

## February 2009 Week 3 TEACHING

# How We Love God

Who could have ever imagined that life on earth would be as complicated, fantastical, and dangerous as it is now. It seems to be so intricately woven with complexities in fact, that most of us would not dream of speculating where we'll be ten years from now. Truth is, we don't know whether to be frightened or thrilled by it. So most of us find ourselves these days just taking it as it comes; living, working, and struggling to find our bearings in a world that is changing faster than we can keep up.

The only ones who seem to be remotely poised for this new frontier are young folks. They were practically born with a psyche that's internet ready, with fingers that glide over keyboards as if they've somehow been programmed at birth to do so. These *youngens* have an air of confidence that makes them think they're all geniuses. In their minds the rest of us are just slumps who would be better served to hand over the world and step aside because, as they are so quick to point out, they can do a better job with it.

Every generation thinks they'll do better than the last. In some ways that is probably true, but in some ways it isn't, and it doesn't take much to prove that point. All we need do is look around. With each passing moment we tend to love material things more and more, as we move further away from God and the standard of His Word. So if you're over forty or fast approaching it and are wondering exactly where you fit in, wonder no more. You are the constant...the bridge for that young hopeful few who will almost lose their souls, but will stop just short of it and recognize what a privilege it is to love God.

This is the work we were destined to do. In our own individually unique and small way, we were purposed to make this contribution; to shine a light in this dark world of ours, to pray often, and to continue to grow in wisdom. This is our charge.

Matthew 5:6 says *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* Well, first off --when we talk about letting our lights shine, some of us will immediately hearken back to childhood days in Sunday choir, twirling our ponytails and picking our noses while trying to belt out *"this little light of mine..."*, in the most angelic way possible of course. This kind of childhood memory stays with some of us, and that is where we left our light...back there, in a time when we were innocent and trusted the Father wholeheartedly.

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The world is definitely a dark place, no one will argue that. It is so dark in fact that we think we couldn't possibly do anything to breach it, but in truth we can. Through the love of Christ we have an infinite supply of light. It is with us everywhere we go. You don't have to be concerned with how brightly the light shines. Your responsibility is to make sure it isn't hidden--to be sure that you are always poised to do a good deed and to speak a word of truth, and that you don't miss an opportunity to do either.

### **1Thessalonians 5:17-19 NKJV**

*17 pray without ceasing,*

*18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

*19 Do not quench the Spirit.*

A friend of mine once told me that he was praying in the spirit while mowing the lawn and almost ran over his cat. God isn't suggesting to us in 1Thessalonians 5 that He wants us to pray morning, noon, day, and night, but we must keep in mind that the Christian life is intended to be a spiritual one. It requires that we are constantly doing those things that promote a clear and clutter free line of communication with our Heavenly Father. So while you may not be able to pray 24/7, your mind and heart should always be in a place that honors your spirit.

We should give God His time in prayer and allow nothing else to hinder us when we do. Too many of us pray only when all else fails; when we're exasperated, exhausted, and out of focus. Our prayer life must accommodate room to pray for others and for ourselves as well. We're not talking about a few words here and there. God desires meaningful dialogue with us, where He hears us and we wait to hear from Him.

Verse 18 says "*in everything give thanks.*" This is how we can really set an example for those who are looking for the slightest glimmer of light. Negativity is rampant. People are constantly tearing each other down through gossip, through the airways, and in print. We have a choice to either add to this negativity by continuing to spread it, or to put a stop to it by at least refusing to further its sting.

We can give thanks in everything, and all things can be influenced by the prayers of those of us who love God and keep His Word. It isn't about being superficial, flaky, or appearing ultra religious. It is about knowing the transformative power of praying to God through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The reality of who He is and who we are through him increases as we pray in earnest. We become better than we thought we would ever be. We have been changed and that is why we are in a prime position to understand what it is to be truly thankful. It's the appropriate response to any negativity that comes our way.

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Although there are times when these things are appropriate, our time in prayer is not meant to be monopolized with emotionalism, mindless chatter, or with repetitive requests. To quench the spirit is to extinguish its fire and that is exactly what we will do if we spend too much time on any one of the aforementioned. In 1Corinthians 13:11 KJV, the Apostle Paul said *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."* Those of us who have been on this journey a while must step up to the plate and put away childish things. We have to realize that God has called us with a holy calling; we have to get a few things done. *"Gimme, Gimme, Gimme..."* will not work anymore. The spirit burns to uplift the body of Christ--to help us live up to his example; and our hearts ought to yearn to do that as well. We are equal to the task that God has set before us, and it is time to get it done. Pray for others, in everything give thanks, and don't allow your actions to quench the momentum of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

### **Proverbs 4:7 KJV**

*Wisdom [is] the principal thing; [therefore] get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*

Proverbs 4:7 says that getting wisdom is the most important thing we can do. Everybody is walking around either searching for purpose, fulfilling a resolution, or trying to find the next best way to make themselves younger, richer, prettier, or more handsome. They are out there looking for a gold mine when the Word tells us where it really is. Wisdom is our treasure. We're not talking run-of-the-mill textbook, but God desires that we seek the upper echelon, the top branch of wisdom where respect and honor for the things of God are hand and hand. We are to be diligent in our pursuit of this jewel because it holds us in that place of authority, where we can instruct others in the Word and they will listen because of the Christ they see in us. Words of wisdom are not just intelligent, but impactful, carrying with them a persuasive reasoning that causes one to mend his and her ways and take up the cross.

No two people will carry out this work the same way. We all love God a little differently, but make no mistake about it, the path before us is clear. It has been marked out by our savior. No matter what the future holds, on that glorious day when we give an account of the life we've lived, God will look at how we have loved Him. And when we unveil our body of work, there ought to be a long line of people we have prayed for, those of whom we've shared our wisdom, and those whose way has been made a little brighter by our light.

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