

**I. STARTING WITH THE RIGHT FOUNDATIONS**

- A. As we continue our vision series, our third heart standard I will call “joyful, happy holiness.” I am calling us to be a “people of joyful, happy holiness.”
- B. God calls us to holiness because He is holy. In being holy, He has the highest, most pleasurable, and exhilarating quality of life in existence. He wants to share this life with us forever. Holiness as it describes God talks about His ‘separateness’ and ‘purity.’
- 16“Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:16)*
- C. He has called us to enjoy the superior quality of life in the liberty of holiness. Many see holiness only as the drudgery of self-denial.
- D. God created every human being with a longing for pleasure and fascination. It is His design. Understanding these two longings is foundational to pursuing holiness in a biblical way. The call to holiness is a call to the superior pleasures of being fascinated by the revelation of Jesus.
- E. Holiness equips us to enjoy life together with God forever. We must not approach holiness in a negative way with dread. It does not keep us from pleasure, but equips us to experience it. The power of holiness frees us from the vain imaginations of lust, pride, and bitterness.
- F. One of King David’s lifelong goals was to encounter the beauty of God regularly. As king, David was head of the government and the army. His hands were occupied with his kingly duties, but his heart was preoccupied with the beauty of God.

*4One thing I have desired...all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)*

**II. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH #1: BEING PREOCCUPIED WITH SUPERIOR PLEASURES**

- A. God is the author of pleasure. He created us to enjoy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pleasures. Our longing for pleasure is part of our created design and must be satisfied; it will not go away. The devil tempts us with “counterfeit” pleasures that are outside God’s will.
- B. The greatest pleasures available to the human heart are spiritual pleasures that come to us when God reveals God to our spirit. This exhilarates our spirit at the deepest levels. We are liberated from the inferior pleasures of sin by experiencing the superior pleasures of the beauty of Jesus.
- C. The Spirit discerns the deep things of the Father’s heart and mind including the delight He feels for Jesus, the saints, and His kingdom. The Spirit helps us feel some of what the Father feels.
- 10The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...12We have received...the Spirit...that we might know the things that have been freely given to us. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)*
- D. The Spirit escorts us on a divine treasure hunt into the beauty of Jesus. He takes the things Jesus is thinking and feeling, and He reveals them to us. This is divine entertainment at its highest.

*14He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (Jn. 16:14)*

- E. We see many in the biblical record who lived a life of extravagant devotion unto the Lord because of their experiences with these superior pleasures they had found in God.
- F. John the Baptist was one (a Nazarite in his day) who had found his joy in his relationship with God. This pleasure, enjoyment, led him to extravagant love and devotion.
- <sup>29</sup> He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. <sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3: 29-30***
- G. John wanted his life to increase in the pleasures of knowing God and the beauty revealed to him. The way in which he adjusted his lifestyle therefore came from the joy of God he was experiencing.
- H. Jesus testified that this extravagant devotion looked like ‘spiritual violence’. This was not the radicalized violence of a suicide bomber, but the response of a heart in love with God. A heart released in this type of love for God will make dramatic life altering decisions.
- <sup>12</sup> And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. Matt. 11:12***
- I. One of the greatest prophetic judgments made over a people demonstrating God’s displeasure was when the people sought to diminish and discourage the radical extravagant love of the Nazarites. You will find their story in the lives of Samuel, Samson, Paul, Jesus, Deborah, Elizabeth and Zacharias.

***I raised up some of your sons as prophets, And some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?” Says the LORD. <sup>12</sup> “But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, And commanded the prophets saying, ‘Do not prophesy!’ Amos 2:11-12***

- J. In the end times, God will fascinate His people with Jesus’ beauty beyond any time in history.
- 2 In that day the Branch of the LORD [Jesus] shall be beautiful and glorious. (Isa. 4:2)***

### III. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH #2: SETTING OUR HEART ON WHOLEHEARTED OBEDIENCE

- A. It is empowering and satisfying to set our heart to love God with 100% obedience.
- B. ***Empowering:*** The pursuit of 98% obedience has a limited blessing. The last 2% positions us to live with a vibrant heart. Powerful and surprising dynamics occur in our emotions as we pursue the last 2%. There is a “spark” of the Spirit in our heart as we “reach,” or aim, to live this way. The Spirit speaks to many about their lack of agreement with Him instead of God’s beauty.
- C. Aiming for 100% obedience includes bridling our speech (Jas. 3:2), making a covenant with our eyes and refusing to look at anything that stirs up lust (Job 31:1), disciplining our appetites, and managing our time (for service and prayer) and our money for the increase of God’s kingdom.
- D. This reach must be so deliberate that it gets into our daily dialogue with God in our prayer times. It is more than a casual commitment to obey God in a general way.

- E. Aiming for 100% obedience is different from attaining it. However, when we sin, we repent, receive forgiveness, and renew our resolve to “reach” to obey God fully, with confidence that He enjoys us now and values our journey to grow in love. We are equally yoked to Jesus, not by the size of our love, but by the all of our love. Our all may be small, but it is our all.
- F. **Satisfying:** God created us with a longing to be wholehearted in our love for Him. It is necessary for our emotional health. The human heart does not function properly without wholeheartedness.
- G. **God is self-sufficient:** He desires us, but does not need us. His insistence on our full obedience is not because He is an insecure narcissist looking for human affirmation. He knows that only in fully loving Him are we able to experience the fullness of what it means to be human. By requiring our full dedication and helping us to sustain it, He equips us to experience great joy.

#### IV. VICTORY OVER SIN: 3 PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES (ROM. 6:11-13)

- A. Romans 6 tells us how to access, or experience, the power, favor, and blessings of God, which are freely available to us because of what Jesus did on the cross. Transformation in our life begins by knowing who we are in Christ—seeing ourselves in the way God sees us in Christ. God requires us to cooperate with His grace. He will not do our part, and we cannot do His part.
- B. Principle #1—Knowing Principle (Rom. 6:11): We must know who we are in Christ and what we have received in Him. We reckon, or see, ourselves as alive to God—alive to the realm of God—which includes seeing that we are fully accepted and enjoyed by God, empowered to use Jesus’ authority, and indwelt by the Spirit. The Spirit’s peace resides in our spirit from the very day that we are born again (Gal. 5:22). We access His peace by acknowledging it and thanking Him for it. The simple act of thanking the Spirit for His peace in our spirit releases it to our soul (emotions).

***11Reckon [see] yourselves to be...alive to God in Christ. (Rom. 6:11)***

***!22The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness... (Gal. 5:22)***

- C. Principle #2—Resisting Principle (Rom. 6:12-13a): We resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances. We resist the inward prompting of sin and the schemes of Satan. Paul emphasized self-denial. God chose the denial of our lustful desires as one arena in which we express our love to Him (Jn. 14:15, 21-23). We refuse circumstances that inflame sinful desires. Therefore, we do not go to places, buy items, or look at or talk about that which stirs up sinful passions.

***12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin... (Rom. 6:12-13a)***

- D. Principle #3—Pursuing Principle (Rom. 6:13b): We serve and relate to God and people in love. We present ourselves to God, and our bodies as His instruments, that He may use us to bless others. Our first call is to love God with all our heart as worshipers of Jesus—we are to cultivate His presence in our life (intimacy with God). Then we express God’s love to people by offering our bodies as vessels for the Spirit to use to bless them.

***13But present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:13b)***

- E. Summary: We must know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God and people. We love God and people as we resist sin, Satan, and sin-provoking circumstances, and grow in the knowledge of who we are in Christ and experience God's heart as a Father and Bridegroom.
1. None of these principles can be omitted. Some pursue God at prayer meetings without knowing who they are in Christ or resisting sin; some know the truth about who they are in Christ and even resist sin, but without pursuing God and loving people; etc.
  2. If we embrace all three of these principles in the context of the two foundational truths of being preoccupied with the superior pleasures of God and seeking 100 % obedience, then the Holy Spirit will dynamically work in and through our life.