

Chapter 1

Loving Enemies

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THE VALUES OF CHRIST
(Part 2)

The date of September 11, 2001, will live in infamy in America. The events of that day shocked America and the world, not only because of the tragic loss of life. The values of millions were impacted that day. Jesus had much to say in His teaching about values. He taught that our values show us where our hearts are, and He emphasized the truth that our hearts should not be given to "treasures on earth," but to "treasures in heaven." He gave two very good reasons for this: earthly treasures depreciate and they can be taken from us. We should have treasures in heaven that do not depreciate and cannot be taken from us, according to Jesus (Matthew 6:19-34).

According to the dictionary, a value is "That quality of any certain thing by which it is determined by us to be more or less profitable, useful and, therefore desirable." As we learned in part one of this series on the values of Christ, Jesus had a value system and we are to confess the values of Jesus Christ.

In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, the word "confess" is a compound word. Those words are the Greek words for speaking and for sameness. To "confess" literally means, "to speak sameness, to say the same thing," or "to agree". To confess Jesus Christ means to say the same thing Jesus says when He identifies a value.

Jesus loved a great many people when He was in this world. In this study, I want to consider the love of Jesus for our enemies. Jesus is unique among all world figures because He loved His enemies. From the cross He prayed that extraordinary prayer for those who were crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." What a shocking moment that was, when, as He was dying for the sinners of this world, dying for the very people who were putting Him to death, He was able to pray this great prayer: "Father, forgive them." (Luke 23:34)

The Apostle Paul writes, that when Jesus loved His enemies, He was loving all of us:

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:6,8,10)

In this passage, Paul is telling us that the love of Christ is unique because it is unconditional. He doesn't just love us when we are good. He loves us when we sin also, though it makes Him sad. He demonstrated that love because He died for us when we were ungodly sinners - when we were His enemies. There would be no salvation for any of us if Jesus had not loved His enemies.

Jesus had the kind of love that is profiled in the great love chapter of Paul, which is indestructible because it is unconditional, and not based on performance (I Corinthians 13:4-7).

Now Jesus not only loved His enemies by example, but He also taught that we should love our enemies. Jesus taught the greatest ethic the world has ever heard while He was giving His Sermon on the Mount:

"You have heard that it is said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' but I say to you, 'Love your enemy. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you greet your brother only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" (Matthew 5:43-48)

When He gave that great teaching, Jesus was essentially saying: "You must confess the value I place on love by not only loving each other, but by loving your unlovely enemies." He concludes this very challenging teaching with a question: "If you only love those who love you, what reward do you have?" The literal Greek is, "If you only love those who love you, what grace do you practice? It doesn't take any grace to love those who love you."

It was and is the strategy of Jesus to impact this world by showing this world something it doesn't see every day: people loving their unlovely enemies.

During the Crusades, Francis of Assisi was nursing a wounded enemy soldier. A crusader from horseback shouted to Francis, "If that infidel gets well he will kill you." Francis replied, "Then he will have known divine love before he does!"

Jesus challenged the Apostles with this proposition: "If you will confess the value I place on loving the unlovely, you are going to impact this world!" If you will only love those who love you, you are no different from the people of this world. Everybody loves those who love them. That is conditional, human love.

What a challenge to love the unlovely, unconditionally, as Jesus Christ did! When Jesus suggested it takes no grace to love those who love us, He was teaching that it does take grace to love unconditionally, as Jesus loved His enemies. The most dynamic teaching in the New Testament is that the risen, living Christ lives in you and me. This means that He can love our unlovely enemies through you and me! (See I John 4:7-21; Colossians 1:27)

The last part of this teaching is: "Therefore, you should be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Now, that word "perfect" bothers people. It actually means "complete" or "mature". If the word "perfect" bothers you, read Matthew 5:48 and leave out the word "perfect". "Therefore, you shall be, just as your Father in heaven is." The Apostle Paul mandates that husbands should love

their wives just as Christ loved the church. They should also give of themselves to their wives, just as Christ gave Himself for the church (Ephesians 5:25). They are to love and give just as Christ loved and gave Himself for the church. Is that possible? Yes! If Christ lives in us that is not only possible. That is natural.

We should be the love of Christ in this world. We should be loving and we should be loving unconditionally because Christ lives in and through us. Every disciple of Jesus Christ should say what Francis of Assisi said to the sinner in this world, even the enemy of Jesus Christ and of God the Father. What a challenge! Do you confess the value Jesus Christ placed on loving your enemies?

Chapter 2

The Lost

We are considering the values Jesus identified as He lived His life among us. As He identifies His set of values, we see a profile of the absolute values of God. In this study, we will look at the value He placed on the worst sinner in town.

If you will turn to Luke 19:1-10, we will see a great illustration of the value Jesus placed on the people He called "the lost".

"Jesus entered and was passing through Jericho. Now behold there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief of the publicans and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was but he could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

"And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down. For today, I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.'

"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor. And if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore four fold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today, salvation has come to this house. Because he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

Like many of the stories about Jesus, this passage could be presented like a play in three acts. Act One is where Jesus meets this man, Zacchaeus, who is the chief of the publicans, otherwise known as tax collectors. Publicans were sinners in a class all by themselves because they collected the Romans' taxes for them from their fellow Jew, and they were especially hated by the Jewish people. These

publicans usually added a percentage for themselves and the poor Jewish people were helpless to do anything about it.

In Act One, Zacchaeus is so anxious to see the Lord, he runs before Him and climbs up a tree. Jesus calls him by name and says, "Make haste and come down for today I must stay at your house." The people are very upset, especially the religious leaders. Probably the most important religious people in that town expected Jesus to spend the day with them. But Jesus decides to spend the day with the worst sinner of all, a publican! And not just a publican - the chief of the publicans!

Act Two takes place in the home of Zacchaeus. Jesus spends the whole day there. We do not know anything about what happened in the home of Zacchaeus. We can only speculate what happened in Act Two by the way Act Three begins.

When Act Three begins, they are coming out of the house and Zacchaeus says, "Behold Lord, I will give half of my money to the poor and if I have cheated anyone, I will restore them fourfold." And Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house for he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

In other words, Jesus is essentially saying: "I have come for people like Zacchaeus, a chief publican. In case you are surprised that I spent My one day in Jericho with Zacchaeus, I want you to realize something: I place great value upon people like him. In fact, I

came not only to save lost people like him. I came to seek them out and save them."

Personal Applications

Are you lost? Are you a sinner? Then take heart. Jesus Christ came for people just like you. He highly valued the people like you. You were and are at the top of His cultivation list. If Jesus were throwing a party, you would be invited!

And then, if you are part of the religious establishment, part of the church, are you so sophisticated in your Christianity that you do not value people like Zacchaeus? We should be concerned if we do not find love in our hearts for the Zacchaeus' of this world. We should have in our hearts, not our heads, the love of Jesus Christ for the sinner, a love that confesses the value Jesus placed on people like Zacchaeus.

Chapter 3

Our Approach to His Teaching

We are considering the value system of Jesus, and we are asking ourselves if we confess, or say the same thing about the values identified and declared by Jesus. Have we made the values of

Jesus our values? In this chapter, consider with me the way Jesus values His own teaching.

Jesus makes it clear that His teaching is to be obeyed. When He made the claim that His teaching was the teaching of God, He told us how we can prove that it is. He taught, "If any man will do ... he will know ..." (John 7:17) Our intellectual approach to everything is essentially, when I know, then I will do. Jesus told us that is not the way we should approach His teaching. We say that the knowing will lead to the doing. Jesus taught that the doing leads to the knowing.

Making that same point in another way, Jesus taught that His teaching is like new (unfermented) wine. In those days, they never put unfermented wine in an old, brittle wine skin. If they did, the fermenting wine would expand and burst the wine skin. Jesus taught that His teaching would put pressure on their minds, and if they did not yield to that pressure, His teaching would literally "blow their minds." (Luke 5:36-39)

If His teaching is put into practice, Jesus taught that it will become a belief system that will be like a foundation under our lives. When difficult times come, we will not collapse. We will not be defeated by the storms of life if our belief system is based on the teaching of Jesus:

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat

on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7:24-27)

Jesus also taught that the purpose of His teaching is to revolutionize culture. The religious leaders told Jesus, that if He really were the Messiah, He should be more disciplined and legalistic. But He answered them with a somewhat humorous metaphor: "Who are you to suggest to Me that I should be different from what I am in My lifestyle? Why, that makes you just like little children." In the marketplace, children played little games imitating two things they had observed - weddings and funerals.

They would say to busy merchants, "Stop and play funeral with us and be very sad." Or they would say, "Stop and play wedding with us and be very happy." (Luke 7:31-35) But, busy merchants had no time to stop and play little games with children. Jesus is saying to the established religious leaders, "I did not come to play your little religious games."

There is another place in the Scripture where Jesus placed an intriguing value on His teaching. He said: "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a house-holder who brings out of his treasure things new and old." (Matthew 13:52) My paraphrase of His metaphor is: "If you understand My teaching, you will really understand the Old Testament and you will be able to

teach the Old Testament - in a new and fresh way. You will be able to get to the spirit of the law - the kernel of truth, the heart of the truth that is taught in all those beautiful, inspired, books of the Old Testament."

He might also be saying, that as a teacher of the kingdom of heaven, you will give a fresh view of the old truth that has always been accepted.

There is no greater blessing than to hear someone teach a familiar Scripture like Psalm 23, and give new insight. I remember once hearing a man teach Psalm 23 and I thought, "This is boring." We are so familiar with Psalm 23. What could he possibly say that we have not heard before? I realized, however, after I had listened to him for 40 minutes, that everything he was teaching about Psalm 23 was new to me.

Perhaps that is what Jesus meant when He placed this great value on His teaching. He was telling us, that when we really understand His teaching, we will be a teacher who can teach things that are new and things that are old, or we can teach the old with a new and fresh way of teaching those old truths.

Chapter 4

The Written Word of God

We are studying the values of Jesus Christ. During His three years of public ministry, He highly valued the written Word of God. The religious leaders were constantly challenging Him, saying He was teaching something new, something different. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed the value He placed on the Old Testament Scriptures:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. Whoever, therefore, breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20)

Observe that Jesus taught, "Whoever does and teaches these Old Testament laws shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Not just understands, but whoever does and then teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom. He ends this teaching by saying, "Whoever really understands and applies this approach to Old

Testament Scripture, their righteousness will far exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

According to the Book of Deuteronomy, the purpose of the Old Testament Scripture, is to show man how to live (Deuteronomy 8:1-3). In more than five decades of studying and teaching the Bible, I have discovered that the more you know the Bible, the more you understand life, and the more you experience life, the more you understand and appreciate the Bible.

Consider this prayer of Jesus regarding the importance of the Word of God in the lives of the apostles: "I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world." (John 17:14) It seems as if an evidence of the fact that the Apostles really understood and lived the Word He had given them was the fact that the world hated them. This raises an interesting question for us to ask ourselves as disciples of Jesus Christ: "Does anybody hate me because my Lord Jesus Christ has given me the Word of the Father and I am living it?"

As He prays for the apostles, He prays this prayer for them: "Sanctify them by Your truth." Then He makes this declarative statement about the Word of God: "Your Word is truth." (17) The word "sanctify" means "to be set apart." He is praying, "Set them apart to Yourself. Give them a relationship to Yourself that will keep them safe in this world." He had sent them out as sheep, (Luke says "lambs") in the midst of a pack of wolves, into a place of great danger (Luke 10:3; Matthew 10:16). So, He prays to the Father, "Do

not take them out of the world because they can't get the job done if they come out of the world. But while they are in the world, in this place of great danger, set them apart to Yourself. Use Your Truth (Your Word) to do that."

Then He makes this great declaration about the Word of God: "Your Word is Truth." (John 17:17) Here is a great insight into the Scripture. The Scripture is truth. Therefore, come to the Scripture to discover that truth. That truth can set you apart to God. It can give you a relationship with Him while you are living in a world that hates Him, His Word, and the value system revealed in His Word. Always come to the Scripture looking for that truth, remembering that when you do, you will know (John. 7:17). You will know the Truth that will set you free, and you will know the Truth that will set you apart to God and Christ as you live out the values of Christ in a world that is hostile toward those values (John 8:30-35; 17:14).

Will we confess the value Jesus placed on the Word of God? That is the challenge we have to face as we consider the value Jesus Christ placed on the truth found in the Scriptures - the written Word of God.

Chapter 5

His Work

We are following Jesus through the Gospels, watching Him identify a set of values. In this study I would like for us to consider the value Jesus placed on the work the Father sent Him into this world to accomplish. Have you observed the obsession of Jesus with finishing the work of the Father?

For example, we hear Him pronounce his vision statement when He is a child: "I must be about My Father's business." (Luke 2:49) Jesus certainly was focusing on His work when He said, "I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day. The night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4) Jesus Christ had a mission and He knew what His mission was.

On another occasion, the Apostles returned with food that He didn't want. When they offered Him the food, He refused it by saying essentially, "My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) Jesus modeled for us that His nourishment, His meat, His fulfillment came from doing the work the Father sent Him to do.

When He came to the end of His life, having been obsessed with "working the works of Him who sent Me while it is day," knowing that the night was coming when no one could work, as He faced the cross, knowing that His life on earth and His mission on earth was coming to an end, He prayed these beautiful words,

"Father, I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You have given Me to do." (John 17:4)

What is the purpose of a human life? The creeds say, to glorify and enjoy God. So, to glorify and enjoy God is the purpose of a human life, according to the creeds. Now, how do we glorify God? That is a great question. Jesus models the answer for us. "I have glorified You on the earth" (And how do we glorify God?) "I have finished the work that You have given Me to do." (That is how we glorify God.)

When Jesus went to the cross, and came to the end of all the suffering there, what were His last words? The Gospels, if we compare them, tell us that the last words of Jesus on the cross were, "It is finished. ... Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." (John 19:30; Luke 23:46)

These words were found in the diary of a missionary who was brutally murdered for his faith: "When the time comes in the plan of God for you that you must die, see to it that all you have to do is die." Since Jesus lived a perfect life, when He came to the end of that perfect life, He could say, "It is finished. Father, all I have to do is die. Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit. I have finished the work You have given Me to do."

Jesus had a mission and He made many mission statements. Do you have a mission statement? Do you know the fulfillment that comes from finishing the works that you believe the Father has assigned to you? Do you have a sense of finished work? When you

come to the end of your life, are you going to be able to say, "It is finished?" Will you be able to say with Jesus, "Father, I've glorified You on the earth. I have finished the works You have given me to do? Father, all I have to do is die?"

Chapter 6

How We Hear the Word of God

One of the great teachings of Jesus is The Parable of the Sower. If you study it carefully, you realize the story is really The Parable of the Seeds because this parable is all about how we hear the Word of God. Four kinds of soil receive the Word of God, showing four ways we can respond to the Word of God when we hear it. We should therefore call this teaching, "The Parable of the Soils." Once we realize what this parable truly is all about, we should call it, "Four Men in a Pew, Which One Are You?"

In this parable, Jesus tells us that a farmer went out to sow seed in his field. Some of his seed fell on the packed down soil. So, the birds of the air came and ate it. It never did penetrate the soil or produce anything. When He explained the meaning of this, He said this is a picture of those who hear the Word of God and do not let it penetrate their understanding. Before they have a chance to

internalize it, the evil one comes and takes away the seed of the Word of God.

The second kind of soil that received the farmer's seed was rocky soil. The rocks prevent the seed from putting roots down into the soil. The seeds are not able to put roots down into the soil. As soon as the sun comes out, these seeds are destroyed and they bear no fruit.

When He interpreted this parable, He explained that these are the people whose minds are penetrated when they hear the Word of God, but not their wills. Jesus often talked about "hardened hearts." When Jesus used that metaphor, He was teaching that our volitional center, where our wills reside and our decisions are made is encased in concrete. This second soil explains what Jesus meant when spoke of hardened hearts.

The third kind of soil produced a plant when it received the seeds the farmer was sowing. However, as the plant grew there were weeds that choked the life out of the plant and those plants produced no fruit. These weeds are called "tares" or "thorns," in most translations. When He interpreted this parable, He explained that the weeds were the cares of this world, such as money, possessions, or the lack of these things, and the worry and stress that often accompany them. The point is that people get distracted by money and possessions and never bear fruit when they hear the Word of God.

Then He said that some of the seed fell on good ground. Nothing above or beneath the soil was going to prevent this good ground from producing fruit. The harvest produces thirty, sixty, and one hundred times the seed that was planted. Jesus explained that this fourth category is a picture of the person who hears the Word of God, keeps it, and bears fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some one hundred fold. The Word penetrates their understanding. It penetrates their will and nothing is allowed to distract them from doing what the Word of God instructs, challenges, and inspires them to do. They become fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ.

In this beautiful parable, Jesus is once again placing a great value on the Word of God. The Word of God is what makes us fruitful when we respond to it properly. Ultimately, we show how highly we value the Word of God, not by signing some creed, but by allowing the Word of God to penetrate our understanding and our wills. When we hear the Word of God, we must all reach the point where we are not going to let anything distract us from applying, and living out the Word of God as our final authority for faith and practice.

In this parable, we again see the emphasis of Jesus upon the importance of applying the Word of God when we hear it. Jesus seems to say in so many places and in so many ways, "What we really believe, we do. All the rest is just religious talk - and nobody needs religious talk!"

Chapter 7

Loving Sinners

We are studying the value system of Jesus. In this study, join me and consider the value He placed on loving sinners. We find these beautiful words in the New Testament:

"Later on as Jesus left the town, He saw a tax collector, a publican, with the usual reputation for cheating, sitting at a tax collection booth. The man's name was Levi, (or Matthew). Jesus said to him, 'Come and be one of My disciples.' So Levi left everything, sprang up and went with Him.

"Soon Levi held a reception in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests were there. But the Pharisees and teachers of the law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples about His eating with such notorious sinners. Jesus answered them, It is the sick who need a doctor - not those in good health. My purpose is to invite sinners to turn from their sins; not to spend My time with those who think themselves already good enough." (Luke 5:27-32)

As we have already learned in this study, Jesus expressed a dynamic love in all His interactions with people. The people who met Jesus could see love in His eyes and gestures, and it mesmerized them.

I was working my way through college as a janitor, and one night I came to clean a classroom where an outstanding spiritual

leader had just finished speaking. I had my mops and buckets and was anxious to start cleaning. This famous man turned to me, took my hand and said, "Young man, what is your name?" He looked into my face and for a couple of moments, even though I was only the student who was going to clean the room, I felt as if I were the most important person in the whole world.

Imagine what it must have been like to have Jesus turn His full attention to you, look steadily at you and love you. How that must have impacted the people He loved! Why was it that sinners and publicans were so attracted to Jesus? I believe it was because He radiated unconditional love and acceptance, and in His facial expression and gestures, they could see that He loved them.

Luke describes Jesus eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. I have attended secular dinners where the speaker was profane and there were jokes that were so inappropriate they were embarrassing since everybody knew I was a pastor. In that uncomfortable context, I have asked myself the question, "How did Jesus attend functions like these and not be unwelcome or unwanted? I believe the answer is that Jesus loved publicans and sinners - and they knew Jesus loved them.

If Jesus loved the publicans and sinners when He was here, does He want to love them through you and me today? Jesus was the friend of sinners. Do you have any sinner friends? Do you even have any interaction with people who are obviously sinners? Consider your relationship to Jesus Christ and see if He is

uninhibited and free to be Who and what He wants to be to the sinners who intersect your life.

Do you confess the value Jesus Christ placed on love for the sinner by deliberately seeking them out and then conveying to them the love Jesus Christ has for them?

Chapter 8

Knowing God

We are looking at the values of Jesus Christ. In this study, join me and think with me about the value Jesus placed on the importance of knowing God. Jesus taught that when we respond properly to His teaching, something spiritual and relational happens in us.

Jesus spent His three years of public ministry in this world with twelve men. Those twelve men were always with Him. He taught them, He showed them, and He sent them out and coached them. He spent His last hours with these twelve men when He knew that the hour had come when He was going to be arrested and then die on the cross for the sins of the world (John 13-16).

During their time together, while He shared His longest recorded discourse, He surprised them all by essentially saying to them: "I'm going to leave you! But I'm not going to abandon you

like orphans. After I leave you, a miracle is going to happen. As a result of that miracle, it will be possible for us to have a more intimate relationship than we have had these past three years."

He explained that He was talking about the Holy Spirit. The word He used for the Holy Spirit is the Greek word, "paraclete." It is translated "comforter" in many translations of the Bible. "Paraclete" means "Someone who comes along side us and attaches Himself to us for the purpose of assisting us."

In the context of that intimate time Jesus had with His apostles, Jesus taught: "If you love Me, obey Me; and (then) I will ask the Father and He will give you another comforter, ... He is the Holy Spirit." (John 14:15-17 LB) The Apostle Jude asked Him, essentially, "How are you going to reveal Yourself to me and not reveal Yourself to the people around me?" The essence of Jesus' reply was, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teachings." (John 14:22,23)

He is saying that obeying His teaching will bring us into this relationship with Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He explains that this new relationship, which will be made possible through the Holy Spirit, and our obeying His teaching, will be even more intimate than the relationship He had with the apostles during the three years of His public ministry on earth. This was an intriguing insight into the value He was placing on our

vertical relationship with God through the Holy Spirit and obedience to His teaching.

He even went a step further than that and essentially said: "As a matter of fact, when this new arrangement is in place, you are going to do greater works than I have done." (John 14:12) What a challenge that is! I have always felt that He must have meant greater works in quantity, rather than quality, because there would be more of them and they would be all over the world. With the Holy Spirit, Himself, and the Father living in them, anywhere a Spirit-controlled, Spirit-filled believer was, God would be able to do great, supernatural works.

In Summary

Obedience to Christ's teachings is the key to having and maintaining a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ, and God the Father. Our obedience also releases the Holy Spirit to work dynamically in our lives. Peter affirmed this value when he said, "He gives His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him." Peter also explained while experiencing all the miracles of Pentecost, that the risen Christ was responsible for all the signs and wonders of that miraculous day (Acts 5:32; 2:33). Does that not place a tremendous value on our understanding and obeying the teachings of Jesus and on our really knowing God?

In Application

If we lack, but sincerely desire spiritual reality in our lives, we should be challenged to confess the value Jesus Christ placed on obeying His teaching and on knowing God. Do you want relational spiritual life to become a reality in you? Then come to the teachings of Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what they say, what they mean, and what they can mean to you when you live them.

Confess the value Jesus placed on obeying His teaching. By this I do not mean only understanding, memorizing, or even teaching His values. I mean obeying, applying, putting into practice, and making His values your values. According to Jesus, this will bring you into a relationship with the Holy Spirit, with the risen living Christ and with God the Father. Then the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will relate to you, and do their work through you.

Chapter 9

A Man Called Peter

Welcome to another study of the values of Jesus Christ. Join me as in this study we consider together the value Jesus placed on a man called, "Peter".

When Jesus meets Peter, his name is Simon. If there is any one thing that characterizes Simon when he meets Jesus, it is instability. The Living Bible says, "One of these men was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. Andrew then went to find his brother, Peter, and told him, 'We have found the Messiah'. And he brought Peter to meet Jesus. Jesus looked intently at Peter for a moment and then said, 'You are Simon, John's son, but you shall be called Peter, the rock.'"

Jesus sets a great example for us when He looks at Peter intently, and calls him a rock. Now was Peter stable, like a rock? No, not at that time. But Jesus not only saw Peter as he was; He saw Peter as he was going to be. Try this approach to relationship building on your children. Try this on your spouse. Try this on the people who work for you or the people with whom you work - anyone with whom you are building a relationship. Try letting them know that you believe in their potential to be what God wants them to be. Placing the value of positive reinforcement on a person is an expression of your love for that person. That kind of love is inspirational to them and irresistible. That is what Paul meant when

he told us that love "... believes all things, hopes all things, bears all things and endures all things", and never fails. (I Corinthians 13:7,8)

We see another chapter in the relationship of Jesus with Peter when the Lord asked the apostles that question, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter came out with the right answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." In essence, Jesus responded, "You are not that smart Peter. My Father in heaven revealed that to you." (Matthew 16:16,17)

Jesus went on to say that Peter was the rock on which His church was going to be built. I believe Jesus was essentially saying that His church was going to be built on the miracle that a man like Peter could receive a revelation like the one Peter had just received. In other words, Jesus was going to build His church on the miracle that God can do extraordinary things through very ordinary people because they are available to Him. Throughout the Gospel narrative that records the relationship between Jesus and Peter, we see, again and again, the love of Jesus, constantly affirming Peter, constantly saying to him, "You can do it, Peter. With my help, you can do it."

Toward the end of their time together, Jesus knows that all the apostles are going to forsake Him and run before the night is over, and He knows that Peter is on the brink of denial. And here we find recorded these beautiful words from the Lord. I am sure Peter could see love in the eyes of the Lord when the Lord said to him: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail and

when you are converted (have returned to Me), strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:31)

If you harmonize the four Gospels, you will realize that this is where Peter had recently said to the Lord, "I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." The Lord responded (I believe with love for Peter in His eyes), "I tell you Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you deny three times that you (even) know Me." You may know that these words of Jesus were a prophecy and Peter fulfilled that prophecy to the letter. When Peter denied for the third time that he knew Jesus, immediately the cock crowed. Then Jesus appeared with Roman soldiers who had abused Him and Luke tells us the eyes of Peter and Jesus met. No wonder that Peter went out into the darkness and wept bitterly (Luke 22:33-34,61-62)

Making Somebody out of Nobody

After this awful experience of denial, John records another chapter in the Gospel record of the relationship between Jesus and Peter (John 21). Jesus has been crucified, buried, and resurrected. It appears that Peter might have gone back to his fishing business. You can imagine the discouragement and the disillusionment of the apostles at this point. You can also imagine the awful guilt Peter is experiencing for having denied his Lord three times.

The Lord appears to Peter and those who are fishing with him. In the presence of seven of the men who were present in the Upper Room when Peter boasted that he would never deny his Lord,

Jesus asks Peter three very hard questions. In the presence of these other men, an intriguing dialog takes place between Jesus and Peter. To paraphrase and summarize this dialog:

After breakfast, Jesus essentially says to Peter, "Peter, do you really love Me more than they do?" When Jesus asked the question, He used the word "agape," which means the total, complete kind of love that Paul describes in I Corinthians 13 - the real thing. Peter replies using a different word for love, "phileo." This word describes a friendship kind of love. Peter was essentially responding, "You know the answer to that question, Lord. You know that I am only Your friend. You know my heart. You know that I love (phileo) You. Peter uses that word which is not like the total, real thing, the kind that comes from God, and results in a total commitment.

Peter replies in honesty. He is not boasting now, but confessing. He is not saying, "I love You more than they do." It is almost as if the Lord is asking him, "Peter, do you love Me with all your heart and mind and soul and strength?" And Peter is responding, "You know the answer to that, Lord. You know that my love only amounts to friendship."

Peter is not boastful and proud now. Peter is broken. Peter is poor in spirit. But here is the amazing thing about this profound dialog between Jesus and Peter. When Peter confesses to the Lord that his love is only a friendship, the Lord says, "Feed My sheep, Peter." I want someone like you who knows what it is to fail feeding My sheep. I do not want some perfectionist making unrealistic

demands of My sheep. I want a broken person. I want a humble person. I want a compassionate, caring person who can relate to people who are failures. I want someone like you feeding My sheep, Peter."

A second time the Lord asked the question, "Peter, do you really love Me?" And again He uses the word "agape." Peter responds again with the word "phileo." Peter essentially responds, "You know the answer to that question. You know that I am only Your friend." And this time the Lord says, "Then shepherd My sheep, Peter." Jesus responds, "Then take care of My sheep, Peter. I want someone like you looking after My sheep, Peter."

Then for a third time the Lord asks, "Peter, do you love Me?" This time Jesus uses the word, "phileo." It is as if Jesus is asking, "Simon, son of John, are you even My friend? He is asking, "Peter, does your love even amount to a friendship? Do you even have that much love for Me?"

This is why Peter is grieved because of the way the Lord asked the question the third time. I believe Peter's voice broke up emotionally when he answered, "Lord, You know my heart. You know everything. You know that I at least have that much love for You. For the third time, when Peter confesses the shallow quality of his love, the Lord says to this broken and humble man, "Feed My little lambs, Peter." The Peter we meet in this dialog is a broken and humble Peter.

In Summary and Application

This is one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament. The Lord is saying to this broken and humble leader of the New Testament Church, "Peter, I want someone like you feeding My lambs." Have you ever wondered why the Holy Spirit broke out through Peter on the Day of Pentecost? Why not the Apostle John, who was the apostle of love? Why not Nathaniel, who was the only apostle labeled as holy when Jesus meets him? Why not James, who was labeled a "son of thunder" by Jesus?

I believe God used Peter to preach the sermons that brought thousands into the church of the risen Christ when the church was born because Peter was a broken apostle. Jesus called Peter a rock for three years, and after Pentecost, Peter was a rock of a leader in the church.

I find it to be intriguing that the Great Shepherd of the church used failure to bring to fulfillment the prophecy He gave about Peter being a rock on which He would build His church. Peter tells us that Christ is the Rock on which His church is built (I Peter 2:4-6). As I explained earlier, the rock Jesus profited when He made that prophecy about Peter was the miracle that Christ could use ordinary people like Peter to be the channel of extraordinary, supernatural miracles.

The Lord does not want perfectionists, or people who want to perpetuate the myth of their perfectionism - people who do not know what failure is - leading His sheep. He wants humble, broken,

compassionate people feeding His sheep who will not put unrealistic demands on His sheep. This is why everything that happens to us as we follow Jesus - even our failures - can be part of a "seminary" by which He prepares us to love, feed and shepherd His sheep.

Have you ever failed? Has anyone ever valued you with positive reinforcement in your failure? Then you know what it means to be loved and valued by someone who believes and hopes for the best with you, even when you have no hope and do not believe in yourself. And finally, do you confess the value He placed on loving with positive reinforcement those who fail, or young people who have never succeeded at anything? Are you calling anyone a rock who is known for their instability?

Chapter 10

The Spirit of the Law

We read in the Gospels, that one day, Jesus was asked a difficult question:

"Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall

love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:35-40)

Jesus summarized the entire Old Testament with these two commandments: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Both these summary commandments command us to love, because love is the spirit of the commandments, and it was love in the heart of God that gave birth to all the Law of God.

The Fundamental Difference Between Jesus and Religion

There was a fundamental difference between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. That difference is demonstrated by an incident that is described in the Gospel of Mark:

"It happened that He went through the grain fields on the Sabbath and as they went, His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' But He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar, the high priest, and ate the showbread which is not lawful to eat except for the priests and also gave some to those who were with him.' And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.'" (Mark 2:23-28)

Jesus consistently focused the principle that the law of God expresses the loving heart of God. God put these laws in place

because he loves the people He has created. God knew that if man obeyed these laws it would go well for him. The welfare of man is the purpose and the spirit of all the laws in the Old Testament.

But the Pharisees and the scribes lost sight of that principle. They were the kind of people who would allow David and his men to starve to death because the law said only priests should eat that bread. The scribes and Pharisees followed the letter of the law without love. They lost sight of the fact that all those laws were created for man because God loved man. However, Jesus was saying, "love fulfills the law. So love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself and you will fulfill the law."

The Prism of Love

We can summarize the difference between Jesus and the religious establishment this way: before Jesus applied the Law of God to the lives of people, He passed the Law of God through the "prism" of the love of God. The Pharisees and scribes bypassed the love of God and legalistically and ruthlessly applied the Law of God to the people of God. Later in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul will call what Jesus did, "the spirit of the Law," and what the Pharisees did "the letter of the Law." (II Corinthians 3:6)

Jesus highly values love by showing that love is the heart, the principle, the key, and the spirit that fulfills the law. Jesus told those who followed Him that if they understood His approach to the law,

their righteousness would exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

In Summary and Application

It is time for me to ask you the question I have been asking throughout this study: Do you confess the value Jesus placed on the spirit of the Law? When you apply the law of God to the lives of people, do you find a way around love and legalistically apply the Law of God? Like a Pharisee, are you using the law that was meant to fill somebody's stomach in such a way that you keep them hungry? Or do you pass the law of God through the "prism" of the love of God before you apply it to the lives of people? That is how you confess the value Jesus Christ placed on the spirit of the Law.

Chapter 11

The Prayer of a Sinner

We are studying the values of Jesus Christ. In this chapter, we will consider the value He places on the prayer of a sinner. Jesus shows us how highly He values the prayer of a sinner in one of His beautiful parables. The word, "parable" is a compound word that joins the word "para" and "ballo" together. The first word means, "along side of" and the second word means "to throw." A parable is

a story a teacher throws along side of a truth they want to teach. Jesus was the absolute Master of the parable. In the following story, Jesus is throwing a story alongside of the value He places on the prayer of a sinner. We are told that Jesus taught this parable to people who trusted their own self-righteousness for salvation and despised others:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the publican standing afar off would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven but beat upon his breast saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I tell you, this man (that is this publican), went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Here is a clear illustration of the values of Jesus. He profiles two men, two prayers, and what we might call two postures. Jesus places great value on the prayer and posture of one of these men and very little value on the prayer and posture of the other. Jesus decisively values one man far above the other man. He tells the story of these two men because He wants to declare the value He places on the prayer of a sinner.

One of these men is a Pharisee, a member of a religious order that was formed to preserve the orthodoxy of Judaism. Pharisees

were very righteous. They fasted twice a week and tithed. Jesus commended them for this. But their righteousness was self-righteousness. They believed they could be what God wanted them to be by very rigid, religious self-discipline. They thought they could be righteous without any help from God.

The other man in this beautiful parable is a publican, a tax collector who collected taxes for the Romans from his fellow Jews. They were especially hated by the Jewish people. That is why the people who wrote the Gospels make reference to publicans and sinners. They did not mean that publicans were not sinners but that they were such notorious sinners they deserved a special classification.

The Pharisee's prayer is very self-centered, because in two sentences, he uses "I" five times. A prayer has several parts to it but "to pray" literally means "to ask." This Pharisee isn't asking God for anything. He is telling God, or perhaps the people listening, what a good man he is. Jesus says with great satire, "He prayed with himself." His prayer started with himself, it concerned himself, and it never went any further than himself.

Now this publican won't even raise his eyes to heaven. He is contrite, or very sorry for his sins. When you express a prayer of contrition, God places great value upon your prayer. Jesus points to the publican and says, "This man went down to his house justified." Justified means "just as if I had never sinned." When he went down

to his house, he was not only forgiven, not only pardoned, but he was just as if he had never sinned at all.

In Summary and Application

If we have never prayed the prayer of this publican, the primary application of this declared value of Jesus is that we should pray that prayer. If we prayed that prayer many years ago, God values that prayer every time we sin. The body language, or posture of the publican expressed contrition, which means, "to be exceedingly sorry for sin." He asked for the mercy of God. But, that was not the case with the Pharisee. He didn't express contrition, and he didn't ask for anything. When David sinned, as he confessed his sin he declared the value, that what God wants from us when we sin is "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." (Psalm 51:17)

This parable clearly shows the value Jesus Christ places on the repentant prayer of a sinner. He values people who are willing to confess their sin and ask God for mercy in Jesus name. Once we confess our sin in a prayer of contrition, we not only discover the value He places upon us as lost sinners and hurting people, but we discover the salvation He came to bring us all.

Are you a sinner and do you know it? Any person who is willing to confess their sin can be forgiven. If you confessed your sin a long time ago, do you value sinners who have not? How do you feel when your life intersects with a real sinner? If Christ does live in you, do not be surprised if your heart overflows with love when

you intersect with a sinner who is willing to confess the fact that he or she is a sinner.

Chapter 12

Lost and Hurting People

Welcome to a series of studies on the values of Jesus Christ. And by that, I mean, the value system of Jesus Christ. We are considering in this series of studies, the value Jesus declared on issues like Himself, the Word of God and the value He placed upon the likes of you and me.

As we continue this thought of the value Jesus placed upon lost and hurting people, let us return again to the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John and the wonderful interview Jesus had with the Samaritan woman there at Sychar's well. There are fifty-four verses in John chapter four and forty-two of them record this interview. So, we won't have time to read all the verses. But, I would like to make some observations about the forty-two verses that report this interview to us.

First of all, as you consider this interview between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, for our purposes, let us consider the value He placed upon her as a lost and hurting person. We are told, as He arranges for the interview, that He had to go through Samaria on His

way from Judea up to Galilee. If you have been to Israel, or you are familiar with the map of Israel, you know that Judea is in the south of Israel, Galilee is in the north, and right in between the two, you have Samaria.

Jews were so prejudiced toward Samaritans, when they made that journey, they went miles out of their way so that they would not need to go through Samaria. They held Samaritans in such contempt, and the prejudice was so intense they would not even pass through Samaria. Well, when Jesus makes that journey, He makes a point of going straight through Samaria. When He is right in the heart of Samaria, He stops mid day at a well. We read that He is wearied from His journey and so He sat by the well.

When you study the person of Jesus Christ in His humanity, He knew everything that we know. He knew weariness and He knew thirst. He even knew heat exhaustion, which is possible in that part of the world at midday. He apparently sends the apostles away to get food, and when they returned with the food He doesn't even want it. I think it is obvious, that He wanted to have some private time in order to have His interview with this woman on a one-on-one basis.

If you have anything to do with counseling or even interviewing, you know that it is very important to be one-on-one with people. There are certain things they will never share as long as there is a third person present. There is a degree of openness you will never experience if there is even one other person there. Certainly, Jesus knows that.

But observe, first of all, His dedication to this woman and the way He highly valued His time with her. He ignores the prejudice between a Jew and a Samaritan - especially a Samaritan woman, and a woman with a questionable reputation. He ignores His weariness along with His thirst, and He makes sure there is nobody there when He interviews her. You can see how He values this woman and His interview with her.

I wonder what it must have been like to have a face-to-face interview with Jesus Christ. Imagine what it must have felt like to have Him look you right in the eye, as He did the rich young ruler, when we read: "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him ..." (Mark 10:21) I wonder how it felt to be loved by Jesus. Everyone who had an interview with Jesus knew that Jesus loved him or her. I also believe that they were very much aware of His love. He obviously conveyed to them the beautiful reality that He loved them unconditionally. I am sure that was the case in this interview with the Samaritan woman.

The Interviewing Technique of Jesus

He begins the conversation with her by putting Himself under obligation to her. He asks her for a drink. To put yourself under obligation to someone is one of the most beautiful ways to begin an interview. When Jesus began this interview that way, He was doing something that was very extraordinary in that culture. For a Jew, to even speak with a Samaritan was extraordinary, especially a

Samaritan woman. It was very counter cultural for Him to speak with a Samaritan woman who has a domestic life like hers. That comes out in the interview, and, of course, He knows all that when the interview begins.

When He begins the interview, He focuses the thirst of this woman. Now we looked at this interview when we were considering the value Jesus declared about Himself. In this interview, He makes some very vivid claims that He is the Messiah. We considered the interview earlier for those purposes - to demonstrate the way He valued Himself. But we are looking for something different now. We want to consider the value He placed upon this woman. But all of this, in her case, is expressed in one word and that one word is "thirst." We all know what thirst is. In the Gospel of John, Jesus focuses the basic needs of human beings.

This woman is thirsty. And so, Jesus focuses her thirst and He says, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give Him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (13,14) In these verses, Jesus describes the solution that a thirsty person can find in Him.

At the beginning of the interview, she marvels that He has no water pot and the well is deep. The water pot is a symbol of her thirst. The fact that she has had five husbands and is living with a man who is not her husband, suggests that her thirst is deeper than only a thirst for water. As a result of this interview and the way

Jesus highly valued this woman, in verse twenty-eight we read: "The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city and said to the men, 'come see a man who told me all things that I ever did.'" That verse is one of the most beautiful verses in the Gospels because it is a description of the person who has met Christ, has had a drink of the Living Water and their thirst has been quenched. What a beautiful story!

Springs and Rivers

Jesus tells this thirsty woman that once she has taken the drink of this Living Water, that drink will become in her a spring of water from which others will come and drink. This literally happens when she leaves her water pot and goes to the men in Samaria and leads them to Jesus and the Living Water.

In John seven, Jesus will again focus the concept of thirst. Essentially, He will say in John seven, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. When he drinks this Living Water that I am, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of Living Water. He will not only discover when he drinks of Me, that I am Living Water that quenches his thirst forever, but after this drink of Living Water has quenched his thirst, it will become in him rivers of Living Water that will quench the thirsts of those whose lives intersect his life."

In all these interviews of Jesus, He will confront people with the concept of repentance which means to "think again" about your value system. To think again about your life style and without

turning around and going in the opposite direction, people cannot have this Living Water. Once that is clear, the woman repents and I think it is so wonderful to read in this story.

But the thing that we want to see in this story is the value Jesus placed upon this thirsty woman; this simple, sinful, Samaritan woman. When you see the value Jesus placed upon this woman, you see a profile of the value He placed upon people like her. We have been considering in our study the value He placed upon lost, hurting people. Isn't this interview a wonderful example of that? Jesus passing through Samaria places such great value upon this one woman that He spends this time one-on-one with her because He cares about her. He is expressing the fact that, "God so loved the world that He came into this world to express the love of the Father."

Again, we have to face the challenge. When you intersect with a woman like this sinful Samaritan woman, do you have the kind of devotion and dedication to that kind of a sinner that Jesus had? Do you confess the value that Jesus placed upon lost people?

Chapter 13

The Teaching of God

It is considered spiritual enlightenment today to believe that the Word of God is not the final authority for faith and practice. Jesus showed that the final authority for faith and practice could either be man or God; He said it should be God. In this study of the values of Christ, I would like for us to consider the value Jesus Christ placed on His own teaching when He claimed that His teaching was the teaching of God:

“The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him Who sent Me. If a man chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own.’” (John 7:15-17)

What He is saying here is, “I’m not just another Rabbi. My teaching is the teaching of God.” How do you know that the teaching of Jesus Christ is the Word of God? The fact that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and not just the words of the people who wrote them, is under severe attack today. There are many people professing to be followers of Christ who do not believe the Bible is the Word of God. Here in John 7, we have a direct challenge from Jesus. He says that His teaching is the Word of God, that it is the teaching of God.

How can you confess this value of Christ? How can you prove that the teaching of Jesus is the teaching of God? He challenged us to prove that His teaching is the inspired Word of God by coming to His teaching with the will to do what His teaching tells us to do. Apply it to your life. According to Jesus, when we do that, then we will know that His teaching is the teaching of God. This is the opposite of the intellectual approach. The intellectual view so often says, “When I know, then I will do.” Jesus says here, “Oh, no. No, it does not work that way. No, you must first commit your will. Then, the intellectual affirmation will follow. When you do it, you will know it.”

Take one of the teachings of Jesus as an illustration of this: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) Take that truth and apply it to your marriage, to your spouse and to your children. Suppose you decide to apply that teaching to marriage. You then begin to live in that marriage, not for what you can get, but for what you can give. When you do it, when you actually do apply this “ninth beatitude,” you will discover that the application of this teaching can revolutionize your marriage. This teaching can also revolutionize your relationship to your children, to your parents, or to the people you work with. That one truth can revolutionize all of your relationships.

What Jesus is saying here, “If you want to prove that My teaching is the teaching of God, then do it. Put it into practice. Apply it. And when you put it into practice, consider the way My

teaching impacts your life. That will convince you that My teaching is not just the teaching of another Rabbi, but the teaching of God.”

Are you willing to confess the value Jesus placed on His teaching? And are you willing to confess the value Jesus placed on His teaching by actually applying it to your life? Will you apply the teaching of Jesus Christ to your real life situations? Will you apply the teaching of Jesus Christ to your relationships and then prove that His teaching is indeed the teaching of God?

Chapter 14

People Priorities

We are considering the value system of Jesus Christ. We are following Him through the Gospels, watching Him identify His values. Jesus sometimes demonstrated His values through His priorities. There is an intriguing story in the Gospel of Luke that demonstrates the people priorities of Jesus:

"And behold, there came a man named Jairus and he was a ruler of the synagogue. He fell down at Jesus' feet and begged Him to come to his house for he had an only daughter about twelve years of age and she was dying. But as He went, the multitudes crowded Him.

"Now a woman, who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment and immediately her flow of blood stopped.

"Then Jesus said, 'Who touched me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes crowd and press You and You say, 'Who touched Me?' But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.'

"Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling and falling down before Him. She declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately and He said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you well. Go in peace.'" (Luke 8:41-56)

In this beautiful story, we again see Jesus placing great value on lost and hurting people. But here there is a conflict. Jesus is confronted with two people who are hurting: a father whose only daughter is dying, and this woman who has been bleeding for twelve years. Even Jesus, in a body, could not be two places at one time. Every pastor or health professional knows the pressure of people priorities. When your time is limited and there are so many needy and hurting people, how do you make the decisions that might be classified as people priorities?

On this occasion, Jesus knew His priorities. He ministers first to the woman and then to the father. If we were confronted with

these two people, many of us would put the father first and the woman second. He was the ruler (president) of the synagogue, and she was only a "nobody." In fact, she was an outcast. In the law of Moses, she was forbidden to touch anybody but was commanded to quarantine herself and have no social interaction with people (Leviticus 15:19-30). She was literally an "untouchable". Small wonder that Jesus decided to help her first, and then help the father.

Why did Jesus help her first and put off this father, knowing that his daughter would die by the time He helped this woman? One answer is that this father had experienced twelve years of happiness with his little daughter, while this woman had experienced twelve years of unhappiness as an outcast, sick and forbidden to relate to people.

This woman had great faith. Even though it was forbidden, she has the faith to believe, "If I could just touch the hem of His garment, I know I will be healed." She is expressing great faith when she reaches out and touches the hem of His garment. Jesus demands even more faith of her. He exposes her, and forces her to confess publicly with His question, "Who touched Me?" He means that somebody touched Him in a spiritual sense. In so many ways, we are told in the Scripture, there is no such thing as a secret believer.

In Summary and Application

The beautiful personal application to this declared value of Jesus is that the risen, living Christ values you today if you have the

faith to reach out and touch Him. If you are hurting, and even if you are an outcast from society, He values you more than He values people with all the religious and cultural status symbols. You may be in prison, or you may be dying with aids. This beautiful story tells us that Jesus values you. He came for those who are hurting and believe that He can heal them. Do you have the faith to confess that value? Do you have the faith to reach out and touch Him and by faith ask Him to heal your hurt, whatever it is? Confess the value Jesus declared for this woman, and people like her, by reaching out and touching Him today.

Believer, do you confess the declared value of Jesus for hurting and outcast people? If He has made you whole, will you let Him minister to the hurting and outcast people of the world through you? Will you be a vehicle through whom the declared value of Christ for sick and isolated people is expressed today?

Chapter 15

Words of Life

We are studying the values of Jesus Christ. As we see Him identify what is important to Him, we are challenged with the question, "Do we have the values of Christ in our own life experience?" In this study, I would like for us to look at some verses where Jesus makes some more intriguing claims about the value of His teaching.

First, consider this profound claim of Jesus about His teaching: "The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are life. It is the Spirit Who gives life. The flesh profits nothing." (John 6:63) In the Scripture the word "flesh" means, "human nature unaided by God," or what we sometimes call, "our humanity." What does He mean by telling us that our flesh is unprofitable? He was saying the same thing when He told the apostles, " You can do nothing without Me." (John 15:5) Without the Spirit, our human nature is unaided by God and unprofitable. His words are Spirit and they give us life that overcomes our unprofitable flesh.

He makes many more claims about His teaching: "The words that I say to you are not My own, rather it is the Father living in Me Who is doing His work (when I speak)." He is placing a tremendous value on His teaching when He says, "The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are Life. It is the Father living in Me, doing His work, when I speak." (John 14:10)

I believe what He is saying is, "When you hear My Word and respond to it correctly, something happens to you - something spiritual. And this spiritual happening produces spiritual life in you that grows." This may be what the apostle Paul was telling us when he taught that faith comes by hearing and properly responding to the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This claim of Jesus places a tremendous value on the teaching of Jesus.

Consider one more claim of Jesus that placed great value on His teaching: "If you live your life in Me and My words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you (John 15:7, 10). Although this sounds like an open door to whatever we want, if we examine this promise more carefully we will understand this claim of Jesus that places great value on His teaching. He is actually saying that His teaching will establish an alignment between your will and thoughts and the will and thoughts of God. When that happens, wonderful miracles can happen in your life.

The Prophet Isaiah shares his philosophy of preaching with us. Isaiah says, in so many words, "I preach the Word of God because God's thoughts and ways are not man's thoughts and ways. There is as much difference between the way God thinks and acts and the way man thinks and acts, as there is distance between the heaven and the earth. Therefore, I preach the Word of God, and the Word of God brings about an alignment between the thoughts and acts of man and the thoughts and acts of God. When man's thoughts,

will, and ways are in alignment with God's, then wonderful, miraculous things can happen. That is why I preach the Word of God. That is my philosophy of preaching." (Isaiah 55:8-11 My paraphrase)

In effect, Jesus is teaching the same truth. He is teaching, essentially: "If My words live in your hearts, then there will be an alignment between the will of God and your will. The thoughts of God become your thoughts, the ways of God become your ways. And then, when you pray, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you because you will be asking according to the will of God.

Will you confess the value He placed on His teaching by coming to His words, letting His words really and truly live in you so that your thoughts become God's thoughts and your will is aligned with the will of God? If you will confess this value of Christ, you will discover the truth that His words are Spirit and they are Life.

Chapter 16

The Poor

I invite you to another study on the values of Christ. In this study, I would like to consider the value Jesus Christ placed on poor people - people just like you and me: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)

This scripture is actually a quote from Isaiah, which Jesus read in a synagogue in Nazareth as a Manifesto for His ministry. He went into His hometown synagogue and He asked for the scroll of Isaiah. He unrolled it almost to the end, out to chapter sixty-one, and He read the first verses of Isaiah sixty-one. Then He essentially said, "This is my Manifesto. This is who I am, this is what I am and this is what I have been sent into the world to do."

The point to what Jesus did is not so much the value He is placing on Himself as the value He is placing on the people for whom He came into this world - people just like you and me. He calls them "the poor", and His mission statement was that He was sent into this world to preach the Gospel to these poor people. Who were these poor people?

The Blind, the Bound, and the Broken

If you study this passage in Luke or Isaiah, you will see that He spells out precisely who He means by "the poor." He means people who are blind, like sheep without a shepherd. Do you ever feel confused? Do you feel as if you do not know your right hand from your left - that you do not know what to do because you are not really sure what you believe? Well then, you should take great comfort in this. Jesus placed great value on people just like you. He says He came into this world for people like you. Every time you read that He opened His mouth and taught them, He is giving sight to the blind.

Jesus says He came to preach the Good News to the poor who were broken and bruised. Life is difficult. Life is hard. Jesus was a realist about that. The storms of life leave people broken and bruised. Under the pressures of life some people stumble and stagger, but some people collapse. Jesus placed great value on the people He called bruised or broken-hearted. He came to give sight to the blind and He came to give healing to the broken and bruised.

Are you free? Do you do what you want to do or do you do what you need to do? Are you controlled by compulsions and obsessions? Are you a captive? Then, this great teaching of Jesus places a tremendous value on you. You are exactly the kind of people for whom Jesus came into this world. He would call you spiritually poor. But He came to preach Good News to poor people like you and me who are not free.

Are you spiritually blind? Are you spiritually bound? Are you broken and bruised by the hardships of life? Then Jesus placed great value on you. He says you are the reason why He came. He says here, you are the reason why He is in this world today. Are you willing to confess the value Jesus placed on the likes of you by coming to Him so that you might receive sight for your blindness, deliverance for your captivity, and healing for your brokenness?

Chapter 17

Your Neighbor

Welcome to another study of the value system of Jesus Christ. In this study we will consider the value Jesus placed on our neighbor. Our study begins with Jesus responding to the question of a lawyer:

"On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the law?' Jesus replied, 'How do you read it?' He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.' 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.' But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'

"In reply, Jesus said, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

"A Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three seems to you to have been a neighbor to the bandits victim?' 'The man who gave him practical sympathy,' he replied. Then you go and give the same,' returned Jesus."

There are three philosophies of life, or of neighbor, in this story. The first philosophy is shown by the thieves. Their philosophy of life was, "What is mine is mine and what is yours will be mine as soon as I can take it from you." Many people in the world have this philosophy.

The second philosophy of life is represented by the priest and the Levite, the religious establishment, who passed by without helping. Their philosophy of life was, "What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours. I have my problems, and you have your

problems. You do have a problem there, bleeding to death in that ditch, but I am late for church and I do not want to get involved."

The third philosophy of life and neighbor is the one Jesus is teaching. This philosophy is illustrated by the Samaritan. His philosophy of life and neighbor was, "What is yours is yours, and what is mine is yours anytime you need it."

This value of Jesus will not make you rich. You are not going to perhaps win the sales contest where you work. You may not be at the top of the ladder in terms of business success with this philosophy of life. But this is the philosophy of life that Jesus taught. Jesus wants disciples who will confess the value He places upon hurting people, like the injured man in the story, and be part of His answer for these hurting people.

In the story, the lawyer wanted to justify himself so he asked Jesus a very penetrating question, "Who is my neighbor?" You see, to the Jew, only your fellow Jew was your neighbor. Everybody else was your enemy. Love your neighbor but hate your enemy, was their guiding principle. They did not actually get this principle from Moses. This was one of the hundreds of laws they added to the Law of Moses. This story of Jesus challenges their belief, and declares that your neighbor is any hurting person whose life and hurt intersects your life. That is the way Jesus answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" And that is the value Jesus placed on our neighbor.

And of course, what He was doing in this great parable was simply teaching that we should confess the value He placed upon hurting people. We follow Him through the Gospels and we see that He can never pass up hurting people. When He sees hurting people, He has compassion for them and reaches out to help them.

Here in this great teaching we call, "The Parable of the Good Samaritan," Jesus is challenging us to confess the value He placed on hurting people, and to treat all hurting people we meet as our neighbors.

Chapter 18

Loving One Another

In these studies, we have seen the great value Jesus placed on love in His relationships with people. He exhorted His disciples, and especially His apostles, to confess the value He placed on love. Just before He died on the cross, Jesus spent His last hours with the apostles. Secluded with them in an upper room, He gave them a new commandment. That New Commandment produced a new community. That new community became the church. Seen in that context, every church should be a colony of love.

Each of the apostles was with Jesus in that upper room because He had loved them and they were responding to His love.

The opening verses of the chapter that describes these last hours Jesus spent with the apostles begins, "Having loved His own who were in this world, He now showed them the full extent of His love." (John 13:1)

I believe it was revolutionary to them when He commanded them to look across the table and then apply this New Commandment: "A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another." (John 13:34,35) In this study, we'll consider the value Jesus placed on our loving one another.

"Little Children, Love One Another"

"Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God and everyone who loves, is born of God and knows God. He who does not love, does not know God. For God is love." (I John 4:7,8) These verses were written by one of the apostles who heard Jesus give that New Commandment. The Apostle John really did confess the value Jesus placed on love. He was known as "The Apostle of Love," because in his writings, he used the word "love" more than all the other apostles combined. He also seems mesmerized by the reality of the love of Jesus for him when he describes himself all the way through his Gospel, as the disciple whom Jesus loved. When he dedicates the Revelation to Jesus, in the opening verses, he remembers Jesus as the One "Who loved us."

Ten Reasons Why We Must Love One Another

Many think of the Apostle Paul as the Apostle of Love because he wrote the so-called love chapter of the Bible, the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians. The primary subject in that chapter is actually spiritual gifts. The real love chapter of the Bible is the Fourth Chapter of the Epistle of First John (I John 4:7-21). In that love chapter, John gives at least ten reasons why we must love one another. Let us look at some of them.

In verse seven he tells us, "Love one another for love is of God." By this he means that we must love one another because only the people who are related to God are capable of this love. In verse eight, he gives a second reason, which is that love is the credential of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

In verses nine and ten, he gives some more reasons why we must confess the value Jesus placed on our loving one another: "In this the love of God was revealed toward us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. And this is love, not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." He follows that with this comment, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." So he is saying, we should confess the value Jesus commanded regarding love because of the great example Jesus set for us when He died for our sins on the cross.

If you continue to study these verses in First John chapter four, you will find more reasons why we should love one another.

For example, John goes on to say in verse sixteen: "God is love, and anyone who lives in love is living with God and God is living in him." Here he is saying that if we confess the value Jesus placed on love, then we tap in to the very essence and nature of God. As we become conduits of the love of God, we dwell in His love and His love dwells in us. When we dwell in His love, we dwell in God. The proof that we have this relationship with God is that His love is perfected in us. People can then look at us and see God's love.

I conclude our study of the value Jesus placed on our loving one another by asking you to carefully and prayerfully read part of this love chapter of the Apostle of Love. As you meditate on this exhortation of the Apostle John to confess the value Jesus placed on loving one another, see if you can locate the ten reasons why we should love one another. Write those reasons down. Put your list where you can see it every day. Then, every day, confess the value Jesus placed on our loving one another.

A Portion of the Love Chapter of John

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the

propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ... And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." (I John 4:7-16, 21)