

Lesson 20 - Are You Living Less Loved?

"Does Father really love me?"

- ❖ We all need to answer this question, but once we have the answer, then we need to move on and start living our lives like He does! Unfortunately, too many Christians wrestle for years with this question, and some go to their graves never being sure whether Father loves them or not. They go through their lives with what Wayne Jacobsen, in his book *He Loves Me!*, calls "**daisy-petal Christianity.**" They are like many young girls as they pull the petals one-by-one from a daisy blossom, "He loves me. He loves me not," hoping the last petal says, "He loves me!"
- ❖ Religious tradition tries to tell us that we have to earn His love. There is a resistance between our performance-based religion and a revelation of the free loving relationship that Father wants to have with us. Our behavior and relationship with Father are controlled by fear and judgment rather than love. True lasting freedom from sin and our deep passion for Jesus are found only in an intimate affection for Him as sons and daughters.
- ❖ "Nothing fulfills his purpose more than when his love overwhelms you, then transforms you, and then leads you through the rest of your life as a reflection of his glory in the earth." Wayne Jacobsen
- ❖ Too often we allow our feelings and circumstances determine whether Father loves us:

"Something in the Bible inspired me today." *He loves me!*

"My child is seriously ill." *He loves me not.*

"I gave money to someone in need." *He loves me!*

"I let me anger get the best of me." *He loves me not.*

"Something for which I prayed actually happened!" *He loves me!*

"I stretched the truth to get out of a tight spot." *He loves me not.*

"A friend called unexpectedly and encouraged me." *He loves me!*

- ❖ We may basically feel that Father loves us, but when hard times comes, a loved one dies unexpectedly, we lose our job, house burned down, divorce, or some other misfortune comes our way, we find it hard to still believe that Father loves us. We must realize that **Father's love is big enough to walk us through any event** in our lives and come out the other side stronger and more convinced of His love. We can't allow the circumstances ("circum" around me - "stances" standing) block out or image of a loving Father who has a gift to give you that will take care of every situation you face.

Does Father love me after what I have done or who I am?

- ❖ **Father knows everything about you, and yet He loves you through it all.** You can't avoid His love. There has never been a time when Abba hasn't loved you. There is nothing that you will ever do that will cause Father to love you less, and there is nothing that you will ever do to cause Him to love you more than He does right now! We must allow Father's love to work in our fears, weaknesses, inadequacies, and insecurities. He did not love us less while we were sinners. It was for that reason that Jesus died for us. **Rom. 5:8**

Are You Living Less Loved

- ❖ **Father's love is continuously flowing towards us**, but we choose whether to stay in that flow or not. We may feel more loved now than in the past, but it is not because Father's love for us has changed. It is because our ability and capacity to receive His love has changed. Calvary opens our eyes His love, and as we grow in our knowledge and intimacy with Him, we discover the full glory of His love.
- ❖ Another **reason for not experiencing the fullness of His love is the shame and fear** that we have about our own sinful nature and condition. We tend to look at Father from the perspective of, "Oh holy God, Oh sinful me!" Fear is typically used to get someone to make Jesus their Savior and Lord and escape Hell. Because we think that we're just a "sinner saved by grace," we don't feel like we have any right to get too close to Father. How and Why (two poisonous questions to our faith) would Father want to have an intimate relationship with me? So we keep our distance and feel comfortable just knowing that He's around if we need Him. However, the reality of Hell doesn't transform us, only the love of our Father does. We have **two images of God, one of an Angry Judgmental God and a loving Father.**

Jesus reintroduced us to a loving Father

- ❖ In the Old Testament, the people saw and experienced the awesome presence and works of the Father, sometimes administering judgment and justice on those who were rebellious or disobedient. Out of fear in what He might do to them, they kept their distance and had Moses and the priest approach Father for them
- ❖ **Jesus came to reveal the extravagant love and compassion for mankind.** He was a friend willing to die for them, a bridegroom desiring to pour all His love out for them, a gentle mother who would gather them under her wing and protect them. His wrath against sin was because, as a loving Father, He could not stand back and just watch sin destroy us. His anger and judgments are always against sin and not us.
- ❖ The fear of Hell and His judgments only create insecurity in us and take us further away from Him. If we are uncertain of His love for us, we will strive to please Him with our works. Our attitude becomes, "Do I have to?" rather than that "I want to." If we choose the "have to" attitude, we deny the power of the cross and substitute human religious effort to somehow "win" His love. The gift of His love and salvation are free, and our motivation to do things comes out of our desire to bless Him and feel His pleasure. He doesn't want our obedience, only our heart. He wants you to know how much you are loved so that you will choose to love Him.
- ❖ **We need to stop living as if we weren't love. Most of us live our lives like we were less loved.**
 - When we worry that Father, will ask us for some great sacrifice or commitment, *we are living less loved.*
 - When we continually give in sin or are trapped in some addiction, *we are living less loved.*
 - When we give in to worry, anxiety, fear, insecurities, *we are living less loved.*
 - When we try to earn Father's favor through our good deeds, *we are living less loved.*

Are You Living Less Loved

- When we get caught up in religious activities to try and be more acceptable in His sight, *we are living less loved.*
- When we don't trust Him to meet all our needs and try to do it all our self, *we are living less loved.*

Man's Response to Father & Each Other

- **After the Fall, man and woman tried to get all of their love and fulfillment for each other.** We look to man to fill our desire for significance, identity, and destiny, something only Father can give us. It is only as we draw near to Father that He can give us our true identity, the white stone with our name written on it, and the reality that we are sons and daughters. Our Father is not just any father; He's the King!
- As sons and daughters **we were created to depend upon our Father to meet all our needs, to be our life source.** Like a very young child, we cannot survive for long without that source of life. The Prodigal Son thought that he did not need his father's support and struck out on his own to find real life in the "far country." With the money in his pocket, he started down the lane not realizing that his umbilical chord was dragging behind him. He was disconnected from life, love, freedom, approval and strength.
- **Without this source of life, we start searching for the substitute lovers** in the "far country" only to find out that they are disconnected too and trying to suck life out of someone else.
- ***In most marriages, we live like we are less loved.*** We come into the relationship needy and **expecting the other person to meet all our love needs.** "I'm giving you the opportunity of a lifetime. You are going to spend the rest of your life meeting all my love needs!" **We are like two ticks and no dog, trying to suck all the life out of our spouse.** Father's plan was for a man and woman to grow up in a healthy home, getting all their love needs met from a loving father and mother. At some point, the source would shift from the parents to Father, and then they would come together full of love with love to give away. "I'm already loved. What can I do to meet your love needs?"
- **People who live less loved also have a hard time forgiving our self and others.** It is hard for us to accept His forgiveness of us, and instead we live in guilt, shame, and fear. Unforgiveness is a "debtor's mentality" trying to hold on to something someone else owes us. Like the unforgiving servant, we want others to repay us some small debt when we have been forgiven of a debt far greater than we could ever repay. Our unforgiveness causes us to be turned over to the tormentors. We must be willing to forgive the debt someone else cannot pay and allow Father to repay us through His love.

The Older Brother Attitude

- He thought he **had to serve and work hard in order to honor and win the respect of his father**. He never felt like he owned anything or could even ask his father for much. His focus was entirely on the inheritance and not on the relationship with his father. Some day when we get to heaven it will be a lot better and we will be able to rejoice. We try to do things on our own apart from the Father in hopes of pleasing Him. We don't work for the Father, we work with Him.
- **When all our efforts are to try and please Him, we walk on what Wayne Jacobsen calls the "favor line."**
 - It is an invisible line between what brings someone favor, blessing, and acceptance and what brings displeasure, curses, and rejection.
 - Our parents, teachers, friends, and bosses all have one.
 - We only assume that Father must have one too. By what is happening in our life, we can assess on what side of the line we are. The tyranny of this is that we can never be sure how much we need to do to stay in His favor or how He really thinks about us.
 - **Performance becomes everything**. Am I keeping all the Law, am I keep the commandments, am I walking in love, am I being Christ-like today, am I doing all I can to be pleasing to the Father? We keep trying harder to win His affection, but we're never quit sure.
 - The reality is that **Jesus came to smash the "favor line" and help us realize that we are already walking in the favor on the Lord because He has always poured His love out on us**. Even if you never do anything more, He still delights in you as His child!

Knowing & Experiencing Father's Love

- What we need to do is live as loved as we always have been loved. This can only happen as we **move from knowing He loves us in our head** (Gr. "gnosis") to **experiencing His love** (Gr. "epiginosis") **through a personal intimate relationship with Him**. A natural example is the knowing that a man and woman achieve as they join their lives together in marriage. They begin to experience the love that they have for each other. You don't have to tell Sue that I love her. She knows it!
- The more we get to experientially know Him, the stronger our love for Him grows. **Ps. 39:3** "My heart was hot within me." As we know Him, we learn to know our self and the reality of being sons and daughters. Our obedience and freedom from sin comes from love for Him. True pleasure comes from being in His presence which drives us to want Him more. It is like an engaged couple whose passion for each other grows stronger as they approach the wedding day! Well, the King is in love and He has chosen you to be His bride! People need to see the loving heart of the Father in us and be drawn to Him.

Are You Living Less Loved

- Just as the Prodigal Son discovered, **Father is our true source of strength and supply.** He loved his son all the time he was away from him and lavished all his inheritance back on him when he returned home. He gave him the robe of identity, the shoes of ownership and inheritance, and the ring of his authority. There is nothing Father has that He does not want to give us. We need to sense His pleasure in us even when we fail. He has already covered all your mistakes and all the sins you will ever commit. We can live care-free; free to give because He has already supplied all of our needs according to His riches in glory. This is not a license to sin, but a motivation to live a holy life fully pleasing to the One who loves us most. His love is extravagant, passionate, and wild!
- **"God's love us too large to fathom – but it's an incredible adventure to try. It is deep enough to cover everything, high enough to conquer everything, wide enough to encompass everything, and long enough to last forever."** Graham Cooke *God Revealed*
- **Intimacy with Father is not optional for a victorious and prosperous life.** We must stay close to Him and spend time in prayer, worship, praise, and study of His Word. We will take time for what is important in our life. Our favor with Father is tied to our intimacy with Him. His presence must be with us all the time. He must become our refuge and hiding place where Satan cannot reach us or even find us. (He's walking around seeking someone to devour!) How you see Abba and yourself determine how you will see life and live it. We need to keep improving our image of Father. We must keep answering the question Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Each new image of Father brings us a little closer to Him.

Father is the initiator

- **He first loved us so that we would want to love Him.** He has to get us to ask Him for what He already wants to give us.
- **He also wants to do everything with us and be involved in every part of our life.** Gary Wiens shares a vision he had in his book *Come to Papa* about a little boy who received a new toy. He was sitting on the floor trying to figure out the complicated instruction to put the toy together. The more he worked at it, the more frustrated he got. Then he saw his dad come into the room and offer to help his son. He got down on the floor, and with the instructions helped his son put the toy together. That is the way our heavenly Father is too. He doesn't give us difficult or impossible tasks to do to frustrate us. He wants us to ask Him for help so that He can work on them with us.
- It all started with a family in a garden. Father had perfect fellowship with Adam and Eve before the Fall. Jesus labored in a garden and then died for our sins. After three days He rose from a garden to restore us to the family. **Jesus did everything necessary to bring us back into a face-to-face relationship with our Father. It is a place where we can live more loved!**