

## Lesson 2 – Revelation of the Father’s Love

### Intimacy and Love

Experiencing the intimacy and love of our Heavenly Father is central to all Christianity. It’s not head knowledge, but it’s alive in our spirit and shining in our lives to be all God wants us to be.

- **Matt. 22:37-40 - all the law hangs on the commandments to love God, love others, and love yourself.**
- Paul writes in **1 Cor. 13** that nothing is as important as love.
- **Gal. 5:6** tells us that even faith will not work without love. We can stand against the attacks of the devil without fear and in the authority of the name of Jesus (**2 Tim. 1:7**).
- God will protect us (**Ps. 91**), bring healing to our bodies (**Ex. 15:26**), provide for all of our needs (**Phil. 4:19**), and answer all of our prayers that are prayed according to His Word (**1 John 5:14-15**). Perfect love casts out fear (**1 John 4:18**)

### Satan tries to keep us from Father’s love

Most people, even many Christians, never experience the depth of Father’s love. Paul wanted everyone to know the love of Christ and experience the true power of God that is in us. (**Eph.3:19-20**)

- The three sins from the Garden of Eden, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, keep us from experiencing the Father’s embrace.
- The shame, fear, guilt, and self-hatred that come from the sins in our life tries to separates us from God.
- All of our own striving and trying to do things in our own strength (pride) also keep us from finding Father’s love. It is only in our weakness that we can find His love.
- Satan tries to convince us that we can live without love.
- Without expressed love, we become wounded and move into sins of the flesh, control, withdrawal (Numbville), or independence – all of which stop us from receiving His love.
- The world tries to convince us that there is no God, and we are on our own.

### **Created for Love – Not Just Good Works!**

#### **We are all created in God’s image (love) - to receive love and give it away. (1 John 4:8, 16)**

- Only when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, repent of all our sins, have our wounded hearts healed, and destroy the strongholds in our lives will we ever be able to fully receive the Father’s love and experience intimacy with Him.

- If we did not have our love needs met when we were young, we become wounded and may withdraw from our parents. - We can become orphans, even in our own home, and unable to receive the Father’s love. If we withdraw from our earthly mother or father, then we are not able to receive the Father’s love either.

- ❖ Many Christians are like the older brother in the Prodigal son story. Their walk is more about duty and discipline than love and intimacy.
- ❖ The reasonings, arguments, and theories in our mind can limit our ability to receive His love. That is why we must renew our mind (**Rom. 12:2**) and work out the salvation of our soul (**1 Pet. 1:9**).

- Our heart cries out for intimacy, to be part of something bigger than ourselves. But because of the wounds, the experiences of life, and the lies of the devil, we kill the desire in our heart, fall for the false lovers, or hide behind the masks and live in the smaller story we build around ourselves. We deaden the pain through our busyness, hyper church activities, Bible studies, indulgencies, etc. Our hearts are no longer able to receive the Father's love and intimacy.

### Knowing the Father

The verb “to know” used by Paul concerning the love of Christ and to “know” His sufferings” (**Eph. 3:19** and **Phil. 3:10**). implies:

- a) a relationship between two or more people.
- b) there is great value in the level of “knowing”
- c) it is used to describe intercourse between a man and woman. Mary wondered how she could become pregnant if she had not “known” a man yet.
- d) It conveys the thought of a personal union or connection with God. This is the level of intimacy that Father God wants to have with us – full and open transparency and love.

This same level of intimacy is expressed in other ways throughout the Bible:

- Father came to Adam and Eve in the cool of each day (**Gen. 2:8**)
- Jesus compared us to a branch abiding in the vine (**John 15:3**) We must be vitally connected to God and His love or we will wither away and eventually die. Jesus was open and approachable just like the Father. **John 14:9**
- Jesus returned to the bosom of the Father (His lap!) (**John 1:18**) and He said that we would be there also (**John 14:3**) This is where the apostle John loved to be! (**John 13:23**)
- In His bosom we will find peace, rest, joy, love, security, and comfort (**Ps. 91**). Father God wants us to stay in His bosom all of the time.

### Hindrances to Knowing the Father

- ✓ A child can grow up in a home where there was not much expressed love or communication and never really know their parents on more than a surface level.
- ✓ Someone can spend their whole life in the church, do many good things, read their Bible, pray, even be saved, and still not know God.
- ✓ Philip was a disciple who lived with Jesus for three years, saw all the miracles, and heard all the teachings of Jesus, but never really knew Him (**John 14:9**).
- ✓ We can have the image of the God that we read in Revelations sitting on His throne with all of the angels flying around and judging the people and nations.
- ✓ God can become this harsh, impersonal being who knows everything that we have done and is dishing out punishments, tests, and trials to teach us a lesson.
- ✓ Moving into the Father's love is most often hindered by our fear of God's discipline. This fear of submission will go with you even after you leave home and hinder your ability to receive the Father's love.

### The Loving Father

In **Rom. 8:15** and **Gal. 4:6** He refers to us as adopted SONS and DAUGHTERS and He is our “Abba Father,” or literally, Daddy!

- You might have a more difficult time understanding this aspect of Father God if your earthly daddy was not walking in light and love. It may be easier for you to think of yourself as an adopted child and Father chose you.
- Try to form an image in your mind of what a perfect father might be like, then you can start to appreciate the way God wants us to relate to Him.
- A little child starts life having complete trust and confidence in his father taking care of his every need.

### The Effects of the Father's Love On Us

In **Matt. 22:37-40** Jesus shares with us the most important commandments in the Bible that we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, literally all of our being. And then we are to also love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Only a person who really knows God and is comfortable with love can do this (**1 John 4:7-8**).

Our deepest need is to be loved. The degree to which we are uncomfortable with love is the degree to which we are uncomfortable with ourselves and others.

- People who are uncomfortable with love often turn to other things, activities, ministries, or people, to fill the void and compensate for the insecurities in their life. However, if we have not first been rooted and grounded in the Father's love, all of our ministries and efforts will have limited success in both our lives and others.
- In **John 15:9-10, 12** Jesus admonishes us to abide in His love, which implies to continue or tarry in love. Then He tells us how to abide in love by keeping the Father's commandments.
- Jesus in **John 15:12** says to love one another as He has loved us. You begin to see this "circle of love" where we receive the Father's love, we love ourselves, then we love our neighbors and others who in turn will love the Father. This circle of love can flow in both directions unless we choose to break it.
- When we experience the perfect love of God, we will not fear anything (**1 John 4:18**). The degree to which you are in fear is the degree to which love has not been perfected in you.

Life is all about being "**at home**" with God. God's greatest desire is to be at home with us. Home is where you will constantly hear your Father say, "You're the child I love and favor." Home is where there is no fear, impurity, or wrath. It is a place of peace, rest, security, affirmation, warmth, identity, destiny, inheritance, and acceptance. Without a home there is fear, insecurity, and unrest. "**Be**" sons and daughters of God rather than "*do something*" for Him!

### **Receiving the Father's Love**

**If we are born again, we have all of the love of the Father in us that we will ever have!**

- ❖ There is not anything that you can do to make God love you more than He does right now. God is love and He now lives in you.
- ❖ Our spirit first needs to be in touch with His love and then it will be open to share that love with other people.
- ❖ The pain and wounds from the past, negative relationships growing up, bad experiences, choices we have made, and influences of others can all make us feel uncomfortable with love.
- ❖ Shame, fear, control, insecurity, and false beliefs can also hinder our releasing God's love in you to others.
- ❖ A person who really knows God is a person who is comfortable with love. (**1 John 4:7**) Intimacy comes with how comfortable we are with love and giving it away.
- ❖ If you are not comfortable with God, you will not be comfortable with yourself or your neighbor.
- ❖ Most people have never had a revelation in their heart that God loves them.
- ❖ Fear is the greatest destroyer of love. There is something greater than God in your life, if there is fear. In Father's presence, there is no fear. Fear is just an indicator that you need more of Daddy's love!
- ❖ Religiousness and the strongholds of the flesh (envy, pride, rivalry, performance, hate, anger, etc.) can also prevent us from receiving Father's love.

**In His Lap!** Father God wants us to be in His loving arms and on His lap (“the intimate presence of the Father”

**John 1:18 Amplified)** all of the time.

- But we can choose to get down from Daddy's lap. It is just like a small child who decides that he does not want to sit in your lap or be in your arms any more. He stiffens his back and slides down off of your lap or struggles to get out of your arms.
- We do the same thing when we decide to do things our own way or in our own strength. If we choose to sin, get offended, respond in anger, try to manipulate or control others, covet what others have, judge someone, or speak evil, we are stiffening ourselves, sliding out of Father's lap, and moving away from His love.

**It's a matter of the Heart!** Father created us to have intimacy with Him. He loves us as much as he loves Jesus. **John 17:23** *"Jesus loves me this I know, for I heard Him tell me so!"*

- There is a yearning within our heart that can only be satisfied with Father God's love.
- Through the wounds, experiences of life, and choices we have made, we may have drifted away from the Father's love, but every time we experience something beautiful, a sunset, a poem, a picture, beautiful scenery, flowers, smells, a touching story, our heart cries out again for intimacy.
- John Eldredge says in his book, *The Sacred Romance*, "The Christian life is a love affair of the heart." But most Christians have lost the life of the heart.
- Communion with God is replaced with activities for God.
- We silence the wounds in our heart with the less wild lovers: sports, TV, hyper activity (church, business, and organizations), fantasies, indulgencies, addictions, etc.
- We try to write our own smaller story and wear the masks and costumes that we think everyone will like.
- We must take all of the old self to the cross and begin to turn our hearts towards God again.

**Sons, Daughters, and a Bride!** Father sees us as we were before the fall, as sons and daughters, and remembers how it was between us (**Is. 62:4, 12**). He continues to pursue us despite our unfaithfulness. Eldredge describes the "Pyramid of Intimacy and Belonging." At the bottom of the pyramid we are the clay for the Potter. Above that we are the sheep for the Shepherd. Next comes the servant for the Master (we are in the house now!). Then He sees us as children of the Father (real intimacy begins). Above this we are a friend of Jesus, but at the top of the pyramid, we are the lover of the Bridegroom (beloved, pursued). God created man as the most special gift that He could give to His son and all of creation as His wedding gift!

**Living in the Bigger Story!** Father God wants to show us where we are in the bigger story of His unconditional love.

- We must move away from just "doing" to resting in His love through the discipline of meditation, silence, solitude, fasting, and practicing God's presence.
- We need to realize that we are not left out, but are a vital part of His Story.
- He has saved a place for us at the table with our name on it! We are going to a wedding and it is for us!!!!

**4 Keys to Open a Heart of Intimacy** (adapted from Shiloh Place Ministries)

**Key #1** – *Our Image of Ourselves Determines The Depth Of Intimacy In Which We Dwell*

- Being uncomfortable with God will cause us to be uncomfortable with love and our self. If we are uncomfortable with our self, then we will also be uncomfortable with others.
- Father God wants to dwell in us so that He can make His love known to the world.
- If you are ministering to others or trying to earn love and acceptance from what you do, but neglect your spouse and children, you don't understand God's love.
- Walking with God is all about walking in love.
- Being able to receive and give love is a true test of our relationship with the Father.

**Key #2** – *We Must Become Aware of Our Need for Intimacy*

- God created Adam with a need for another human being. He was not satisfied with just the animals. He created Eve to meet that need.
- Adam and Eve fully knew and were known by each other, with nothing hidden or held back.
- God created us with a desire to have a place in someone else's heart. God wants to know that He has a place in our heart.

**Key #3** – *We Must Be Willing to Embrace Our Responsibility for Intimacy*

- We must make intimacy a priority in our life and relationships.
- Men seem to have more difficulty opening up and sharing their emotions and spiritual lives with their wife and family.
- Eve was deceived, but Adam willfully sinned. When confronted, however, he tried to shift the blame onto the woman which opened the door to male irresponsibility in intimacy.

**Key #4** – *Intimacy Requires Us to Find Our Value and Self-worth in Being Who God Created Us To Be – A Gift of Love to Others*

- A husband's love for his wife is determined by how he feels about himself. **(Eph. 5:25-29)** In order to love his wife properly, he must first experience the Father's unconditional love for himself.
- **If a man does not feel good about himself, he will not be able to achieve intimacy with his wife.**
- We must submit to a lifestyle of love and intimacy in order for God to transform our hearts, our character, and our nature to be more Christ-like.

**How do you picture Father God's face when you mess up?**

- The truth is, Love (God) doesn't think a negative unloving thought of you! **(1 John 4:16-18)**
- The presence of our Father God should bring joy to our hearts. **Jeremiah 31:3** and **Zephaniah 3:17**
- God wants you to be "at home **in** Him." Then He wants **you** to be "a home **for** Him." **(Isa. 66:1, John 14:18)**
- The way we see Father treat us when we have failed is the way we will treat others who fail.

**Why We May Not Find Rest in God's Love**

**1. Religion is based on fear, performance, or hyper-religious activity** rather than on a relationship with God and His love and grace.

- We see God as a hard taskmaster to whom we must measure up in order to be loved, accepted or blessed.
- We only see God as holy and ourselves as sinners. Thus we run and hide from Him.
- Religion can cause us to have an unhealthy fear of Him. **(John 14:9-10)**

**2. Our early parental and earthly authorities misrepresented the Father's love.** We may end up seeing Father God through the lenses of our earthly fathers and mothers. If we do not see Him as loving, forgiving, gracious and merciful, we may be weighed down with fears, insecurities, anxieties, a sense of loneliness or separation, discouragement, guilt, shame, or a sense of failure and feeling that we never measure up.

**We treat God like a guest rather than someone who lives at our house.** Our misconceptions of Father God cause us to not feel at ease in His presence.

- As Christians we often pray for a *visitation* from God, when what God wants is a *habitation* in us. He does not want to be a guest in our lives causing us to be on our best behavior until He leaves.
- He wants to be Someone with whom you can let your hair down, relax, and be yourself.
- Martha spent her time treating Jesus as a guest rather than simply **being with Him**. Mary cherished her relationship with Jesus. **(Luke 10:38-42)**
- Our relationship with Father God is not based on what we do; it is based on what Jesus has done for us.

**4. We try to Believe – Change – and Belong rather than Belong – Believe - Change.**

- Religious standards say we need to be spiritually mature and holy enough to receive God's blessings. Its phrases are: "You must...", "You have to...", "You should..."
- This gives the idea that God requires that you believe, and then change, and then you can belong and receive God's blessings.
- We can walk in the flesh and try to earn God's blessings through our human effort - trying to believe right, pray right, talk right, and do right in order to have our formulas in place so they work.
- Trusting more in our spiritual disciplines than in God's grace and loving nature leads to performing to feel good about ourselves and receive God's blessings.
- God's grace is what instructs and matures us. Being unconditionally loved and accepted is never based upon our merit but on the loving nature of God who gives it!
- We **belong no matter how much we fail – thus we believe that we are loved the way we are – and believing that we are unconditionally loved will motivated us to change.**  
(Matt. 11:28-30 Message)