

## HOW HE LOVED

Week #2 of a 4-Week Series, "Jesus' Greatest Teachings"

March 15, 2023

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Okay. So I want to talk about the two paths before us. Because I really believe that the paths that we take to God actually impact our life.

And the first path -- that I think most people are on -- is the path of understanding. And in the path of understanding, you want to understand God. You want to understand spiritual principles. You want to understand how life works. And your first way -- your dominant way -- of living is through understanding. It's more of an intellectual path.

The other path is the path of devotion. And the path of devotion is about feeling and feeling the presence of God. It's about dedicating your life to God. And this path is the path oftentimes called the path of love. But it's the path where we feel our way into a greater experience of God.

And neither path is right or wrong; we just have a tendency -- all humans -- have a tendency to be more dominant in one way or the other. Some people have to understand it before they open their heart to feel it. Some people just want to feel it, and they don't care if they ever understand it. And those are kind of the two paths to God.

And I think it's kind of helpful if you actually know what your dominant way of experiencing God is. If you want to think about God, great! Right? It's helpful to know that that's your path. I tend to lean more into the "feel it" side, and I want to feel the ecstasy of God.

And so where we are tonight is: I want to talk about Jesus' greatest teachings. And I want to talk about how he loved. And I made a promise last week that I cannot completely fulfill. So I said last week I was going to teach you how to love people that are hard to love. And I'm actually ... And I thought that was where I was going to go tonight. I'm actually going to do that next week. So ... But hold that with a grain of salt, right? [Congregation laughs] But that's where I think I'm going next week.

Tonight I want to talk about this path. And how Jesus lived his relationship with God.

So I want to start with the first question tonight: Who's in charge of your life? Who's really in charge of your life? Because I think that actually matters. And I asked that question a couple of months ago to an audience, and I said, "*Who's in charge of your life?*" And this guy goes like this [points to his side], meaning pointing to his wife, right? [Congregation laughs] And it was like, who's in charge of his life? "*She is. And I'm man enough to admit it. Right? That she's just in charge of my life.*"

And I want to look at that, because there's really three ways -- or three aspects of this. You can believe that you're in charge. How many want to vote for: You're in charge of your life? Perfect! Great! How many of you want to vote: God's in charge of your life? Perfect! Great! How many of you want to vote that God -- through you -- is in charge of your life? Well, that's all of the above, kind of, right? That's kind of the "cheat" answer, right? All of the above! Right?

In psychology it's called the "locus of control." It refers to an individual's perception of the underlying main cause of the events in their life. His or her life. Or more simply put: Do you believe that your destiny is controlled by yourself or external forces?

So in psychology, the real work is: They want you to believe that you're in control of your destiny, not something outside of you. Right? If you believe that something's in control of your life that's outside of you, there's always that feeling of being a victim to circumstances. Because you don't have a choice; you

don't have control; you don't have a say. And whether it's fate or God or powerful others, it feels disempowering to believe that something outside of you has control of your life.

Now, where we stand is this idea that God isn't outside of us as a fate, but is a living presence and power that's within us. That's moving through us. So that God is an active force in our life, but moving through us. And I know some of you are thinking, *"But wait! You're supposed to talk about love today! When are you going to get to love?"* Well, I'm about to. Right?

So what was Jesus' greatest teachings? What did Jesus say were his greatest teachings? And I want to take you to Matthew 22, when he said:

*"And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. And this is the great and first commandment.'"*

Then he said:

*"The second is like it; that you shall love your neighbors as yourself."*

So what I want us to look at is: How do we do that? Because all love is about relationship. All love! All love is about relationship. Even self-love is about relationship! Self-love is about the relationship that you have with yourself. And many of us could say that the relationship that you're having with you might be kinder, more gentle, more honest, more nurturing. But it's the relationship.

So how do we get to a kinder, more loving relationship with ourselves? Because I want to start there and then go bigger.

So, for most of us, the first step in really having a more loving relationship with ourselves is positive self-talk. How many of you know that sometimes your self-talk can be a little negative? Like four of us. Great. Woo! [Congregation laughs] Right?

So what usually happens is: When the individual notices that their self-talk is a little negative, they want to eradicate negative self-talk. Like, they just want it completely gone out of their life. And I'd like to suggest tonight that I think what's more effective is that you just add positive self-talk. Like, instead of trying to never say anything negative about yourself, or never think anything negative about yourself, I want you just to add more vegetables. [Congregation laughs] Right?

**I want you just to add more positive self-talk.** So when you see something -- when you know that you're doing a good job; when you see your own successes -- I want you to add more positive self-talk. And if every hour on the hour you had to say something or think something nice about yourself, I want you to add more positive self-talk.

Because if, for 30 days, you make yourself -- every day -- add positive self-talk, you are going to feel different about yourself in 30 days. You just will! Because you can't be kinder to yourself; you can't be more generous with yourself; you can't even begin to change your self-talk within 30 days without having a positive impact. So that's number one.

Number two: **I want you to actually practice self-forgiveness.** And I want you to be willing to forgive yourself for all the times when you were creepy; all your times when you made a mistake; all the times you fell; all the times when your behavior didn't really match the ideal. I want you to forgive yourself.

So the first aspect is: I want you to add more self-love, self-talk. The second one is: I want you to forgive yourself.

And the third one is ... [Laughs] And you're going to love this one! The third one is: **I want you to say to yourself daily, "I love me!"**

Together: [with congregation] *"I love me!"*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I love me!"*

Now, sometimes when we say that, that's a little uncomfortable! Because we feel a little narcissistic or a little self-aggrandizing. And it's a little too much! And it's like, *"Well, I'm just trying to get to 'I like me.'"* Right? *"I don't want to go all the way to 'I love me.'"*

But I want you to really play with this idea.

*"I love me."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I love me."*

I love me! I do! I love me!

I want you to really entertain that idea: that you could actually be in total, complete love with yourself.

*"I love me."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I love me."*

*"I'm adorable!"*

Together: [with congregation] *"I'm adorable!"*

Right? I want you to really hold that! [Laughs] Because for some of us, this is radically going to change your relationship with everything as you are willing to, over and over again, expand your level of self-love.

One more time, just for grins!

[With congregation]: *"I love me!"*

And I want you to see that, so many times, we stop ourselves because we don't feel that we're worthy. We don't feel that we deserve it. We don't think it's okay to be that loving or that generous or that kind to ourselves.

So once we begin to play with this idea, I now want to take it to the level of talking about God.

So I'm going to invite you to deepen and broaden your relationship to God. And to really see if there's room for you to have a more loving relationship with God.

So, how do we do that? How do we really have a more loving relationship with God? And I'm going to make the case tonight that the more you think you have a connection with God -- the more you think that you see the benefits of God in your life -- the easier it is for you to love it.

If I bought you a meal -- if I took you out to dinner once a week -- for years and years and years, do you think that you might have a positive feeling about me? Three of you; great! Well then, this is a tough crowd. [Congregation laughs] Right? If I came over and I kind of poked you in the eye once a week, would you have a positive feeling about me or a negative feeling about me? Negative, right?

So the more that we see the activity of God at work in our lives, the more we begin to see and the more we begin to love God! So I want you to see, with me, that we can live our life from our ego or we can live it in relationship with the Divine. And I think that, if we live our life in relationship with the Divine, it's just better!

So how do we do that?

Well, I think the number one thing we have to do if we're going to have a greater relationship with the Divine is that **WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO ASK FOR HELP.** We actually have to shift out of an ego-based relationship with life and move it into a divine relationship with life. And the way that we do that is to ask for help. That, every day, I'm going to invite you to dedicate your life to God. Every day -- as you start the day -- I'm going to invite you to ask for help. I'm going to ask you to ask God to guide you and direct you, and that we actually acknowledge that Spirit of God that moves in and through us. And that we actually allow that presence to be more active.

In James 4:2 it says:

*"You do not receive because you have not asked."*

See, one of the things that's fundamentally important is: Because you have free will, God only interacts to the level that you're willing for God to be present in your life. If you don't want to help, you never have to have help. But to the degree that you ask for help; for blessings; for good; for love; for joy, the more that you receive it and the more that we get amazed about all the ways that God is showing up in our life -- all the ways that we are being blessed!

Matthew 7:7:

*"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened."*

Over 30 times Jesus said, "Ask!" Ask, ask, ask, ask, ask!

And it's not just about asking for "stuff." Like, you ever have a friend who just asks you a lot for stuff? [Congregation laughs] It's like, "*Oh, gosh; here he comes.*" Right? Because it's always like what's in it for him, right?

And so I don't want our spiritual life to be contracted to the point that we're just asking God for "stuff." I want the first thing that we ask God for is a relationship: "*God, I want to know you more. I want to experience you more. I want to feel you more in my life.*" Because over and over again, as we ask, we receive! But it's not just about asking for the details; it's more about asking for deeper, greater relationship with the Divine.

And then, once we ask, the second step in this is that **WE HAVE TO BE OPEN TO RECEIVE.** If you want God's help in your life, you actually have to be able to receive God's help.

Now, the difficulty is: However you think it's going to go, it's not going to go that way! [Congregation laughs] Like, when you ask God for whatever it is you're asking -- if you ask God for whatever the need is, whatever the situation -- I think the odds are about 98% that it's not going to go the way you think it's going to go.

But when we ask God, we have to be open to receiving it the way it shows up. Because it's always going to be a surprise. It's like, "*Oh! I thought we were going to go this way; Spirit's saying go this way.*" And our ego says, "*No! If it doesn't go that way, I don't want help. This is my plan; this is my strategy; this is the way it's supposed to go. And if it doesn't go that way, fine. I'll just do it myself.*"

And I think if we told ourselves the truth, we would have to admit that there's been times in our past where we've actually turned away from the divine guidance we were given to do it our own way. Amen? [Congregation: "Amen."] And that's not it! We have to be open to receiving!

How many of you have heard the story about the man in the flood who prays to God? Has everybody heard that story? I've got to share it. Right? I love this.

*A fellow was stuck on the roof of his house during a flood.*

*And, you know, with all that's going on in California, this is kind of an easy thing to understand.*

*And he was praying to God for help. Soon a man in a rowboat came by and shouted to the man on the roof and said, "Jump, and I will save you!"*

*The stranded man shouted back, "No thanks! I'm praying to God, and he's going to save me!"*

*So the man rowed away. Then a man on a motorboat comes in. The fellow in the motorboat shouts, "Jump, and I will save you!"*

*He says, "No thanks! I'm praying to God, and God will save me."*

*A little while later, a helicopter comes by and the pilot shouts down, "I'm going to throw you a rope! Grab the rope and I'll take you to safety."*

*And the man says, "No thanks! I'm praying to God, and God will save you."*

Now, we look at this story, right? And we don't see ourselves in this story at all. [Congregation laughs] Right? We don't see that this has anything to do with our life at all! [Laughs] *"This is that poor guy on the roof, and this is a crazy story. And it's certainly not about my life, because I'm too spiritually advanced to every turn God's help away."* Right?

So as the story goes:

*The floodwater continues to rise and the man drowns. And he's ticked! He's mad! And he goes to God in this story and says, "What's the deal here? I prayed to you and you were supposed to save me!"*

*And God says, "What? Cut me some slack! I sent you a rowboat, a powerboat and a helicopter! How many other times did you want me to save you?"*

Right? And so the idea is that, if we ask for help, just assume it's not going to go the way you think. Just start with that. And if, by a fluke, it goes exactly you want it to go, then give thanks for that! But the way that God is going to help you is not probably the way you're expecting it.

Because God has infinite possibilities! You can think of one or two or three ways that you could get out of the jam, and God can think of a million!

So the first one is: We have to be willing to ask. We have to be open receive is two.

And three is -- and we have this word. The word is "obey." That **ONCE GOD REVEALS A PATH -- A STRATEGY -- WE HAVE TO OBEY**. We hate this word! We want it out of our marriage ceremonies; we want it out of our life. We don't do "obey" anymore! We do, "Whatever I want to!"

But I want you to see that "obey" is part of our spiritual process. That when we actually allow ourselves to obey the activity of Spirit that's at work in our life, everything is better!

So a couple of weeks ago, I read you a section from Deuteronomy. And what I read you was all true. It was all in Deuteronomy. And it was all the good stuff that God promised us.

And I'm going to read that section again tonight. And then I'm going to read the caveat -- the additional conditions in the contract, okay? Because sometimes [laughs] we want the good stuff, but we don't always pay attention to the conditions that come after the good stuff. So here we go: Deuteronomy 8.

*"Observe the commands of the Lord your God, and walk in obedience to him and reveling in him."*

Right? Did you hear that? Walk in obedience to him!

*"For the Lord your God will bring you into a good land -- a land of brooks and streams; of deep springs gushing out from the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce; where you will not lack anything; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.*

*And when you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God, for the land he gave you was good. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws, his decrees that I am giving to you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied; when you build your fine houses and settle down; and when your herds and flocks grow and your silver and gold increase; and all you have has multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, who brought you out of the land of slavery. Who led you from the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. Who brought you out water from a hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test so that you might end with a good and bountiful life.*

*You will say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands is what has produced this wealth.' But remember the Lord your God! For it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors to give you this day."*

So what's the commandment here? That God will be all-providing! And you just have to obey and acknowledge that God was the source of all the good in your life. And, in this way, it keeps the channel flowing. The good keeps flowing into your life because you're acknowledging that you're one with God; that God guided you and directed you; and that you're giving thanks for all the good that is in your life.

So the fourth step is to **GIVE THANKS**.

*"Thank you, God, for everything that you've given me!"*

Together: [with congregation] *"Thank you, God, for everything that you've given me!"*

One more time: [with congregation] *"Thank you, God, for everything you've given me!"*

Now, if God has blessed you in a great and wonderful way, is it easier to say, *"Thank you"*? Is it easier to feel loved?

See, I think that -- as we put God first and as we unleash the infinite blessings of God in our life -- our love for God goes up a hundred-fold. We feel blessed; we feel blessed in wonderful ways.

One of my favorite affirmations is, *"God is blessing me now."*

Together: [with congregation] *"God is blessing me now."*

Now, there are times when I don't feel that statement completely. Right? Does anybody else ever get a little negative? A little curmudgeonly? A little cranky? When you don't feel that statement completely?

But as I make myself say that statement -- *"God is blessing me now"* -- I know at some level that statement is 100% true. And as I say it to myself, I then begin to look around at my life and ask myself, *"If that's true -- if God is blessing me now -- where is that showing up?"* And I begin to look -- in my family; in my work; in my life; in my health. And I begin to actually look for the blessings.

As I look for the blessings, do I feel more in love with God? Do I feel more grateful? Yes! That if you want to love God, acknowledge what God is doing in your life, and your joy; your gratitude; your love for God will go through the roof.

*"God is blessing me now."*

So a couple of years ago, God opened a door for me that I have wanted for years. And for years, I've wanted to take my ministry to corporate America with the idea of sharing spiritual principles with people who wouldn't necessarily come to my church, our church.

And over the last two years, God has opened the door for me to do corporate consulting; speaking; facilitation with corporations here in town. And it's absolutely been a God job. Like, I couldn't have figured this out! I couldn't have done this! I tried to do this! And a door opened, and another door opened. And I could see the hand of God in this activity. And it's just been an incredible process of knowing -- knowing! -- that the reason that this happened was 100% God!

Like, a couple of weeks ago I'm standing in a boardroom; this board table felt like it was as long as this room. There's all these people around it. And I'm teaching spiritual principles! And they're all nodding! [Congregation laughs] And I think, "*This is crazy! This is fabulous!*" I'm going to be back at it again tomorrow morning, right?

And what I want you to see is: I love what God is doing in my life! I love what God is doing in my life!

Now, is my life perfect? Yes!!! [Congregation laughs] It is!!! It's not perfect the way I thought it was going to be, but it's perfectly my life!!!

And I love God, because there's been so many times when I was actually putting myself in the fire, and God pulled me out. Where I know that the good in my life comes from that one Presence and that one Power. That God is right here!

So when we read Matthew 25:

*"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little, and I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"*

Today I want you to join me in giving thanks and acknowledging all the things that God has done in your life. And as you begin to see them, to count them, to praise them, to acknowledge them, see if your love for God doesn't go through the roof.

Because one of the things I often hear from people is, "*Well, how do I love God? God is Spirit. God is ...*"

And it's like, "*What's God doing in your life?*" If God's not doing amazing things in your life, we need to change the process!

So what's the process?

- Ask;
- Be open to receive;
- Obey; and
- Give thanks.

So next week, I am going to talk about the other part of this. And I'm going to talk about how to not move into judgement and to really open your heart to others. Because the two sides to this commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your mind and heart. And when we get that first, it's actually easier to cut people slack. But if you live as a victim, then we just want to judge the heck out of everybody!

So are you ready for your homework? Your homework this week is: I want you ... I want you to ask God to show up in your life in a greater way. And I want you to be open to that: in all the ways that God wants to do miracles in your life. All the ways that God wants to bless you. And when a door opens, go through it! Obey! Trust it! Trust the process. And when that door blesses you and blesses you and blesses you: "*Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God.*" That, if we're not in love with our God,

we're not noticing it! We're noticing the Spirit of God that's at work in our life. That, over and over again, we are blessed people living in a blessed land. And the more we trust God -- the more we allow God to bless us -- the more in love with God we become every day.

So will you pray with me?

I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. That God is good! That your God loves you! That your God wants to bless you in ways that are too numerous to name. And our job tonight is to ask ... not just for "stuff," but a deeper, more powerful relationship. To feel God; to love God with all our mind and heart and soul. To allow that infinite Spirit and Power and Presence that created us from the beginning to be our God; to lift us out of the darkness and the fear and the hatred in our world and to reveal the truth that we are sons and daughters of the Most High.

So tonight we give thanks to our Creator for every blessing; for every good thing. And in all things we look to God and we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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