

## A Deeper Walk With Jesus

### Part 1 – A Deeper Love

I believe that in the heart of every true believer in Christ, is a desire for a deeper walk with Him.

And in this brief series of messages, I want to give you some basic keys to a deeper walk with Jesus.

#### 1. I want to be with the one I love

ILLUS – When my wife and I first started dating, I lived in one part of town and she lived in another. I had no car, no driver's licence, and public transport was unreliable. How did I travel the 5-6 kms from my place to hers? I went by Shank's Pony. That's right. I walked. 5 or 6 kms didn't seem that high a price to pay to be with her.

Why is that? Because when you're in love, you want to be with the one you love.

If you're in love with someone, it's a pleasure to be with them.

So if I love Jesus, my love for Him is going to impact my relationship with Him in two ways.

First, in prayer.

ILLUS – It's my habit to get up in the night and spend time with the Lord. Recently, I woke up and thought, "I'm too tired tonight. Anyway, I don't need anything." And immediately the thought came to me: Why do you have to need something to spend time with the Lord?

I got the distinct impression that the Lord actually wanted to spend time with me; that He enjoys keeping company with me.

He has no needs, but He just likes hanging out with me.

Truly, He is the friend of sinners.

But the question is: Do we like hanging out with Him?

Just being in His presence, spending time with Him.

I remember the words to an Elton John song called "I Never Knew Her Name". The song is a story, and one line goes like this: "I was killing time with Jesus".

I love that idea: Killing time with Jesus.

Did you know that no time spent hanging out with Him is ever wasted?

ILLUS – Two sisters – Mary and Martha – have Jesus come to visit at their place (Luke 10:38-42). And what a contrast in the way they relate to Jesus! Martha isn't a bad person. But she's a doer. She is serve, serve, serve, serve! Gotta get this done. Gotta get that done. Verse 40 says she "was distracted with much serving". Jesus Himself is in her house, and all she sees is things that have to get done. But Mary is different. She's thinking, "Wow! What an opportunity! Jesus is in my house. I get to spend time listening to the One I love. Housework? What housework?"

Guess which one got it right. Mary or Martha?

Jesus said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Vss. 41-42)

Mary chose the good part; spending time with Jesus.

Martha's heart was filled with housework; she barely noticed Jesus.

Mary's heart was filled with Jesus; she barely noticed the housework.

Martha's heart was filled with things to do; she barely noticed Jesus.

Mary's heart was filled with Jesus; she barely noticed the things to do.

Does that mean that she never did any housework again, never lifted a finger to serve, didn't fulfil the important tasks of life?

Of course not! But she saw Jesus as the priority, and these other things fell into place in their rightful order.

What about you? Are you Mary or Martha?

Are you distracted with much serving – things to do, people to see, places to go?

Are you worried and troubled about many things?

Or is Jesus the priority? Spending time with Him, listening to Him?

Do you love being with Him?

If I love Him, I want to be with the One I love.

But not only in prayer.

If we love being with Jesus, it should radically transform our view of death.

ILLUS – Acts 21:10-14 When someone prophesied over the apostle Paul, that he would be bound and delivered into the hands of the pagans if he went to Jerusalem, his friends all started pleading with him not to go there. But Paul was unafraid. He said, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

How come he wasn't scared? How come he didn't think, "Wow! That sounds dangerous. They might kill me. I better go somewhere else."?

2 Cor 5:8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Phil 1:21-24 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. (23) For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (24) Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Wow! Paul speaks like he had the power to decide.

It's almost like the Lord Jesus said to him, "Paul, I'm going to give you the choice. You can either stay here. Or you can come home and be with Me." And Paul says, "Really? I can come home? I can be with You? That's so cool, that's so exciting, it's so fantastic, it's wonderful. I'm going home to be with Jesus. I'm going home to be with Jesus."

And then a thought comes to him. "Oh, yeah, all those people in the churches. They need me right now. Oh, Lord, I don't know what to do. I really, really want to come and be with You. [The Lord shrugs] But I think I better stay here a bit longer."

Paul was weighing it up: The need of the churches and the prospect of more fruit on the one hand.

And on the other hand, his almost overwhelming desire to be with Jesus.

Because for a Christian, that's what death means: Being with Jesus.

It was a **tough** decision.

Would that be a tough decision for you?

The trouble is, it's very easy to be infected with the love of this world.

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. (17) And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Can't have both.

Can't love what's here, and love God.

What's your greatest love?

So our first thing in a deeper love for Jesus is that I want to be with the One I love.

## **2. I want to please the one I love**

Not so long ago I was with another pastor and the topic came round to housework. I said that I did all the washing for our house. His response was, "What! Don't you know what wives are for?"

Actually, I do.

My Bible says they are for loving and nourishing and cherishing.

But I know that a lot of guys would think, "Why on earth would you want to do the washing?"

I'll tell you why; it's really simple: I want to please the one I love.

I don't have any other reason.

This is also true of our relationship with Jesus: If we love Him, we'll want to please Him.

I believe that the clearest mark of a genuine Christian is an overwhelming desire to please God, which is translated into obedience from the heart.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 14:21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

But this isn't just a gritting-your-teeth kind of deal, where I'll do what God wants me to do because I have to do it.

I don't do the washing because I have to; I do it because I want to, because I want to please the one I love.

I always get concerned when I hear Christians looking at things in terms of whether they **have to** do something or not.

Why do I have to go to church? Why do I have to remain celibate if I'm not married? Why do I have to give money to the church? Why do I have to forgive?

Do you know what the antidote is to this kind of thinking?

It's to get back to your first love for Jesus.

Because then obedience to Him isn't a matter of having to.

You'll want to.

ILLUS – Anybody who's ever had kids knows what I'm talking about. You tell your child, "Your bedroom is a mess. Go clean it up, please." And they say, "Aw, why do I have to? It's not that bad. I want to watch TV. Why do I have to do it now? Waa, waa, waa." So you say, "You get to your room right now, and clean up that mess, or I'll wallop you so hard you'll beat the next space shuttle to Mars." Or, "I'll give you \$5 if you do a good job. (Or, I'll give you chocolate.)"

This is the application of the Law.

The Law is a system of rewards and punishments.

Clean your room, or else!

Clean your room and I'll give you money.

That's Law.

The Word of God says that we're not under Law but under grace.

How much nicer is it when a child thinks, "I can do that. I can clean my room even though I don't feel like it, because I love my parents and I don't want to disappoint them. I want to please them."

Different motivation: Obedience is now driven by love, not fear or greed.

ILLUS – The story is told of a girl who was with a group of teenagers at a party. "Let's go to a night club" someone suggested. She said, "No, my parents wouldn't like that." One of the other girls said, "Afraid your father will hurt you?" "No," she replied. "I'm not afraid my father will hurt me. I'm afraid I might hurt him."

That's the point, isn't it?

If I love Jesus, I'll obey Him because I don't want to disappoint Him.

And it's my pleasure to please Him because I love Him.

ILLUS – This whole concept of obedience motivated by love is graphically illustrated in the Old Testament. Back in those days, an Israelite could, for various reasons, lose his freedom and become the slave of another Israelite. But the Law stated that at the end of seven years he had to go free. So the day comes, and his master says, "Well, today is the day. It's your last day of slavery. Now you go free." But what happens if the slave thinks, "Well, hang on. I love this man, and I love his family. I love serving them, and I actually don't want to go free."? The slave can then say to the master, "I don't want to go free. I want to remain your slave." He was then taken to the judges to make it official. Then they would take him to the house, put his ear up against the doorpost, and drive an awl through it. That mark indicates that he is now a slave, not by compulsion, but through choice because of his love for his master. (Ex 21:2-6)

That's the kind of relationship God wants with us: His obedient slaves, not by compulsion, but through love.

2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ compels us...

### **3. I want to talk about the one I love**

ILLUS – Some of you will relate to this. Because I was a victim of the countdown. Well, actually, my friends were the real victims. Because as the day for our wedding approached, I kept everybody up-to-date. Secure in the conviction that they were as interested and excited as I was. So they got the regular updates: Only 85 days to go...; only 84 days to go...; only 83 days...

I think I must have driven them nuts, but most people played along and humoured me.

But I couldn't help it; I wanted to talk about the one I love, because I was excited about her.

And that's what happens when you're in love.

You want to be with that person, you want to please that person, and you want to talk about them.

ILLUS – I'll use my wife, Allison, as an example here, because she's a good example. At the age of 20, she met Jesus. Jesus was a Person like no other person she'd ever met before. So what was the first thing she did? She gave her life to Jesus on a Saturday night. At 1:30 the next morning, she was still up talking to the Lord when there was a knock on the door. A girl came in to talk, and my wife led her to the Lord. The next morning at breakfast, she and that girl led another girl to the Lord. Two days later, Allison and that second girl led another girl to the Lord.

Allison just wanted to talk about Jesus: He has that kind of effect on people.

ILLUS – Jesus is sitting by a well one day, hot and tired. And a woman comes along to get water, so Jesus strikes up a conversation with her. And pretty soon they are talking about spiritual things. She's asking questions, He's telling her things about herself that He definitely wasn't supposed to know. This is her encounter with Jesus. Do you think that she is impacted by that encounter? You bet. She was so excited that she left her waterpot, raced back into the city without any water and said, "Hey everybody, you should see this

guy I just met. He's amazing. He's incredible. I've never seen anyone like this before. Come and meet Him. Yes, now. I don't care about your shop. You get yourself off your fundament right now and get yourself out there."

The excitement of meeting Jesus.

I bet she didn't know any theology, had no training, but she knew Jesus.

But do you know what happens?

Our relationship with Jesus is a lot like marriage.

People go in with all the zeal and excitement and enthusiasm about their newfound relationship.

But then gradually, slowly, the shine wears off.

It's no longer, "I don't care how far I have to walk, I just want to be with you."

Now it's, "Oh, man, why do I have to put out the garbage? Why can't you do it?"

It's no longer, "This is my beautiful wife."

Now it's, "Yeah, the old frump is in the kitchen."

It's no longer, "Man, am I a lucky guy to be married to you."

Now it's, "I said I loved you when we got married. If anything changes, I'll let you know."

And the marriage goes stale, and the warmth disappears, and kindness turns into coldness.

Let me tell you this guys: The best thing you can ever do for your children is to love their mother.

The way you treat their mother will impact them more than anything.

And when it gets to the stage where their first love has gone, husband and wife are just going through the motions, and they fall prey to the enemy in many different ways.

What a tragedy when a marriage gets to that point.

What an even greater tragedy when our relationship with Jesus looks like that too.

When it's settled into a humdrum routine, the warmth has gone, the excitement has disappeared, and the first love is dead.

Folks, if you want to start talking about Jesus again, you've got to revitalise your first love for Him all over again.

Quickly, here are three steps to regaining that warmth, that first love.

1. Set aside time each day to spend time with Him in worship: It *will* affect you.
2. Ask God to speak to you from His Word.
3. Ask God to reveal Himself to you afresh – and don't quit asking till He does.