Session 9 The Superior Pleasure of Obedient Love (Jn. 15:10-11)

*“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty.” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

1. Review: Two glorious truths and one command (Jn. 15:9)
   1. Jesus declared that His love for His disciples was as intense as the Father’s love for Him (Jn. 15:9).   
      In John 15:9, we see the two most important truths and the most important command in the Bible. The way God loves God (15:9a) is the greatest love story—it overflows to His people (15:9b).

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love…” (Jn. 15:9)

* + 1. ***Truth #1***: The Father’s love for Jesus (15:9a) points us to the reality of how God loves God.
    2. ***Truth #2***: Jesus loves His people (15:9b) in the same intensity that the Father loves Him.
    3. ***The command***: To abide or live focused on understanding and expressing God’s love (15:9c). We do this by engaging in conversation with Jesus around the two truths in John 15:9a, b.   
       We search them out by prioritizing time to study, reflect on, and pray them often.
  1. God is love (1 Jn. 4:16): the nature of God and the essence of His being is wholehearted love.   
     The only way that God loves His people is with *all of His heart*. The Lord never changes (Mal. 3:6). *He always loves in fullness* because His actions and feelings are always 100% true to who He is.

1. The absolute necessity of obedience—as evidence of salvation
   1. Jesus connected His command to “abide in love” (15:9c) to walking in a spirit of obedience (15:10). He declared truths in 15:9 that empower us to obey God (15:10) and walk in joy (15:11). There is a dynamic connection of grasping God’s love to being empowered to obey God and to walk in joy.

9“…abide in My love. 10If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love…11that My joy may remain in you.”   
(Jn. 15:9-11)

* 1. ***If you keep My commandments***: The essential requirement in abiding or living in the power and reality of His love includes the commitment to walk in a spirit of obedience to Jesus’ teachings and leadership. The word, “if,” implies that this essential condition is easy to overlook. Many believers are confused why they rarely feel joy but instead feel weighed down with heaviness and despair. In 15:1-10, Jesus tells us the **only** reliable way to experience His joy.
     1. Just moments earlier, Jesus linked loving God with obeying God–He emphasized it five times (14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31). He defined loving God as being rooted in a spirit of obedience. We must love God on His terms—by how He defines love. He is the most qualified to define love.

15If you love Me, keep My commandments…21He who…keeps them, it is he who loves Me… 23If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word… (Jn. 14:15-23)

* + 1. There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey Him. The distorted grace message promotes sentimental definitions of love that minimize obedience—it is a deception.
  1. ***You will abide in My love***: He promised the obedient disciple a breakthrough of love in their heart.   
     If we keep His commandments, we will progressively “abide in” or experience more of His love.   
     Thus, live in the tenderizing influences of His love via an increased insight in His love for us and an increased impartation of love in our heart for Him. There is a “love-cycle” that progresses in us–the more that we understand His love for us, the more it empowers us to love Him. Then the more that we love Him, the more we obey Him. And the more we obey, the more we understand His love. Affection-based obedience is the most reliable–compared to duty-based or fear-based obedience. Do not try harder to love God but thank Him more for His love and ask for greater insight into it.
  2. Serving Jesus and denying our lustful desires are “the theater” that God chose for us to express our love to Him. Lust includes covetousness, anger, bitterness, retaliation, complaining, slander, and more. Each of us has a different struggle according to our own personality and life circumstances. Thus, we each have a different *“assignment,”* from which we offer our gift of obedient love to God.
  3. Jesus takes our obedience personally as love for Him. He esteems, remembers, and rewards all that we do because of love (Mt. 10:42). Obedient disciples are part of His love gift to the Father. The apostles had great joy when their disciples walked in obedience to God (1 Thes. 2:19; 3 Jn. 4).
  4. Our love (and resistance of sinful lusts) is often weak and flawed, but it is still valued and honored by the Lord. Weak love is still real love–it is genuine. Our love is not only real when it is mature.
  5. Obedience to Jesus is not optional.Jesus had just warned that some who follow Him would be   
     “cast out” as unfruitful branches (15:6). Obedience is the evidence of one who is born again. About 18 months earlier (summer AD 28), Jesus gave a sober warning of the delusion and false confidence that many have–even those who prayed the sinner’s prayer without repentance (Mt. 7:21-27).

2“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away…6he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” (Jn. 15:2, 6)

21“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father…22Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name…?’ 23I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you…’” (Mt. 7:21-23)

* 1. ***Just as I have kept My Father’s commandments***: We remain in Jesus’ love in the same way that Jesus remained in his Father’s love—by His obedience (Jn. 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:29; 14:31; 17:4). Jesus’ own life magnified the value and beauty of obedience and vindicated it as the best, wisest, and most noble lifestyle. He proved the reality of superior pleasures of radical obedience to God.

1. The kingdom view of obedience: superior pleasures of the gospel
   1. It is essential to cultivate a kingdom view of obedience. The enemy works to obscure this reality. The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are the spiritual pleasures that come to us as ***God reveals God*** to us. We are freed from the ***inferior pleasures*** of sin by experiencing the ***superior pleasures*** of the gospel. When we feel the superior pleasurers of the gospel (even a little), we are liberated from the dominion of dark emotions related to the inferior pleasures of sin.

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

* 1. It takes spiritual understanding to see obedience as the way to true liberty, greatness, and joy.
  2. Many see obedience or holiness as the drudgery of self-denial. Holiness is almost a bad word today. The truth is that His holiness is the most pleasurable quality of life in existence. It is how God lives.
  3. We can live fascinated in the pleasure of loving God that overflows in loving people. Holiness or obedience equips us to enjoy life with God–it does not keep us from spiritual pleasure. The power of holiness sets us free from vain imaginations and the dullness of lust and bitterness.
  4. Holiness is not just a good idea for the distant future. It is possible to live with a holy preoccupation with the beauty of Jesus today. The battle for holiness is the battle to become fascinated with Jesus.
  5. Jesus never apologized for calling His people to obedience or holiness as if it was “negative.”   
     His commands are not burdensome but are designed to lead us to joy, liberty, and greatness.   
     John exposed Satan’s lie that God’s commandments were burdensome. The litmus test of our genuine love for people from God’s point of view that we love and obey God. John did not allow a false dichotomy of choosing between loving people and loving and obeying God (1 Jn. 5:2-3).

2By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:2-3)

* 1. The enemy promotes the lie that seeking to obey the Lord in a wholehearted way is burdensome–that it is even a harmful type of legalism. This lie is manifested in validating sinful choices with   
     the rhetoric of “grace”—yet God is raising up those who will *contend for the true gospel* (Jude 3-4). We are called to walk in liberty from fear, accusation, addictions, and other dark emotions.

3…exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4Certain men have crept in unnoticed…who turn the grace of our God into lewdness. (Jude 3-4)

13You…have been called to liberty; do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh… (Gal. 5:13)

* 1. Obedience to Jesus is the only reliable pathway to true spiritually, emotional rest, and lasting joy. Being yoked to obey Jesus’ leadership is the place we find emotional rest from the weariness of “option fatigue,” and the fear of missing out, perpetually guessing what will make us happiest, and how to be successful in men’s eyes. No one puts on a yoke to rest physically. Jesus promised spiritual and emotional rest to those who surrender themselves to His truth and loving leadership. Jesus’ yoke is easy because of His loving leadership. The yoke of self or sin is very hard to bear; its penalties are severe. God’s truths and commandments are the “user manual” for the human heart.

29“Take My yoke upon you…find rest for your souls. 30My yoke is easy…” (Mt. 11:29-30)

* 1. Obedience to Jesus is the only reliable pathway to true greatness. He calls one’s life choices “great” as they love and obey Him. This is attained without regard for outward achievements and impact.   
     It is based on the size of one’s heart response to Him. We are not left guessing what He calls great.

19Whoever breaks [consistently] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does [consistently] and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)

* 1. ***My commands***: We are to be loyal to and cherish His commands, even those that carry a stigma. One aspect of abiding in love includes treasuring, guarding, and contending for Jesus’ commands (Jude 3), even as Jesus cherished and guarded His Father’s words (Jn. 12:49-50).

49For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.” (Jn. 12:49-50)

* + 1. The teachings of Jesus are one of the primary issues that is attacked globally in the end times. David prophesied that the nations would rise up in anger against Jesus’ leadership (Ps. 2:1-3), seeking to remove the influence of His Word from society (2:3). Many secular leaders will see God’s Word in a negative light, as though it were *bonds* enslaving them and hindering “human potential,” and as *cords* binding them to His morality, godly ways, and truth.

2The kings…and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord…saying,  
3“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” (Ps. 2:1-3)

* + 1. We are to be loyal to Scripture as the only perfect and reliable guide to true spirituality.   
       We stand for the authority of God’s Word, for the sanctity of life, marriage, and sex, etc.

7The law of the Lord [God’s Word] is perfect…enlightening the eyes [to truth] 10More to be desired are they than gold…11In keeping them there is great reward. (Ps. 19:7-11)

* 1. We set our heart to stand for Jesus’ truth and commands regardless if they are unpopular.

60Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying…”  
61When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them,   
“Does this offend you?...63The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life….”   
66From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more…68Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (Jn. 6:60-68)

1. the promise of Joy (Jn. 15:11)
   1. Jesus was informing—even alerting them—that these truths in 15:1-10 were essential to empower them to receive joy. He promised a breakthrough of joy in the heart of those who would persevere.

11These things I have spoken…that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.   
(Jn. 15:11)

* 1. ***These things I have spoken***: Jesus is referring to what He said in 15:1-10 with a special emphasis on what He just said in 15:9-10. Our experience of God’s joy is anchored in our growing in our understanding of the intensity of how the Father loves the Son and how the Son loves us (15:9-10).
  2. ***My joy***: Joy is a deep sense of well-being in God’s presence with confidence in His goodness.   
     This joy is not the “natural happiness” that is sought in favorable circumstances and relationships.
  3. ***Your joy may be full***: Our experience of God’s joy comes as momentary impartations of the Spirit. In time, His joy becomes the lens by which we view our life. His joy marks us progressively so that it becomes our joy or part of our mindset and emotional make up. His joy sparks our heart until joy becomes more dominant in our heart than dark emotions (despair, fear, rejection, lust, anger, etc.).