see what they see.” That group thinks about angels and I say, “Oh, don't worry. When they stand next to each other, He wins.” Angel, score: 3, 6, 2, 4. Jesus, score: 10, 10, 10, 10. Sorry, angels.

He will outshine the saints throughout history. He will outshine Mary, of whom the Scriptures said, “She will be called blessed” (Lk. 1:48, paraphrased). One of these days, we have to get around to obeying what the Scriptures said. She is called blessed, except in the Protestant church. But when you put Mary next to Jesus, Jesus is stunning in His beauty: 10, 10, 10, 10. He'll win every single one of the sideshows, every one.

The Holy Spirit and the Father say, “Don't be so worried; just exalt Jesus. Be lovesick. Talk about His beauty as it's declared in the Word amid those shark-infested waters, those trip wires. Just stay focused on Jesus and His beauty, and you're in the safety zone.” Stay in the Word of God and don't worry about all the other stuff. You don't have to join all the institutions. I'm telling you this for a very important reason, because of this phrase in verse 18, “able to comprehend with all the saints.” That's a critical phrase of going deep. Your tradition doesn't have all the gold the Spirit wants to give to the Scriptures. Why? Our frames are just too small. Our histories are too small. No one can contain all that God will give about the beauty of the God-Man, no one.

Look at verse 18: this is God's main pathway into fullness. What we're after is verse 19. There must be more. That's what we're into, right? There must be more. It's the fullness of God, the cry of our spirit; there must be more.

The Holy Spirit says, “There’s more, I promise you. There’s way more than what you’re walking in. I want to bring you into the fullness of God in the relative sense in this age.”

I think it was David Ruis who wrote the song, “There Must Be More.” I’m not that easy-going; I’m kind of intense. I’m not just jovial and easy-going, saying, “Hey, cool!” The truth is, I say, “Most of you guys just bug me all the time, to be totally honest. A lot of the things you do annoy me. Why do you do that? Why are those books written? Stop it!”

That’s what’s going on a lot. I’m not just this happy, easy-going, “love everyone” sort of person. I want to do that, but at this point I’m too broken, and that’s not where I’m at. I’m being very pragmatic about it; I’m doing it for sanctified, selfish reasons. There must be more, and I have to get it.

THE LORD IS RAISING UP AN INTERNATIONAL FAMILY OF AFFECTION

The Lord says, “You’re going to have to cross some lines to go drink. Go cross the lines.” I put things in these traditions, in these camps, in the hundred streams. Again, that’s a made-up number. It isn’t just crossing the lines; it happens within our own Protestant world. “I gave them something you don’t have the capacity to get because you’re so busied and filled with the little I’m giving you. Go learn from them.”

“Lord, I don’t want to do that. They just bug me too much. They have too many errors.”

“OK, then be satisfied with what you have.”

“Oh, I hate that part.”

“Go cross the lines.”

“I’m tired. I’m busy.”

“Good. Go with what you have.”

“OK, I’ll cross the lines. I’ll buy the book. I don’t want to talk to them. Is that OK?”

“No, I want you to buy the books, I want you to talk to them, I want you to kneel down and let them pray for you.”

Here’s what’s happening. I’m doing it because I’m greedy for the glory; it’s sanctified selfishness. I want more. Like you, I’m addicted to this thing. I can’t bear living in the realm I’m living in. I can’t bear the realm I’m living in right now. I can’t bear living where I’m living now.

He says, “OK, I’m starving you out. Cross the line.” So I go over there within the Protestant world. They bug me as much as the other groups. I go over there, I hear from them, I see the love of Jesus in their eyes. Their language is a little different, they use different verses, they have different experiences. They lay hands on me. I get up after a couple of days, go back and tell the man, “I really like those people.”

The Lord says, “Got ya!”

“Lord, I accidentally fell in love with them. I’m not really into that part, but I really like them now. They’re not as strange as I thought. They really love You like I do. They just have a few heresies, that’s all, but I’m stuck. I really like them. I’m in a total jam right now. I like them.”

The Lord says, “Got ya!” He only gives a little to each part of the body, so we have to cross the lines because He’s raising up an international family of affection.

“I love them and I enjoy them and I want you to feel some of what I feel when I look at them when they worship Me. I enjoy them. They love My Son. I want you to enjoy a little of what I enjoy when I look at them.”

I’m enriched and I say, “Lord, I really appreciate the new horizons and the new understandings.”

I have this really radical thing called, “I only do Jesus in the Word of God and it has to fit in there,” but lots of it does that I never thought of. All that other stuff that’s not in that circle, I don’t even think about. The man says, “Pray about it.”

I say, “Nope. If it isn’t clear in the Bible and it isn’t about Jesus, I just don’t do it.” That’s how I’m built, but I find so much of Jesus and so many new understandings of the Scriptures in all these different camps—the Protestants and the Orthodox and the Messianic. I walk away saying, “I like them, I really do like them. I enjoy You enjoying them a little, Lord, and it’s really cool what You’re doing called bringing forth the Bride of Christ from all the nations.” We have to know there’s a safety net; it’s the beauty of Jesus.

YOU’LL ENTER INTO FULLNESS WHEN YOU GO WITH ALL THE SAINTS

We don’t normally do what we did in the worship meeting this morning at IHOP-KC. We just want to gaze; we want to sing the hymns of Revelation and the Song of Solomon, songs of the worthy Man and His beauty and His passion. That’s our safety: we can connect with the worthy Man and his worthy Father. We can go there and stay in the Scriptures with hearts of love.

The Lord says, “If you’ll do it with all the saints, you’re going to know” (Eph. 3:19, paraphrased). That word *know* means intimate experience. Adam knew Eve. This isn’t just cognitive. You’ll enter into experience when you do it with all the saints. You’ll experience new realms of the fullness of the Godhead, and it’s only after that that fullness comes. Fullness comes out of what the Holy Spirit has taught the whole Church throughout all time and eternity. In eternity we will be drinking of the different streams.

“There are different streams in eternity?” I don’t know; there are all kinds of different peoples and tribes, and we will be learning from each other in eternity. I want to experience more. I want to get into that treasure chest. I want more. I want more. I want more. It’s hurting. I want more. You want more. You can only have more with all the saints. You don’t have to join them; you don’t have to agree with them. You don’t even go outside of the boundaries of Jesus in the written Word of God, but there are scores, there are volumes of treasure about Jesus in the written Word of God that I’ve never thought of, that can bring us deeper into the contemplative world.

Again, in a lot of these books, in a lot of the things I study, I read page 10 and say, “Wrong”; page 11: “Wrong”; page 12: “Oh my, I never knew that”; page 13: “Ay, ay, ay!” page 14: “Hmmm, that’s confusing”; page 15: “Wrong!” page 16: “Wrong”; page 17: “Oh, Lord, I didn’t know anything about that.”

MINISTRY TIME

Let's stand. We're going to talk about some practicals of contemplative prayer tomorrow. We really are.